



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Laos and Cambodia Encompassed

Tour Duration – 29 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●○ | Culture ●●●●● | History ●●●●○ | Wildlife ●●●○○

Tour Pace

Busy

Tour Highlights

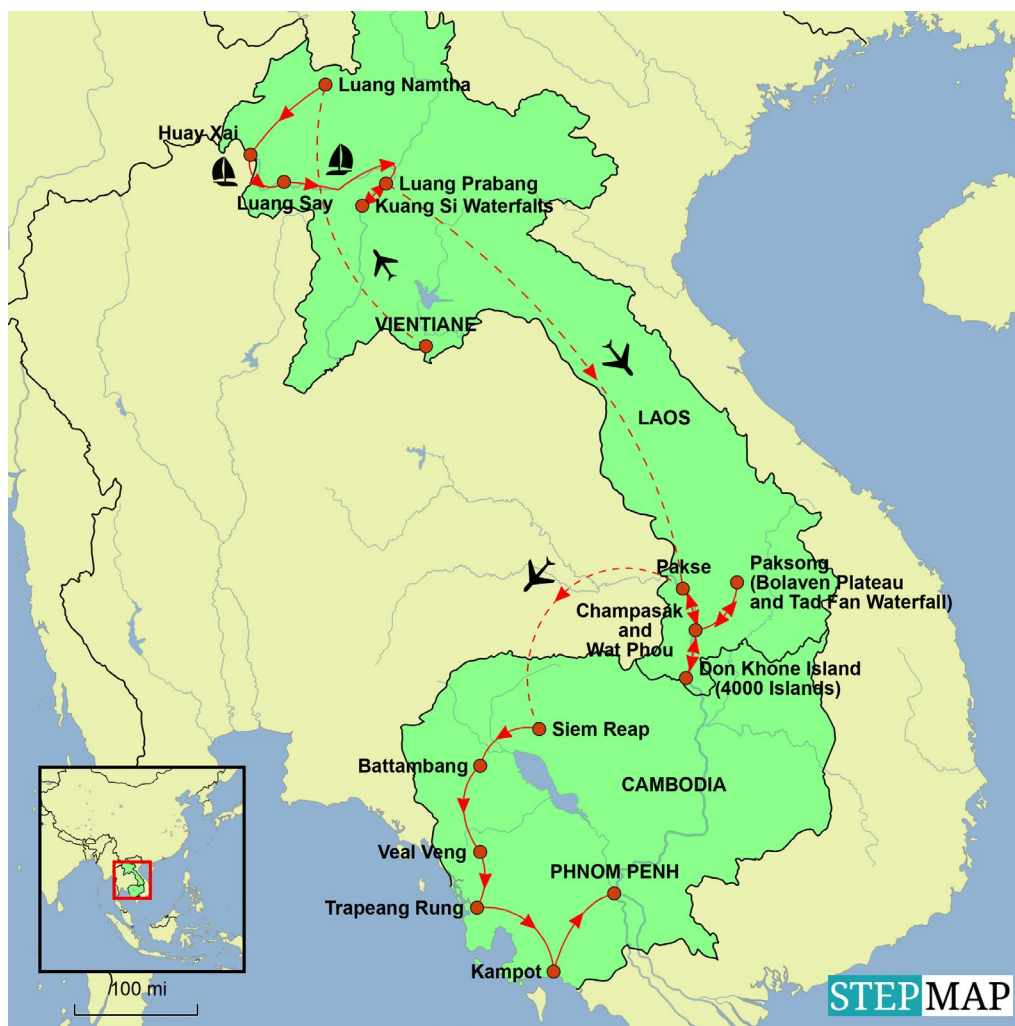
- ✓ Explore Vientiane, the friendly capital of Laos, and enjoy sunset overlooking the Mekong
- ✓ Experience the cultural diversity of the local tribes in the remote northern region of Laos
- ✓ Take a spectacular 2-day journey cruising down the mighty Mekong River
- ✓ See the gleaming temples and soak up the magical atmosphere of Luang Prabang
- ✓ Discover UNESCO world heritage listed Wat Phou, pre-dating Angkor Wat
- ✓ Explore the magnificent temples of Angkor Wat
- ✓ Visit the UNESCO site of Phnom Kulen National Park
- ✓ Spend an evening at the famous Cambodian circus
- ✓ Travel through the Cardamom Mountains, staying in a tented camp
- ✓ Discover Phnom Penh and the infamous Killing Fields





