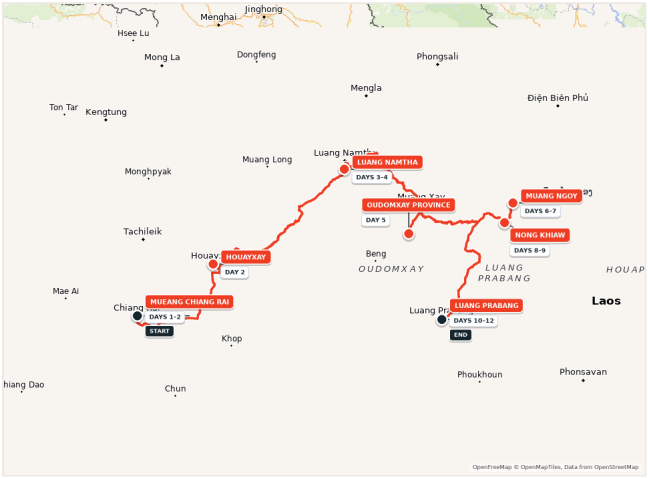
ENCOUNTERS TRAVEL

Your passport to adventure

Laos Trekking

COUNTRY(IES)	Laos , Thailand
TOUR TYPE	Private
TRANSPORT	A/C minibus & boat cruise
GROUP SIZE	Min: 2 | Max: Any
DURATION	12 days
STARTS	Chiang Rai, Thailand
ENDS	Luang Prabang, Laos
MEALS	Breakfasts - 11, Lunches - 5, Dinners - 1

TOUR ROUTE MAP **12 Days**



ROUTE: **Mueang Chiang Rai** (Start) → **Houayxay** → **Luang Namtha** → **Oudomxay Province** → **Muang Ngoy** → **Nong Khiaw** → **Luang Prabang** (End)

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

Land at Chiang Rai International Airport and spend the remainder of the arrival period at leisure. Use the free time to rest, settle in or explore independently at your own pace. Chiang Rai's calmer atmosphere provides an easy introduction to northern Thailand before the organised activities begin.

ACTIVITIES

- **Arrive at Chiang Rai International Airport**
  Arrival at Chiang Rai International Airport in Thailand followed by a road transfer to Chiang Khong. This introduces you to the border region along the Mekong River.
- **Free Time in Chiang Rai**
  Spend a free day in Chiang Rai, Thailand. Explore the town or surrounding countryside independently.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
Chiang Rai hotel	None	Extra day in Chiang Rai - pre-tour, Single room supplement (LATMLT)

DAY 2 Huay Xai to Luang Namtha

Travel by road from Chiang Rai towards the Thai-Lao border and continue into Huay Xai after completing the crossing. Rural mountain scenery gradually opens into river country as the route approaches the Mekong. Reaching Huay Xai completes the international transfer and sets up the next stage of travel deeper into Laos.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Chiang Rai to Huay Xai**
  Travel by road from Chiang Rai, Thailand to Huay Xai on the Laos border. Complete border formalities before continuing onward.

Huay Xai to Luang Namtha Cultural Journey

Continue inland from the border town of Huay Xai toward Luang Namtha, passing through remote northern Lao landscapes shaped by forests, hills, and traditional settlements. Along the way, visits to hill tribe villages in the Muang Phouka region offer insight into local ethnic cultures and rural ways of life. The journey highlights the slower rhythm and natural beauty of northern Laos. Arrival in Luang Namtha allows time to unwind and explore at your own pace. This day blends travel, cultural discovery, and quiet moments in a distinctly Lao setting.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Huay Xai to Luang Namtha**
  Drive from Huay Xai to Luang Namtha in northern Laos. The smooth mountain road passes rural landscapes and small settlements.
- **Explore Hill Tribe Villages in Muang Phouka Region**
  Visit hill tribe villages near Muang Phouka in Luang Namtha Province, Laos. Learn about rural lifestyles and ethnic minority cultures.
- **Free Time in Luang Namtha**
  Spend free time in Luang Namtha, Laos after arrival. Relax at your accommodation or explore the local area.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Luang Namtha hotel	Breakfast

DAY 3 Luang Namtha, full day trekking

Explore the natural and cultural heart of northern Laos through a full day of trekking, viewpoints, and village visits around Luang Namtha. The journey begins with panoramic views from Phoumpok Stupa before entering dense jungle landscapes on foot, revealing the region’s rich biodiversity. A picnic lunch in the forest offers a quiet pause

surrounded by nature. Visits to Akha and local craft villages provide insight into traditional lifestyles, including handmade Saa paper production. The day concludes at Luang Namtha Market, where daily life, local produce, and regional flavors come together.

