

# Laos

12 days Bangkok to Vientiane  
Mekong River Cruise - Luang Prabang - Laos Mountains - Vientiane

'Lao lao' is a rice wine distilled locally in villages and while we don't suggest you consume it while cycling it does give a good idea of this trip - local, fun and tasty with the potential for a little bit of pain the next day.

This is a great trip with wonderful variety, the cycling is spectacular. We ride along back roads and quiet highways and along side rivers before climbing up into spectacular limestone mountains and descending for a number of days through H'Mong villages to Vang Vieng, a travellers hangout town, then onto the (not so) bustling capital Vientiane.

## Itinerary

### Day 1 | Chiang Khong

We will meet up at Bangkok airport for a short flight to the northern city of Chaing Rai. From here it is about 2 hours drive to Chiang Khong, a small border town that sits along the banks of the Mekong River. Our rustic guesthouse has a great balcony that looks out over the Mekong and onto Laos. We will chat over dinner about the upcoming adventure. (D)

### Day 2 | Pak Beng

After crossing the border in the morning comes the non-cycling highlight of the trip as you spend the day cruising down the Mekong River on a converted cargo boat. The perfect introduction to Laos, you'll quickly get a feel for the slower pace of life here in Laos. We overnight in the small town of Pak Beng in a new tourist class hotel. (B,L,D)

### Day 3 | Udomxai | 80km

Our first day on the bikes is also one of the best, taking us away from the Mekong River through a rolling landscape of small minority villages that grow corn and rice. This road is very new and carries very little traffic so you can enjoy the scenery and the kids who love to stand by the roadside and yell out "Sabaii Dii!". After approximately 80km we board the bus and drive to our accommodation. Udomxai is a medium sized trading town and our guesthouse here is simple but clean. (B,L,D)

### Day 4 | Nong Khiaw | 103km

Today is a long ride with two mountain passes to climb. The landscape is mixed forest and slash and burn farming which is still practiced by the local H'Mong people who live in small villages which hug the mountain sides. Nong Khiaw is a beautiful little town sitting on the banks of the Nam Ou River, a major tributary of the Mekong. We stay overnight in a simple guesthouse looking out over the river. (B L D)

### Day 5 | Luang Prabang | 70km

In the morning we board a small boat to cruise down the river



for a couple of hours. Limestone cliffs compete with villages and farmland and makes for a relaxing river journey. Where the river and highway meet we get back on the bikes and ride to Luang Prabang. This is an undulating ride with the Nam Ou River as our companion for much of the way. In the afternoon we will ride into Luang Prabang, our home for 3 nights. It has been said that Luang Prabang is the most beautiful town in South East Asia, and we'd have to agree. With a combination of historic temples, French colonial architecture and its setting by the Mekong surrounded by mountains you won't want to leave. (B,L,D)

### Day 6 | Luang Prabang

Enjoy a free day in Luang Prabang to explore the temples, learn Lao cooking, shop, explore the surrounding handicraft villages, ride an elephant, relax in a café - there is so much to do! (B)

# Lao Lao Bike Tour

## Tour Notes



### Day 7 | Luang Prabang | 62km

After a restful day we hit the bikes for a ride to the stunning Kuang Sii Waterfall. The ride is along a small road alongside the Mekong River passing through small villages, rice fields and forest. At the waterfall enjoy a swim, picnic lunch and a visit to the tiger and bear rescue centre before riding back to Luang Prabang. (B,L)

### Day 8 | Luang Prabang to Kiew Ka Cham | 78km

Cycling out of Luang Prabang we are faced with what is without doubt the most difficult day of cycling but also one of the most rewarding with two huge uphill climbs. We pass through lush forest and many small H'Mong villages that sit dwarfed by the amazing landscape of limestone mountains that surround them. We stay the night in Kiew Ka Cham, a small village on top on the mountains. Few people stop here overnight so the accommodation is very simple. It is a special experience to stay in such a place. (B,L,D)

