

11 Days The Highlanders

Validity till Sept 2018

Tour Code: HPV11

Enjoy a combination of scenic landscapes, city sightseeing and adventurous trekking expeditions through villages and highland areas. We journey through many fascinating hill tribe villages, waving to the warm and friendly locals and admiring the dramatic mountain scenery. You will get a feel of their customs and culture as trekking provides a greater insight and staying overnight in a villager's home offers an authentic experience. This tour sees the best highlights and a close up cultural experience of northern Laos. This is remote country side and your homestay is very basic accommodation

Day1. Houeixai – Pakbeng (River)

This morning you have an early morning departure for to the small town of Chiang Khong, the exit point from Thailand to Laos on the banks of the Mekong River.

After passing through Thai immigration you will cross the Mekong River to Houeixai where your Lao guide will be waiting for you at the immigration point. Completing Laos border formalities you board your traditional slow boat for the trip down the Mekong River. The scenery along this part of the Mekong is arguably at its most beautiful. As your journey downriver you will stop at the Hmong of **Ban Houay Lampen** where you have the opportunity to explore the village and observe their traditional lifestyle.

Arriving at Pakbeng late afternoon you will check in to your hotel and enjoy a few drinks watching the sun set over the mountains and the Mekong. Overnight in Pakbeng. (B/L/D)

Day2. Pakbeng – Oudomxay (Road)

This morning we pay an early visit to the morning market in Pakbeng before driving towards Oudomxay, the most mountainous area in Laos. The many villages that dot the hillsides and the undulating terrain makes this an interesting journey.

Oudomxay Province is home to a mixture of 23 ethnic minority groups. We make a few rest stops along the way, giving you the opportunity to see the ethnic minority groups such as Hmong, Khmu, Black Thai and Lue. The hill tribe people are unfailingly friendly, welcoming you with waving hands and smiling faces. Overnight in Oudomxay (B)

Day3. Oudomxay – Muong La - Muong Ngoi (Road + River)

After breakfast, our journey to Muong La will lead us through some scenic landscape. Here we have the fantastic chance to visit **Pra Xack Kham Temple** with its sacred Buddha image. This 400 years old legendary Buddha image is said to have many supernatural powers and is widely worshipped among the faithful local Buddhists.

After a pleasant stop in Muong La we continue our voyage towards Muong Khoua and board a traditional boat for a leisurely cruise on the Nam Ou River to **Muong Ngoi**. This remote little village, set along the east riverbank is accessible only by river and surrounded by breathtaking scenery will be our base for trekking for the next two days. Overnight in Muong Ngoi (B, L, D)

Day4. Muong Ngoi – Ban Kioukhan (village homestay)

Today we discover the remote and extremely beautiful mountainous region of the north, ideal for anyone seeking an adventurous trekking expedition.

We head out of town and begin our trek uphill to the rural village of **Ban Kioukhan**. Along the way we trek through many different villages where we will be sure to attract attention from the friendly locals who don't encounter many foreign visitors.

We arrive at **Ban Kioukhan** by late afternoon and have time to walk around this charming village giving us the opportunity to interact with the locals and understand a little more about their culture and daily lifestyle. This village is home to **Khmu** hill tribe people who live a traditional lifestyle. We enjoy a local dinner and will reside at a Ban Kioukhan villager's house, the best way to experience

authentic village life. Overnight Ban Kiou Khan Homestay (B, L)

[Homestay is very limited facilities and basic accommodation]

Day5. Ban Kioukhan - Muong Ngoi (River)

After breakfast we continue our trek using trails used by the locals going about their everyday activities. These trails are more challenging but the experience is unique and rewarding.

After a 4-5 hour trek we arrive at **Ban Hadsaphaei** situated by the Nam Ou River. Boarding our traditional boat you have a chance to rest your aching feet and enjoy the stunning scenery as we cruise downriver arriving in Muong Ngoi midafternoon.

The rest of your afternoon and evening is free to explore or enjoy a few Beer Lao along the riverfront. Overnight in Muong Ngoi (B)

Day 6. Muong Ngoi – Luang Prabang (River + Road)

After breakfast this morning we take a short boat journey to Nong Khiaw where we transfer to road transport for the drive to the World Heritage town of Luang Prabang.

Along the way we visit the mysterious **Pak Ou Caves**, these caves are an ancient pilgrimage site and contain thousands of gold lacquered Buddha images left there over hundreds of years.

Arriving in Luang Prabang midafternoon we check in to our hotel and your evening is free to explore or relax at your hotel. Overnight in Luang Prabang. (B)

Day 7. Luang Prabang – City Tour

After breakfast back at your hotel we will head out to see the city's oldest temples, the magnificent **Wat Xiengthong** with its roof sweeping low to the ground representing classical Lao architecture, the impressive stupa of **Wat Visoun** and the shrine of **Wat Aham**. From here we visit the **Royal Palace Museum**, which hosts a range of interesting artifacts from the Royal period in Luang Prabang.

Your afternoon is free to treat yourself to a spa treatment or massage, explore the town by foot or bicycle or just relax at the hotel.

Late afternoon we climb to the top of **Mount Phousi** to explore the sacred gilded stupa and to enjoy the panoramic view of the city and the sun setting over the Mekong River.

Descending the mountain you will find yourself in the midst of the famous Luang Prabang **Night Market**, where you can find a unique selection of handmade textiles and handicrafts locally made by both ethnic Lao and hill tribe people surrounding Luang Prabang.

