

Explore Northern Laos: Nature & Culture | 11 Days



Laos remains relatively exotic, unexplored and is possibly the most overlooked destination in Asia, despite its rich culture, history and diverse ecosystem.

Your trip will start in the capital city of Vientiane and end in Luang Prabang. In between, you will explore rugged and mountainous Luang Namtha and its surrounding areas. In Luang Namtha, you will be able to meet many hill tribe people, venture off the beaten path and discover the many hidden wonders of this beautiful Southeast Asian country.

Once the heart and soul of the ancient kingdom of Laos, Luang Prabang is now a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city is filled with ornate temples and French colonial architecture on the bank of the Mekong River, giving it a truly magical feel.

You will experience the finest local food, trek through the forest and hill tribal villages, yet you will go back to a world of comfort each evening. We are sure that this will be a once in a lifetime experience!

Trip Highlights

- Visit Wat Sisaket, Wat Prakeo, the COPE Centre, That Luang Stupa, Patuxay Monument and the Buddha Park in Vientiane, the laid back capital
- Observe hill tribe traditional way of rural life in Muang Sing
- Visit Pak Ou cave
- Behold the beauty of Kuang Si Waterfalls
- Visit Xieng Kok village and witness ethnic Aka hill tribes' daily life

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Vientiane

Welcome to Laos! Upon arrival in Vientiane a *travel-to-nature Asia* guide/representative will be at the airport to greet and take us to our hotel. Please look out for your name-card once you exit out of arrival area.

This ancient city is situated on the bend on the left bank of the Mekong as the largest city and the capital of Laos.

Accommodation: Salana Boutique Hotel

Day 2: Guided City Tour of Vientiane

Today a city tour brings you the best sites of Vientiane, religious museums of Wat Si Saket, the oldest temple to have been survived from the Siamese war of 1828 and its cloister contains more than 8000 Buddha statues; Wat Ho Prakeo, the former home-temple of the Emerald Buddha statue or Pra Keo, but today it contains a collection of Buddha statues, antiques and all artifacts found in around Vientiane; That Luang Stupa, the single most important monument in Laos, which was built to cover the original small stupa containing a piece of the chest bone of Buddha; Patouxay (Arch de Triumph), built quite recently in commemoration of those who died during the wars in the past and it is today as the landmark of Vientiane.

Accommodation: Salana Boutique Hotel

Meal: Breakfast

Day 3: Fly Vientiane - Luang Namtha (55 min)

After breakfast, transfer to Wattay airport for a flight to Luang Namtha, a land of rugged mountains, pristine forests, and rich river plains with over 20 ethnic groups, make it the most ethnically diverse province in Laos. Upon arrival at Luang Namtha Airport, our guide will accompany you to your hotel.

In the afternoon you start visiting without delay Luang Nam Tha provincial museum, drive outskirts of town to visit Ban Nam Leu, a small village of Lane Tane hill tribe and also visit Ban ThongchaiNeua, a silk-weaving village of Tai Dam.

Accommodation: The Boat Landing

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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travel-to-nature Asia Pvt. Ltd.

www.traveltonatureasia.com | contact@traveltonatureasia.com
Nepal: +977 986-7063685 | Europe: +49 (0) 170 464 7726

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Day 4: Drive Luang Namtha - Muang Sing (64 km | 1.5 hrs)

Following breakfast, we head north by car about 2-3hrs to Muang Sing, a small town near Laos-China border where there are more hill tribes to be seen. There are lots of interesting villages of various ethnic groups such as Hmong, Aka...that you may visit. Check in at a good guest house and enjoy lunch at local restaurant.

Afternoon, you continue to drive to near China border area and visit villages of Ikor or Aka ethnic group as well as a village of Yao hill tribe where you will learn the more traditional way of rural life with their fascinating culture of these people. Dinner is at a local restaurant or guest house.

Accommodation: Singchalern Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5: Day trip to Xieng Kok (70 km | 2.33 hrs)

After early breakfast, it will be another highlight day to take a drive about 2-3 hrs to visit villages of various types of Aka hill tribe on the way to Xieng Kok, a small village for the checkpoint on the Mekong to Burma. It's quite easy to see lots of ethnic Aka people, walking along the road. Arrive at Xieng Kok village, where you have lunch at local restaurant and take a view of Burma on the other side of the Mekong River.

