

Laos Trekking

Country(ies): Laos , Thailand

Tour type: Private

Transport: A/C minibus & boat cruise

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: Any

Days: 8 days

Start Location: Chiang Rai, Thailand

End Location: Luang Prabang, Laos

Meals: Breakfasts - 11, Lunches - 5, Dinners - 1

Highlights:

Trek through the Luang Namtha National Park, take a private boat cruise down the Nam Ou River, uncover the beautiful caves of Pak Ou, explore the UNESCO World Heritage City of Luang Prabang



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Chiang Rai and transfer to hotel

Meet and greet at Chiang Rai airport, Thailand when you will be transferred to your hotel where you have the rest of the day at leisure.

OVERNIGHT: Chiang Rai hotel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Extra day in Chiang Rai - pre-tour Single room supplement (LATMLT)

Day 2: Huay Xai to Luang Namtha

Today we travel from our accommodation to Huay Xai. Following your completion of border formalities, we head out of the town to Luang Namtha. This road has recently been improved, and is now a very smooth and comfortable drive. We visit hill tribe villages along the road at Muang Phouka and other surrounding areas. We arrive in Luang Namtha in the afternoon where you have the rest of the day at leisure.

OVERNIGHT: Luang Namtha hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 3: Luang Namtha, full day trekking

The trip starts with a climb up to Phoumpok Stupa a great view point, offering panoramic views of Luang Namtha town. We then head into the jungle with your local guide, who will show you the different types of medicines and foods you can collect in the forest. For lunch you will have a wonderful picnic prepared by your guide and some local villagers. They will use bamboo pipes to cook either Black Tai or Akha style food and you will dine in the heart of the jungle.

After lunch, we continue trekking for another 45 minutes, and eventually reach Ban Nammutmai, a picturesque Akha minority village built on the hillside. Here you will learn about the life of this small ethnic minority group. Your guide will translate and explain to you old folklore stories from the locals. After this village visit, we travel by pickup truck to the Lanten village of Ban Nam Jang, where they specialize in the making of Saa paper. The trip ends when we return to the Luang Namtha market. Here you will see many of the forest products found along the trail being sold in the market. You will arrive back at your accommodation by mid afternoon.

OVERNIGHT: Luang Namtha hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch

EXTRAS:

Day 4: Luang Namtha, drive to Oudomxay

You have the morning at leisure to relax in beautiful surroundings, before we get back on the road, heading south to the town of Oudomxay. After making a number of stops to admire the scenery, we reach Oudomxay by late afternoon. Overnight in Oudomxay.

OVERNIGHT: Oudomxay hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 5: Oudomxay to Muang Ngoi via Muang Khua

The local market also attracts numerous ethnic minorities who converge from the surrounding mountainsides or valley to barter and trade their goods. We visit this congregation before setting off on our journey east to the riverside town of Muang Khua. En route we have the chance to visit the intriguing Pra Xack Kham Temple with its sacred Buddha image. The 400 years old legendary statue is said to have many supernatural powers, and is widely worshipped among the faithful local Buddhists. We also stop at the market of Xin Sai, which is very colourful as many of the ethnic minorities meet to exchange goods here. Upon arrival in Muang Khua, we board our private boat for the cruise down the Nam Ou River to Muang Ngoi, arriving there early evening.

OVERNIGHT: Muang Ngoi hotel

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch

EXTRAS:

Day 6: Muang Ngoi, trekking & homestay

This morning, we begin trekking 2 hours to Ban Houay Boor (a Khmu and T'ai Deng ethnic village). After lunch at villager's home in Ban Houay Boor, continue trekking in the afternoon to Ban Na (a T'ai Deng village) and Ban Houaisene, where we stay overnight at community bamboo guesthouse. Before dinner, enjoy a Baci ceremony and traditional music show with the villagers.

OVERNIGHT: Homestay

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 7: Muang Ngoi to Nong Khiaw by boat

This morning, after breakfast, we begin trekking through the rice fields and beautiful landscape back to Muang Ngoi. We then embark a long tail traditional boat for a leisurely 1hour trip downstream on the Nam Ou River, enjoying the lush green forests and landscape until arrival at Nong Khiaw. Afternoon at leisure.

