

# Explore Thailand and Laos

Depart Cairns 4<sup>th</sup> June at 11.15AM arrive Singapore 3.25PM – Silk air

Accommodation: Peninsular/Excelsior IN: 4<sup>th</sup> June OUT: 6<sup>th</sup> June

Depart Singapore 6<sup>th</sup> June at 12.50PM arrive Bangkok 2.20PM – Singapore Airlines

Commence the following tour in Bangkok on the 6<sup>th</sup> June and ending in Vientiane on the 18<sup>th</sup> June

## [Day 1: Bangkok](#)

Sa-wat dee! Welcome to Thailand. Thailand's bustling capital, Bangkok is famous for its tuk tuks, khlong boats and street vendors serving up delicious Thai food. Your adventure begins with a welcome meeting at 6pm on Day 1. Please look for a note in the hotel lobby or ask the hotel reception where it will take place, and have your insurance details and next of kin information ready for collection. Bangkok has so much to offer those with time to explore, so perhaps arrive a day or so early and take a riverboat to Chinatown and explore the crowded streets, uncover the magnificent Grand Palace and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, wander down the tourist mecca of Khao San Road, or indulge in some Thai massage. After the meeting tonight perhaps gather your fellow travellers together and tuck into some world famous street food.

### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

### Optional Activities

- Bangkok - Bangkok by Bike Urban Adventure - THB1904
- Bangkok - Grand Palace - THB500

### Meals Included

There are no meals included on this day.

## [Day 2: Bangkok](#)

Begin the day with a river cruise down the Chao Phraya River to explore the famous 'khlongs' (canals) (approximately 1 hour). Life along these canals seems a world away from the chaotic streets of the capital. Pay a visit to Wat Pho, one of the 'trinity' of Bangkok temples, with a 46-metre long gold plated Buddha reclining inside. Even the feet of this statue are incredible, three metres long and intricately decorated with mother of pearl. The temple grounds are equally fascinating, filled with beautifully decorated stupas, halls, and shrines. This evening you'll head north to Chiang Mai on an overnight train journey, accommodated in air-conditioned sleeping berths (approximately 13 hours). Multi share compartments are air-conditioned, with bunk beds; sheets and pillow provided. Your baggage travels in the carriage with you. There is a food and drink service available on board. Sometimes the air conditioning can make the carriage quite cold so you may want to bring a warm layer of clothing.

### Accommodation

- Overnight sleeper train (1 night)

#### **Included Activities**

- Bangkok - Khlong boat (canal) tour
- Bangkok - Wat Pho Temple

#### **Optional Activities**

- Bangkok - Thai Massage - THB250
- Bangkok - Jim Thompson's House - THB150

#### **Meals Included**

- Breakfast

### [Day 3: Chiang Mai](#)

The most vibrant city in northern Thailand, Chiang Mai has many famous temples and an interesting old city area. Renowned for dazzling beauty and extremely welcoming locals, the 'Rose of the North' will leave you spellbound. Chances are, you won't want to leave. Embark on a scenic, winding drive up a mountain (around 45 minutes) to one of the country's most stunning temple complexes, Doi Suthep. A 300-step naga-guarded stairway leads you to the temples, and the climb is well worth the effort. The hypnotic atmosphere of chanting Buddhist monks and sweeping views of the city make this a most memorable experience.

#### **Accommodation**

- Hotel (1 night)

#### **Included Activities**

- Chiang Mai - Doi Suthep temple

#### **Meals Included**

There are no meals included on this day.

### [Day 4: Chiang Mai](#)

Today is free for you to explore, but there are also a few optional activities you can join if you want. Perhaps join a local cooking class today and discover the secrets of real Thai cuisine. You'll learn the key ingredients, how to use them, and what to use in their place if you can't get them at home. As well as taking your own comprehensive recipe book with you after the class, you'll feast on the fruits of your labour for lunch. Get active with a bicycle tour to discover the city and surrounding countryside from a different perspective, or be spirited away on an early morning Chiang Mai tour that puts you at the epicentre of Buddhist rituals. Learn to meditate, offer alms to monks, and make an offering at a temple. In the evening you can choose to wander through the enormous, colourful Night Bazaar, and perhaps relax at a fine restaurant along the riverfront. Make sure to sample some delicious traditional northern Thai food – the signature dish is kao soy, yellow wheat noodles in a curry broth, traditionally served with chicken or beef.

## Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

## Optional Activities

- Chiang Mai - Thai cooking course - THB800
- Chiang Mai - Bicycle tour - THB950
- Chiang Mai - Urban Adventures - Mind & Soul - THB2317

## Meals Included

There are no meals included on this day.

## [Day 5: Chiang Khong](#)

Take a journey through rural countryside to the Thai border town of Chiang Khong (approximately 5.5 hours). Formerly known as 'Juon', peaceful riverside Chiang Khong remains an important market town for the surrounding hill tribes and for trade with Laos. Stretch your legs with a stroll around town, and if you find yourself with time, then Wat Phra Kaew and Wat Luang are both well worth a visit while you're here. Then maybe enjoy a final Thai drink and dinner, while Laos beckons from across the mighty Mekong.

## Accommodation

- Guesthouse (1 night)

## Meals Included

There are no meals included on this day.

## [Day 6: Pakbeng - Mekong River](#)

Board a slow boat for the two-day journey down the mighty Mekong River to Luang Prabang. The journey is relaxed, so you can experience the slow pace of village life and the breathtaking scenery along the river up close. The river boat is basic in nature, with a toilet, covered roof, and open sides to take in the fresh air. There are seats in the front of the boat and a small open area in the back where you can have a nap on the mat, play cards, read or have lunch. Dock at the small town of Pak Beng (after about 6 hours) to spend the night. Hmong and tribal Thai people are frequently seen on the main street, where vendors sell local textiles and handicrafts.

Notes: Our guesthouse here is very basic -- standard accommodation in this small, remote trading port. It can be quite cool from November to February so make sure you have some warm gear packed for this period. Due to dam construction upstream, water levels aren't as reliable as in previous years, and when the river is at its lowest from February to April, part of the journey may occasionally need to be made by land.

## Accommodation

- Guesthouse (1 night)

## Included Activities

- Mekong River - 2 day boat trip

#### **Meals Included**

There are no meals included on this day.

### [Day 7: Luang Prabang](#)

Reboard the boat and cruise to the Pak Ou Caves, before arriving in the former royal capital of Luang Prabang (approximately 7 hours). An important religious site overlooking the river at the junction of the Mekong and Ou Rivers, the revered Pak Ou Caves consist of two sacred limestone caverns filled with Buddha images of all styles and sizes, brought by devoted villagers over the centuries. The lower cave, known as Tham Ting, is entered from the river by a series of steps and can easily be seen in daylight. The higher cave, Tham Phum, is deeper and requires a torch for viewing. The atmospheric World Heritage-listed city of Luang Prabang is a favourite of many travellers. Nestled in the hills of northern Laos on the confluence of the Mekong and Khan rivers, the city is claimed to be 'the best preserved city in South East Asia' by UNESCO. The city and its people retain a refined, yet relaxed, air and it's a wonderful place to wander the side streets and dusty lanes and seemingly step back into another era.

#### **Accommodation**

- Hotel (1 night)

#### **Included Activities**

- Luang Prabang - Pak Ou Caves

#### **Meals Included**

There are no meals included on this day.

### [Day 8: Luang Prabang](#)

Once the heart and soul of the ancient Lao Kingdom (Lan Xang) and designated a World Heritage site in 1995, Luang Prabang is endowed with a legacy of historic red-roofed temples and French-Indochinese architecture, not to mention some of the country's most refined cuisine, a multi-ethnic population and rich culture. Enjoy a guided tour around the Traditional Art & Ethnology centre, a non-profit museum dedicated to the collection, preservation, and interpretation of its traditional arts and lifestyles. In the afternoon, head south of town to the beautiful Kuang Si Falls, a picturesque, multi-level cascade that offers fantastically blue pools that are perfect for a mid-afternoon dip. Back in Luang Prabang this evening you'll have free time to make further discoveries, including walking around the popular Night Bazaar.