Your evening is free to explore the market and sample some traditional Lao cuisine at one of the many restaurants the town has to offer. Overnight in Luang Prabang (B)

Day8. Luang Prabang – Vang Vieng (Road)

This morning we have an early departure following Route 13 to Vang Vieng. Climbing into the mountains we pass through spectacular scenery and numerous hill tribe villages. We will lunch at an altitude of approximately 1,300 meters above sea level surrounded by the endless mountain peaks of this remote region. After lunch we continue on along Route 13 arriving in Vang Vieng midafternoon.

After check in and time to freshen up we board our boat for a relaxing trip on the Nam Song River, exploring the breathtaking mountain landscape and stopping to explore the famous **Tham Jang Cave**, used in the early 19th century in defense against the Chinese invaders. Overnight in Vang Vieng (B)

Day9. Vang Vieng – Discover

Depart from your hotel we drive 14kms north of Vang Vieng to explore a few of the many caves dotting the landscape.

Tham Xang (Elephant Cave) which lies on the opposite banks of the Nam Song. This cave is an

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important Buddhist temple and owes its name to a remarkable limestone formation. The nearby **Tham Hoï** (Snail cave) winds its way deep into the mountain. An hour of exploration through numerous corridors will take us to a crystal clear spring. Here swimming by candle-light is possible all the year round.

The most beautiful cave on this trip is **Tham Loup** (Deep cave). This cave is known for it's many stalagmites and stalactites. Another cool pool of spring water lies at the mouth of **Tham Nam** (Water cave), also a good place for a swim. Tubing inside the cave is possible.

After a picnic lunch we trek to the Hmong village of **Ban Phathao** passing through rice paddy fields and vegetable gardens. From here we **kayak** back to Vang Vieng through idyllic scenes of rural life and the stunning backdrop of limestone karst-mountains. Overnight in Vang Vieng (B, L)

Approximately: 25 minutes transfer/ 1½ hour trekking/ 2 hours caving / 2 hours kayaking

Day10. Vang Vieng – Vientiane (Road)

This morning we drive 4 hours to the national capital of **Vientiane**, a charming city with an interesting mix of Lao, Thai, Chinese, Vietnamese, French, Soviet and American influences.

After check in and time to freshen up we head out on our afternoon city tour. You are seeing the major temples of Vientiane including the oldest, **Wat Sisaket**, with its thousands of miniature Buddha statues, and the former royal temple of **Wat Prakeo**, which housed the famous Emerald Buddha Image. We also visit the national icon of Laos, **That Luang Stupa**, stopping along the way to take some pictures of the imposing **Patuxay Monument**, which is Vientiane's own Arc de Triumph, from there you visit **COPE Center**. The COPE was created in response to the need to provide **UXO** survivors with the care and support they required, namely by way of orthotic and prosthetic devices. This museum was set after in 1997 to help covering the victim during Indochina war.

Heading for the waterfront your evening is free to enjoy a few drinks watching the sunset over the Mekong River, explore the **Night Market** and take in some of the city's nightlife. Overnight in Vientiane (B)

Day11. Vientiane – Departure

After breakfast, we will visit the Morning Market and if time permits we will also visit the Laos's handmade textile exhibition center. The tour ends after your transfer to airport or for departure (B)

Prices below are quoted in USD per person, valid till September 2018									
Group of:	2-2	3-4	5-8	9-12	13-16	17-20	21-24	25-29	Single suppl.
3-Star Hotel	2719	2186	1911	1669	1505	1496	1425	1375	547
4-Star Hotel	2906	2374	2095	1854	1703	1681	1611	1563	733
5-Star Hotel	3184	2650	2373	1936	1969	1959	1888	1839	1011

Cities	3-Star Hotel	4-Star Hotel	5-Star Hotel
Pakbeng	Phetsokxai Standard	Sanctuary Pakbeng Superior	Sanctuary Pakbeng Deluxe
Oudomxay	Charming Lao Superior	Charming Lao Deluxe	Charming Lao Executive Deluxe
Muang Ngoi	Ning Ning Standard	Ning Ning Standard	Ning Ning Standard
Village Homestay	Villager's house Homestay	Villager's house Villager's house	Villager's house Villager's house
Luang Prabang	Sada Hotel Deluxe	Vangthong Hotel Deluxe	Luang Prabang View Superior
Vang Vieng	Vieng Tara Bungalow Riverview	Silver Nagas Deluxe	Riverside Boutique Deluxe
Vientiane	Season Riverside Standard	Lao Plaza Regular	Settha Palace Deluxe

Included in above prices:

- Accommodation in twin shared basis
- Private, Airconditioned Transport
- Boat trips as stated in the itinerary
- English speaking guide
- Admission fees to sites stated in the itinerary
- Meals: daily breakfast at hotel
- Gov't taxes and service charges
- Luggage handling
- Drinking water

Exclusive of above prices:

- Visas and Immigration fees on arrival
- Domestic airticket
- Int'l air tickets to/from Laos
- Travel and/or Medical Insurance
- Lunch or dinner unless stated in the itinerary
- Single room accommodation (quoted separately)
- Child or adult in triple share accommodation
- Foreign language guides other than English
- Peak Season or Special Events Surcharges
- Tip, drinks and other personal expenses

Additional Remarks:

- Itinerary is subject to change depending on flight availability, road and/or weather conditions and room availability.
- Group of 10 persons and above will use separate vehicle in Luang Prabang due to UNESCO restrictions on large coaches entering downtown Luang Prabang.
- Hotels listed above may not meet international star rating standards, especially in the remote areas where accommodation options are limited.
- Room rates quoted above do not include compulsory fees for special events, peak season such as Christmas and New Year or Gala Dinners etc.
- Prices are subject to change at any time as a result of VAT, Fuel Excise or other tax increases and USD currency fluctuations.

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