OVERNIGHT: Nong Khiaw hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 8: Nong Khiaw, full day trekking

Full day trekking around Nong Khiaw, or for more adventurous clients the new 1-day 100 waterfalls adventure trail can be enjoyed. For anyone wishing to enjoy a truly stunning experience on the newly discovered 100 waterfalls adventure trail, we'll start the day with a peaceful boat ride on the Nam Ou river. We then explore a small Lao village along the river side before heading into the waterfalls learning about village way of life along the way. Walking through small streams and rice paddies you arrive at the bottom of the 100 waterfalls which were first discovered (by foreigners) in October 2008. The next few hours we see only water and jungle and hear the sound of clear waterfall cascades. The pools around you are very inviting for a refreshing splash. Our guide will lead us through the cascades and prepare a local style lunch on the falls in the middle of amazingly green nature. A small village trail on the top of the 100 waterfalls will lead us back down into the valley offering spectacular views over the landscapes of the Nam Ou valley. Hiking back to the village we will have more time to see the daily life here on the Nam OU riverside village and than head back with a small boat which will bring us back to Nong Khiaw.

OVERNIGHT: Nong Khiaw hotel

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch

EXTRAS:

Day 9: Nong Khiaw to Luang Prabang

After breakfast today we'll begin our journey to Luang Prabang. Our first stop along the way will be to the traditional Thai Lue Minority village of Ban Na Yang, set 12km from the mainroad). In the village you'll be able to witness a traditional way of life, see local houses and local hand-weaving techniques. Next, we'll transfer to Ban Pak Ou where you'll have time to take a break for lunch at a riverside restaurant, with views of the Nam Ou and Mekong Rivers. After lunch we'll head to the mysterious caves of Pak Ou, two linked caves crammed with thousands of gold lacquered Buddha statues of various shapes and sizes left by devoted pilgrims. We make the remainder of our journey by river to the UNESCO World Heritage City of Luang Prabang. This former royal capital with its gleaming temple roofs, fading colonial architecture and stunning mountain backdrop retains a unique charm rarely found in all Asia.

OVERNIGHT: Luang Prabang hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 10: Luang Prabang, half day city tour

This morning we begin our walking tour taking in some the cities most beautiful temples. Depending on the rest of your programme this may include the magnificent Wat Xiengthong, with its roofs sweeping low to the ground, representing the classical Luang Prabang style, as well as Wat Mai and Wat Sene, the oldest temple in Luang Prabang. We also stop by at Kinnaly Gallery, where your guide will show you the different ethnic minorities that live in Laos. We end the tour with a climb up Mount Phousi, which offers a spectacular panoramic view over Luang Prabang and the Mekong River. Overnight in Luang Prabang.

OVERNIGHT: Luang Prabang hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 11: Luang Prabang, visit Kuang Si Waterfall

Leaving Luang Prabang with your private guide and driver, you travel for around one hour and twenty minutes out of the town. On the way you pass through beautiful scenery and rural landscapes with rice terraces and pineapple fields. You visit Ban Longlao a local H'mong village where the culture, customs and language are all different to mainstream Laos. Your trek starts from the H'mong village and takes between two and two and half hours through primary forest and jungle before reaching the spectacular Kuang Si Waterfall. Lunch (not included) can be taken at the falls with time for relaxation, swimming and the possibility to climb to the top of the waterfall. Afterwards you return to Luang Prabang in time to catch the sun setting over the Mekong.

OVERNIGHT: Luang Prabang hotel

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch

EXTRAS:

Day 12: Luang Prabang, free time then depart

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport for your departing flight.

