

## 2009 Laos Experience 8 days / 7 nights

Highlights: Chiang Rai, Luang Prabang, Pak Ou Caves, Mekong River, Kuang Si falls, Village visits, Vientiane

### Laos Experience

Laos is a magical nation where you will meet devout monks and hilltribe farmers, enjoy lush tropical backgrounds and thundering waterfalls, and a night market full of fabrics, handicrafts and delicious local snacks. Travelling down the mighty Mekong on a private boat is a truly unique experience.

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

Suitable for travellers with an average level of fitness and independent mobility. Expect lots of walking and you may need to carry your bags from time to time. Prepare for some long road and boat journeys. 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:

- 7 nights hotel accommodation (1 night basic)
- Breakfast daily, 2 lunches and 1 dinner
- All transfers and transport in modern air-conditioned vehicles (temple touring by foot in Luang Prabang)
- Boat trips on the Mekong River
- 1 domestic flight
- Sightseeing as specified (entrance fees not included; allow 18USD)
- 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 along the way. **One night PHETSOKXAI LODGE**

#### Day 3 - Pakbeng 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. **Three nights SALA PRABANG**

#### Day 4 - 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 5 - 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 6 - Luang Prabang to Vientiane

Fly to the sleepy Laotian capital Vientiane, visit the National Museum and That Luang. **Two nights NOVOTEL**

#### Day 7 - Vientiane

Continue exploring the capital's most famous landmarks with visits to Wat Si Saket, Haw Phra Kaew and the Patuxai Independence Monument. 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 8 - Vientiane

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 Lodge in Pakbeng

*Information in this dossier was correct at the time of its preparation.*

*Travel Indochina reserves the right to make itinerary changes as operational or other circumstances require.*

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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.

#### **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, this accommodation has great character and is unbeatable in terms of location and atmosphere.

#### **Novotel in Vientiane**

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

#### **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 the border crossing from Thailand to Laos in Huay Xai, where the process is simple and efficient. 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**

- Bamboo Palace - Chris Kremmer
- Ant Egg Soup - Natacha du Pont de Bie
- The Ravens: Pilots of the Secret War - Christopher Robbins
- Shooting at the Moon - Robert Wagner
- A Brief History of Laos - Grant Evans

#### **A Responsible Travel Indochina**

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

#### **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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