



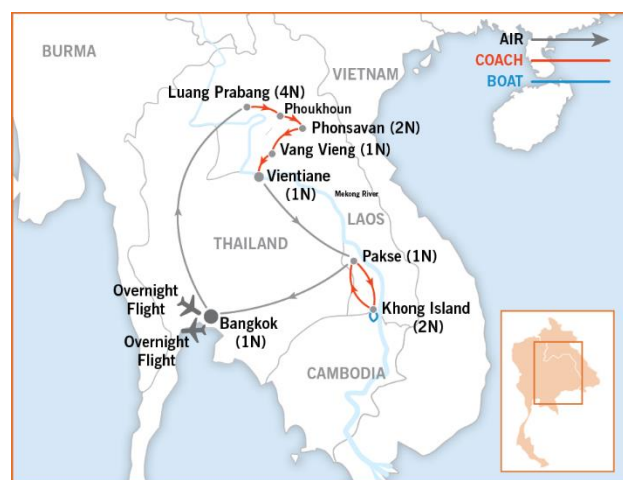
Highlights of Laos

Immerse Yourself | 15 Days | Moderate

Bangkok - Luang Prabang - Phonsavan - Vang Vieng - Vientiane -
Khong Island - Pakse

Experience the old-fashioned charm of the city, explore untouched landscapes and meet the locals on an all encompassing tour of Laos.

- Admire the architecture of Wat Xieng Thong in Luang Prabang
- Cruise the languid Mekong River to explore the Pak Ou Caves
- Discover the mysterious Plain of Jars
- Explore the colonial charm of Vientiane



Highlights of Laos tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- Meals as stated on your itinerary
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Visa fees for UK and EU passport holders (except for Laos, please refer to visa section for more information)
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with ABTA, ATOL and IATA

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.

Immerse Yourself:

Designed for those who wish to be further immersed in the authentic charm of Asia; tours in our Immerse Yourself range include more cultural and active experiences. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts or local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience. These tours include:

- Cycling and walking through classic sites
- Unique cultural experiences and encounters
- Off the beaten track destinations
- More evenings at leisure for independent exploration

Moderate Tours:

'Highlights of Laos' is a **moderate** tour. This means that the itinerary requires a good level of fitness.

- There will be long periods of walking whilst sightseeing
- You will be required to get on and off boats throughout the tour, often without assistance

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you require any more information about the pace of this tour, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

Itinerary – Highlights of Laos

Days 1-2: Bangkok

Meals included: Dinner

Fly to Bangkok where you will spend the night; you will not have a guide today, you will meet your guide upon arrival in Luang Prabang. On arrival at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok, make your way to level 2 and between exits 3 and 4 (inside the arrivals hall) you will find your hotel representative holding The Cottage Suvarnabhumi Hotel sign with your name on it. A complimentary shuttle bus will transfer you to the hotel which takes approximately 30 minutes. Upon arrival at the hotel please advise reception that you wish to take the complimentary shuttle bus back to the airport the following morning; the hotel will provide you with your flight ticket to Luang Prabang for the following day.



If you have any issues finding the shuttle bus please contact our hotel representative on +66 87546-4334 or The Cottage Suvarnabhumi hotel directly on +66 2727-5858 extension 0.

Destination Information

Bangkok - Bangkok has been Thailand's dominant city since the 18th century. It was established as the capital after the former capital Ayutthaya was attacked by the Burmese and burned down. The emerging city, which was protected by a wall, was occupied by a large number of stilt and floating houses built to adapt to common seasonal flooding. Up until the Thailand War, Bangkok was still largely undeveloped until it became a popular place of rest and relaxation for the American soldiers, which resulted in a boom of nightclubs, massage parlours and bars. However, in the 80's and 90's, Bangkok underwent rapid modernisation and exploded into the metropolis it is today; a city that is lined with skyscrapers and is full of life.

