

2009 Inside Laos 16 days / 15 nights

Highlights: Golden Triangle, Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Pak Ou Caves, Mekong River, Kuang Si falls, Plain of Jars, Village visits, Bolaven Plateau, Wat Phou, Khonephapeng falls.

Inside Laos

Experience Laos and understand why her landscapes and people are Asia's best-kept secret.

Enter Laos by wooden barge as you glide down the Mekong from the Golden Triangle. You will stay in a remote but comfortable eco-lodge only accessible by boat before continuing downriver to a sacred cave and on to Luang Prabang, the country's religious centre. The mysterious Plain of Jars will captivate your imagination, and Vientiane will impress you as one of the world's sleepest capitals. The beauty and simplicity of the south will leave you breathless and wondering about the Asia of yesteryear.

All road travel is in comfortable minibuses or mid-sized coaches. Your journey is escorted by both a Western tour leader, based on a minimum of seven travellers, and a local English-speaking guide in each location. Groups are never more than 15 travellers in size.

Tour grading - MODERATE TO ADVENTUROUS.

Suitable for travellers with an average level of fitness, independent mobility; a keen sense of adventure is important. Prepare for some long road and boat journeys often through remote regions, basic facilities at eco-lodges and plenty of walking. While accommodation is 3 star, this is not 'sanitised' travel and by day you'll walk through markets and villages, meet the local people and sample local food.

What's Included:

- 15 nights hotel accommodation (3 nights basic)
- 1 night accommodation in Kamu eco-lodge
- Breakfast daily, 3 lunches and 2 dinners
- All transfers and road transport in modern air-conditioned vehicles (temple tour on foot in Luang Prabang)
- Boat trips on the Mekong River
- 1 domestic flight
- Sightseeing as specified (entrance fees not included; allow approx 42USD)
- Expert western tour leader (group size 7 minimum) and Laos local guide throughout
- Tour arrival and departure transfers

Climate:

Laos experiences two distinct seasons, wet and dry. The dry season generally runs from November to February and it's a bit cooler this time of year. The wet season, March to October, is a great time to experience lush countryside and occasional cooling afternoon showers which rarely affect travel. Bring a layer of warm clothing when travelling to the North between November and February.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Chiang Rai

Arrive in Chiang Rai in the Golden Triangle, where Thailand, Laos and Myanmar (Burma) meet, and prepare for your Mekong boat journey. **One night WIANG INN**

Day 2 - Chiang Rai to Pakbeng

Transfer to the Lao/Thai border to board a private slow boat and glide down the majestic Mekong River to the small town of Pakbeng. Witness the amazing scenery of this region en-route. **One night PHETSOKXAI LODGE**

Day 3 - Pakbeng to Kamu Lodge

Continue by slow boat down the river to Kamu eco-lodge. Enjoy learning local activities and traditions with village and jungle walks, rice planting, fishing and gold panning. **One night KAMU LODGE**

Day 4 - Kamu to Luang Prabang

Continue your journey down the Mekong to the famous heritage listed city of Luang Prabang. On the way stop at Pak Ou (thousand Buddha) caves and visit a local Lao village on the river banks. **Three nights SALA PRABANG**

Day 5 - Luang Prabang

Take a trip to the spectacular National Museum, formally the royal residence. Spend some time walking around the city's many beautiful wats and gain an appreciation for the unique architectural styles and Buddhist culture. Some free time in the afternoon before finishing off the day with sunset drinks and a game of petanque on the famous Mekong River.

Day 6 - Luang Prabang

Rise early this morning to witness hundreds of robed monks perform the spectacular centuries-old morning alms tradition. Visit a local market then drive to the beautiful Kuang Si falls for swimming and relaxing in the amazing natural surroundings, visiting the Traditional Centre for Arts and Ethnology en-route. In the evening participate in a cooking class in traditional Lao cuisine where you get the chance to taste your own creation.

Day 7 - Luang Prabang to Phonsavan

Drive seven hours to Phonsavan enjoying the amazing diverse scenery of Laos. **Two nights AUBERGE HOTEL**

Day 8 - Phonsavan

Visit the ancient sites of the mysterious and captivating Plain of Jars and the old city of Muang Khoun.

Day 9 - Phonsavan to Vang Vieng

Drive to the beautiful riverside town of Vang Vieng stopping at Tham Pha cave on the way. **One night VILLA NAM SONG**

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Day 10 - Vang Vieng to Vientiane

Visit the amazing Tham Chang cave before some free time to relax in the amazing natural surrounds of Vang Vieng before the drive to the capital Vientiane. **Two nights NOVOTEL**

Day 11 - Vientiane

Explore the capital's most famous landmarks, That Luang and Wat Sisaket, Patuxai, Haw Phra Kaew and the National Museum. Also get the chance to visit the educational and interactive COPE visitors centre. COPE is an organisation dedicated to assisting Lao people in need of prosthetic limbs often as a result of exploded ordinance.

Day 12 - Vientiane to Pakse

Fly to Pakse and explore the Bolaven Plateau where you will explore coffee plantations, hilltribe villages and the beautiful Tad Fane Waterfalls. **One night TAD FANE RESORT**

Day 13 - Pakse to Khong Island

Take an elephant trek through the jungle to visit ancient temple ruins then transfer by boat to Khong Island. **Two nights SENESOTHXEUNE HOTEL**

Day 14 - Khong Island

Today travel around the area known as 4000 Islands to see the largest falls in Southeast Asia, Khonephapeng Falls. Continue by small boat to catch a glimpse of the rare and elusive Irrawaddy dolphin

Day 15 - Khong Island to Pakse

Travel to the city of Champasak to visit the famous Wat Phou. Situated on a massive escarpment, these ancient ruins pre-date Angkor Wat and were said to have once been the nexus of the Khmer Kingdom. **One night PAKSE HOTEL.**

Day 16 - Pakse

Today you will be transferred to the airport for your onward journey.