ACTIVITIES

- **Explore Phoumpok Stupa Viewpoint in Luang Namtha**
  Climb to Phoumpok Stupa viewpoint overlooking Luang Namtha, Laos. Enjoy panoramic views across the town and surrounding countryside.
- **Jungle Trek in Luang Namtha Region**
  Trek through jungle trails near Luang Namtha, Laos with a local guide. Learn about medicinal plants and forest foods.
- **Picnic Lunch in the Jungle in Luang Namtha**
  Enjoy a picnic lunch prepared by villagers in the jungle near Luang Namtha, Laos. Traditional foods are cooked using bamboo methods.
- **Explore Ban Nammutmai Akha Village**
  Visit Ban Nammutmai, an Akha hill tribe village near Luang Namtha, Laos. Learn about local traditions and folklore.
- **Drive from Ban Nammutmai to Ban Nam Jang**
  Travel by pickup truck from Ban Nammutmai to Ban Nam Jang in Luang Namtha Province, Laos.
- **Explore Ban Nam Jang Saa Paper Village**
  Visit Ban Nam Jang village in Laos, known for traditional Saa paper making. Observe handmade paper production techniques.
- **Explore Luang Namtha Market**
  Explore Luang Namtha market in northern Laos. See forest products and local goods sold by villagers.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Luang Namtha hotel	Breakfast,Lunch

DAY 4 Luang Namtha, drive to Oudomxay

Enjoy a relaxed start in Luang Namtha before continuing south through the mountainous landscapes of northern Laos toward Oudomxay. The drive passes rural scenery, forested hills, and small settlements that reflect the region’s traditional way of life. This transfer day provides a natural pause between more active experiences, allowing time to observe the countryside and shifting geography. Arrival in Oudomxay offers free time to unwind and explore the town at your own pace. The day serves as a calm transition deeper into Laos.

ACTIVITIES

- **Free Time in Luang Namtha**
  Spend free time in Luang Namtha, Laos after arrival. Relax at your accommodation or explore the local area.

- **Drive from Luang Namtha to Oudomxay**
  Travel south by road from Luang Namtha to Oudomxay in northern Laos. Scenic stops highlight mountainous landscapes.
- **Free Time in Oudomxay**
  Spend the evening at leisure in Oudomxay, Laos. Relax after the day's drive.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Oudomxay hotel	Breakfast

DAY 5 Oudomxay to Muang Ngoi via Muang Khua

Travel through northern Laos from Oudomxay toward the Nam Ou River, combining local markets, temples, and river transport into a single overland and waterborne journey. The day begins with a visit to Oudomxay’s local market before continuing through mountain roads to Muang Khua. Cultural stops along the way include Pra Xack Kham Temple and the lively Xin Sai Market, offering insight into daily life in remote Lao towns. The route shifts from road to river as you board a boat along the Nam Ou. This scenic cruise leads to Muang Ngoi, completing a day shaped by landscapes, tradition, and slow travel.

ACTIVITIES

- **Explore Oudomxay Local Market**
  Visit the local market in Oudomxay, Laos. Ethnic minority groups gather here to trade produce and goods.
- **Drive from Oudomxay to Muang Khua**
  Travel east by road from Oudomxay to Muang Khua in northern Laos. The journey passes rural villages and valleys.
- **Explore Pra Xack Kham Temple in Muang Khua Region**
  Visit Pra Xack Kham Temple near Muang Khua, Laos. The historic temple houses a revered Buddha image.
- **Explore Xin Sai Market**
  Stop at Xin Sai market in northern Laos. The colourful market attracts ethnic minorities from surrounding areas.
- **Boat from Muang Khua to Muang Ngoi**
  Cruise by private boat along the Nam Ou River from Muang Khua to Muang Ngoi, Laos. Enjoy river scenery and forested banks.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Muang Ngoi hotel	Breakfast,Lunch