Day 3: Bangkok – Luang Prabang

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Return to the airport via the complimentary shuttle bus for your 1 hour and 40 minute flight to Luang Prabang. Upon arrival, you will be met by your National Escort or local guide and transferred to your hotel. Enjoy the rest of the day at leisure before taking an evening tour of the bustling night market and browse for colourful textiles and carvings.



Destination Information

Luang Prabang - The capital of Luang Prabang Province in northern Laos, lies in a valley at the confluence of the Mekong and Nam Khan rivers. It's known for its many Buddhist temples, including the gilded Wat Xieng Thong, dating to the 16th century, and Wat Mai, once the residence of the head of Laotian Buddhism.

Day 4: Luang Prabang

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Rise early this morning to witness the Buddhist ceremony of Takbat, when the monks of Luang Prabang's monastic communities collect alms from locals. These lines of silent saffron robe-clad monks will be an enduring image of your trip. See Wat Sene and the National Museum. Visit the traditional H'mong village of Ban Na Ounae, before walking to the cascading turquoise waters of delightful Kuang Si Waterfalls for a picnic lunch. It is possible to take a swim in the river near the falls and if you wish to do this, please remember to bring along your swimsuit and a towel. Changing rooms are available on site. Stop at Ock Pop Tok Weaving Centre on the return to Luang Prabang.



Destination Information

Wat Sene - A Buddhist temple (wat), located in Luang Prabang, Laos. It was built in 1718 by King Kitsarath with 100 000 stones from the Mekong River. It literally means 'Temple of a 100,000 treasures'. It was restored in 1957 commemorating the Buddha's birth 2,500 years earlier.

National Museum – Built in 1904 in the French colonial era, the original building was the Royal Palace but was later converted into a museum.

Kuang Si Waterfalls - A three tier waterfall about 29 kilometres south of Luang Prabang. The falls begin in shallow pools atop a steep hillside. These lead to the main fall with a 60 metres cascade. The falls are accessed via a trail to a left of the falls. Water collects in numerous turquoise blue pools as it flows downstream. The many cascades that result are typical of travertine waterfalls. There are walkways and bridges for your enjoyment. Most of the pools are open to swimming.

Day 5: Luang Prabang

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

This morning visit Wat Xieng Thong before boarding a boat to cruise the mighty Mekong up to the sacred caves of Pak Ou, known for the hundreds of miniature Buddha sculptures that reside within. Return to Luang Prabang and visit the local villages of Thin Hong and Ban Xang Khong to witness the daily life of the local people and their cottage industries.



Destination Information

Wat Xieng Thong - A Buddhist temple (wat), located on the northern tip of the peninsula of Luang Prabang, Laos. Wat Xieng Thong is one of the most important of Lao monasteries and remains a significant monument to the spirit of religion, royalty and traditional art. There are over twenty structures on the grounds including a sim, shrines, pavilions and residences, in addition to its gardens of various flowers, ornamental shrubs and trees.

Pak Ou Caves – Near Pak Ou (mouth of the Ou river) the Tham Ting (lower cave) and the Tham Theung (upper cave) are caves overlooking the Mekong River, 25 km to the north of Luang Prabang, Laos. They are a group of two caves on the west side of the Mekong River, about two hours upstream from the centre of Luang Prabang. The caves are noted for their miniature Buddha sculptures. Hundreds of very small and mostly damaged wooden Buddhist figures are laid out over the wall shelves. They take many different positions, including meditation, teaching, peace, rain, and reclining (nirvana).

Day 6: Luang Prabang

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch



This morning, explore many of the former royal capital's cultural highlights. Climb to the top of Phousi Hill and enjoy panoramic views of the city and Wat Mai, with its beautiful gilded façade. Later visit Wat Visoun, one of the oldest temples in the city, followed by Wat Aham. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure.

