

Laotian Discovery Trip (8 days)



Departs anytime (2018-19)



Please note: This itinerary can be modified in any way to best suit your school's particular aims, learning objectives and budget.

Please contact us detailing any changes you'd like to make.

Laos retains many of the traditions that have disappeared in a frenzy of development elsewhere in the region. Whilst the country capital city Vientiane retains a timeless rural quality, Magical Luang Prabang still retains trapping of old Southeast Asia, still untainted by mass tourism.

This epic 8-day educational trip through Laos is designed for students seeking a unique Asian experience. It will include visits all the country's most important centres of activity as well as the remote province of Phonsavan, a short distance from the mysterious *Plain of Jars*. It will further entail travel through the screensaver landscapes of Vang Vieng

This adventurous itinerary also includes ethical interaction with elephants, a mountain bike activity, as well as a very significant service learning project working alongside our Laotian student contemporaries.

Most importantly, this trip is designed to be highly enjoyable. We hope to provide students with a very memorable and fulfilling introduction in Laos, beyond the mainstream.



Billy Penfold
Director

Day 1

Arrive Laos – Vientiane



Flight details to be advised

On arrival in Vientiane, we will be greeted at the airport by our tour leader. We head to the hotel and begin with a group meeting to cover the upcoming days' activities, followed by a short introduction walk around the riverfront area. Eminently walkable, the historic old French town is famous for its lunging naga (river serpent) statues, wandering Buddhist monks, and frangipani lined boulevards that we will experience this afternoon. Later today we will pay a special visit to a vocational training centre for women to learn of the country's weaving traditions. Dinner is at a perfect site on the Mekong river, where we will enjoy our first taste of Laotian food. (dinner).

Day 2

Vientiane Vang Vieng



After breakfast, we will set out for a short tour of Laos's charming capital city, Wat Prakeo, home of the Emerald Buddha. We will also be stopping at Anousavari Monument, inspired by the French and dedicated to those who died during the recent wars.

The Anousavari Monument resembles the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. It is here that we will climb to the top to enjoy panoramic views of the city centre.

In the early afternoon, we will depart for the far-flung township of Vang Vieng in central Laos. The fairytale landscapes we will travel through today were, until relatively recently, off-limits from foreign travellers. It had once been home to

secret airbases and guerrilla fighters, resulting from the conflict that engulfed much of southeast Asia in the late 20th century.

Tonight, we stroll through this sleepy town and learn about the impact tourism is having on this traditional and conservative part of the country and its environment. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 3

Vang Vieng



This morning we take a bicycle tour through town and then out amongst rural villages to experience life in the countryside. En route we will stop off at Cham cave and climb inside to learn about the peculiar ecosystems of Vang Vieng. From the cave entrance, we gain beautiful views of the valley below.

We continue with bicycles, travelling over an abandoned runway used during the Vietnam War era. As we make our way to the Nam Song River, we will swap our bikes for kayaks, led by qualified and experienced kayaking instructors. (breakfast, lunch)

Day 4

Vang Vieng Phonsavan (Plain of Jars)



After a local style breakfast, we take the windy road to Phonsavan province in the country's remote east. Phonsavan was a strategic transit point during the Vietnam/American War for communist forces and was therefore targeted by American bombing raids. Phonsavan was more heavily bombed than any other location in Indochina throughout the conflict.

During our time in this remote province, we will visit the UXO Centre to learn about the legacy of unexploded ordnance and the clearing operations that took decades to complete. We will visit learn about Laos position in the Union of Indochina, established by the French.

Later we visit Asia's "Stone Henge" – an archaeological site featuring a vast scattering of giant stone jars, most likely used as funeral jars for storing bodies during the Stone Age (500BC - 500AD). Exactly where the stones jars were produced and transported from remains unknown. Around the jar sites teeth, pottery, iron and bronze

objects have been found. Our local guide will explain this historic site to us. Later today we visit a Hmong village to meet people from this ancient region's minority group. The Hmong live in traditional houses and attend a colourful Sunday market where all manner of goods is sold.

We will also explore the countryside, visiting local villages to learn about local agricultural practices, self-sustainability and the issue of waste management. (2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 1 dinner)

Day 5

Phonsavan 📍 Luang Prabang



Today we depart this remote province of Laos and continue our journey north through more mountains to the fabled town of Luang Prabang. Sitting at the sacred confluence of the Mekong River and the Nam Khan (Khan River), nowhere else can lay claim to this UNESCO-protected gem's romance of 33 gilded wats, saffron-clad monks, faded Indochinese villas and wonderful cuisine.

On arrival, we will check into our hotel and stroll around the original part of the town, before setting out to explore the colourful streets and markets which materialise each evening.

