

# Thailand & Laos: A river journey (11 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.**

The 11-day trip entails a journey through two of Asia's most geographically and culturally diverse countries – Thailand, a developed nation and the only country in the region never to have been colonised, and Laos, a peaceful landlocked nation bordered by no less than five large and powerful neighbours.

Both nations are a treasure-trove filled with glittering temples, ancient ruins and wonderful cuisine. Furthermore, they are ideal countries to provide students with an introduction to the region's endearing landscapes, traditional hill tribe life and educational adventure opportunities.

Highlights of this trip will include working alongside a refugee community in Thailand's Chiang Dao Province, a vigorous session of *Muay Thai* kickboxing, kayaking, cycling, a spicy cooking class and an unforgettable journey down the most enchanting reaches of the Mekong River.



  
**Billy Penfold**  
Director

## Day 1

### Arrive Thailand (Chiang Mai)



Arriving in Chiang Mai this morning we will be greeted at the airport by our tour leader and transported to our hotel. The former seat of the Lanna kingdom, Chiang Mai is characterised by its laid-back character and plethora of activities and events – many of which we will enjoy over the coming days.

This afternoon we will embark on a tuk-tuk orientation tour around the city. We will be guided through the old Citadel walls and calling in on Wat Chedi, the site of a local monastery and reclining Buddha.

Mid-afternoon we will take part in a hands-on cooking class to learn the secrets of Thai cuisine, enjoying for dinner what we have cooked! This class will be hosted by a talented local chef who, will also give us a thorough explanation of the myriad of spices and ingredients essential to Thai cuisine. (lunch, dinner) **Flight details to be advised**

## Day

### Chiang Mai



We will awake early this morning to learn of the disciplined physical regime of Thai boxing (Muay Thai). The art of Muay Thai has been Thailand's most popular sport for hundreds of years. It is unique among other kinds of fighting disciplines in its approach to close quarters fighting.

Later we will venture out of the city to enjoy the true exhilaration of white-water rafting – the best way to enjoy some of the beauty of the Thai rainforest and mountains vistas. When returning to town this afternoon, there will be a short time for a trip to the local night market. (breakfast, lunch)

## Day 3

### Mae Ngat Lake



Once again, we head out of the city, this time for a cycling activity beginning at Mae Malai township. From here we cycle on sturdy bikes for a three-hour ride to Mae Ngat Lake. From here we will board a long-tail boat to a floating house. Following this is an exciting kayaking activity, allowing students to explore the surrounding waterways.

Mid-afternoon we will venture up into the mountainous hinterland surrounding Chiang Mai to take on an adventurous tour of the forest by way of a zip line. This safe and controlled activity is a must-do activity when in these lush reaches of Thailand. It will afford us a bird's-eye view of the rainforest canopy as we soar

over it at a significant pace!

While undertaking this activity, we will also learn of the province's fragile ecosystem and of the animal species that inhabit this region. In the evening, we will visit a pleasant local night market, followed by dinner at a quaint local restaurant. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

## Day 4 & 5

### Chiang Mai Chiang Dao



This morning we depart Chiang Mai and travel to the hill tribe region of Chiang Dao. Over the years, this northern Thai province has become a state of refuge for many Karen and Palong ethnic tribes' people, who fled from Burma (Myanmar) in the late 1980s.

We will spend two days in this region where we will embark on a community project designed to assist this village community in constructing a medium sized brick house. Our time in the village will entail working in groups with the local inhabitants engaging in several manual building tasks including bricklaying, cement mixing, carpentry and landscaping. It is expected that whilst in the

village students will learn something of the local traditions and history of the tribe, whose traditions differ markedly from mainstream Thai society.

*NB: Facilities in the village are basic. A thin mattress, pillow and mosquito net will be provided in each long-house. Sleeping arrangements are communal style. Toilets are of squat style, and showering facilities are simple. Good quality walking shoes/boots are preferable. (2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners)*

## Day 6

### Chiang Dao Chiang Khong



This morning we will complete our community project and hand it over to the new family. We spend time interacting with the locals who have helped us. The local tradesmen will finish off the fixtures and fitting over the coming days. Following this, we will farewell our village and travel further east across mountain ranges to the border town of Chiang Khong on the banks of the Mekong River. On arrival in Chiang Khong, we will enjoy a short orientation tour of this friendly town before lying back to enjoy a foot massage whilst watching the world go by on the banks of the mighty Mekong River.