### Day 9 | Kiew Ka Cham to Kasi | 95KM

You will be high in the mountains for the first half of the day following a ridgeline up and down with peaks all around. In the

afternoon it is time to relax a bit as the road is largely downhill along a valley to our overnight stop of Kasi. (B,L,D)

### Day 10 | Kasi to Vang Vieng | 58KM

The ride to Vang Vieng is a relatively easy day travelling through the lush green of rice fields. Vang Vieng is set in a prime location. Surrounded by limestone peaks, caves and rivers this town see its fair share of travellers but for good reason. We should arrive before lunch so the afternoon is free to go caving, tubing on the river or relaxing in one of the many restaurants. (B)

### Day 11 | Vang Vieng to Vientiane | 80km

Into the flatter land now we ride away from the mountains towards Vientiane, Lao's quiet capital city, and the end of the ride. The roads will become busier as the day goes on but Vientiane is nothing like other capital cities of Asia. In the evening we will head out for a nice dinner and celebrate the last night of the tour. (B,L,D)

### Day 12

You are free to leave at anytime today. (B)

## Bangkok Early Bird Arrival Package

If you want to arrive early in Bangkok and spend a couple of days exploring the city consider our Bangkok early arrival package.

### Itinerary

**Day 1** Arrive Bangkok. You will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. We will provide information on things to do and places to see.

**Day 2** A day to relax, shop, swim or explore. In the evening take part in our Bangkok Night Bike tour, exploring the city from handlebar height. This 4 hour ride really shows a different side of this vibrant city.

**Day 3** Today is day 1 of the Lao Lao tour. You will be met at the hotel by your tour leader and transferred to the airport for the flight to the north of Thailand and the start of your Laos adventure.

### Hotel

For this package you will stay in deluxe rooms at the Viengtai Hotel. The hotel is located close to Khao San Rd, a famous backpacker street with all services needed by travellers close at hand. Surrounding the hotel there are many restaurants, internet cafes, travel agents, market stalls and banks. The hotel has newly renovated rooms with private bathroom, air conditioning, TV and 24 hour reception. An excellent buffet breakfast is included.

Viengtai Hotel  
42 Rambuttri Rd  
Banglumphu  
Bangkok  
Thailand  
Tel: +66 2280 5434-45  
[www.viengtai.co.th](http://www.viengtai.co.th)

### Inclusions

- 2 nights in deluxe room at the Viengtai Hotel
- Airport transfers
- Travel information for Bangkok
- Bangkok Night Bike tour (bikes included)

### Pricing

Single	US\$230	Extra nights
Double	US\$180	US\$55
		US\$32

Prices are per person

### Bookings

To book a place on this package please indicate on the Lao Lao booking form or just send us an email.



## Tour Details

### Style

Fully supported bicycle tour.

### Inclusions

Mekong boat trip, Ou River boat trip, Kuang Sii Waterfall, local guide, tour leader, most meals, support vehicle.

### Group Size

Minimum 3, maximum 14.

### Food

Included meals: 11 breakfasts, 8 lunches, 8 dinners, plus water, fruit and biscuits on cycling days. You should consider bring some of your favourite energy snacks and electrolyte powder for the cycling days.

### Arriving in Bangkok

Meeting Point - We will provide you will e-tickets for the flight to Chiang Rai on day 1. You will see you tour leader at the airport, on the plane or waiting for their luggage in Chiang Rai. Just look out for the green Grasshopper shirt!

### Accommodation

6 nights comfortable hotel, 4 nights local guesthouse (with private bathroom), 1 night basic guesthouse. Due the nature of cycling trips we stay in some towns where the general standard of accommodation can be quite low. In these places

we have chosen the best possible place to stay - trust us there's nothing better! In the bigger towns we choose hotels with style and location considered. The accommodation on this trip is a roller coaster from basic guesthouses through to 4 star luxury.