Dinner tonight will be at a popular local eatery, followed by an evening climb to the summit of Mt Phuosi. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 6

Luang Prabang (Student-initiated activities)

Prior to travelling, a Student Educational Adventures staff member will talk to teachers and students about specific activities that your students might like to add to their overseas experience. These activities can be included based on students' knowledge of the country or their particular interests or passions for any aspect of a country's culture.

The activities we can include are many and varied. These may include; an introduction to a country's creative or performing arts scene, visits to local schools, great race activities, cooking classes, outdoor educational pursuits such as hiking, bike riding or a plethora of cultural programs. Please contact us for further ideas.

OPTION 1:



Great Race: The Luang Prabang Great Race is a competitive team building event designed to take students on a competitive race throughout town. The activity is designed so that students may learn more about Laotian culture as well as aspects of Southeast Asian culture and daily life.

In small teams, students engage in a challenge where the objective is to locate race checkpoints, solve team challenges and then travel to the next checkpoint. The first team back to the hotel, having completed all the required tasks and answered all the questions wins. (breakfast, lunch)

OPTION 2:

Cooking Class: For those who like to cook up a storm, Luang Prabang is the place to be. With a wide range of ingredients, herbs and spices, a market tour is essential to gain an understanding of all the produce and ingredients required before we begin cooking. Influences on the local dishes include royal cuisine, the French colonial period, and ethnic minority specialties. We will cook traditional recipes with fresh local ingredients, meats and spices, often eaten by hand Laos style.



OPTION 3:

Jungle Zipline: We travel out of the city to take part in an exciting zipline and rope course – in the jungle! After receiving our safety instructions and basic training from local guides, we put on our harness for the exhilarating zip line course, flying high between the jungle canopy and walk along a suspended rope course high above the forest floor.

Day 7

Luang Prabang



Today we will travel to a local school to take part in a full day cross cultural immersion program. This program is specifically designed to acquaint student with aspect of Laotian culture, the Laos education system and the hopes and aspirations of our contemporaries.

The further aim of today's initiative, which will also include sporting activity learning of Laotian creative arts and music, will be to explore the difference and similarities between us and our hosts. This exercise in solidarity is intended to awaken students to their global citizenship and help instigate the life long process of understanding the complex issues of development.

For our final evening in Laos, we will enjoy a traditional 'Baci' dinner blessing ceremony, accompanied by a display of traditional Laotian folk dancing. No doubt we will be invited to join the dance! (2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 1 dinner)

Day 8

Depart Luang Prabang ✈

This morning we have a short time to explore the city and have a final chance for shopping. Then we make our way to Luang Prabang Airport for our back home. Our tour leader will take care of all our onward travel arrangements and wave us farewell. (breakfast) **Flight details to be advised**

Summary

Grading

Moderate; Students will be required to be in good health to get the most out of this trip while any one of reasonable fitness will be able to take part. There are no real physical difficulties however students will be expected to walk every day, particularly during the community project component of the trip. You will also be expected to be able to ride a bike. It will be necessary for you to carry your own luggage throughout the trip but only for short distances.

Accommodation

Student accommodation is on a twin/triple share basis. Teacher accommodation is on a single room basis. Hotels hold a 3-star equivalent rating.

Transport

Modern air-conditioned bus, boat, vans, bicycle.

Group Size

Minimum group size 20 students & 2 staff members.
▲ [Smaller group sizes can be quoted upon application](#)

Your Tour Leader

Your tour leader is probably the person who most influences the success of your trip. Thus, Student Educational Adventures employs our own team of meticulously trained student dedicated, local tour leaders - not foreigners, imported at your students' expense with no language skills or insight into your host culture.

These nationals are not only the best folk to show you their country. They are your teachers, translators and an enthusiastic purveyor of authentic experiences. They are there to facilitate your immersion into new cultures and are the bridge between you and the world of education and new experiences.

Your tour leader is always with your students throughout your trip and is thoroughly versed in safety protocols and duty of care responsibilities. This ranges from assisting in the most basic of health and safety measures to ensuring that teachers & students are always safe during our trips. All have been chosen because of their ability to deal with the needs and unique issues associated with escorting young people through this wonderful and at times, most foreign of regions.

Service Learning Program

All service-learning programs initiated by Student Educational Adventures are conducted after careful consultation with the local community and with the local People's Committees.

These projects are initiated based on a model of mutual learning and designed as an immersion experience. An understanding of the importance of an integrated approach to community development is useful to frame what students and teachers might see, learn or experience during a student immersion.

Laotian Discovery Trip (8 days)

Inclusions

- All accommodation and transport, activities, and programs as described in the itinerary
- Student Educational Adventures Tour Leader throughout the tour
- Additional local guides where required
- Meals (+ drinking water) as listed in the daily itinerary
- Pre-departure support, briefings & planning meetings for students and parents
- 24/7 in-country support

Exclusions

- International flights to / from Laos
- Some meals
- Laos Visa