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Extra day in Luang Prabang - post-tour

Included:

- Transportation in private vehicle
- Accommodation in twin shared room
- Domestic air ticket as stated only
- Private Boat trip as stated in above sights
- English speaking guide (Other languages available)
- Admission fee to indicated sights
- Meals: daily breakfast at hotel, lunch/dinner where stated only
- Gov't tax and service charge
- Luggage handling and drinking water

Excluded:

- Visa stamping fee on arrival
- International air tickets to/from Laos
- Travel insurance (mandatory, [get quote here](#))
- Single room (quoted separately)
- Other foreign language guide (fee may apply)
- Peak tourist season or special event rates
- Child or adult in triple sharing room
- Tipping, drinks, meals not indicated on itinerary
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Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

No Options

1. Accommodation

We use good quality hotels rated at the 2 and 3-star level hotels and guest houses on this tour. Accommodation is based on twin, triple or double en-suite rooms. Whilst trekking you should expect more basic accommodation. Please visit the accommodation tab of this tour for examples of the hotels normally used on this tour. If you have any specific accommodation requests please let us know and we'll be happy to provide you with a customised quotation.

2. Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time we want you to finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour. With this in mind we use public transport where we think it offers a good local experience & this may include local buses and local ferries. We also use private transportation including jeeps, song- thaews or pickup trucks, and mini buses for sightseeing tours where required.

3. Transfers

The tour includes a 24-hour arrival and departure airport-hotel transfer service and all other transfers. Arrival transfers will be provided from Chiang Rai Airport (Thailand) and departures to Luang Prabang Airport (Laos).

4. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

As we don't offer guaranteed group departures on this tour we can run the itinerary for however many people you happen to be travelling with, starting from 1 upwards. The prices given for this tour are based on a minimum of 2 passengers travelling, so if you have a different number of passengers in your group please contact us for a customised quotation.

In Laos we provide fully trained, local English-speaking guides for all of the sightseeing tours. At Encounters Travel we only use local guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing. Please check our website for more details and profiles of some of our most famous guides.

5. Dates & Prices

This tour is designed as a sample tailor-made tour itinerary. As such we do not offer set group departure dates that you can join. Rather, the tour is available for you to do privately starting on any date of the year. Guideline seasonal prices are given below, based on 2 people travelling. If you would like to adjust the tour itinerary, or there will be more or less people travelling, please contact us and we will customise a price for you.

For many people planning a trip to Laos, the weather will be a determining factor in choosing when to travel. The driest and coolest time to visit Laos is from November to February. You will experience days of cool breezes and low temperatures and miss the monsoon season (May to November). Certain provinces of Laos (Xiang Khuang, Hua Phan and Phongsali) will also get rain blowing in from Vietnam and China from February to May but this northeast monsoon usually bypasses the rest of Laos. This time of year is also Laos's main season for both national and regional bun (festivals) though December to February and August are the peak tourist times. January, in particular, is very busy and booking ahead is advisable. If you are interested in river travel you will best visit during November when the floods have subsided but the rivers are still filled to capacity. This type of travel can be difficult from January to June when water levels are low. Please speak with our reservations team who will be happy to help you in selecting an appropriate time for your tour.

6. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

7. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.

We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

8. Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

9. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

www.facebook.com/encounterstravel

<https://x.com/encounterstravel> (yes, without the 'e')

10. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event).

Considering travel insurance for your trip? [World Nomads Travel Insurance](#) offers coverage for more than 150 adventure activities as well as emergency medical, lost luggage, trip cancellation and more.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.

Covid-19

Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable.

11. Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's ['Travel Aware' campaign](#) which provides further useful and invaluable information.

12. Reduce Plastic Waste with Water-to-Go Filter bottles

Traveling responsibly means minimizing plastic waste, but staying hydrated on the go is essential. At Encounters Travel we are committed to reducing single-use plastics, which is why we've partnered with Water-to-Go. Their portable filtration system removes over 99.9% of contaminants from any non-saltwater source, turning even questionable water sources into safe drinking water.

Given that tap water is un-safe to drink in many of the countries in which we operate, we recommend purchasing a Water-to-Go bottle prior to departure. This will help you avoid the use of single use plastic bottles and keep you hydrated on the go.

Save big! Get a huge 25% off your Water-to-Go bottle and other Water-to-Go products (such as filters, lids, and carriers). Use code **ENCOUNTERS25** at checkout (valid in the UK, USA and Canada).

How Water-to-Go Technology works:

- Their reusable, BPA free water bottles contain their own unique 3-in-1 filtration technology effectively providing clean safe drinking water from any non-salt water source around the world.
- Three different (1 traditional and 2 nano) technologies are combined in one filter cartridge to remove up to 99.9999% of microbiological contaminants in water.