Return to Muang Sing in the late afternoon and the rest of the day is at leisure. Dinner is at the local restaurant.

Accommodation: Singchalern Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 6: Drive Muang Sing - Oudomxay (200 km | 5 hrs)

Early morning visit Muang Sing morning market, where there are lots of Aka people, who bring their forestry products to sell and also buy their necessary goods back home.

Breakfast at local restaurant, it's time to say goodbye to Muang Sing, and drive back to Luang Namtha and you continue about 4 hours drive to Oudomxay, a good stop off point N or S surrounded by hills, linking China, Vietnam, Luang Prabang and Pakbeng, even it was razed during the war. There are also more villages of ethnic groups such as Hmong, Khmu that you may stop and visit along the way. There are a few good local restaurants where we can take a good simply lunch along the way.

Arrive in Oudomxay, check in at a good guest house and relax after a long day drive. Dinner is also at a local restaurant.

Accommodation: Udomkham Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7: Drive Oudomxay - Pak Ou - Luang Prabang (208 km | 5 hrs)

After breakfast, it is also interesting visit the morning market in town, where some Hmong hill tribe people come to sell and buy things there, before we head south by car about 4 hours to Luang Prabang, the ancient first capital of Lane Xang kingdom, the center of religious life in Laos and today the World Heritage City. You also stop to relax and have a lunch at local restaurant.

Stop en route at Ban Pak Ou, a village opposite of Pak Ou cave in the side of a limestone cliff and the opposite of the mouth of the Mekong and Nam Ou rivers. The sanctuaries at Pak Ou consist of two large caves, both repositories for thousands of Buddha images, which range from mere centimeter to two meters in height. We cross the Mekong by small ferry boat to visit Pak Ou cave, and we cross back to Ban Pak Ou to continue our way to Luang Prabang. This afternoon is spent free for own experience of this charming town with kind people. Overnight in Luang Prabang.

Accommodation: The Grand Luang Prabang Hotel

Meal: Breakfast

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Day 8: In Luang Prabang

After breakfast at hotel, take a sightseeing tour of the sacred city of temples, of which nearly fifty still remain in the town and surrounding areas. Visit the National Museum, the former Royal Palace which houses the collection of valuables including the famous Prabang Buddha statue, gifts received from foreign dignitaries...etc. Visit Wat Visoun, the 16th century temple served as a small museum for religious artifacts; Wat Aham, the early 19th century temple, whose two guardian figures at the foot of the steps which represent two characters from the Ramayana - Hanuman, the Monkey God and a fierce Yaksa; drive outskirts of town to visit Ban Xangkhong, the well-known village for its wood papers and also Lao silk weavings with natural dyes.

In the afternoon, we continue to visit Wat Xieng Thong, the 16th century temple, which more than any temples in Luang Prabang, epitomizes all the elegance and grace of Luang Prabang architecture, Hmong market in town, where some of the Hmong ladies still show their skilled embroidery works, climb Phousi Hill, the 328 steps leads to the summit of Phousi Hill that dominates the skyline of Luang Prabang overlooking the finest panoramic view in the whole Luang Prabang and watch sunset over the hill at Wat Phabat Tai on the bank of the Mekong river.

Accommodation: The Grand Luang Prabang Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 9: Visit Kuang Si Waterfall (30 km | 50 min)

After breakfast, we take a drive (30 km South) to visit Kuang Si Waterfall, which, though not very high, is spectacular and really beautiful with its green surroundings as the preserved National park. We visit a fresh produced market namely Talad Phosy, where most of your food comes from and also visit Ban Na Oune, a small village of Hmong hill-tribe group. Just before arriving at Kuang Si

waterfall, there is another village of Khmu minority group, Ban Tha Pane that we can visit.

Your picnic lunch is served at the shady park nearby Kuang Si waterfall. There is plenty of time for relaxing and swimming in cool water if we like before you head back to Luang Prabang in the late afternoon. The rest of the day is at leisure for independent exploration on this ancient town.

