

# HERITAGE TEMPLE & LAOS LUSCIOUS LANDSCAPES

## SIEM REAP – MEKONG CRUISE – SAIGON – LAOS

13 Days / 12 Nights

### Day 01: Arrive Siem Reap

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Welcome to Siem Reap. Upon arrival at the Airport, you will meet your Guide and transfer to hotel for Check-in. (Standard Check in time 1400 hrs.)

Lunch and dinner are on your own account.

Overnight at your selected hotel

### Day 02: Siem Reap – Angkor Tour

(B)



Breakfast at the hotel.

We are departing to visit the world heritage temple of Angkor Wat Temple, Angkor Park's most revered temple and the largest religious monument in the world. Inside the temple, the walls are covered with stone carvings and bas-reliefs, which are absolutely breathtaking. Your guide will explain the stories in exquisite detail and provide you with ample time to explore the inner and outer grounds of the temple.

Afternoon: visit the South Gate with its huge statues depicting the churning of the ocean of milk and see the ancient capital of Angkor Thom, built in the late 12th century, before we head onwards to Bayon Temple, which is unique for its 54 towers decorated with over 200 smiling faces of Avolokitesvara. Baphuon is like an artificial mountain that recently re-opened after years of restoration. Following, you may visit the Royal Enclosure, the Elephants Terrace, and the Terrace of the Leper King. Then continue to the popular temple of Ta Prohm, which is the modern name of the temple at Angkor, built in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. However, it is probably more famous for being the location where they filmed the Tomb Raider movie.

Lunch and dinner are on your own account.

Overnight at your selected hotel

## Day 03: Siem Reap – Phnom Penh

(B)

Breakfast at your hotel.

This morning, our driver will meet you at the hotel lobby for assistance with a transfer to the airport for the flight to Phnom Penh City (*flight not included*).

*Suggestion flight K6106 16:00–16:45 (flight price in supplement)*

Upon arrival, your tour guide will meet and greet you and transfer you to the hotel for check-in.

Lunch and dinner are on your own account.

Overnight at your selected hotel

## Day 04: Phnom Penh

(B/D)



A discovery tour of Phnom Penh. At 8:00 a.m., you will be met by your driver and guide. Gain insight into the recent dark history of Cambodia at the **Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum**, a former school converted into a detention center during the Khmer Rouge. Visit the equally harrowing **Killing Fields of Choeung Ek**. These are tough visits, but important for learning about the country's history.

Lunch at your own account.

Afternoon, visit **Wat Phnom**, a beautiful hilltop temple with manicured gardens, followed by the **Royal Palace** and **Silver Pagoda**, named for the 5,000 silver tiles that cover the pagoda's floor, known for its collection of gold, silver, crystal, and bronze Buddha statues.

Board your **Victoria Mekong Cruise** at 4:00 PM and meet your crew.

The charming capital of Phnom Penh was once known as the "Pearl of the Orient" for its French colonial buildings, tree-lined boulevards, and scenic riverwalk. Against the backdrop of a traditional musical performance, board the **Victoria Mekong Cruise Ship** at **Sisowath Quay**, Phnom Penh's downtown riverside promenade.

As the sun sets on the Tonle Sap River, linger over a sundowner on the sundeck while taking in a performance of Khmer Apsara dancing, with the opportunity to meet the performers afterward. As day turns into night, sit down to a wonderful dinner to officially welcome you aboard your Victoria Mekong Cruise. Tonight, the ship overnights at Sisowath Quay.

- *Khmer dance performance on board the ship*
- *Cocktails are served in our Horizon Lounge Bar. Meet the crew and your fellow passengers.*

Accommodation: Victoria Mekong Cruise (Deluxe Cabin Main Deck)

Day 05: Phnom Penh – Tan Chau – Vam Nao

(B/L/D)



As the ship begins cruising towards the Cambodia-Vietnam border, enjoy the morning sun by the Infinity Pool or the Sky Deck, followed by breakfast in the restaurant. After, select from the many on-board activities, including a ship's tour, mini-golf, or simply enjoy the scenery as we sail on towards Vietnam and cross the border between Vietnam and Cambodia. After lunch, head by sampan to the shore, where you will then board a local rickshaw to a silk village to witness all the labor-intensive steps to producing this fine textile, including the use of natural dyes made from tree bark, leaves, and fruit.