The three technologies used in a Water-to-Go filter are:

- Mechanical filtration – A tiny pore size, so small contaminants can't fit through.
- Electrical – A positive charge reduces the pore size even further and attracts contaminants like a magnet, trapping them inside the filter.
- Activated Carbon – Unlike most carbon based filters, instead of using adhesives to glue the carbon particles together, (which vastly reduces the carbon's efficiency) it is contained within the membrane, helping to reduce contaminants whilst eliminating bad tastes and odours. Try filtering water from your tap at home and taste the difference!

Water-to-Go filter bottles deliver safe, healthy water worldwide

- Water-to-Go filters remove bacteria, viruses, waterborne disease, protozoa, heavy metals such as lead as well as harmful chemicals.
- Their filters remove Chlorine and Fluoride from tap water.
- The filter will eliminate harmful contaminants from the water but allow beneficial minerals such as sodium and magnesium to pass through leaving you with the healthiest water possible.
- Water-to-Go filters have been independently tested against internationally recognised standards by industry specialists including The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK), BCS Laboratories (USA), Bangalore Test House (India) and IMI (China).

Use Water-to-Go products and you'll be healthier, wealthier and helping to make the world a better place!

- Depending on filter size, each Water-to-Go filter is able to replace 260 or 400 single-use plastic water bottles!
 - They ensure you have access to safe water anywhere in the world without ever having to buy environmentally damaging bottled water.
 - Their water bottles deliver safe, clean drinking water at just 5p per litre.
 - The filter membrane is biodegradable and the shrouds are recyclable.
 - The water bottles are used and approved by everyone from backpackers to commuters, gym users to expecting mums. Perfect for everyday, outdoor and travel.
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13. Private & Tailor-made Tours

While our group departures offer a fantastic way to explore with like-minded travellers, we understand that some guests prefer a more exclusive experience. Most of our group tours can be booked on a private basis, allowing you to enjoy the same expert-led routes with your own dedicated party. The primary advantage of choosing a private arrangement is the flexibility it provides; we can easily customise the itinerary to include your preferred style of accommodation or adjust the pace to suit your needs. Private tours can be run on the same start days as our group tours, or on other dates. However, some activities within our trips are restricted to particular days of the week - we will advise you on anything like this that we need to work around. Pricing will be based on the number of travellers in your party, and any customisations you may like to make.

For those seeking something truly unique, our specialist sales team is available to collaborate with you on a completely tailor-made tour, designed from the ground up to match your specific interests, accommodation level and requirements.

To request a quotation for a private or tailor-made tour, please [contact us](#).

14. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don't include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour.

Most of our Thailand tours start and finish in Bangkok, and include an arrival and departure airport transfer from/to Bangkok international airport (BKK). However, some tours also finish on one of Thailand's islands. Transfers back to Bangkok or to one of the nearby island airports can be arranged on request.

We do also sometimes advertise flight inclusive packages from selected airports. Where these are shown on our website, prices are correct at the time of quoting, but are subject to continued availability of the fare used. Prices will be reconfirmed at the time of booking, and we will also provide the flight times and airline details before tickets are issued.

Flight inclusive prices are based on the cheapest Economy ticket class available which is generally non-refundable and non-changeable unless the flight is cancelled for reasons such as Covid-19, in which case the airlines are more flexible. More flexible ticket options, as well as Premium Economy and Business Class tickets are available on request for an additional supplement. Any changes made to flight inclusive bookings will be subject to the airline rules on your ticket.

Flight CO2 Emissions:

Traveling by air is an amazing way to explore the world, but flights also contribute to carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions that impact the environment. By considering the airline's CO2 emissions when you choose your flight, you can help minimize your travel footprint.

When selecting your international flights and airline, we do therefore recommend that you try and also take into account the flight CO2 emissions. Some airlines and flight search websites (eg. Google Flights, Skyscanner) do publish this information, so you can compare between your flight options and make an informed decision. Thankfully, many airlines are working towards sustainability efforts, and choosing a greener option allows you to contribute to positive change while still enjoying your incredible adventure.