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Tour Map



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mix of Comfortable hotels and guesthouses with private bathrooms
Included Meals: Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
Group Size: Maximum 12
Start Point: Vientiane, Laos – you can arrive any time on day 1
End Point: Phnom Penh, Cambodia – you can depart any time on day 29
Transport: Minivan, boat, domestic and regional flights
Countries: Laos and Cambodia



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Laos and Cambodia Explorer

Laos and Cambodia, neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia, are known for the World Heritage Sites of Luang Prabang and Angkor Wat and for their shared rich French colonial past. On this extended tour we not only take in the key sights, but we take the time to get off the tourist trail and to uncover what makes these two destinations so special.

We start our adventure in Vientiane, Laos' delightfully friendly capital, studded with crumbling French mansions, bougainvillea-blooming streets and steaming noodle stalls. Next up is the little visited North of Laos to experience the ethnic diversity of the many hill tribes in the region of Luang Namtha and observe local customs and traditions. A 2-day journey down the mighty Mekong River then awaits culminating in an arrival in Luang Prabang, which captivates even the most jaded travellers with its brew of gleaming temple roofs, crumbling French provincial architecture and multi-ethnic inhabitants. Next, we head south to the spectacular lush jungle of the Bolaven Plateau and immerse ourselves in authentic coffee culture and visit some of the most alluring scenery in Asia, the landscape scattered with volcanos and sparkling waterfalls. We conclude the Laos leg of this remarkable tour visiting the mystical 4000 Islands, a one-of-a-kind river archipelago where the Mekong River spreads out over a width of 14km.

From Laos we take a short flight to Cambodia where our journey starts in Siem Reap with a visit to the magnificent Angkor Wat and its overwhelming collection of temples. Scattered throughout a huge area of forest, they comprise one of the world's greatest man-made wonders. Travel to Battambang and explore the rural side of Cambodia before taking an exciting journey through the Cardamom mountains, where we spend two nights in the Cambodian jungle. Explore local villages and relax in the coastal province of Kep before ending the tour in Phnom Penh, where we learn about the country's dark history, as well as experiencing the lighter side of the city; it's bustling nightlife.

Tour Itinerary Notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour, especially where more than one country is involved. Small group sizes of 3 or less will have a driver and different local guides in different locations.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Vientiane

Arrive in Vientiane and transfer to the hotel where the rest of the day will be at leisure. Overnight Khamvongsa Hotel or similar. No meals.





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Vientiane

This delightfully friendly capital, studded with crumbling French mansions, bougainvillea--blooming streets and steaming noodle stalls, is somewhere between a big town and a diminutive city; the kind of place you might find a Graham Greene protagonist. Its conveniently compact travellers' enclave is based around Nam Phu, the Mekong riverside and Setthariat and Samsenthai streets. Full of things to see, from Buddha Park to the morning market and an impossibly rich selection of international cuisine – most pointedly French – you'll find yourself slowly won over by the easy charms of this evolving backwater. The city may reveal its beauty less readily than Luang Prabang, but spend a few days visiting its unusual sights, sampling its excellent food, and enjoying a Beer Lao at sunset by the river, and you'll soon feel at home.

Day 2 – Vientiane

After breakfast, visit some of the important sites of Vientiane's past and present including Wat Sisaket, Wat Ho Pha Kheo, Patouxai, the Lao Victory Monument and Wat That Luang - the most sacred structure in all of Laos and if time allows Wat Si Muang where we can observe local people making their wishes. Visit the COPE Visitor Centre for a moving insight into the Secret War which left Laos as the most heavily bombed country in history. This afternoon is all about food where we stroll through the market and taste traditional Lao coffee and other local snacks. We shall also see how traditional Kao Piak (noodle soup) and papaya salad are made, staple dishes in Laos. Finally, today we take a drive alongside the fabled Mekong River and enjoy a cold Beer-Lao as the sunsets. Overnight at Khamvongsa Hotel or similar. (BL)

