

ANCIENT KINGDOMS OF *Thailand* & *Laos*



TRAVEL CLUB
travel without judgement

16 DAYS - 15 NIGHTS | 18 JANUARY - 2 FEBRUARY 2020

HI THERE CLUBBERS!

We are now entering our fourth season of G&T Travel Club Tours.

After a very successful introduction with tours to both India and Sri Lanka in our first season it was necessary due to popular demand to duplicate the same for our second season. Season three exploded with four fabulous African safaris to both Kenya and Tanzania. And now as many of you patiently await, we are about to launch our South East Asia Tours that will encompass Northern Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.

To date we can report that we now have had 179 clubbers who have experienced the G&T style of travel and we are delighted to add that some have already signed up for all three previous destinations.

The success of our club, is absolutely, due to the wonderful people who have travelled with us so far and we thank you all for your trust and loyalty. Great friendships have been made and it is truly awesome to see the genuine excitement in peoples faces when they meet up again with other clubbers that have shared a destination with them previously.

For those of you who have travelled with us already you can see how we do things a little different to the regular tour companies. For those of your family and friends who haven't they may be interested in reading what we see as our point of difference.

There are some good tour companies out there, but they all tend to follow the same path and the same style. We are not re-inventing the wheel but feel that our 'product' has some distinct differences and personal touches.

G&T Travel Club trips will always have Gools and Thommo on each and every departure.



JOURNEY WITH US THROUGH THAILAND & LAOS, SOAKING UP THE SCENERY, CULTURE & CULINARY SURPRISES!

From Bangkok to The Golden Triangle our tour will focus on the best of Northern Thailand. Fun-loving friendly people, fantastic cuisine and amazing historic sites, Thailand has it all.

We will meet the modern people of the cities and rub shoulders with the more traditional people of the countryside. We will see, smell and taste the fundamental ingredients that make up the freshness and are the simplicity behind the seemingly complicated but simple dishes that Thailand is known for. We will wonder at the sacred spaces that range from simple small shrines at people's homes to the gleaming temples and golden Buddhas that sit proudly as a witness to the people's devotion to their religion. We will experience the daily life from the rural villages to the colourful markets while always welcomed by the ever-comforting broad Thai smiles.

Laos and Beyond will take our focus onto the river life of The Mekong. This bite-sized country has a lot to offer as it retains many of the traditions that have disappeared in a frenzy of development elsewhere in the region. The kaleidoscope of people in this ethnically diverse country reflects its geographic location as a true crossroads of Asia. This diversity is very evident in the local arts and crafts that pepper the market place with style.

Nature and food enthusiasts will feel right at home. The rice paddy fields dissolve into the city fringes as the market gardens continue from the paddock to the plate. UNESCO World Heritage listed Luang Prabang with a heavy French influence in the architecture, restaurants and cafes will beckon you to sit and enjoy the colonial feel. Vientiane which is quite small compared to other Asian capitals and is best explored on foot, will entice you to spend the evenings along the banks of The Mekong River dining on deliciously fresh local seafood.

This tour will end in Hanoi where a diverse blend of old and new exist harmoniously.





HOW WE DIFFER

The following are some of the considerations we made while developing our tours.

A. We wanted to develop an **interesting itinerary** that will 'wow' you each day **with great value inclusions** that everyone would be interested in and **none of those 'kitch' touristy things** that just waste your time and patience. We will point out the different ways to enjoy your shopping and bargaining experiences. We will not take you to the Emporiums and Carpet sellers, but instead will show you how these businesses work and show you how to get a good deal on your own.