15. Entrance Fees

The tour price includes entrance fees to all the tourist sites mentioned in the itinerary. You will need to cover the cost of entrance to any other extra sites that you may wish to visit.

16. Tipping

Tipping is not part of Thai culture but has become customary but not compulsory in the tourist and service industry. Tipping is always optional, and any amounts paid should reflect excellent service. You may therefore wish to tip your guide and driver at the end of the tour. You should not feel obliged to tip any particular amount, and should consider your personal budget. We are often asked to provide a guide however, and can suggest that approx. GBP 5 / USD 8 per person per day would be appropriate.

17. Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are:

Thailand: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

Vietnam: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an infected area.

Cambodia: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

Laos: Additional vaccinations: Diphtheria, Poliomyelitis, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an infected area.

The above information can change at short notice. For up to date health information & vaccination requirements we recommend that you contact your medical practitioner or a travel clinic.

Malaria: Vaccinations are not available against Malaria, which is a disease transmitted by mosquitoes that can be very serious and sometimes fatal. You should avoid mosquito bites by covering up bare skin with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers and applying insect repellents to exposed skin. When necessary, sleep under a mosquito net. Mosquitoes are most active during and after sunset. You should consult with your GP/medical practitioner/travel clinic about the most appropriate malaria prophylactic medication to take for the regions you are visiting.

Yellow Fever: This disease is spread by infected mosquitoes that bite during the day. A Yellow Fever Certificate of vaccination may be required as a condition of entry depending on which country you are arriving from, or that you have travelled or transitted through recently (including connecting flights with stopovers of over 12 hours). You can view this US CDC information about where the virus is present and follow the links to further information detailing which countries need you to have a Yellow Fever vaccination as part of their entry requirements. Please ensure you have this certificate with you and to hand if necessary.

Please inform us of any pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or asthma and any prescription medicine you may be taking. We also need to know about any food allergies or physical disabilities that you may have.

18. Passports and Visas - Thailand

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities.

Most foreign nationals (including UK, EU, USA, CA, AU, NZ, SA) are granted a visa exemption on arrival for stays in the country of up to 30 days. If you are looking to spend longer in Thailand then you will need to leave the country and re-enter to extend your stay. We strongly recommend arranging your visa in advance if you would like to stay longer than 30 days in Thailand.

19. Voltage

Sockets are two round or flat pronged and 220 volts (Type A, B, C). Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. Standard European adapters will work fine, though sometimes they may feel a little loose in the sockets. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are normally available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already. If you have US appliances (110 volts) you will need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

20. Time

The time in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos is GMT plus 7 hours. Daylight saving adjustments are not observed.

21. What to take

Luggage: Suitcases, rucksacks or fabric holdalls are all fine to bring with you to Thailand, though if your itinerary has many stops and different travel included within it, we recommend packing light and not bring any large cases. You should also bring a small daypack/bag to take out during the day. Your main luggage will normally be left in the hotel during your sightseeing trips – you will not need to carry it far, and there are nearly always hotel porters to assist.

Luggage limits: There is no luggage limit for this tour. However, most airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 25kg for your hold luggage and between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage. Please check with your airline before travelling to the airport.

Climate and Clothing: There are three reasonably well-defined seasons in Thailand, but unlike in Europe, where seasons are temperature based, Thailand is tropical and generally speaking warm all year round. Rains from the monsoon are the marker of seasons and the rainy season is from June to October. Pre-monsoon is from March to May, when the weather becomes progressively hotter. Post monsoon is from November to February when the weather is cooler. The range of temperature is more marked in the north where pre-monsoon can be very hot, though the heat is much drier than in the south. Winter in the north can feel cool, particularly in the mountains. Take light clothes with something warmer for the winter nights if you are travelling to the north. Some light raingear would be useful in the wet season.