### Single Room - US\$350

On Grasshopper Adventures tours single travellers do not have to pay any extra to join our trips - we will match you up with another same sex, single traveller. However, should you wish to choose to take a single room we are happy to book rooms for you for an extra charge. This single supplement is completely voluntary. We should point out that on occasion single rooms may not be available and in these instances you may need to share for a night or two - we will refund part of your single supplement in these cases.

### Additional Accommodation

Should you require extra accommodation in Bangkok before or Vientiane after the trip we can offer you competitive rates at our hotel. Please book extra nights when you book your trip.

Bangkok - Viengtai Hotel - deluxe room

Single: US\$55/room

Double/Twin: US\$64/room

prices includes breakfast

Vientiane - Lao Plaza Hotel

Single: US\$90/room

Double/Twin: US\$106/room

prices includes breakfast

## Cycling Details

### Cycling Days and Distance

8 days - 626km

### Difficulty

Moderate/Difficult - this trip involves some riding up long mountain roads, some dirt road riding and longer days over 80km. Riders should be of reasonable cycling fitness.

### Cycling Conditions

Road conditions in Laos are good on the main highways which we will be using. Maintenance, however, is not always the best so you must expect random potholes, short sections of terrible road and road works. While this ride does lose altitude over its course, the two days out of Luang Prabang are very challenging with long hills to climb. Traffic is generally light but care must be taken with all those unexpected surprises like chickens, children and dogs running out in front of you. Stay alert.

### Bikes

You will need to bring your own bike for this trip. The best bike for conditions in Laos would be a good working mountain or hybrid bike with 21 gears or more and hybrid tyres to cope with the varying conditions. You should have your bike serviced by a professional bike mechanic before travelling to ensure that it is in good working order. While we do provide mechanical assistance and carry some spare parts during the

trip you will need to bring spare parts (including tubes) for your bike as different bikes use different parts and we cannot guarantee that we will have a part to suit your bike.

### Bike Hire | US\$100

If you don't have a bike or don't want to bring your own you can hire a bike from us for the entire trip. We provide well maintained Giant Boulder mountain bikes in sizes 15"-21" and will be responsible for any maintenance required during the trip for these bikes. Please note, renters will be liable for any damage caused to rental bike which is a result of riding accidents. For added comfort you should consider bringing your own seat and pedals which we can easily fit to your rental bike.

### Helmets

For safe cycling we highly recommend wearing a helmet whilst cycling on our trips.

### Transporting your bike

Most international airlines consider bicycles as part of your regular luggage weight allowance, so you will need to pack light. The best way to transport a bicycle is to package it in a bike box. Most bicycle stores are happy to give away boxes for free. You will need to remove the front wheel (and sometimes the rear wheel), handle bars, pedals and seat post. Tape any loose parts to the bike frame and pack a few extras in the box such as your helmet. You can keep your box until the end of the trip to pack it for the trip home.

On the domestic flight to Chiang Rai on day 1 there is a

weight limit of 15kg for 'sports equipment'. If your bike weighs more than this you will be charged approx US\$2.50 per kilogram over 15kg.

### Support Vehicle

For the cycling days we will have the backup support of a small bus that will carry our luggage, snacks, water, and anybody not cycling. You can use the support vehicle whenever you feel like no longer cycling.

## Travel Details

### Visas

In Thailand, 30 day single entry visas are free on arrival for many nationalities. If you want to stay long than 30 days, 2 month visas are available from the Thai embassy in your country.

Lao visas can easily be obtained on entry at the immigration point where we enter the country. Visas cost US\$30. Make sure you have one passport photo for your visa application form.

Before you travel check your passport to ensure that there is room for a visa and entry/exit stamps (at least 3 pages) and that it has at least 6 months validation remaining.

### Travel Insurance

It is a condition of participating in a Grasshopper Adventure that you hold travel insurance for the duration of the trip. Insurance must include comprehensive medical and emergency evacuation. Your travel insurance details will be checked by your group leader on arrival at the starting point hotel.