Day 3 - Vientiane – Luang Namtha

Enjoy a little leisure time this morning before taking an internal flight to Luang Namtha, the most ethnically diverse region in Laos. The rest of the day involves experiencing the cultural diversity of the region, visiting villages of tribes such as the Akha, Hmong, Khmu and Lanten people. During the day, interact and observe their traditional customs and practices. After sunset as the distant mountain ridges form layered silhouettes, enjoy a visit to the exotic night market. Overnight at Zuela Guesthouse or similar. (B)

Day 4 - Luang Namtha and the Lanten people

This morning, take a short drive out to a Lanten village in the jungle (approx. 15 minutes). Take an easy grade jungle walk (approx. 2 hours) deeper into the forest and on the way, it may be possible to observe some of the colourful tropical forest birds and if lucky perhaps also some wildlife. During the walk, the guide will share his experience to explain traditional medicine, animal tracks, edible leaves, and other things of interest. A Lao style picnic lunch will be served at Nam Dee Waterfall before visiting a traditional Lanten home in Nam Dee village to observe local people practicing activities such as traditional waving and bamboo paper making. Overnight Zuela Guesthouse or similar. (BL)

Day 5 - Luang Namtha – Huay Xai

This morning transfer to a local village known for their traditional weaving and handicrafts. Enjoy a demonstration in this ancient Lao trade and try your own hand at it! After lunch in town, travel to Huay Xa (approx. 4.5-hour drive) located on the banks of the Mekong River. Drive through the Nam Ha National Park, one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in Laos. Stop along the way to experience the sights and sounds of the jungle. Upon arrival in Huay Xai the rest of the day is at leisure. Overnight at Bokeo Guesthouse or similar. (BL)



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Day 6 – Le Grand Pakbeng Cruise

After breakfast, transfer to the local pier and commence cruising around 09:30am down the mighty Mekong River to Pakbeng (approx. 6.5 hours cruising time in total). After around an hour on the river, we stop at a traditional riverside village to take a chance to observe rural life alongside the Mekong. A Lao buffet lunch is served on board before a leisurely afternoon awaits, enjoying the magnificent scenery and nature of the Mekong as you cruise along. Disembark before sunset to the lodge near Pakbeng and this evening enjoy local Lao cuisine on the open-air terrace overlooking the Mekong. Overnight at Le Grand Pakbeng Resort or similar. (BLD)

Day 7 – Le Grand Pakbeng Cruise – Luang Prabang

After breakfast we continue the second leg of our cruise downstream and pass areas of unspoilt forest with little villages along the riverbanks, and perhaps the odd elephant or two with his mahout. We visit a Hmong village and have the opportunity to explore the local villages and old temples. Lunch is served on board as we enjoy the slow-paced cruise. After lunch we stop and visit the Pak-Ou Caves, an ancient pilgrimage site and containing thousands of gold lacquered Buddha images left there over hundreds of years. After the day on the river, we arrive at Luang Prabang the former royal capital of Laos. Upon arrival you will be picked up and transferred to your hotel. This evening we enjoy a delicious dinner in the renowned Mande De Laos. Overnight at Maison Dalabua or similar. (BLD)

Luang Prabang

Colour is the first of Luang Prabang's virtues to greet travellers. Pearly frangipanis with their heady perfume, banks of overgrown trees peppered with scarlet flowers, the burnt sienna robes of hundreds of monks and their novices, and resplendent gold and claret wats. The scent of fresh coffee, river activity, produce markets and spicy food soon follows. And then the broader aesthetics begin to unfold. Encircled by mountains and set 700m above sea level at the confluence of the Nam Khan (Khan River) and the Mekong River, Luang Prabang is Laos' foremost showpiece. The brew of gleaming temple roofs, crumbling French provincial architecture and multi-ethnic inhabitants captivates even the most jaded travellers, and the quiet benevolence of the city's residents lulls them into somnambulant bliss.