Return on board in time for a traditional Vietnamese lion dance. After dinner, enjoy the evening's entertainment while the ship sails to Vam Nao, where we anchor for the night.

- *Leisurely cruising along the Mekong River, traveling from Cambodia to Vietnam*
- *Visit a famous Silk Farm village to observe the whole process of traditionally producing silk using only natural products (silk thread, dyes made of tree bark, leaves, and fruit).*

Accommodation: Victoria Mekong Cruise (Deluxe Cabin Main Deck)



Day 06: Vam Nao – Tiger Island – Long Xuyen

(B/L/D)



Wake up to another leisurely breakfast in Phu Tan, the provincial capital of An Giang in the Mekong Delta. Tender ashore to visit a craft village famed for handmaking Ca Rang clay stoves. Used for hundreds of years by the southern Vietnamese, these stoves have a unique design that allows them to block the wind, retain heat, and keep ash from dispersing. During lunch, the ship sails on before anchoring near Tiger Island. Head ashore by sampan and explore Tiger Island by 3-wheeled "xe loi," learning about cottage industries such as plant pot making and incense making. Visit a site locally known as "Mr. Tiger's Temple" and hear the story that gave the island its name. Return on board in time for the cocktail competition and the evening's entertainment.

Accommodation: Victoria Mekong Cruise (Deluxe Cabin Main Deck)

Day 07: Long Xuyen – Dinh Yen – Can Tho

(B/L/D)



Enjoy a relaxed breakfast as the ship cruises towards the provincial capital of Long Xuyen. Travel by tender to witness the mesmerizing Long Xuyen floating market and tour the A Giang Museum, with fascinating exhibits on Kinh, Chinese, Khmer and Cham cultures in the region.

Enjoy lunch onboard as we cruise towards the village of Dinh Yen where we'll observe colorful straw mats being woven on mechanized looms. On the way, we'll also visit a family who makes delicate tofu skin, a food product made from boiling soy milk with a plethora of uses. Return to the ship and cruise towards Can Tho, the beating heart of the Mekong Delta. Enjoy a traditional Southern Vietnamese folk music performance known as "Đờn ca tài tử" followed by a final farewell dinner. Overnight in Can Tho.

Accommodation: Victoria Mekong Cruise (Deluxe Cabin Main Deck)

**Day 08: Tan Loc – Can Tho – Cai Be – Ho Chi Minh City****(B)**

Enjoy breakfast on the terrace of **Claypot Restaurant** with time to enjoy the view from the pool or from your private balcony before disembarkation.

Accompanied by your local guide, board a coach for Cai Be, where lunch is served at the elegant **Le Longanier Restaurant**, set amidst lush fruit trees by the river. Continue to Ho Chi Minh City, arriving mid-afternoon at **EMM Hotel Saigon**, 157 Pasteur Street, District 3.

Overnight at your selected hotel

**Day 09: Ho Chi Minh City – Luang Prabang****(B)**

Breakfast will be served at the hotel.

At the indicated time, a private transfer by air-conditioned vehicle with an English-speaking guide to the airport will take the flight to Luang Prabang (*flight not included*).

Upon arrival in Luang Prabang, you will be met at the airport by **your guide**. The guide will assist you in transferring to your hotel for check-in. Please note that the standard check-in time is 14:00. Depending on your arrival time, you may decide to add an additional tour at this point.