We will enjoy true Thai hospitality this evening as we relax at our teak guesthouse. Prepare to get a good night's sleep, as tomorrow marks our new adventure in Laos! (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

## Day 7

### Chiang Khong Pak Beng (Laos)



After breakfast, our new adventure begins as we farewell Thailand for our journey into the heart of Laos. Once across the river border, we will board our private long boat for a two-day journey down the famous Mekong River (which begins in Tibet and winds its way through six countries before reaching the ocean). Our boat trip will provide ample time for students to enjoy the beauty of this landlocked country, only opened to foreigner visitors since 1994.

We will learn about the Mekong River's environmental impact on its bordering nations and related economic issues; in particular damming causing concerns in the low land countries. En route we will stop to visit remote minority villages whose traditional lifestyles and subsistence practices have changed little in four centuries. This evening we will arrive in the small town of Pak Beng and enjoy a short orientation walk around the town before dinner. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

## Day 8

### Pak Beng Luang Prabang



Today we will continue our journey down the Mekong River en route to the enchanting town of Luang Prabang, rich in French colonial character and the centre of Laotian Buddhism. We will also visit the cave of Pak Ou where hundreds of ancient Buddha figures have been stored. Our local guide will explain to us the intricacies of the Buddhist religion and the meaning of the various artworks depicted here.

We will continue down the river to Luang Prabang, arriving mid-afternoon. On arrival, we will check into our hotel and stroll around the original part of the town, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Luang Prabang's main street comes alive each evening to the colour of local merchants selling their wares – time for which we will have to experience after dinner. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

## Day 9 & 10

### 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 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:** Students will embark on a *Great Race* style activity where they will work in small independent teams to achieve objectives, while navigating around the city and beyond. Along the way, students will try various forms of transport, interact with the locals and embark on mini fact-finding missions. Students will climb hills, explore cultural buildings, purchase items from the market and note down facts and observations. Later in the day as the groups return to base, we will compare the results. (breakfast, lunch)

**OPTION 2:**

**Bicycle activity:** There are numerous biking tracks on the outskirts of Luang Prabang that we can take to explore the rural countryside. This gives students a great opportunity to visit local villages and gain an understanding and appreciation of everyday life. Along our journey, we will stop at a handicraft village where they make ornamental paper from tree bark and produce silk weavings from hand-operated looms. (breakfast, lunch)

**OPTION 3:**



**UXO (Unexploded Ordnance!):** Did you know Laos is the most heavily bombed country in the world per capita? More than two million tons of bombs were dropped on Laos between 1964 and 1973. An estimated 30 per cent of them did not detonate. Today we will visit Lao's fascinating UXO centre to learn of the painstaking efforts the nation has gone to expunge this terrible legacy. We will also be able to view some dwellings made from these weapons.



On this, our final evening in Southeast Asia we will enjoy a traditional 'Baci' dinner ceremony. This uniquely Laotian ritual is a traditional way of expressing our feeling in many aspects of life – in our case, to bless people who are going to travel to another province or overseas for a long time. The ceremony will end with a traditional dance performance after our final feast of great Laotian food. (breakfast, dinner)

**Day 11**

**Depart Luang Prabang → Home**

There will be a final time this morning to observe monks and morning rituals escorted by our tour leader, before we transfer to the airport for our flight back home. Our group leaders will take care of all flight re-confirmations, assist with check-in 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 work diligently during the days of the community service project. You will also be expected to be able to ride a bike and be able to participate in a light hiking activity. 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 also 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.

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### Inclusions

- All accommodation, transport, activities, entrance costs and other programs as describe in itinerary
- *Student Educational Adventures* tour leader throughout trip & additional specialist guides
- Meals (+ drinking water) as described in the itinerary
- School program costs (Luang Prabang)
- Pre-departure support, briefings & planning meetings for students and parents
- 24/7 in-country support

### Exclusions

- International flights to Thailand / from Laos
- Chiang Dao community service costs (approximately US\$1,100)
- Some meals
- Laotian visa (if required)