#### **Accommodation**

- Hotel (1 night)

#### **Included Activities**

- Luang Prabang - Traditional Arts and Ethnology Museum
- Luang Prabang - Kuang Si Waterfalls

## Meals Included

- Breakfast

## [Day 9: Luang Prabang](#)

Today is free for your own explorations. It's worth getting up in the misty early morning to view the procession of saffron-robed monks on their daily outing collecting alms, a practice that dates back centuries. The people of the town wait out the front of their houses with food for the monks to collect and take back to the temple. It is done early, as the monks cannot eat anything after midday. By giving food to a monk you 'het bon' or make merit, which should augur well for your next life. Make sure you don't miss Wat Xieng Thong, the most enchanting of Laos' monasteries. Inside you'll find monks eager to practice their English with you. A large hill called Mt Phu Si dominates Luang Prabang's skyline, topped by a glittering golden stupa. You can climb the 328 zig-zag steps up to the sacred gilded stupa and big drum of the Phu Si Temple for a panoramic view of Luang Prabang and its surrounds. The Dara Market sells everything and is a great spot to browse. If you'd like to experience more local culture, consider taking a long boat across the river to a traditional Laotian village.

## Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

## Included Activities

- Luang Prabang - Offering alms to Monks

## Optional Activities

- Luang Prabang - Royal Theatre - USD20
- Luang Prabang - Mt Phu Si - USD2
- Luang Prabang - Wat Xieng Thong - USD2
- Luang Prabang - National Museum - USD4

## Meals Included

- Breakfast

## [Day 10: Vang Vieng](#)

Take a private mini van through dusty villages and winding mountain roads to Vang Vieng (approximately 7 hours). The mountain scenery on the drive is as impressive as that of your destination. En route, take in scenes of small village life at various points along the hilly highway. Situated on the Nam Song River, Vang Vieng is surrounded by towering limestone karsts and is a great place to walk through local markets and along the riverside.

## Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

## Meals Included

- Breakfast

## [Day 11: Vang Vieng](#)

There's plenty to do in and around Vang Vieng, known as an adventure town thanks to its unique and varied surrounding country. The area is renowned for its many caves, many of which are easily accessible from the town. Perhaps the most famous is the cave of Tham Chang, a beautiful cavern fed by a natural spring making it a perfect spot for a refreshing swim. Hire bicycles to explore further afield, or if you're looking to relax or perhaps learn more about local niche industry, you can visit an organic mulberry farm just outside town and enjoy a meal there.

### **Accommodation**

- Hotel (1 night)

### **Optional Activities**

- Vang Vieng - Bicycle hire - USD2

### **Meals Included**

- Breakfast

## [Day 12: Vientiane](#)

Continue by private mini bus to the country's capital, Vientiane (approximately 3.5 hours). Possibly Asia's most laidback capital, Vientiane is a city where daily affairs are conducted at a relaxed pace. Hardly touched by the modernisation that has completely changed the face of other cities in South-East Asia, it has a wealth of cultural delights to discover on foot, or for the less energetic, by jumbo (tuk tuk). Faded colonial mansions, tree-lined boulevards and old temples create an atmosphere of timelessness, particularly in the older part of town along the Mekong River. Pay a visit to Wat Si Saket, the oldest temple still standing in Vientiane and home to almost 7,000 Buddha images. Visit COPE, an Intrepid Foundation-sponsored organisation dedicated to assistance those who have been injured by the multitude of unexploded ordinance across the country. This is an excellent cause and a chance to educate yourself about Laos' devastating war history. This evening, maybe join your fellow travellers for a celebratory dinner as your adventure comes to an end.

### **Accommodation**

- Hotel (1 night)

### **Included Activities**

- Vientiane - COPE visit

### **Optional Activities**

- Vientiane - Tuk Tuk to Buddha Park - USD25
- Vientiane - Vientiane temples - USD1

## Meals Included

- Breakfast

## Day 13: Vientiane

There are no activities planned for the final day and you are able to depart the accommodation at any time.

## Meals Included

- Breakfast

Depart Vientiane 18<sup>th</sup> June at 4.05PM arrive Singapore 10.30PM – Silk air

Accommodation: Peninsular/Excelsior IN: 18<sup>th</sup> June OUT: 20<sup>th</sup> June

Depart Singapore 20<sup>th</sup> June at 8.30AM arrive Cairns 5.10PM – Silk air

## **Cost per person \$3042.00 and includes the following;**

Airfares

Airport taxes

4 nights accommodation in Singapore

13 day tour with the following inclusions

### **Inclusions**

Meals

7 breakfasts

Transport

Longtail boat, Overnight sleeper train, River boat, Private Mini van, songtheaw

Accommodation

Guesthouse (2 nights), Hotel (9 nights), Overnight sleeper train (1 night)

Included activities