Destination Information

Phousi Hill - A 100m high hill in the centre of the old town of Luang Prabang. It lies in the heart of the old town peninsula and is bordered on one side by the Mekong River and on the other side by the Nam Khan River. The hill is a local religious site, and houses several Buddhist shrines. Halfway up the hill, overlooking the Nam Khan is Wat Tham Phou Si, a Buddhist temple. At the summit of the hill, overlooking the town and surrounding countryside, is Wat Chom Si, which is also a Buddhist temple and is a tourist highlight of Luang Prabang.

Wat Visoun – Rebuilt in 1898 following fire due to Black flag Haw raiders, restoration commenced to rebuild the once oldest wooden temple in Luang Prabang from more sturdy bricks and stucco. The highlight here is a 34.5 metre tall Lotus Stupa.

Day 7: Luang Prabang – Phonsavan

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Drive 3 and a half hours over scenic, mountainous and windy roads to Phoukhoun for a market visit and lunch. From here continue driving for another five hours, making stops at Tham Phra Cave, for a 30 minute visit and Nong Tang Lake to see local villagers fishing for approximately one hour. Arrive in Phonsavan in the late afternoon.

Destination Information

Phonsavan - The capital of Xiangkhoang Province - the name stands for 'hills of paradise'. Phonsavan is the provincial capital of Xiangkhouang Province. The countryside is dominated by green hills and pine forests. Villages consist of colourful wooden houses. Cattle raising is one of the main agricultural activities and H'mong cowboys with brown and violet cowboy hats are a common sight. Phonsavan was built in the late 1970s and replaced the old Xiangkhouang (today: Muang Khoun) which had been destroyed during the Second Indochina War. Phonsavan's most famous attraction is the nearby Plain of Jars, which has been nominated for UNESCO World Heritage status.

Day 8: Plain of Jars

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Drive half an hour to one of the most important prehistoric sites in Southeast Asia. These mysterious clusters of giant jars are thought to be about 2,000 years old. Sightseeing here will be a full day and involve walking over uneven terrain. You will visit Site 1 where there are over 200 jars, and Site 2 which also allows you to admire the beautiful scenery of the region. There will also be visits to Muang Khoune village, home of the H'mong minority group, and the office of the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), an organisation that helps clear unexploded ordnance that are a remnant of American raids during the Vietnam War.



Destination Information

Plain of Jars - A megalithic archaeological landscape in Laos. It consists of thousands of stone jars scattered around the upland valleys and the lower foothills of the central plain of the Xieng Khouang plateau. The jars are mostly arranged in clusters ranging in number from one to several hundred.

The Xieng Khouang Plateau is located at the northern end of the Annamese Cordillera, the principal mountain range of Indochina. A French researcher in the early 1930s concluded that the jars were associated with prehistoric burial practices. Excavation by Lao and Japanese archaeologists in the intervening years has supported this interpretation with the discovery of human remains, burial goods and ceramics around the jars. The Plain of Jars dates back to the Iron Age (500 BC to 500 AD) and is one of the most important prehistoric sites in Southeast Asia.

Day 9: Phonsavan – Vang Vieng

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Drive approximately 7 hours to Vang Vieng, stopping en route for about 1 hour at Pathang Village to admire the spectacular views over karst mountain landscapes. Spend the afternoon exploring the magnificent Tham Chang Cave which involves one hour on foot over uneven surfaces, and climbing steps to reach the cave.



Destination Information

Vang Vieng - A town in Vientiane Province about four hours bus ride north of the capital. The town lies on the Nam Song River. The most notable feature of the area is the karst hill landscape surrounding the town.

Tham Chang Cave - Tham Jang is a cave just to the southwest of Vang Vieng, Laos. The cave is reached by crossing a bridge that spans across the Nam Song River. You will need to then climb a long flight of steps to the entrance. A spring is located about 50m inside the cave. The cave was used as a bunker in the early 19th century during the Chinese-Ho invasion.