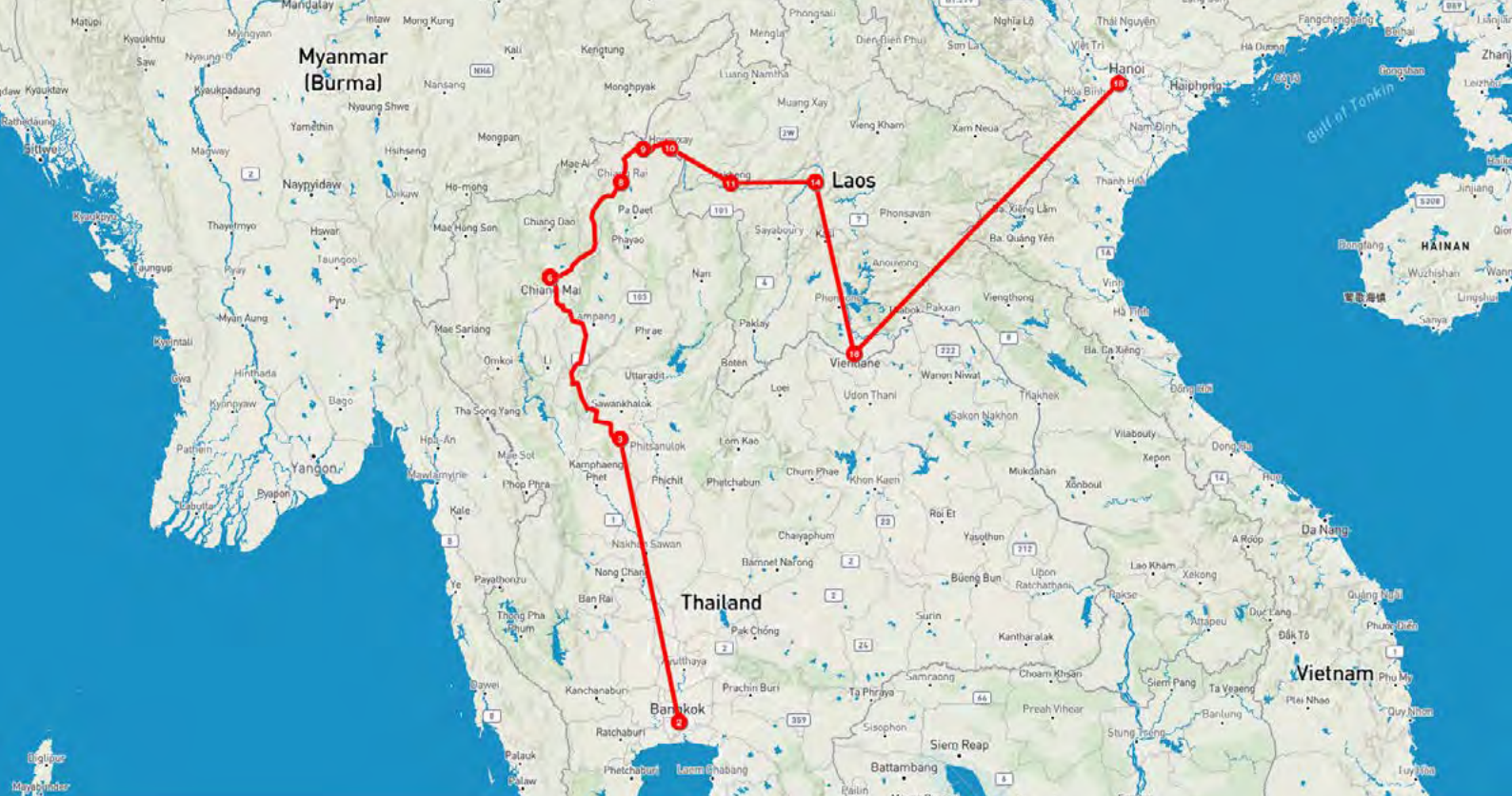
We will offer you the **freedom to do your own thing**. In fact, we will encourage you and help you to get the most out of your holiday by listening to what **your personal needs are**. You may want to go shopping for something unique or want to head out on your own or in a smaller group. Our coach is often bigger than our group size requires so there can be **spare seats to spread out**.

B. Accommodation selections are chosen for their **great location, view, style, feel and facilities**, not just to a Star Category or as suggested by our 'ground operators'. We make sure to use fantastic hotels that will add to your holiday experience. Some hotels are set inside a Colonial Residence and others are slick modern boutique style. **All are hand-picked and researched personally by us!** All the accommodation options include a great breakfast so you can start each day with a good healthy meal. Most breakfasts have both **western and Local foods** available to suit your taste.