Other items: We recommend you also bring:

- Cool footwear (sandals are ideal). If you are interested in exploring the reefs, a pair of reef shoes is recommended to avoid injuries. If you are trekking, then bring comfortable and sturdy walking shoes or light walking boots.
 - Swimming costumes – rash-guards/t-shirts are recommended for snorkelling to avoid sunburn.
 - Sunscreens, after sun lotions and personal hygiene products – Please adhere to 100ml restrictions for anything you wish to carry on hand-luggage on flights.
 - Prescription medications (if required) – please bring supporting documents.
 - Power adapter for phones, laptops etc
 - Sunglasses and hats
 - Basic first aid kit and toiletries
 - Money belt
 - Small torch
 - Dive certification card and log book if you intend to participate in SCUBA diving.
 - Sleeping bag if your tour includes any hill-tribe or village trekking
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22. Culture and Customs

Dress code

The Thai people consider dressing appropriately to be important and respectful, so please follow their example. This means covering up your swimwear while not on the beach or by the pool, and while shorts and T-shirts are fine, please try not to look scruffy. Remember to take your shoes off before entering local houses or any religious buildings.

Temple etiquette

When entering temples you should wear clothes that cover your knees and shoulders. Women may be asked to wear long skirts, not trousers, and shorts are not appropriate for either sex. You may wear a shawl to cover up and these are sometimes available to hire before entry. Again please take your shoes off before entering.

Buddhist Culture

Thailand is a Buddhist country and Buddhism permeates nearly all aspects of society and culture, resulting in a country with different customs to much of the West. Rudeness and disrespect are frowned upon and you will be judged on your behaviour. Some tips for behaviour to avoid causing offence are; do not touch other people with your feet, point your feet at Buddhist statues or shrines (be careful of this when you sit), and don't touch the head of someone you don't know well. Public displays of affection are frowned upon, so save these until you are in private. You'll find being polite using a few Thai words will really pay dividends (thank you is Kawp Khun Kaa if you are female, and Kawp Khun Kraap if you are male. Your tour guide will provide more information and advice while you are on the tour; please don't hesitate to ask them any questions or for advice.

The Royal Family

The Thai people have huge respect for their Royal Family and this is enshrined in many laws as well. You should bear this in mind when speaking to Thai people and in simple things like remembering that Thai paper money has the King's face on and should therefore be treated carefully.

Drugs and Alcohol

Drugs are illegal in Thailand and heavy penalties including very large fines and jail time can be imposed. Don't think that because you are a tourist you are exempt or will be treated differently. Drinking is legal and you should not worry about having a few beers or cocktails while on tour. However remember to be respectful to your surroundings, fellow group members and the local population.

23. Money - Laos

The currency Laos is the 'Kip' (LAK).

Common notes:

100 kip
500 kip
1,000 kip
2,000 kip
5,000 kip

It's worth noting that US\$ are widely accepted throughout Laos and are often actually preferred for higher value purchases. Travellers arriving from Thailand will also find that the Thai baht is another currency welcomed in Laos. However, when paying in these currencies change will most likely be given in kip which should be kept for more day-to-day purchases and transactions. You can change money at any bank (08.30 & 16.00 Mon-Fri) although a variable commission will be charged. In general, it's a good idea to try and find the lower rates which are usually available through exchange kiosks or hotels. In the capital city Vientiane you can exchange UK£ pound, Euros, AUS\$ and other currencies but in the smaller towns around the rest of the country, US\$ and Thai baht are preferred.

Traveller's cheques are widely accepted in major cities and do benefit from a slightly better rate but this can be offset by the commission charged to change them.

ATM's have now made it into Laos and these are available in Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Viang Vieng. For some reason, Mastercard is sometimes preferred to Visa but a lot of debit cards such as Cirrus and Maestro are

now accepted. You can also use credit cards to pay for hotels and some restaurants but credit and debit cards are far from being accepted everywhere so having an alternate way of accessing funds is vital.

24. Passports and Visas - Laos

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities.

15-day visas are available for most foreign nationals and cost US\$30. These are available on arrival into Vientiane International airport or when crossing into Laos from Thailand, either at the friendship bridge land border or even when crossing over from northern Thailand into Huay Xai. Longer 30 day tourist visas and business visas can be arranged prior to departure either in your home country or by using an agency in one of the neighbouring countries although this will incur a fee. When leaving the country by air there is a US\$10 departure tax payable at the airport.

As visa regulations often change we recommend that you check this information with your nearest consulate. Obtaining the correct visa is the responsibility of the traveller.

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Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