Day 10: Vang Vieng – Vientiane

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Continue driving 3 and half hours south to Vientiane, Laos' capital. Nestled in a languid bend in the Mekong, Vientiane is a delightfully quaint city, more a friendlier backwater than the chaotic capital. Spend the rest of the day exploring with visits to Wat Si Saket, Wat Phra Keo, That Luang Stupa, and the Patuxai Victory Monument, resembling Paris' Arc de Triomphe. Sightseeing today involves around 2 to 3 hours on foot.



Destination Information

Wat Si Saket - Wat Si Saket is a Buddhist wat built in 1818 on the order of King Anouvong (Sethathirath V.) Wat Si Saket was built in the 'Siamese style' of Buddhist architecture, with a surrounding terrace and an ornate five-tiered roof, rather than in the Lao style. This may have kept it safe, since the armies of Siam that sacked Vientiane following Anouvong's rebellion in 1827 used the compound as their headquarters and lodging place. It may be the oldest temple still standing in Vientiane. The French colonial government restored Wat Si Saket in 1924 and again in 1930. Wat Si Saket features a cloister wall with more than 2,000 ceramic and silver Buddha images.

That Luang Stupa - A gold-covered large Buddhist stupa in the centre of Vientiane. Since its initial establishment, suggested to be in the 3rd century, the stupa has undergone several reconstructions as recently as the 1930s due to foreign invasions of the area.

Patuxai Victory Monument - Patuxai means Victory Gate or Gate of Triumph. and, is a war monument in the centre of Vientiane. It was built between 1957 and 1968. The Patuxai is dedicated to those who fought in the struggle for independence from France.

Day 11: Vientiane – Khong Island

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Rise early for a morning flight to Pakse, the flight will be approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes. On arrival drive to Champassak to visit the World Heritage-listed Wat Phou, a ruined Khmer temple complex located in the incredibly beautiful landscapes of Mount Phu Kao. Continue to Khong Island, the largest island of the Si Phan Don archipelago in the Mekong River. The afternoon is at leisure.

Destination Information

Wat Phou - A ruined Khmer Hindu temple complex in southern Laos. It is located at the base of mount Phu Kao, some 6 km from the Mekong River in Champassak province. There was a temple on the site as early as the 5th century, but the surviving structures date from the 11th to 13th centuries. The temple has a unique structure, in which the elements lead to a shrine where a linga dedicated to Lord Shiva was bathed in water from a mountain spring. The site later became a centre of Theravada Buddhist worship.

Day 12: Khong Island

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Around Si Phan Don, meaning '4,000 islands', the pace of life is slow and easy and the river views are gorgeous. See the magnificent Khone Phapheng and pop over to Khone Island to discover its charming colonial buildings and see Lphi Waterfall, nicknamed the Devil's Corridor. Depending on the season, you may see local fisherman in action. The rest of the day is at your leisure.



Destination Information

Khone Phapheng Waterfall - The largest in Southeast Asia and the main reason the Mekong is not fully navigable into China. The fall is characterised by thousands of islands and countless waterways, giving the area its name Si Phan Don or 'The 4,000 islands'.

Lphi Waterfalls - A roaring collection of powerful falls spilling down at odd angles along a branch of the characteristically coffee-coloured Mekong River.

Day 13: Khong Island – Pakse

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Drive 2 hours from Khong Island to Pakse, stopping to admire Tad Yuan and Tad Fane waterfalls as you go. Tad Fane is a set of twin 120m-high waterfalls formed by the merging waters of the Champy and Pak Koot rivers. These impressive falls are situated on the edge of Dong Hua Sao protected wildlife area, 38km from Pakse. Continue on to the Bolaven Plateau to pay a visit to a coffee plantation and learn about the process of planting, harvesting and roasting the beans. This evening, enjoy a farewell dinner back in Pakse.



Destination Information

Bolaven Plateau - Located in an ancient volcano that erupted millions of years ago, the area spans 50km of southern Laos most vegetated area. From an altitude of 800 and 1350m it is green all year round and cooler than the rest of Laos and Thailand. Surrounding the plateau there are a number of protected national parks, dramatic waterfalls, remote hill tribes, dense jungle and a taste of some of the world's best coffee beans.