### Flights

International flights to the starting point and from the finish point are not included in the price of this tour. We can assist with the purchase of inter-Asia flights and provide advice if you are considering overland travel.

### Money

The official currency of Thailand is the baht which should be used for all transactions. Thailand has a modern banking systems with ATMs and money changers in everywhere. When coming to Thailand it is possible to use Visa/Mastercard or Cirrus/Maestro cards to access cash with an ATM. You should, however, carry travelers cheques as a backup. Most international currencies can be exchanged so it is not necessary to bring only US dollars - AUD, EUR, CAD, NZD are all accepted at banks in major centres.

The official currency of Laos is the kip, however, the US dollar serves as a second currency and can be used for larger purchases. If going to Laos it is best to bring some small denomination US dollars cash along with travelers cheques as your main form of money. Thai Baht can also be changed easily. Credit cards can are not that useful in Laos.

For current exchange rates visit:

[www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com)

### Costs

We recommend that you allow approximately US\$10 for food and general living costs per day. Shopping money should be considered extra to this amount. It is customary to tip the

guides and drivers in Laos. You should allow approximately US\$20 for tips. Note: this is a guide only, feel free to tip more or less (or nothing) depending on your satisfaction.

### Electricity

Thailand and Laos work on a 220 volt system and uses two flat pin plugs which is standard in South East Asia. You can easily buy an adapter for much cheaper than home when you arrive in Hanoi.

Plugs look like this: | |

### Packing

While we do have a support vehicle to carry your luggage during the cycling days, you will be required to carry your own luggage at times. Luggage will need to be loaded on and off buses and up and down stairs at hotels. For this reason we recommend that you pack as lightly as possible in a backpack or small wheeled bag. If traveling to Laos in December/January it is quite cold at night and in the early morning. You should bring a wind breaker and cold weather clothing. You should consider bringing the following items:

#### Personal

Backpack  
Long trousers  
Shorts  
Shirts  
Hat  
Sandals/Light Shoes  
Swimming Costume  
Sunglasses  
Light Rain Coat  
Toiletries  
Small Towel  
Sunscreen  
First Aid Kit  
Mosquito Repellent  
Camera and Film/Memory  
Alarm Clock

#### Travel

Passport with 6 months  
validity and spare pages  
Passport photo  
Travel insurance details  
Flight tickets  
Money - cash/credit cards/  
travellers cheques  
Phrase book

#### Bicycle

Bicycle  
*if renting* - your own seat &  
pedals (optional)  
Something to carry your  
personal belongings in while  
cycling, eg. day pack, bum  
Bag, handlebar bag  
Helmet  
Cycling gloves  
Bicycle water bottle  
Bike shorts with something to  
put on over the top while  
off the bike

Note: on the domestic flight to Chiang Rai on day 1 there is a strict checked luggage allowance of 15 kilograms per person. If you exceed this limit you will be charged approx US\$2.50 per kilogram over the weight limit.

### Health

There are no specific health requirements for travelling in Laos, however, we recommend that you visit a travel medicine doctor before travelling. You should carry a well stocked first