C. You will have an option to eat at **some of our favourite restaurants** within close proximity to our accommodation. **You can choose** to join us and eat out or simply stay and eat in, it's up to you! Funnily enough some of the best restaurants are within our chosen accommodation anyway. We have also **personally checked many restaurant menus** to make sure that they can cater for most of the obvious dietary requirements. We also have a good variation between set menu, buffet and ordering from the menu with both western and local choices. The restaurants for our **Special Farewell Dinners** have both been chosen for the amazing food and the experience, which all adds to a night to remember.

D. **Having both Gools and Thommo along as hosts gives you something no one else can match.** We will be with you the whole time looking after you personally. On top of that we will also have **Local City Guides** throughout the tour. You are in a **small group environment** which is great and with so many support staff on hand you can create your own travel experience. You may have had a 'group tour' experience before where you felt rushed and dragged along by your guide. We make sure that everyone gets to **walk at a comfortable pace and have time to have a good look at things along the way**. If you are a keen photographer, then you will have time to get the shot without losing the group. If you need to buy something special while we are out and about then we can make this happen without making the group wait. In our opinion, this is really important in a group environment.

E. Most importantly we made sure we put together a **"Great Value"** product, not necessarily the cheapest but well worth the few extra dollars for an amazing experience! We have chosen our dates and itinerary for each country, with **consideration given to the best possible weather, the lesser crowds and special holiday dates**.



[CLICK HERE](#) to view an interactive version of the tour map online

Day 1

ARRIVE BANGKOK
OVERNIGHT: BANGKOK

Welcome to **Thailand!**

Upon arrival at Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport, make your way to our start point hotel.

Airport to Hotel transfers are available upon request (extra charges apply) **Please Note:** Taxis are easy to arrange at the airport and often cheaper.

Once you have checked in to the hotel (any-time after 14:00hrs) **the rest of the day is free** until we have a **brief pre-departure meeting in the hotel lobby at 18:00hrs.**

Please feel free to **join us for dinner tonight** at a local restaurant near by the hotel.

Meals Included: None

Hotel: Riva Surya Hotel (or similar)

Distance and journey time:

Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport – Riva Surya
(35 km): 50 min



Day 2

BANGKOK

OVERNIGHT: BANGKOK

After breakfast at the hotel, we start the morning with a trip to **Wat Pho**, arguably Bangkok's most enchanting temple. We may be lucky to see the **resident monks gathering for their morning chants**. If so, we can witness this deeply spiritual ritual and gain a better sense of Thailand's Buddhist heritage. We will take a gentle stroll around Wat Pho and see the vast collection of religious treasures on display. Admire the famed **reclining Buddha** image, which stretches 45-metres in length. Learn about the symbolism of the Buddha's intricate footprint and witness devotees making offerings to this revered image.

The tour then continues to the nearby **Grand Palace**, which has served as the seat of Thailand's revered Royal family for more than two centuries. We will stroll around the vast grounds, stopping in to **explore the various temples, throne halls and museums** within the compound.

Later, visit the **Emerald Buddha**, the most revered Buddhist image in Thailand, and hear about its mysterious origins.

Following the morning tour, we will drive towards the bustling **Yaowarat district, Bangkok's Chinatown**. Now on foot, we will discover some shops and stalls selling an enormous array of curious items, including of course **traditional Chinese food and bric-a-brac**. We will take a break at an old tea shop to enjoy people watching while sipping a cup of **Chinese tea**.

From here, we delve deeper into the smaller backstreets, or 'sois', of Chinatown. We will stop in at **Talad Kao**, a market packed with fresh food, tropical fruit and Chinese herbs. Here we **rub shoulders with the locals** while marvelling at all the various items on sale.



The last stop of the walk is **Wat Leng Nei Yi**, a Chinese Taoist temple and we will learn about this traditional belief system.

Finally, we will reach the edge of the **Chao Phraya River** and board a **'longtail boat' for a cruise along Bangkok's canals**. Called 'klongs' in the Thai language, the waterways are lined with stilted houses and shops. Here we will see firsthand the **amazing life along the water**. While cruising past these charming small neighbourhoods you may wonder just how does, the post get delivered.