Day 8 - Luang Prabang

This morning, travel the short distance to the impressive falls of Kuang Si (approx. 45-minute drive). Relax around the cascades and idyllic pools and feel free to take a refreshing dip if you wish. A picnic lunch will be served close to the falls. Later visit the nearby Sunbear Refuge to learn more about the poaching and conservation efforts of these endangered creatures. On the way back to the town, visit the Buffalo Dairy Farm, known for their sustainable approach to local farming. Overnight at Maison Dalabua or similar. (BL)

Day 9 - Luang Prabang

Today is all about immersing in the wonderful world of Lao food. Start by visiting a local fresh food market where our local guide will explain the local produce on show. Continue by across the Mekong to the family home of our local guide where you will be greeted by friendly villagers and go on to experience a simple private cooking lesson in the family home with local specialities. After lunch, cruise back down river to Luang Prabang enjoy the views of river life whilst sipping on a refreshing drink or two. Later this afternoon, experience a private Baci ceremony at the small village of Ban Mano. These gentle villagers led by their Nai Ban (village chief) offer visitors tidings of good luck and fortune for their life and travels by gently tying cotton cords symbolizing luck, friendship, and good health around your wrists. The Baci ceremony will be held at a private family home. Afterwards, continue to a hidden temple rarely visited by foreign travellers and have a special encounter with the monks who will teach you the fundamentals of meditation. Overnight at Maison Dalabua or similar. (BL)



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Day 10 - Luang Prabang – Pakse – Wat Phou – Champasak

For early risers, witness the sacred ritual of monks on their alms rounds, known locally as Sai Bath. Long lines of barefoot monks go through the streets to receive their morning rice from the local villagers. After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your direct flight to Pakse. On arrival, visit travel to visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Wat Phou by car (approx. 1 hour drive). Continue to Champasak Town, cross the Mekong by private boat to Don Deang Island where your hotel is located and catch the sunset over the mystical mountains surrounding Wat Phou from your terrace. Overnight at La Folie Lodge, or similar. (BL)

Wat Phou

Recorded on the UNESCO World Heritage List, Wat Phou with its atmosphere is a pre-angkorian temples built upon three levels. When the temple has been erected, it was the most important economic and political centre in the region. The lower level is focused on the baray (water reservoir) and the promenade to join the second level with the galleries and the quadrangular pavilions. The upper level is the sanctuary itself.

Note - In keeping with our respectful stance regarding local cultures, please observe this sacred ritual from a respectful distance. If you take photographs, do not use a flash, and try not to let this interfere with this highly revered ritual.

Day 11 - Champasak – Bolaven Plateau

An early start today around 8am and transfer to the Bolaven Plateau (approx. 2 hours). On arrival in Paksong, enjoy a cup of local coffee at Jhai Café, the world's first completely philanthropic coffee roaster & café, located at source. We then continue by jeep on an exciting journey through along the backroads of the Bolaven and marvel at the spectacular highland scenery formed from an ancient super volcano. After a short (and bumpy) ride you will arrive at Mystic Mountain Coffee and meet Mr. Khamzone (just Kham is fine also) – for a masterclass on Bolaven coffee. Kham has been running his coffee plantation for 17 years. Enjoy a tour of the plantation followed by a coffee roasting demonstration. Continue to the secluded Tad Moun waterfall where you can take a dip in the crystal-clear water and enjoy a picnic lunch of authentic Laotian food close to the falls. Overnight at Sabaidee Valley Resort or similar. (BL)

Day 12 - Champasak – Bolaven Plateau

This morning take an easy trek to the inactive volcano of Dan Xinxay, one of many volcanoes on the plateau. After the trek, continue to Tad Champee waterfall and enjoy the opportunity to relax or swim and enjoy a picnic lunch of Lao specialities. After lunch, continue to Tad Fan waterfall which plunges impressively more than 100 metres into a jungle gorge. The final stop today is the more intimate falls of Tad Yueng. Overnight Sabaidee Valley Resort or similar. (BL)

Note – for those that do not wish to do the morning trek, then you can just visit the Tad Fan and Tad Yueng falls in the afternoon and the morning at leisure.

Day 13 - Bolaven Plateau – 4000 Islands

After breakfast, travel to the mystical 4000 Islands (approx. 3.5 hours), a one-of-a-kind river Archipelago where the Mekong River spreads out over a width of 14km. Take a short boat ride through these enchanting islands and feel the sense of tranquillity that makes this place so special. Arrive at Don Khone Island and the rest of the day will be at leisure to relax by the pool and immerse in the peaceful atmosphere. Overnight at Senghaloune Resort or similar. (BL)