# Lao Lao Bike Tour

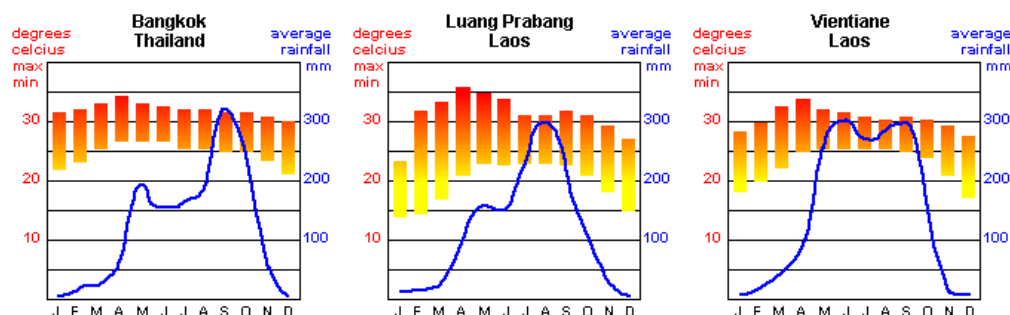
## Tour Notes



aid kit with you when you travel. All Grasshopper Adventures Group Leaders are first aid trained, however, they are not permitted to distribute any medications.

### Climate

Laos has a tropical climate with generally warm to hot days and warm nights, however, in the north it can get quite cold during the cool season. The coolest months are November to January - during this time you should expect very cold mornings down to 5 degrees Celsius. During the wet season (May-Oct) it does rain most days



but the rain generally falls in the late afternoon or night - after we have finished our cycling. The wet season is actually a fantastic time to visit Laos as the rain brings the fields and country to life. Endless green rice fields are a feature of this time of year.

## Positive Impact

An integral part of traveling is to have a positive impact on the country that you are visiting. On this trip there are a number of things you can do to have a positive impact on the communities that we visit.

### Dress

Laos and Cambodia are still quite a conservative country. In rural areas and temples overly revealing clothing is considered offensive. You should make an effort to dress more conservatively in these situations. Walking around a village in bike shorts is not appropriate so if you wish to cycle in just bike shorts you should have something with you on the bike to put on over the top such as long loose shorts or a skirt/sarong. A good solution to this is 'shy shorts' which combine cycling shorts with loose long shorts over the top. When visiting temples shorts are acceptable providing they cover the knee. Sleeveless tops are not acceptable in temples.

### Poverty

There is an enormous amount of poverty in Laos and Cambodia which you will see, particularly in tourist areas. If you choose to give something to a beggar you must bear in mind the value of money in the country you are visiting. Many beggars can earn more than those who work unskilled jobs. There are organisations in Laos who are working to alleviate this poverty issue and may be able to do more good with donations that you might like to make. Your Tour Leader will be able to provide more information about this.

### Phrase Book

A highly memorable part of your travels will be the local people that you meet. In the tourist areas some people will speak English but away from these areas you should learn a few words of Lao or Khmer. We will teach you some of the basics but if you want to really interact we recommend bringing a phrase book.

### Donations

Often when coming on trips overseas people like to bring items such as sweets, pens and books for children or old clothing for families. While this is a fantastic idea, if distributed in the wrong way it can actually create more problems. Giving items away to local people can create an expectation that a visiting foreigner equals free give away's. In some communities in Asia this has created whole villages where the only interaction is the locals asking for things. If you would like to donate anything to the communities that we visit we suggest that you give the items to Grasshopper Adventures which we will then pass on to development organisations, schools or whole communities. In this way items are distributed by those working in the communities who understand better the local needs.

### Big Brother Mouse

In Laos we choose to support the Big Brother Mouse organization. Big Brother Mouse is a Lao-based, Lao-owned project. They publish books that make it fun and easy for kids to learn to read; and books that will provide older readers with access to the information, ideas, and pleasure. Something people in many countries take for granted.

Until now, few books were published in the Lao language. Many Lao people never saw a book. Children in most villages had nothing to read except textbooks, and often not even that. Big Brother Mouse has already begun to change that.

We ask our travelers to donate a small amount of money so that we can buy a collection of books to donate to a school. At some stage during the tour we will stop in a village to donate the books to a needy school. In this way we can act as a distribution network for children's books in Laos. It is our dream that one day we will have delivered books to every school that we cycle past!

More on Big Brother Mouse can be seen at [www.bigbrothermouse.com](http://www.bigbrothermouse.com)

### Important

All information in these tour notes is researched with care and provided in good faith. The information subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Grasshopper Adventures.

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