Before returning to the city, we will stop in at **Wat Arun**. Admire its distinctive architectural style and the views of the Chao Phraya River before returning to the boat and heading back to our hotel.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Hotel: Riva Surya Hotel (or similar)

Day 3 BANGKOK - SUKHOTHAI FLIGHT OVERNIGHT: SUKHOTHAI

This morning we will have an early check out before breakfast to take advantage of an **early flight to Sukhothai**. (Note: Our hotel will supply a breakfast box to enjoy later.)

After a short domestic flight, our guide will meet us at the airport. We will then head off to enjoy the **sites and activities of the old historical town of Sukhothai**.

This morning's activity begins with us **making our own masterpiece, a Buddha Amulet** made from clay. Enjoy molding and carving the clay pieces and then take them home as a memorable souvenir. We will then visit a small **educational center and museum** that outlines the rich history of Sukhothai.

Once we have a better understanding of Sukhothai, we will proceed to a small local house where we will help **cook our 'Sukhothai' noodle lunch**.

Here we **learn about the ingredients of this local noodle** and we will influence the end flavour of this dish by the mixing of our own ingredients. We will then sit and enjoy our traditional lunch.

After the cooking class, we will join a **'Krathong' making workshop**. The 'Loy Krathong' festival is one of Sukhothai's most popular gatherings and here we will learn from the local expert how to create your own beautiful 'Krathong'. **What is a Krathong you ask? It is a decorated floating festival candle**. A real chance to test your artistic skills here.

Later in the late afternoon when it is cooler, we will visit the **Sukhothai Historical Park by electric tuk tuk**. 'Sukhothai', meaning the 'dawn of happiness', was founded in the 13th century and became the kingdom's first capital. The park contains almost **200 ruined 'chedis' in remarkable condition**. We will visit five of the best main sites being **Wat Mahathat, Wat Si Chum, Wat Sri Sawai, War Sra Sri and Wat Trapang Ngoen**.

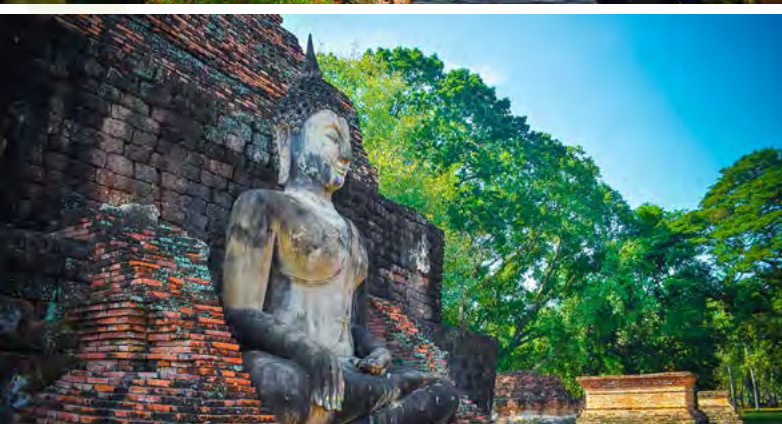
Meals Included: Breakfast and Lunch

Hotel: Sriwilai Resort (or similar)

Distance and journey time:

Riva Surya - Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport
(35. km): 50 min

Sukhothai Airport – Sriwilai Resort (12 km): 15 min



Day 4 SUKHOTHAI - LAMPANG - CHIANG MAI OVERNIGHT: CHIANG MAI

Today, after a relaxed breakfast, we will drive north to **Chiang Mai via Lampang**, with a stop in at the most 'must visit' temple in Lampang, **Wat Phra That Lampang Luang**. We will then have lunch at a local restaurant on the way to Chiang Mai.

Later in the afternoon we will arrive into the charming city of Chiang Mai. If history is your 'thing' you have time for an **optional visit to the 'Three Kings monument' and Chiang Mai Arts & Culture Hall** (you can pay locally if interested). For those not interested in the history then you will have some free time in town before heading to our hotel.

This evening, you may choose to head back into the **Chiang Mai night market for a spot of souvenir shopping** and then make a choice for dinner from the **huge array of cheap local street food**. Chiang Mai is undoubtedly a 'shoppers' and 'foodies' paradise!