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Day 14 - 4000 Islands

This morning you have the choice of some gentle cycling passing by the rice fields and friendly villages of the islands or to explore the islands by Tuk Tuk. This afternoon, join one of the local fishermen to experience the 4000 Islands from the local perspective. Board one of the wooden boats and head out to the fishing-grounds, equipped with nets which you can try throwing out into the water and try your luck at a catch. At dusk continue to a secluded spot where we enjoy the idyllic scene and enjoy a delicious BBQ and listen to local myths from your guide. Overnight at Senghaloune Resort or similar. (BD)

Day 15 - 4000 Islands – Pakse

After breakfast, take a short boat ride through the 4000 Islands to Nakasong Pier and continue to Pakse, en route visiting Kon Phapheng Waterfall, the largest waterfall by volume in Asia where the entire Mekong River descends downwards making for a truly amazing spectacle. Finally, a drive of around 3 hours will take us to Pakse for an overnight stay, Overnight Residence Sisouk Hotel or similar. (B)

Day 16 - Pakse to Siem Reap, Cambodia

After breakfast transfer to the airport for the one hour flight to Siem Reap where you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Overnight at La Niche D'Angkor Boutique Hotel or similar. No meals included today.

Day 17 – Siem Reap

This morning we visit a Buddhist pagoda for a special monk water blessing ceremony. This ceremony is believed to cleanse and keep bad spirits away while bringing good luck for the coming years. The offering of a Sadok (traditional gift of sugar, milk, tea, amongst other items) for the monk will be provided. After the blessing visit the spectacular jungle temple of Ta Phrom before visiting the main temples of Angkor Wat. This afternoon we explore Angkor by bicycle*. Ride past the King's Siem Reap residence and through the Royal Gardens and continue up the Siem Reap River past private homes and small riverside markets. Crossing the river, we wind our way along red clay roads and small dirt trails, through a series of local villages, crossing small farms and passing school children on their way home. We make our way towards the west edge of the Angkor Park. After a brief stop, we bypass the crush of visitors exiting the park and instead follow single track lanes, past stunning rice fields and small, historic family parcels where life appears unchanged for generations. As the temples close to visitors, we will access park roads and trails to view this remarkable historic site in twilight, and poise ourselves for a glimpse of sunset as the day comes to a close. We then take a peaceful Dragon Boat ride on the moat of Angkor Thom, with local delicacies including soft drink and champagne on-board. After the boat ride you will be transferred back to your hotel. Overnight at La Niche D'Angkor Boutique Hotel or similar. (BL)

Note: Visiting temples or other religious sites in Cambodia, visitors are advised to follow a dress code consisting of long trousers or skirt which covers the knees as well as covered shoulders. Skirts, short shorts, tank tops and revealing clothing are culturally insensitive and not allowed.

**The cycle ride is flat and approximately 20km in total.*

If you do not wish to explore Angkor by bicycle, a tuk tuk can be arranged. However, this may make following the smaller trails more difficult. Please advise us at the time of booking.



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Angkor Wat

Prepare for divine inspiration! The temples of Angkor, capital of Cambodia's ancient Khmer empire, are a perfect fusion of creative ambition and spiritual devotion. The Cambodian god-kings of old each strove to top their ancestors in size, scale, and symmetry, culminating in the world's largest religious building, Angkor Wat, and one of its weirdest, the Bayon. The hundreds of temples surviving today are the sacred skeleton of the vast political, religious, and social centre of an empire that stretched from Burma to Vietnam and which, at its zenith, boasted a population of one million. The temples of Angkor are the heart and soul of the Kingdom of Cambodia, a source of inspiration and national pride to all Khmers as they struggle to rebuild their lives after years of terror and trauma. Today, they are a point of pilgrimage for all Cambodians, and no traveller to the region will want to miss their extravagant beauty.

Day 18 - Phnom Kulen National Park

After breakfast we leave Siem Reap through the stunning countryside for a visit to the mysterious waterfall at UNESCO World Heritage Site of Phnom Kulen. Explore the area and visit Preah Ang Thom, which houses a large Buddha statue, as well as the Terrace of Sdach Kum Ling, a small brick-built ruined temple which was covered by lava for hundreds of years. We end at the waterfall where you can take a refreshing swim before a local Khmer lunch. After lunch we take a scenic drive to Banteay Srei, loosely translated as "Citadel of Women", which houses some of the finest and best-preserved examples of classical Khmer bas-relief. Continue to the Cambodia Land Mine Museum. This is part museum, but also an orphanage, school and clinic to victims ran by Aki Ra, who was forced by the Khmer Rouge to lay thousands of mines as a child and has now devoted his life to clearing them and has so far removed over 50,000. We finish our tour with sunset at Pre Rup Temple. This evening enjoy a night at the Cambodian circus. You will be picked up from your hotel at 7.30 pm by Remok (tuk tuk) to the Phare circus tent, located just outside of town. The show starts at 8:00 PM and lasts about an hour. Overnight at La Niche D'Angkor Boutique Hotel or similar. (BL)