Pakse - The gateway to southern Laos, sits at the confluence of the Mekong River and the Se Don (Don River). The city retains fewer colonial-era buildings remain, but do look for the grandiose, Franco-Chinese-style Chinese Society building in the centre of town.

Days 14 - 15: Depart Pakse

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

This morning you will check-out of your hotel and transfer to the airport for your overnight flight to the UK, flying via Bangkok.

Due to the long transit at Bangkok Airport for passengers travelling to the UK (approximately 6 hours), dinner and day rooms at The Cottage Suvarnabhumi Hotel will be provided for your comfort. On arrival at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok, make your way to level 2 and between exits 3 and 4 (inside the arrivals hall) look for The Cottage Suvarnabhumi Hotel sign. Here you will find your Hotel Representative who will organise your complimentary shuttle bus transfer to the hotel which takes approximately 30 minutes. Upon arrival at the hotel please advise reception that you wish to take the complimentary shuttle bus back to the airport later in time for your international flight back to the UK.

Highlights of Laos Travel Information

Visas

The cost of a Laos visa is not included as there is no Laos consulate in the UK. However, visas are very easy to obtain upon arrival in Laos and will cost \$35, you will need to bring passport photo for the visa. Your guide will assist you with this process.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your national escort should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Evenings at Leisure

To give you more flexibility and choice when travelling on selected Immerse Yourself range; we have carefully balanced special highlight meals with evenings at leisure so that you can explore the many culinary delights that Southeast Asia has to offer. Alternatively, you can use this time to enjoy the facilities of your hotel. Your National Escort will be happy to provide you with advice about good places to eat, and assist in the booking of transportation to get you there (at your own expense)

Eating in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in most local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region actually has its own distinct characteristics. Vietnam, for example, is perhaps best known for its fresh and aromatic dishes – relying heavily on flavours from fresh herbs such as mint, basil and dill.

Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead. When dining in Southeast Asia, although some restaurants have adopted a western approach to dining, expect some restaurants to follow the traditional communal style of eating. Typically, this will mean each diner has their own small bowl and may serve themselves from a variety of shared dishes. At some local restaurants, appetizers and main courses might be served when they are ready instead of following a particular order.

Determining when it's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. In Vietnam, dishes are normally placed in the centre and people serve food for themselves with their own chopsticks and bowl. In Thailand and some other countries in Southeast Asia, fork and spoon are used for most dishes and chopsticks are typically provided to eat noodles. Usually chopsticks or other utensils are provided to scoop the food into your bowl to prevent your own chopsticks from touching the food that remains on the table. Dining in Southeast Asia is fairly casual with not too many rules. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Please refer to your travel guide for more information on Southeast Asian cuisine, including information for travellers with restricted diets.

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and Southeast Asia. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

Solo travellers: If you are a solo traveller and willing to share a room, you will not have to pay a single supplement for any hotel rooms. Willing to share single travellers booking within 75 days of the first day of a group tour will be subject to availability. If no suitable match is available at time of booking you will be required to pay all single supplements.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Roads in South East Asia have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

Planes: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

Development in Southeast Asia

Although Southeast Asia is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in the UK. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in the UK; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides.

Laos public holidays

If you are travelling within the below Laos Public Holidays please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Tourist attractions will be open, but may be crowded. In Laos: International Women's Day is 8th March, Laos New Year Holiday is 14th – 16th April.

Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 18 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides instead of a National Escort.

Tipping Policy

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and Southeast Asia is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your National Escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed to local guides and drivers throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the National Escort.

If you are travelling in a smaller group with local guides only, then tipping is paid in each destination. To be fair to the guides we ask for slightly higher amounts per traveller with small groups.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

Climate

Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

Itinerary changes

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances, we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

Last updated: August 2017