Meals Included: Breakfast and Lunch

Hotel: Khum Phaya Resort and Spa (or similar)

Distance and journey time:

Sukhothai – Lampang (210 km): 3.00 hrs

Lampang – Chiang Mai (93 km): 1.50 hrs



Day 5 CHIANG MAI OVERNIGHT: CHIANG MAI

Today's day tour will begin after breakfast at 09:00hrs. We will get a **true taste of Thai 'local life' and be immersed in local culture** by spending a day far removed from the tourist areas of Chiang Mai City.

Firstly, it's **important to dress like a local**, so we will put on a pair of 'fisherman's pants', the comfortable cotton trousers worn in the rural villages of the north. Now, dressed for the occasion, we will venture out of the city to the **local district of Hang Dong**. Here we will meet with 'Mr Prapat' and his family and our **hosts will provide a warm welcome into their home**.

Once settled we will explore the property of Mr. Prapat to encounter the **local architectural styles and uniquely traditional ways of life**. There may be an opportunity to **witness basket weaving**, a handmade process that has remained unchanged for centuries.

Next up is a visit to Mr Prapat's gardens to browse his **vibrant array of vegetation**. Here we will select some fresh ingredients, grab an apron and head inside to begin our **interactive cooking experience!** The family will then share their recipes and demonstrate the traditional techniques necessary to prepare a host of delicious northern Thai specialty dishes. At the completion of our culinary journey, we will sit down with the family and **enjoy the results of our efforts, a traditional Northern Thailand meal**.

The afternoon is free to **explore the neighbourhood**, capture scenes of daily life and enjoy the tranquil atmosphere of this local area. Towards the end of the day, we will say farewell to Mr Prapat and his family and return to Chiang Mai.

Meals Included: Breakfast and Lunch

Hotel: Khum Phaya Resort and Spa (or similar)

Day 6 CHIANG MAI OVERNIGHT: CHIANG MAI

After breakfast we will head off to explore the main **ancient temple ruins of Wiang Kum Kam**, the Lost City, by bicycle (or horse carriage for those who may not wish to ride).

We will then pass by **Wat Chedi Liam, Wat Phraya Meng Rai, Wat Kan Thom, and Wat Koo Paa Dom**.

After visiting Wiang Kum Kam, we will visit **Wat Chiang Mun**, the oldest temple built in the 'new' city of Chiang Mai, which containing numerous old and interesting artifacts.

We will then stop off at a **local restaurant, serving 'Khao Soy' curry noodles**. 'Khao Soy' is the signature dish of Northern Thai cuisine.

After lunch, we will then drive up to the mountain temple of **'Wat Phra That Doi Suthep'**, the most famous landmark of Chiang Mai. We will climb the **Naga staircase to visit the exquisite golden pagoda**. The sound of temple bells usually fill the air and the view overlooking the city makes an irresistible photo opportunity.

Afterwards, we continue up the mountain by **"songtaew" (a local form of motorized transport)** onto a dirt road to the Chang Khien Coffee Research Project where you can **enjoy a cup of local 'arabica' coffee** surrounded by fabulous gardens and flowers. After this relaxing break we will continue to the **'White Hmong' village of Chang Khien** where the 800 inhabitants still wear their traditional hill tribe clothes and practice a culture that dates back at least 500 years.

Meals Included: Breakfast and Lunch

Hotel: Khum Phaya Resort and Spa (or similar)

Day 7 CHIANG MAI - CHIANG RAI OVERNIGHT: CHIANG RAI

After another delicious breakfast, we will check out and head towards the **northern city of Chiang Rai**. With a picturesque journey behind us, we will arrive into Chiang Rai for lunch at **'Chivit Thammada', a gorgeous riverside café and restaurant**. Later, we will stop at **Wat Rong Khun, the 'White Temple'**, and **Baan Dam, the 'Black House'** to note the crazy contradictions between the two.

We will then arrive into Chiang Rai in the late afternoon and relax at the resort. **The balance of the day is free to rest or explore.**

Meals Included: Breakfast and Lunch

Hotel: Le Meridien Hotel (or similar)

Distance and journey time:

Chiang Mai – Chiang Rai (200 km): 3.5 hrs



Day 8 CHIANG RAI OVERNIGHT: CHIANG RAI

Our day tour today will begin after breakfast at 08:00hrs.