Phnom Kulen

Phnom Kulen (or Kulen Mountain) translates as "Mountain of Lychees". It is located in Svay Leu District roughly 48km north of Siem Reap. Phnom Kulen is an isolated chain of small mountain plateau of moderate height lying south of the Dânggrêk Mountains and appears as a long silhouette on the horizon. Geologically Phnom Kulen is formed of sandstone, and it was important as a quarry in Angkorian times. Kulen is now a protected area and as of 1992 has acquired World Heritage status from UNESCO. The Samré tribe was formerly living at the edge of Phnom Kulen, quarrying sandstone, and transporting it to the royal sites at Angkor and beyond. The area is also easily defended as the infamous Khmer Rouge used the location as a final stronghold as their regime came to an end in 1979. Recently archaeologists have located some 30 temples on Phnom Kulen using helicopter-mounted lasers to measure variations in ground height through dense vegetation. Phnom Kulen is widely regarded as the birthplace of the ancient Khmer Empire. During the constructional period of the ancient temples in the ninth century, sand stones were brought from this sacred mountain to Angkor. It was here at Phnom Kulen that King Jayavarman II proclaimed independence from Java in 802 A.D. The site is known for its carvings representing fertility and its waters hold special significance to the people of Cambodia. Just a few inches under the surface of the water, over 1000 carvings of Yoni and Linga are etched into the sandstone riverbed. The waters are regarded as holy, given the sacred carvings which also include a stone representation of the Hindu god Vishnu lying on his serpent Ananta, with his wife Lakshmi at his feet. A lotus flower protrudes from Vishnu's navel bearing the god Brahma.



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Cambodian Circus

Phare Ponleu Selpak means "Brightness of the Arts". This is a circus like none other and it's very different to a western style circus. Phare is a Cambodian non-profit art organization founded in 1994 by eight young Cambodians returning from refugee camps along the Thai border. The purpose is to improve the development of local communities by providing education and professional artistic training. The circus performers are very talented, passionate and have travelled all of the world giving performances. The shows are constantly rotating depending on the time you visit. All of their shows are fantastic and focus on both traditional and contemporary themes. Some people credit Phare with the rebirth of Cambodian dance and culture.

Day 19 - Siem Reap – Battambang (165km, approx. 3.5 hours)

This morning you will be picked up from your hotel and drive to Battambang (approx. 3 hours, with a driver only). Upon the arrival in Battambang you will be transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure. Overnight at Bambu Hotel or similar. (B)

Day 20 - Battambang

This morning take your private remok and ride for about 5km to the Bamboo train where you have the opportunity to ride this unique contraption on train tracks that were initially built for the French to transport goods. Continue to Ek Phnom, an ancient temple 15km north of the town. This temple is stunning and seldom visited by tourists. Along the way, you will pass many small villages and encounter various village activities such as making bamboo sticky rice (korlan), fish paste, rice paper and banana paper. Afterwards we return to town and visit the campus of Phare Ponleu Selpak. The campus lets you experience the vibrant energy of Phare first-hand. Take a stroll through the campus with one of our guides to see circus students learning new tricks, music students practicing beneath shady trees, and watch an animation film made by our students. After lunch at a local restaurant visit the site of the "Killing Caves" at Phnom Sampeou. There is a Khmer Rouge memorial as well as an interesting temple on top of this hill. When at the top, you will have a commanding view over the Cambodian countryside. If you choose to stay until sunset, you will see countless bats exit from the cave down below, while enjoying a cold drink from a comfortable chair set up by enterprising locals. After sunset, you will be transferred back to your hotel. Overnight at Bambu Hotel or similar. (BL)