*Notice: Revealing clothes such as shorts and skirts above the knees and bare shoulders are prohibited in sacred places and temples.*

**LUANG PRABANG:**

Luang Prabang, the ancient capital of Luang Prabang Province in northern Laos, lies in a valley at the confluence of the Mekong and Nam Khan rivers. Inhabited for thousands of years, it was the royal capital of the country until 1975. It's known for its many Buddhist temples, including the gilded Wat Xieng Thong, dating to the 16th century, and Wat Mai, once the residence of the head of Laotian Buddhism.'

Overnight at your selected hotel

## Day 10: Luang Prabang – City Tour by Tuk Tuk

(B/L)



Breakfast at your hotel

Explore the city by Tuk Tuk. The Tuk Tuk (a motorized rickshaw) was brought to Southeast Asia in 1934 from Japan and has since become an icon of the region. The classic Tuk Tuk has a sheet-metal roof covering an open frame that rests on three wheels. They're one of the most popular forms of transportation in Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia, and this Southeast Asian emblem is the perfect vehicle for an open-air tour of Luang Prabang.

Depart from the hotel at 8:30 and get on the Tuk Tuk to the open-air morning market in the old town. There are only a few large grocery stores here; instead, food is still produced by small farming families and villages and brought to Luang Prabang from the surrounding rural areas. The guide will explain the common vegetables and fruits that are in season and pick up some snacks for later.

A short walk from the market is Wat Mai Suwannaphumaham ("New Monastery"), the National Museum (Royal Palace), and Hor Phra Bang. After the museum, travel again by tuk-tuk through more of the picturesque town to Wat Visounalath. Continue to Heuan Chan Luang Prabang for a short activity and learn how to make banana leaves and flowers.

Another short tuk-tuk ride along the Nam Khan River to Wat Xieng Thong. End the day's tour on top of Mount Phousi.

Dinner on your own account.

Overnight at your selected hotel

Day 11: Luang Prabang – Pak Ou Caves & Kuang Si Waterfall

(B/L)



Breakfast at your hotel

Travel by boat to Tham Pak Ou Caves and by vehicle to the beautiful Tad Kuang Si Waterfall, stopping on the way to visit Hmong and Khamu villages. Hmong and Khamu villages have different structures and ways of life; here, we learn about their traditions and the differences between Lao, Khamu, and Hmong culture.

#### PAK OU CAVES

Pak Ou Caves, one of the most respected holy sites in Lao, have a history dating back thousands of years. Packed with over 4,000 Buddha icons, the caves, a shrine to the river spirit and Lord Buddha, are set in a dramatic limestone cliff at the point where the Mekong joins the Nam Ou River. There are two caves to visit: the lower cave called Tham Ting and the upper cave called Tham Thueng, both boasting miniature Buddhist figures that are mostly made from wood.

#### KUANG SI WATERFALL AND BEAR RESCUE CENTER

Tad Kuang Si Waterfall is the biggest waterfall in the Luang Prabang area, with three tiers leading to a 50-meter drop into spectacular azure pools before flowing downstream. The pools also make great swimming holes and are very popular with both tourists and locals. Visit the Bear Rescue Center within the Kuang Si Waterfall Park (no extra entrance ticket).

Many of the bears at the Tat Kuang Si Bear Rescue Centre were destined for bile farms or kept illegally as 'pets'. Since 2003, we've been working with the Luang Prabang Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office to create a safe haven for these victims of the illegal wildlife trade. The bears can now relax in hammocks, play with new friends, and live a safe, healthy life.

**ADDON OPTION:** We offer an exciting chance to go behind-the-scenes. You'll hear the unique and moving rescue stories of the bears, meet the bears, help the Bear Care Team prepare their food and enrichment treats, and then watch the bears search them out and gobble them down. By taking part in this unique experience, you'll be contributing directly towards helping care for bears rescued from the illegal wildlife trade.

#### KUANG SI BUTTERFLY PARK

Situated 300 m before the entrance of Kuang Si Waterfall, Kuang Si Butterfly Park is a project that was initiated in January 2014 by two passionate people from Holland. The mission was to create a research center studying and publishing about Laos butterflies, host plants, and preservation due to environmental issues in Laos. A nice little café on the pond can finish the visit with a good coffee and a delicious baguette in a beautiful setting.