We will discover the diversity of Thailand's neighbouring countries with a **full day trip to the famed 'Golden Triangle'**. First, we will travel to **Mae Sai**, the bustling trading town at the northernmost border between Thailand and Myanmar. Here we will obtain a **'one-day visa free pass' to enter mysterious Myanmar**.

We will cross from Thailand into the **border town of Tachilek** where we then travel by local rickshaw through the town. You will be amazed at the stark contrasts between these two countries. See men, women and children wearing **longyis, the traditional skirts worn by the Myanmar people**, and thanaka, a yellowish-paste that is worn as a decorative cosmetic.

We then visit **Tachilek's 'Shan' style temple** and explore local neighbourhoods, all the while travelling slowly as the **rickshaw driver pedals along the streets of Myanmar**.

We then return to the border and visit the bustling border market. You will have time to **browse the stalls selling products from Southern China, Myanmar, Thailand and Laos** and rub shoulders with the incredible mix of people who come to shop here.

After a break for lunch, we then **continue onwards to the Golden Triangle where the borders of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos converge**. Here we take a 'long tail' boat ride along the Mekong and Ruak Rivers, seeing where they meet to form the 'triangle' for which the region is named.

Later we return to land and **drive back to Chiang Rai**, having time to reflect on this incredible journey through Myanmar and the Golden Triangle.

Meals Included: Breakfast and Lunch

Hotel: Le Meridien Hotel (or similar)



Day 9 THE MIGHTY MEKONG RIVER OVERNIGHT: PAKBENG

After an early breakfast at the hotel, we drive towards the **border at Chiang Khong**. We plan to arrive there before 8:00hrs. **Here we enter Lao** and the first thing you will notice is that some signage says Lao while others say Laos. There is no rhyme or reason and it appears that sometimes it is the French spelling and other times it's not. Upon arrival we will start our **Mekong River cruise experience**.

We first need to pass through Thai immigration. We will then cross the bridge over the Mekong on a shuttle and enter the Lao immigration area. **Note:** Please bring 2 passport photos per person and cash in USD \$35 for your Lao visa. (Price always subject to change) Our guide will be waiting for us after we clear Lao immigration in Huay Xai (Laos) We will then transfer by road (approximately 9km) to the pier to board our river boat.

Here we commence our **gentle two-day cruise on a 'slow boat'** down the **Mighty Mekong River** to Luang Prabang, stopping overnight for the evening in a small village called Pakbeng.

As we cruise gently down this magnificent river, we will **stop to visit a local hill tribe village**, where a stroll around will provide a firsthand look at the traditional rural life of the people. We then re-board our boat and enjoy a delicious lunch.

We then arrive in Pakbeng for the evening.

Nestled approximately halfway **between Houay Xay and Luang Prabang, Pakbeng is an ideal stop for slow boats on their journey to Luang Prabang.** The town is made up of wooden houses along a steep street on the hillside and has a peaceful and friendly atmosphere.

Upon arrival we can then sit back, relax and maybe enjoy a 'G&T' (or a drink of your choice) as the sun sets over the banks of 'The Mekong'.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Hotel: Le Grand Pakbeng (or similar)

Distance and journey time:

Chiang Rai – Chiang Khong Border (100 km): 1.5-2 hrs

Huay Xay – Pakbeng by boat (150 km): 6 hrs



Day 10

PAKBENG - PAK OU CAVES

OVERNIGHT: LUANG PRABANG

After a hearty breakfast we will check out and leave the sleepy village behind as we re-board the second part of this amazing journey.

While cruising along the Mekong, we will **stop off at "Ban Baw village to observe the processing of traditional rice alcohol, known locally as 'lao lao'.**

A delicious buffet lunch will be served back on the boat as we cruise further along the Mekong.

Before reaching Luang Prabang, we will make one final stop to **visit the incredible 'Pak Ou' Caves.** These Limestone caves contain **thousands of gold lacquered Buddha statues** crammed into two caves carved out of a towering cliff. The statues range in size from a few centimeters tall to the size of a human, and the views from the mouth of the cave provide sweeping views of the Mekong and Nam Ou rivers.

