

## Laos – Spirit of Laos

### Tour Code LA

A fabulous journey through the extraordinarily friendly country of Laos and the least visited of South-East Asia. Culturally rich and steeped in centuries-old charm, the appeal of Laos lies in its unique artistic, religious and architectural heritage set against a backdrop of diverse natural beauty. The World Heritage town of Luang Prabang is a cultural gem and probably the most charming destination in the region, whilst a wealth of historic monuments, beautiful Buddhist temples, stunning UNESCO listed archaeological sites, colourful markets and enchanting tribal villages set amidst the splendour of the mighty Mekong River cannot fail to inspire the traveller throughout this captivating land.



Novice monks, Luang Prabang  
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### ITINERARY

#### Day 1 Fly to Bangkok

Depart UK for Bangkok. Various airline options available. Arrive Bangkok following afternoon. Overnight at airport hotel

#### Day 2 Fly to Luang Prabang. Afternoon orientation tour

Early morning flight from Bangkok with Lao Airlines to Luang Prabang. We arrive into LP airport this morning and transfer to our hotel. This afternoon we have an orientation tour of the town and include visits to the National Museum, set in the former Royal Palace and to Wat Mai, a beautiful Buddhist temple with a five-tiered roof typical of the graceful Luang Prabang architectural style. A welcome dinner has been arranged at a smart local restaurant. Three nights at the Villa Deux Rivières hotel (B,D)

#### Day 3 In Luang Prabang. Mekong riverboat trip to Pak Au

After a leisurely breakfast we head into the town to visit Wat Xieng Thong, seen as the most historic and enchanting Buddhist monastery in the entire country. We head to the Mekong River and enjoy a riverboat trip to visit the famous and sacred Pak Ou Buddha Caves. The caves overlook the confluence of the Mekong and Ou Rivers and are home to many thousands of Buddha images. After lunch we visit a weaving village populated by the Lu people originally from Southern China who still use traditional weaving methods. The rest of the afternoon is left free to enjoy the relaxed atmosphere of Luang Prabang. Dinner at a traditional restaurant (B,L,D)

#### Day 4 In Luang Prabang. Morning Alms and Kuang Si Waterfalls

We start the day early with one of the most memorable sights of Luang Prabang. At dawn hundreds of saffron robed monks move silently through the streets to collect alms (offerings of food). After breakfast we drive along the scenic Laotian countryside lined with rice paddies and many ethnic minority villages to visit Khuang Sy Waterfall. The afternoon is left free to enjoy the relaxed atmosphere of Luang Prabang. Dinner at a local restaurant (B,D)

#### Day 5 Drive to Phonesavanh

A long but exhilarating drive through some of the country's most beautiful scenery as we climb along the mountain roads with the opportunity to pause at some of the many Mong tribal villages along the way and to visit a local market. We arrive in the late afternoon for two nights at the Vansana Hotel with dinner (B,L,D)

#### Day 6 Visit Plain of Jars

We spend the morning visiting the Plain of Jars, where some 300 giant funerary urns lie scattered over a scenic plain of rolling red hills and pine trees. Their origin is a mystery though they are believed to date 2000 years old. We will also visit the old capital Muang Khun, today's Xieng Khouang rebuilt since the Vietnam war, and stop to see the Tai Dam people who still keep their distinctive cultural customs such as the weaved headdress (B,L,D)

#### Day 7 Drive to Vang Vieng

We continue our journey south through the lush rolling Laotian countryside passing many ethnic tribal villages set against stunning backdrops before arriving at Vang Vieng. Our hotel is wonderfully set on the Nam Xong River against a spectacular spread of saw-toothed limestone karsts. We visit Tham Chang cave to enjoy the stunning views across this region. Overnight at the Elephant Crossing hotel with dinner (B,D)

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### **Day 8 In Vang Vieng. Drive to Vientiane**

We start the day with a boat trip along the Nam Song River in order to fully appreciate the stunning limestone karst scenery that surrounds us. Our destination is an organic farm which we will be able to visit and enjoy an organic lunch! In the afternoon we continue our journey to the Laotian capital. Dinner tonight is accompanied by a folkloric show. Two nights at the City Inn hotel. (B,D)

### **Day 9 In Vientiane. Morning City Tour**

We spend the morning in the capital visiting its historic and architectural highlights including the city's oldest temple; Vat Sisaket and Haw Phra Keo; the former royal temple. We continue to visit the National Museum and the photogenic That Luang Stupa, the most revered shrine in Laos. We have an included lunch at a local traditional restaurant and the afternoon is left free to further enjoy the city at your own leisure (B,L)

### **Day 10 Drive to Savannakhet**

A long but scenic drive south along the French – Indochina road linking to Vietnam and Cambodia. We break our journey at a number of villages along the way including a visit to Tham Pha Pafa Cave containing over 200 bronze Buddhas believed to be 300 years old. Our destination is Savannakhet, a charming town with French colonial architecture reminiscent of Hanoi and we will have time to explore the old French quarter. Overnight at the Savan Vegas hotel and dinner at a local restaurant (B,L,D)

### **Day 11 In Savannakhet. Visit Hill tribe villages. Drive to Tad Lo**

After a morning visit to the Savannakhet dinosaur museum and much revered That Ing Hang stupa, we continue our journey via Pakxe to the hill tribe villages of Kha' and other 'Lao Thung' peoples. We overnight with dinner at the Tad Lo Waterfall resort (B,L,D)

### **Day 12 Visit Bolaven Plateau**

After a visit to the Tad Lo waterfalls, we travel through the western edge of the Bolaven plateau, formed by a now extinct volcano. The soil here is very fertile and so cultivation of coffee beans, tea and spices is the most important trade and we will be able to visit a plantation. In the afternoon we will drive to Kiet Gnong to an Elephant Camp where there may also be the opportunity to do some elephant riding. We continue to Si Phan Don – the '4000 islands'. Two nights at the Villa Muang Khong resort hotel with dinner (B,L,D)

### **Day 13 Boat trip to Don Khong, 4000 Islands**

A boat trip this morning reveals where the Mekong has split to create a maze of channels and also where the great river reaches its widest point. We witness Asia's largest waterfall at Khong Phapheng and will hopefully see Irawaddy river dolphins along our journey. We will also visit parts of the Old French Railway and Colonial Bridge, built at the turn of the century to circumnavigate the falls. (B,L)

### **Day 14 Visit Wat Phou. Drive to Pakxe**

Heading north we stop at the impressive Khmer temple complex of Wat Phou occupying a setting of unparalleled beauty. With UNESCO status the site consists of ruined temples and shrines dating from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. We continue to Pakse for our final night stay at the Pakse hotel. Farewell dinner at a local restaurant (B,L,D)

### **Day 15 Fly to Bangkok**

Morning departure to Bangkok with Lao Airlines for connecting flights to London

**Cost £1595.00** per person in a twin room (excludes international flights) Single supplement £200



Funerary Urn, Plain of Jars  
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#### **Price includes -**

- ▶ Tour accompanied from London by Patrick Syder FRGS
- ▶ Specialist Laotian guides throughout
- ▶ All transportation in private a/c coach
- ▶ Full sightseeing programme including entrance fees
- ▶ Quality local four star hotels on a half board basis
- ▶ Included dinners and lunches as indicated at quality restaurants
- ▶ All airport transfers
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities

*PLEASE NOTE – personal travel insurance, applicable visa fees, alcoholic drinks, guide and driver gratuities, international flights to Laos are not included in the land tour cost (international flights start from £740.00 through Flight Centre UK) (Included meals denoted by B Breakfast, L Lunch, D Dinner)*