DAY 6 Muang Ngoi, trekking & homestay

Begin a full day of trekking through remote Lao countryside, travelling on foot from Muang Ngoi to a series of traditional riverside and hill villages. The route passes Ban Houay Boor, where a homestay lunch offers a warm

introduction to village hospitality and local cuisine. Continuing on foot through Ban Na and onward to Ban Houaisene, the journey reveals rural landscapes shaped by farming and daily community life. The day concludes with a Baci ceremony and cultural evening, highlighting spiritual traditions and local customs. This immersive experience offers a deeper connection to village life in northern Laos.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Muang Ngoi to Ban Houay Boor**
  Trek through countryside from Muang Ngoi to Ban Houay Boor in northern Laos. The village is home to Khmu and T'ai Deng communities.
- **Homestay Lunch in Ban Houay Boor**
  Share lunch with a local family in Ban Houay Boor, Laos. Experience village hospitality and traditional food.
- **Trek from Ban Houay Boor to Ban Na → Ban Houaisene**
  Continue trekking through rural landscapes to Ban Na and Ban Houaisene in northern Laos. The walk passes rice fields and forest trails.
- **Baci Ceremony and Cultural Evening – Ban Houaisene**
  Participate in a traditional Baci ceremony in Ban Houaisene, Laos. Enjoy local music and cultural performances with villagers.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Homestay	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 7 Muang Ngoi to Nong Khiaw by boat

Discover the quiet beauty of northern Laos with a morning trek through rice fields in the Muang Ngoi region, where rural landscapes and traditional farming define daily life. The walk offers close views of village surroundings set against limestone hills and river valleys. From Muang Ngoi, travel by boat along the Nam Ou River, enjoying a scenic journey through dramatic karst scenery and calm waterways. Arrival in Nong Khiaw brings time to relax and explore at your own pace. This day blends gentle activity, river travel, and unhurried leisure in a peaceful setting.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek Rice Fields in Muang Ngoi Region**
  Trek through rice fields and countryside near Muang Ngoi, Laos. Return to the riverside settlement.
- **Boat from Muang Ngoi to Nong Khiaw**
  Travel by long-tail boat along the Nam Ou River from Muang Ngoi to Nong Khiaw, Laos. Forested cliffs line the riverbanks.
- **Free Time in Nong Khiaw**
  Spend the afternoon at leisure in Nong Khiaw, Laos. Relax by the river or enjoy mountain views.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Nong Khiaw hotel	Breakfast

DAY 8 Nong Khiaw, full day trekking

Spend a full day exploring the dramatic landscapes surrounding Nong Khiaw through a combination of trekking and river travel. The journey moves through forested hills and rural terrain, highlighting the region’s natural beauty and quiet isolation. A boat journey along the Nam Ou River leads to the remote 100 Waterfalls area, where water and jungle shape the scenery. Continuing on foot along the waterfalls trail reveals cascades, pools, and limestone formations hidden within the forest. This active day showcases northern Laos at its most scenic and immersive.

ACTIVITIES

- **Full Day Trekking in Nong Khiaw Region**
  Enjoy a full day of trekking around Nong Khiaw, Laos. Explore rural villages, rice paddies and jungle trails.
- **Boat Nam Ou River on 100 Waterfalls Area**
  Take a boat ride along the Nam Ou River toward the 100 Waterfalls area near Nong Khiaw, Laos. The route passes riverside villages.
- **Trek 100 Waterfalls Trail in Nong Khiaw**
  Trek through the 100 Waterfalls trail near Nong Khiaw, Laos. Walk beside cascading streams and jungle pools.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Nong Khiaw hotel	Breakfast,Lunch

DAY 9 Nong Khiaw to Luang Prabang

Travel south from Nong Khiaw toward Luang Prabang, combining village life, sacred sites, and river scenery along the way. The journey includes a visit to Ban Na Yang, home to the Thai Lue community, offering insight into traditional crafts and rural culture. Continuing toward Pak Ou, the route reaches the famous Pak Ou Caves, where thousands of Buddha statues reflect centuries of spiritual devotion. From here, a boat journey along the Mekong River provides a scenic approach to Luang Prabang. This day blends cultural discovery with one of Laos’ most iconic river passages.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Nong Khiaw to Ban Na Yang**
  Travel by road from Nong Khiaw to Ban Na Yang village in northern Laos. The route crosses rural countryside.
- **Explore Ban Na Yang Thai Lue Village**
  Visit Ban Na Yang village near Luang Prabang, Laos. Observe traditional Thai Lue houses and weaving techniques.
- **Drive from Ban Na Yang to Pak Ou**
  Continue by road to Pak Ou village along the Mekong River in Laos.
- **Explore Pak Ou Caves**
  A stop at Pak Ou Caves near Luang Prabang, Laos. This ancient riverside cave complex contains hundreds of Buddha images.