After a final 2-hour scenic cruise down river from the caves, we reach the **world heritage listed town of Luang Prabang.**

Meals Included: Breakfast and Lunch

Hotel: Villa Maly (or similar)

Distance and journey time:

Pakbeng – Luang Prabang by boat (130 km): 5 hours



Day 11 LUANG PRABANG CYCLING TOUR

This morning we hop onto two wheels and set off on this **half day cycling tour of Luang Prabang!**

(We will have a tuk-tuk on standby for those who wish not to ride). **The city's flat, quiet streets are ideal for cycling** and this relatively compact city can easily be explored by bicycles in a half a day.

We will start with a **short ride to the Traditional Arts & Ethnology Centre**. Here we will see the colourful displays of tribal costumes, tools and artefacts to better understand the rich diversity of the Lao people.

Next stop is the **former Royal Palace**. This palace now houses the National Museum. The museums' informative displays provide a great introduction to Luang Prabang's history.

We will then pedal the **short distance to Wat Mai**, a temple with impressive bas-reliefs covered in gold leaf.

The ride continues to **Wat Visoun, a unique structure shaped like a watermelon** that was entirely rebuilt after being destroyed in the 1880s by the invading Chinese army.

Once we are back on the bikes, we will cycle through the quieter side streets of Luang Prabang. You will see the **well-preserved wooden houses with lush tropical gardens, pass by kids on their way to school and encounter orange robe-clad monks**, cleaning the grounds around their temples. The trip takes us along the **shoreline of the Nam Khan River** where we will enjoy spectacular views of the river and distant mountains. There is plenty of opportunity to stop for photos or to chat with the friendly locals.

The last stop on the cycling tour of Luang Prabang is **Wat Xieng Thong**. This is the city's most revered temple, and for good reason! It is **one of the oldest in town and is covered in ornate carvings and mosaics**, unmatched by any other temple in the country. After spending time enjoying this magnificent temple, we return to the hotel.



Day 11

CONTINUED

EVENING COOKING CLASS

OVERNIGHT: LUNAG PRABANG

Enjoy some free time before our afternoon/evening activity. Our guide and driver will pick us up from our hotel at 15:30hrs and transfer us to the **'Tamarind Cooking School'** for our **Laos cooking class**.

The expert chefs will first demonstrate **how to prepare the authentic Lao dishes**. It's then our turn to try our hand at cooking local Lao cuisine. We will slice and pound our way through the fresh local ingredients before cooking each dish in the traditional way.

After a few hours of concentration and smelling all of the wonderful aromas, we are then free, to **enjoy our wonderful creations for dinner**.

Upon completion of our cooking experience we will be **given a cookbook** that we can take home with us to continue to practice our newly learnt cooking skills!

After dinner we will return to our hotel. We expect to be back around 21:00hrs, however **if you prefer to stay on at the restaurant or to be dropped off at a bar in town, we can make arrangements for you**. You can then make your way back to the hotel at a time that suits you!

Meals Included: Breakfast and Dinner

Hotel: Villa Maly (or similar)



Day 12

LUANG PRABANG - KUANG SI WATERFALLS

OVERNIGHT: **LUANG PRABANG**

This morning, after breakfast we will head out on a **scenic 40-minute drive to Long Lao Village for the start of our trekking tour (approximately 4hrs)**. Before setting off on our trek, we'll have the opportunity to **explore the life and culture of this village** where the Khamu and Hmong people live harmoniously together.

If you don't wish to walk you will simply drive to Kuang Si Falls and meet up with the trekkers.

Non-walkers may wish to walk alongside the falls up many steps to get a birds eye view.

The Kuang Si Falls trekking trail leads to the Lao hinterland, passing through fields and village vegetable gardens before reaching the forested hills which reveal wild scenery and some relatively steep climbs. After a stretch of forest hiking, stop to see a cave along the way that is said to have been used as a bomb shelter during the Second Indochina War.

Next, we will **follow a path through the jungle to visit the incredibly clear waters of Kuang Si Waterfalls**, one of the most famous and picturesque waterfalls in Southeast Asia. Upon arrival we will all enjoy a local picnic lunch next to Waterfall.