Accommodation: The Grand Luang Prabang Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 10: In Luang Prabang

Today is day at leisure just to relax and soak up all the experiences you have had so far.

Accommodation: The Grand Luang Prabang Hotel

Meal: Breakfast

Day 11: Depart Luang Prabang

Transfer to airport for your homeward-bound flight.

Meal: Breakfast

Includes

- Airport (pick up/drop off) transfers by private A/C vehicle
- Twin-Sharing accommodation in all Hotel/Lodge as mentioned or similar
- Daily breakfast throughout the trip, other meals as mentioned in the itinerary
- Professional English-speaking guide all the tour
- All transportation by private air-condition vehicle
- Boat in Pak Ou Cave (Mekong River)
- All sightseeing tickets

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- Services charges and government tax

Excludes

- International flight tickets
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance & vaccinations
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Personal clothing and equipment
- Tips for trip leader/guide, driver, hotel staff, and porters
- Items of personal nature such as alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, laundry, telephone calls and other unforeseen expenses
- Items/services not listed in the "included"
- Compulsory gala dinner on Christmas or New Year (if applicable)
- Extra expenses/payment for 'Optional' activities/programs if participated

Accommodation

Salana Boutique Hotel, Vientiane

The Salana Boutique hotel has a Lao contemporary style which is finished by the real timber wood promoting a real sense of comfort and class. Guests can take pleasure in experiencing the hotel's perfect blend of an outstanding level of service and the attention to detail ensuring your stay is comfortable and carefree.

The Boat Landing Guest House, Luang Namtha

The Boat Landing Guest House is owned and operated by a family in Luang Namtha, Laos' northwestern most province. On the banks of the Namtha, enjoy genuine Luang Namtha cuisine in our open verandah restaurant while watching life by the river. Nearby is the Nam Ha Protected Area, the Namtha River and Lao ethnic villages for rafting, trekking, and local exploration.

The Grand Luang Prabang Hotel

The Grand Luang Prabang Hotel is located on the banks of the grand Mekong River with a spectacular panoramic view of the picturesque mountains surrounding Luang Prabang, approximately 4 kms southwest of Luang Prabang town centre. The resort is situated on the 59 thousand square meters' estate of Xiengkeo Palace which belonged to the nationalist hero Prince Phetsarath.

Group/Individual



On this trip you will be traveling privately with your family & friends. Our representative/tour partner will look after your transfers to and from the airport and will be around to answer other questions you may have about your trip.

Accommodation – Hotel, Resort

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a fine heritage hotel in another or a family-run guesthouse or lodges in a smaller town. Accommodation in remote areas tend to be basic and may not have western amenities.

Single Accommodation

Single (room) supplements are provided on request (single supplement charge applies) and are subject to availability.

Food & Transport

All breakfasts, 6 lunches and 4 dinners are included.

Fiery and fragrant, with a touch of sour, Lao food owes its distinctive taste to fermented fish sauce, lemongrass, coriander leaves, chillies and lime juice. Eaten with the hands along with the staple, sticky rice, much of Lao cuisine is roasted over an open fire and served with fresh herbs and vegetables. Pork, chicken, duck and water buffalo all end up in the kitchen, but freshwater fish is the main source of protein in the Lao diet.

Food is generally very inexpensive in Laos, with the cheapest options those sold by hawkers – usually fruit, small dishes like papaya salad, and grilled skewered meat – and the most expensive being the upmarket tourist restaurants (usually French or European) in Luang Prabang and Vientiane.

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For airport, sightseeing transfers, and for long drives we use a private air-con car, jeep, van depending upon group size.

Weather

The climate in Laos is generally very warm, with an annual average of 32 degrees Celsius, but has few truly tropical and sticky months. It is warm or hot yearlong. The warmest and rainiest part of the country is Champasak and the coldest is Xiagnabouli. If you are hoping for cooler temperature dry season is the best time to travel which is from November to March. Month of May through September get maximum rain.