Dinner on your own account

Overnight at your selected hotel





Breakfast at your hotel

Tours are divided into morning and afternoon half-day segments, with both being led in English by the locals who know the village best. In addition to the pottery, we are able to offer an authentic Lao meal during your tour, whether you choose a morning or afternoon time. We promise a truly Lao, laid-back experience, and we hope you leave feeling like friends and family!

### Morning Programs

#### Ancient Lao pottery making

For over 400 years, the families of our village have been making pottery. The ancient kings of Laos chose this village for their pottery-making skills, and it became the central way of life for the people. At first, the pots were used to ferment fish and hold water, but now families produce a large range of items, from beautifully decorated planters to terracotta roof tiles, making them almost entirely by hand using the same techniques passed down through the centuries. We have started our company in part to help preserve this amazing history, as it's slowly fading away with only six families still preserving these techniques.

On your tour, you not only get a behind-the-scenes look at these ancient techniques but will also have the opportunity to get hands-on with the clay yourself. Our skilled pottery makers will help guide you as you experience, up close and personal, a truly Lao cultural activity. How many people can say they've made Lao pottery using ancient techniques? You will!

#### Experience a Traditional Lao Village

Most Lao people live in villages. Luang Prabang, though small compared to many cities in other countries, is considered a major population center by the people in Laos. Spending all of your time in cities like this means you might miss out on some of the most extraordinary parts of Laos.

Located just across the river from Luang Prabang, our village provides a convenient and authentic look into what most of Laos looks like. We will make sure you get to see Laos the way Lao people do! We have made sure that you will have access to modern amenities such as western restrooms and clean drinking water, but we guarantee you'll walk away with a different outlook on the world!



### Eat delicious Lao food.

One of the highlights of Laos is the wonderfully delicious Lao food, cooked (as always) with lots of love. If you decide to take our half-day tour, we will finish up our tour with traditional Lao food cooked by our family! All the ingredients come from local sources, and if the season is right, they might even come from our very own organic garden (just ask!). We will make sure you get a sampling of all of Luang Prabang's traditional foods, like khaipan (fried river weed), grilled fish, eggplant dipping sauce, and spicy papaya salad. We promise you that your stomach will thank us!

### Afternoon Programs

Experience for yourself the process of making rice—from seed to table—on this half-day 'Rice is Life' interactive experience. We go explore the life cycle of rice with this superb day activity suitable for families and individuals. Rice is the center of life in Laos, and we make it your focal point for the day.

### Half-Day Rice is a Life Interaction Program

You can buy instant boxed rice from either Uncle Ben's or some other corporate brand, microwave it for two minutes, and it's ready to eat. But do you know what it takes to cultivate, harvest, and prepare rice before it is ready to eat? It takes a lot more than two minutes in the microwave. This unique half-day activity invites you to an in-depth and hands-on learning experience where you will participate in 14 steps of the rice cycle on the Living Lands community farm.

Rice is the ultimate foundation of everyday life in Asia, yet it is still a mystery for many visitors. On this exceptional tour, you will be a rice farmer for a day. Learning how to select the seeds, plant, and plough with the help of the farm's water buffalo and every other step until the last one... eating!

The Living Lands Farm, a community enterprise just outside of Luang Prabang, maintains educational programs and professional organic farming right next to village rice paddies. Only small groups are able to join the interactive rice farming experience, which actively benefits locals and the community by maintaining their crafts in their traditional form. You will see and learn about bamboo weaving, tool and trap making, gardening, and even blacksmithing.

Dinner on your own account.

Overnight at your selected hotel

### Day 13: Departure Luang Prabang

(B)

Enjoy your final breakfast at the hotel. Take a walk or get some last-minute souvenirs before you check out at midday. Your guide and driver will meet you to assist with luggage and take you to the airport for your departure flight. (flight not included).

End of Service.