After a relax or a swim in the beautiful turquoise waters (Note: please dress modestly), we will **visit the Asian Black Bear Rescue Centre** run by the Free the Bears Fund Inc. This sanctuary has currently 23 Asiatic Black that have been saved from the hunters. The main threat to these bears is poaching due to the belief that their body parts are valuable in Chinese medicine. Read about their habits and observe their playful nature whilst learning about the difficulties they are facing. Afterwards we will transfer back to our hotel (approximately 45 minutes).

Later this afternoon, we get **the chance to interact with the local people by playing a game of 'petanque'**. This simple sport takes us back to colonial days and remains a favourite pastime of Lao people. Enjoy some snacks and drinks while the locals provide tips on how to play this interesting game.

We then return to our hotel where the **balance of the day is free for you to relax or further explore Luang Prabang.**

Meals: Included: Breakfast and Lunch

Hotel: Villa Maly (or similar)



Day 13 LUNAG PRABANG - VIENTIANE OVERNIGHT: VIENTIANE

We have a relaxing start to our day while we prepare for our **flight to Vientiane**, the somewhat 'sleepy' capital of Laos.

Upon arrival in Vientiane, we will be met and transferred to our hotel.

The balance of the day is free to explore this charming and quiet Asian capital.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Hotel: Ansara Hotel (or similar)



Day 14 VIENTIANE CITY TOUR - BUDDHA PARK OVERNIGHT: VIENTIANE

Today after breakfast we will **learn all about Vientiane, with an in-depth tour of the city.** Vientiane has a quirky charm that is revealed in today's excursion.

We begin this morning at one of the **city's oldest temples, Wat Sisaket.** Having withstood the invasion of the Thai's in the 1800s, this temple houses a remarkable set of more than one thousand Buddha statues tucked into niches in the walkways. The nearby **Wat Phra Keo** is equally impressive with its Lao and Khmer art and sculptures.

We then **continue onto Patuxay**, another relic of the Lao colonial rule. **The 'Arc de Triomphe' of Laos** seems out of place at first but those that make the effort to climb to the top will enjoy a great view from the top.

Step further back in time with a visit to **That Luang, the city's holiest temple.** Built in the 16th century, the gilded stupa is an icon of Laos and an important pilgrimage site for its residents.

Having examined the historical side of Laos, **the afternoon focuses more on the country's culture and people.** We will enjoy lunch at a great local restaurant, then venture just outside of Vientiane to 'Buddha Park', a collection of unusual, quirky religious sculptures located near the Thai-Laos friendship bridge. Also known as Xieng Khuang, **this unusual park is filled with more than 200 modern Buddhist and Hindu statues** placed amid a tranquil, natural garden setting.

We then return to Vientiane and wander along the banks of the Mekong River. **Mingle with the locals as the sun sets** and enjoy some snacks and cold drinks from the various stalls that pop up along the river in the evening hours.

Meals Included: Breakfast and Lunch

Hotel: Ansara Hotel (or similar)

Day 15

VIENTIANE - HANOI OVERNIGHT: HANOI

This morning you will have some free time to explore more of the town at your leisure. We will transfer to the airport at around lunch time for our onward **flight to Hanoi, Vietnam.**

Upon arrival in Hanoi, we will be met at the airport and transferred to our hotel.

Vietnam's capital, **Hanoi blends old world charm with the dynamic hustle and bustle of a modern city.** Its French Colonial past is evident from the surrounding architecture to the coffee shop windows of freshly displayed baguettes. Beyond the enchanting central lake lays the great contrast of thousands of motorbikes traversing between the many cosmopolitan restaurants, cafes and boutiques.

To the north of the central lake, Hoan Kiem, lies the **frenetic maze of narrow streets of the Old Quarter** while to the south are the broad tree-lined boulevards and **majestic buildings of the French Quarter.**

Our hotel is centrally located and is a great base to explore this amazing city. Once we are checked in, we will have **time to head out and explore the surrounding area before freshening up for our 'Gala Farewell Dinner'** at one of our favourite restaurants in Hanoi.

Meals Included: Breakfast and Dinner

Hotel: Silk Path Hotel (or similar)

Day 16

HANOI - DEPARTURE

Today is departure day. You are free to depart any time after breakfast.

Meals included: Breakfast