Baggage Allowance

The standard baggage weight limit on international flights (generally from Europe) is one checked baggage of 25kg (55lb) and hand baggage 7kg (15lbs). However, if your journey involves domestic connecting flights weight limit can be limited/restricted. We recommend packing only one piece of checked baggage. Luggage allowances for both hand and checked luggage are subject to change, we suggest you check the airline's website for the latest information prior to your departure or purchasing your flight tickets.

ESSENTIAL/PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Passport & Visas

All nationalities require a passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information below is primarily for EU passport holders, and other nationalities should check with the relevant embassies. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Visas are required to enter Laos for most of European/American nationals. The Laos visa policy allows three different types of visa: e-Visas, visas on arrival, and

tourist visas. Usually, within 3 working days after approval, the applicant receives the approved eVisa by email.

For further information on eVisa or visa in general please refer to this link: <https://laoevisa.gov.la/index>.

Please note: Visa regulations may change without notice, therefore please make sure to check the most current/updated regulations or contact us.

Vaccination & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad and enjoy holidays to the fullest.

There are no required vaccinations. However, recommended vaccinations include hepatitis A, hepatitis B, typhoid, cholera, Japanese encephalitis, rabies, meningitis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella (MMR), Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, & pertussis), chickenpox, shingles, pneumonia and influenza. You will also need a yellow fever vaccination certificate if you're arriving from a country with risk of yellow fever transmission or transiting for more than 12 hours through a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. Please confirm your vaccine recommendations and requirements with your doctor or travel clinic.

Dengue fever, a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes, is a known risk in some places so take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites. It's not mandatory to have a dengue vaccine but you may want to consult your doctor/health care professional for getting one.

Local Time

GMT/UTC + 7 hours.

Electricity

Laos operates on the standard voltage of 230 V and the frequency is 50 Hz.

In Laos, power plugs and sockets (outlets) of type **A**, type **B**, type **C**, type **E**, and type **F** are used. Do not forget to bring a travel adapter.

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ATM | Credit Cards

ATMs can be found in major towns and most ATM's around Laos will offer you the option of withdrawing in LAK or USD.

While using ATM please be mindful of your surroundings.

Major credit cards such as MasterCard and Visa are becoming more widely accepted around Laos but you should be prepared to use cash in almost every situation. Major hotel chains and fancy restaurants will undoubtedly take your card, and a service charge of 3 percent is often added.

To get the best exchange rates for Kip, bigger denominations Euro/US\$ that are in pristine conditions (no fold, no mark, no tear, no stain) are required.

Extra Expenses & Spending Money

You will need to bring some extra money to cover drinks, laundry, souvenirs and any other personal expense, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Though it totally depends on individual but generally an approximate (rough estimate) amount of Euro 150 (US\$170) per person, per week should be sufficient (more if you enjoy a few beers); however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount. Or if you are the one frugal with money probably allocating less would also be suffice.

Optional Tours may be offered in some city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available. Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each optional tour/activity will be arranged locally by our local partner/guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

Tipping

Tipping isn't customary and traditionally not expected in Laos, but it is always appreciated. If you're happy with the services provided by waiters, drivers and other service

workers, leaving a small tip is a good way to show your appreciation.

Itinerary Change

In case of some unusual events/incidents the order of programs (sightseeing, excursions etc.) might have to change in order to accommodate the local situations. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements while maintaining the overall integrity of your trip.

The domestic airlines (if your program includes) may change their schedule frequently and, in such cases, our local partner/guide will inform you about the changes.

Travel Insurance

We highly recommend to choose/get an insurance plan/policy that covers your requirements/needs. And please make sure to keep/carry a hard-copy of your travel insurance documents on your person while on tour. It's prudent to check thoroughly the inclusions and procedure to file claims prior to purchasing insurance coverage. *travel-to-nature Asia* will not be responsible for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to purchase appropriate travel insurance from the date of booking.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: On all guided trips although our leaders/guides are well trained to deal with different capabilities, if they have any concerns about someone's ability to safely partake in an activity, or their impact on other people's enjoyment, we authorize them to take necessary action which, in some circumstances, may involve asking someone to miss that activity.