Day 21 - Battambang – Smiling Gecko Farm

This morning meet your guide and drive to Smiling Gecko farm (approx. 4 hours). On arrival you have the remainder of the day to enjoy the farm at your leisure. Overnight Smiling Gecko Farmhouse. (B)

Day 22 – Smiling Gecko Farm - Trapeang Rung, Koh Kong (175km, approx. 5 and a half hours)

After breakfast say goodbye to the farm and drive to Koh Kong province where you can relax at the lodge's lounge in Trapeang Rung before embarking for the hour's trip over the Preak Tachan River to Cardamom Tented Camp. Settle into your comfortable safari-style tent. This afternoon, go on an exploratory hike in the jungle around the camp. The diversity of the fauna will amaze you! Overnight Cardamom Tented Camp. (BD)

Cardamom Tented Camp

Electricity

Our camp is solar-powered, which means that we are not able so support heavy power-draining equipment such as flatirons or hairdryers. You will be able to charge cameras batteries, phones, etc. We have limited access to the internet but cannot guarantee connectivity at all times.



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Luggage

Getting to our camp involves a boat journey. We have limited luggage capacity on the boat and in the tents, but we offer the opportunity to leave large luggage items at our Trapeang Rung Jetty. Duffel bags or airplane cabin-sized luggage is ideal for the stay.

Laundry

We do not offer laundry services. Should you want to wash clothing, take your own biodegradable detergent.

Day 23 - Prek Tachan

After early breakfast, Wildlife Alliance Rangers will meet us and together with an English-speaking guide embark on patrol over a network of abandoned poaching and logging trails through the dense forest. Keep your eyes peeled for wildlife. The half-day hike will stop by the Ranger Station, where confiscated snares, traps and improvised hunting rifles are on display. Enjoy a local Khmer lunch and swimming in the river. Later this afternoon, kayak along Prek Tachan back to camp. Dinner and overnight at Cardamom Tented Camp. (BLD)

Note – the kayaking will be done yourself. If you do not wish to kayak back to camp, there is a motorboat option available.

Day 24 - Cardamom Departure – Kep (200km, approx. 4 hours)

If you are an early riser, you can go on a self-guided hike on the trails around the camp. At around 10am we head back to Trapeang Rung and travel to Kep (driver only). Upon arrival you will be transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure. Overnight at Raingsey Bungalow or similar. (B)

Day 25 – Kep – Kampot - Kep

Today explore Kampot by bicycle*. The journey will take you through rice fields, durian and rambutan orchards against the scenic backdrop of the mysterious 'Elephant Mountains'. Stop at local villages along the way to meet and speak with the local people. Your guide will help translate and if you are feeling adventurous try out a few words in Khmer, they are always delighted to hear you try! Our final destination will be the rapids on the Kampot River. This is where we will stop for a swim and enjoy a local picnic lunch. After a leisurely lunch and a swim in the cool waters you will be picked up and transferred back to your hotel. Overnight at Raingsey Bungalow or similar. (BL)

**this can be done by car instead of bicycle. A small supplement will apply. Please let us know at the time of booking.*

Day 26 - Kep

Spend the day at leisure. Overnight at Raingsey Bungalow or similar. (B)

Day 27 - Kep – Phnom Penh (160km, approx. 4 hours)

Today travel to Phnom Penh (approx. 4 hours, not including stops, driver only). Upon arrival check-in to your hotel and spend the afternoon at leisure. This evening transfer to Phnom Penh's river front for a sunset boat trip on Tonle Sap and the Mekong River. Whilst on board observe the past meeting with the present through old Buddhist pagodas and new commercial buildings both visible. Pass local villages nestled on the banks of the river and see the traditional floating houses and markets of the Mekong. Overnight at Rambutan Resort or similar. (B)



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Phnom Penh

The name of this city cannot help but conjure up an image of the exotic. The glimmering spires of the Royal Palace, the fluttering saffron of the monks' robes and the luscious location on the banks of the mighty Mekong – this is the Asia many dreamed of when first imagining their adventures overseas. Cambodia's capital can be an assault on the senses. Motorbikes whiz through laneways without a thought for pedestrians; markets exude pungent scents; and all the while the sounds of life, of commerce, of survival, reverberate through the streets. But this is all part of the attraction. Once the 'Pearl of Asia', Phnom Penh's shine was tarnished by the impact of war and revolution. But the city has since risen from the ashes to take its place among the hip capitals of the region, with an alluring cafe culture, bustling bars, and a world-class food scene.