- **Boat from Pak Ou to Luang Prabang**

  Cruise by river from Pak Ou to Luang Prabang, Laos. Arrive at the UNESCO-listed city by water.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Luang Prabang hotel	Breakfast

DAY 10 — Luang Prabang, half day city tour

Explore the historic heart of Luang Prabang on foot, discovering the city’s blend of religious heritage, colonial architecture, and living culture. The walking tour includes visits to Wat Xiengthong, Wat Mai, and Wat Sene, each reflecting the spiritual and artistic traditions of Laos. Time at the Kinnaly Gallery adds a contemporary cultural perspective through local craftsmanship and design. The day concludes with a climb to Phousi Hill, offering panoramic sunset views over the Mekong and Nam Khan rivers. This experience captures the timeless atmosphere of Luang Prabang from street level to skyline

ACTIVITIES

- **City Tour of Luang Prabang Walking**

  Join a walking tour of Luang Prabang, Laos visiting historic temples and cultural landmarks.

- **Explore Wat Xiengthong in Luang Prabang**

  A visit to Wat Xiengthong, one of Luang Prabang's most important temples. Its sweeping rooflines represent classic Lao architecture.

- **Visit Wat Mai and Wat Sene – Luang Prabang**

  Explore Wat Mai and Wat Sene in Luang Prabang, Laos. These temples reflect the city's religious heritage.

- **Explore Kinnaly Gallery in Luang Prabang**

  Stop at Kinnaly Gallery in Luang Prabang, Laos. Learn about ethnic minority groups across the country.

- **Phousi Hill Sunset in Luang Prabang**

  A climb up Phousi Hill in Luang Prabang, Laos for panoramic sunset views. The hill overlooks the Mekong River and the old town.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Luang Prabang hotel	Breakfast

DAY 11 — Luang Prabang, visit Kuang Si Waterfall

Travel from Luang Prabang into the surrounding countryside, beginning with a visit to Ban Longlao, a traditional Hmong village set among forested hills. The journey continues on foot along village paths and jungle trails leading toward the Kuang Si area, offering insight into rural life and natural landscapes. Trekking through this scenic region highlights the connection between local communities and their environment. The day culminates at Kuang Si

Waterfall, where turquoise pools and cascading tiers create one of northern Laos' most iconic natural sights. This experience blends culture, walking trails, and nature in a single continuous journey.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Luang Prabang to Ban Longlao**
  Travel by road from Luang Prabang to Ban Longlao village in northern Laos.
- **Explore Ban Longlao Hmong Village**
  Visit Ban Longlao, a Hmong village near Luang Prabang, Laos. Learn about local customs and daily life.
- **Trek from Ban Longlao to Kuang Si Waterfall**
  Trek through forest trails from Ban Longlao to Kuang Si Waterfall in Laos. Walk through jungle and primary forest.
- **Explore Kuang Si Waterfall in Luang Prabang**
  A visit to Kuang Si Waterfall near Luang Prabang, Laos. Its turquoise pools and forest trails offer refreshing swimming and scenic views.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Luang Prabang hotel	Breakfast,Lunch

DAY 12 — Luang Prabang, free time then depart

Spend your final hours in Luang Prabang at leisure, enjoying the city's relaxed pace and atmospheric surroundings. This free time allows for last minute exploration, café visits, riverside walks, or shopping in local markets. The calm setting offers a chance to reflect on the cultural and natural experiences of northern Laos. A scheduled transfer from your hotel to Luang Prabang Airport ensures a smooth and timely departure. This gentle close brings the journey to a well paced and seamless end.

ACTIVITIES

- **Free Time in Luang Prabang**
  Enjoy free time in Luang Prabang, Laos before departure. Explore the town or relax at your hotel.
- **Transfer from Luang Prabang Hotel to Airport**
  Transfer by road from your Luang Prabang hotel to the airport in Laos. Prepare for your onward flight.
- **Departure from Luang Prabang Airport**
  Your tour concludes at Luang Prabang Airport, where you complete departure formalities and continue with your onward flight.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
N/A	Breakfast	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 (compulsory, get a 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
-

Tour 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 additional options available for this tour.

Important Notes

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 (Xieng Khuang, Hua Phan and Phongsali) will also get rain blowing in from Vietnam and China from February to May but this northeast monsoon usual 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.

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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.

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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).

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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/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

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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.

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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.

travel aware
gov.uk/travelaware

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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.

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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.

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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: Diptheria, 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 vacinnation 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.

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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.

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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 responsibliity of the traveller.