Hotel Brief

Wiang Inn in Chiang Rai

Stay in great rooms at one of the best hotels in town. Good pool, and well-maintained.

Phetsokxai in Pakbeng

The Phetsoksay Lodge in Pakbeng is basic but contains all the necessary facilities for a night's stay. Due to the geographical isolation of Pakbeng, quality accommodation big enough to take groups is limited. We have chosen the Phetsoksay Lodge because - although simple in style - it is clean and comfortable, has private bathrooms, and is able to take our small groups. We do ask you to understand in advance that your stay in this accommodation will be noticeably 'simpler' than at other properties used on this journey.

Kamu Eco-lodge

This wonderful example of responsible tourism will see you staying in comfortable safari-style tents with adjoining private bathrooms on the banks of the Mekong. The lodge directly contributes to nearby communities and is staffed by local villagers.

Sala Prabang in Luang Prabang

Not a hotel per se but a converted guest house with rustic charm in the heart of Luang Prabang. Rooms do not have extra amenities such as televisions, phone, mini-bars etc but with its restored original buildings, the accommodation has great character and is unbeatable in terms of value, location and atmosphere.

Auberge in Phonsavan

A beautiful cottage style hotel in the Plain of Jars. It has a fantastic location situated on the top of a hill offering superb views of the town, valleys and nearby mountains.

Villa Nam Song in Vang Vieng

Located on the banks of the majestic Nam Song River with beautiful well maintained rooms and a location just out of the centre of this quaint little town makes this one of the most peaceful accommodations available.

Novotel in Vientiane

Comfortable, well-maintained 3 star hotel with excellent facilities. Nice pool, gym and bar area.

Tad Fane Resort in the Bolaven Plateau

Simple cabins set among wild coffee plantations, and overlooking the stunning Tad Fane falls. A truly peaceful place.

Senesothxeune Hotel on Done Khong Island

Simple yet comfortable retreat on the largest of the '4000 Islands' offering great view of the surrounding waterways.

Pakse Hotel in Pakse

Smart modern hotel in the centre of town, close to temples, markets, and old colonial buildings.

Visa Requirements

Of all the countries in which we operate tours, Thailand is perhaps the most visitor-friendly in terms of arrival. Holders of passports from Australia, New Zealand, the USA, UK and Canada do not need visas for stays of up to 30 days in Thailand. All foreign tourists to Laos must possess a valid visa. Visas can be issued on arrival at Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Pakse airport. Visas are valid for 30 days and cost between 30USD and 42USD depending on nationality. More detailed visa information is available in our pre-departure information. It is your responsibility to make sure that visa requirements are fulfilled.

Health Issues

Good medical advice usually recommends vaccinations/prophylactics in advance of travel to Laos. We suggest that you consult with your doctor to discuss health care needs specific to your holiday.

Insurance

You must be comprehensively insured as a condition of travelling with Travel Indochina. Insurance should include cover for personal accident and medical expenses, evacuation and repatriation, baggage loss, and cancellation or curtailment of your holiday. Your booking will not be confirmed if you cannot confirm possession of appropriate insurance, and our ground operations have the right to prevent you from travelling in the event that you can not present your Insurance details at the start of the tour. Your travel agent can organise travel insurance for you.

Recommended Reading

- Stalking the Elephant Kings - Chris Kremmer
- Bamboo Palace - Chris Kremmer
- Ant Egg Soup - Natacha du Pont de Bie
- Culture Shock: Laos - Stephen Mansfield
- The Ravens: Pilots of the Secret War - Christopher Robbins
- Shooting at the Moon - Robert Wagner
- A Dragon Apparent - Norman Lewis
- The Rough Guide to Laos - Jeff Cranmer and Stevin Martin

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website. Our policy includes a 'Guide to Responsible Travel', full of useful pointers which will make you a more 'responsible' traveller in Asia.

Pre and post tour arrangements

If you would like to book pre or post tour hotel arrangements or are interested in doing additional quality touring before or after your Small Group journey, either contact Travel Indochina or your local travel agent.

N.b. This trip ends in Pakse from where there are a number of travel options. There are daily flights from Pakse to Vientiane with the option of connecting to Bangkok and other major Asian cities. There are direct flights from Pakse to Bangkok operating on a Sunday morning (schedule subject to change). There are also daily flights to Siem Reap in Cambodia, home of the temples of Angkor. It is also possible to transfer overland to Ubon Ratchanthani in Thailand which has connecting flights to Bangkok every day. There is also the option of adding on additional arrangements in southern Laos. We will be happy to assist you in your post tour arrangements.

A Responsible Travel Indochina

Travel Indochina practices a thorough, realistic Responsible Travel Policy, full details of which can be found in our

What next

Once your booking has been confirmed and you have paid in full you will receive a detailed itinerary for this tour, detailing day by day arrangements, as well as a pre-departure guide containing valuable information designed to help you get the most out of your holiday.

About Travel Indochina

Travel Indochina has been operating small group journeys to Asia since 1993. Based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, our idea is simple - escape the tourist traps to explore the essence of Asia's history, culture, natural beauty and most importantly, Asia's people. Another feature is the quality, character and location of our accommodation. Our travellers enjoy the combination of well thought out itineraries, tasteful accommodation, insightful western and local leaders, value for money, and our experience and base in the region.

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