Day 28 - Phnom Penh

Today we take a city tour. We start with a visit to Wat Phnom, where a 14th century stupa and small pagoda stands. It is the tallest religious structure in the city and the oldest building in Phnom Penh. Continue to the Royal Palace, built in 1866 under King Norodom. Adjacent is the Silver Pagoda, which is named after its floor which is covered with 5000 silver tiles. Later visit the National Museum, which houses an important collection of Angkorian artefacts. Lunch will be taken at the Friends Restaurant, which provides under privileged street children with the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of the hospitality business. All profits are reinvested into the Training Centre activities. This afternoon visit Choeng Ek, the location of the infamous Killing Fields. Continue to Tuol Sleng prison, the notorious Khmer prison where thousands of Cambodians perished in the darkest hours of Cambodian history. Overnight at Rambutan Resort or similar. (BL)

Note: When visiting the Royal Palace, visitors are advised to follow a dress code consisting of "long trousers or skirt which cover the knees, and covered shoulders". Skirts, small shorts, tank tops and other items of revealing clothing are not allowed.

Day 29 - Phnom Penh Departure

Transfer to the airport for your departure flight. (B)

Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers

All accommodation

Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader (please note local 'station guides' will be used for each location when the group size is less than 3 travellers. The same guide/tour leader will be used throughout when the group is 4 or more travellers)

Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)

Transport, including travel by minivan, river, and domestic/regional flights

Luang Say Cruise (shared with other passengers and not exclusive to the Undiscovered Destinations group)

Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights (except from Pakse to Siem Reap)

Any airport taxes (included for flights shown within the itinerary)

Travel Insurance

Visas

Drinks



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Important Information

Foreign Government Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to any of the areas we visit in Laos and Cambodia. It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore, please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis, please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

At Undiscovered Destinations we know our travellers prefer to stay in comfortable, mid-range accommodation. Rooms on this tour usually come with private bathroom except on the jungle trip and also in the local homestay in Cambodia. When necessary, air-conditioning will be provided. In general, you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar. Some smaller guesthouses, homestays and the ecolodge will not have such facilities.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements, you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.



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Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs, and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £2-£4

Dinner £6

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general, you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Water £0.75-£1.50

Beer £0.75

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is common practice in Asia. If your local guide has been helpful, then you could think about tipping. As a rough guide, drivers can be tipped between \$2-4 per day and guides between \$7-15 per day – these figures are per group, not per person.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: There is a reasonable network of ATMs across the region in larger towns and cities which accept internationally issued cards. In rural Northern Laos ATM machines are not always readily available.

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Larger hotels and higher end restaurants generally accept Visa and Mastercard.

Local Currency: Lao kip (LAK) and Cambodia Riel (KHR).

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US Dollar (Note that torn and old US dollar notes are not generally accepted in Laos).

Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive an airport transfer, both on arrival and departure include in the tour price. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time, and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.





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Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

At the time of writing British, US and Australian nationals require a visa for a tourist visit to Laos and Cambodia. For further details please visit the applicable website shown below.

British Nationals - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - www.smartraveller.gov.au/

Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destinations nearest embassy or consulate.

Should you require any documentation to support a visa application, such as a letter of invitation, upon request this will be provided by Undiscovered Destinations after receipt of your balance payment.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages for each country visited, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition, certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively, UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Vaccinations & Protection

As with travel to most parts of Asia, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice, and the necessary vaccinations.

For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. Anti-malaria medication will also be required, and the use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended.



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The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

October to February is the ideal time to be visiting Cambodia or Laos; as the countries' wet monsoon season ends, and the weather is comfortably warm, but not too hot. Expect average temperatures in the mid 20°Cs.

Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. The temperature can be cold at night, especially from November to February, so please bring some warm clothing with you. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. Please bring a torch or head torch for this tour as electricity outages can occur and it will be of assistance in dimly lit areas, especially on the trip up the Nam Nern into the jungle.

Footwear

Comfortable and sturdy walking shoes are recommended. When travelling lighter sandals are a good option.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large rucksack or soft type bag, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220V and plugs generally have two-prong round or flat pins.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour, but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated 24 January 2024.