

MEKONG RIVERS CRUISE: LAOS REVEALED

YOUR ROUTE:

GOLDEN TRIANGLE – HUAY XAY – PAK THA – PAKBENG – PAK OU– LUANG PRABANG – KUANG SI – THA DEUA – PAKLAY – VIENTIANE (or vv.)

We offer 2 itineraries: Downstream (Chiang Rai – Vientiane) & Upstream (Vientiane – Chiang Rai). Request our cruising dates upon demand.



NOTE: Every river cruise on the upper Mekong is a pioneering experience and is subject to constantly changing river conditions, including floodwaters, low water levels, and morning fog. Therefore, please understand that we must reserve the right to alter the itinerary of this tour because of the logistical complexities involved. Small deviations in the tour program are sometimes necessary, depending on weather and river conditions. For safety reasons arising from the existing navigating conditions, these programs may be amended without previous notice.

Itinerary (11 days upstream Vientiane – Chiang Rai)



Day 01: Vientiane – Embarquement (D)

In Vientiane we meet you at the airport or pick you up in your hotel in town around 2pm. After a short sightseeing program to highlights of the Lao capital such as the Pha That Luang temple and the Wat Sisaket Monastery, you board your Mekong boutique river craft, a comfortable new cruise vessel, in the evening (*embarkation begins at 4pm*)*. This unique vessel is German-Laotian owned and outfitted with stylish cabins. Settle into your accommodations and unpack for a twelve-day cruise. Enjoy the spacious decks or onboard lounge, and join this evening's welcome reception and dinner. A selection of Asian and European food will be provided throughout the cruise. All overnights are spent aboard your boutique cruise ship.



Day 02 + 03: Natural Beauty along the mighty Mekong (B,L,D)

This morning you start your spectacular river cruise upstream to formerly inaccessible parts of the Mekong. Enjoy the comfort onboard the boat, with its fine service and exclusive, yet casual setting, which you share with a limited number of fellow guests. During the next days you will take exciting excursions, both on water and on land, and enjoy an onboard programme of presentations, talks, and film documentaries on relevant topics, such as the French Mekong Expedition of the 1860s, the daily life of a Buddhist novice monk, or the flora and fauna of the Mekong region.



A visit to a small riverside community acquaints you with the life of the local Lao people. At night you anchor at a secluded sand or river bank.



Day 04: Pak Lay (B,L,D)

Your specially designed river vessel allows you to go on this remarkable voyage quite comfortably, something that previously was unthinkable. You travel some 800 km through delightful riverscapes, passing aboriginal villages and visiting World Heritage Sites. You discover some of Southeast Asia's last unknown regions. Upstream you stop at the small riverside community of Pak Lai,

where the local market with its many exotic offerings is quite a sight. Back aboard, you take in the passing river scenery from the safety and comfort of your exclusive river vessel. You spend the night aboard the vessel close to the Thai-Laotian border.

Day 05: Tha Deua (B,L,D)

During and after breakfast on board, you enjoy the view and will perhaps see local fishermen along the shore while continuing along the "mother of all waters", as the locals call the Mekong River. You meet the residents of a small riverside village, which guests on Mekong cruises have often chosen to sponsor. Today you also pass the much-discussed Sayaboury hydropower dam project. An afternoon presentation about the Mekong River and its future by your cruise director supplies background information on this huge construction site and the differing opinions about it held by the countries along the river, the Mekong River Commission, and the local residents. You also see the Mekong ferry crossing at Tha Deua, connecting the provinces of Luang Prabang and Sayaboury.



Day 06: Kuang Si Falls – Luang Prabang (B,L,D)

Another shore excursion takes you to the Kuang Si Falls, one of the most scenic waterfalls in Laos. This afternoon you reach Luang Prabang, the former royal capital of Laos, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The town's unique atmosphere stems from its unusual mixture of numerous temples and French colonial architecture. Begin with a walk up Phou Si Hill, which offers a spectacular sunset view over the Mekong and Khan rivers and the surrounding mountains. In the evening, enjoy strolling along the Mekong promenade or visiting the colourful night market of the local Hmong minority. Watch a traditional Bazi Ceremony and local dances during and after dinner.

Day 07: Luang Prabang (B,L)

Breakfast is served on board. Today the ship remains in Luang Prabang, where we take you on a full day of sightseeing, so you can truly experience the beauty of this UNESCO World Heritage town with its wonderful mix of architectural styles. Luang Prabang offers many opportunities for fine dining, so tonight you are free to choose from the numerous offerings in town or along the Mekong River.



Day 08: Luang Prabang – PakOu Caves (B,L,D)

In the early morning, you are able to observe the traditional giving of alms in the streets of Luang Prabang. Breakfast is served on board. Today you cruise further north and visit a Laotian village, where you see the traditional production of Lao-Lao, the local liqueur. After a short walk through the jungle (*optional*) you explore the famous Pak Ou Caves, with thousands of small Buddha statues inside the caverns. The night is spent anchored at a beautiful sandbank, surrounded by nothing but pure nature.



Day 09: Pakbeng (B,L,D)

The river traffic thins out as you proceed upstream, looking out over the river and its scenic beauty. With a little luck you will be able to see working elephants in action today (*unless they are employed*

elsewhere at the time of your visit). Later in the day, you pause briefly for a look at the market town of Pakbeng.

Day 10: Pak Tha (B,L,D)

Today is a day to just bask in this unique environment – relax on deck, in your comfortable cabin, or in the lounge as you absorb the grandeur of this mighty river and its unspoiled natural surroundings. The landscape now shifts to lush tropical hills. Enjoy the tranquillity of northern Laos, a real retreat from the hustle and bustle of daily life back home. Cruising upsteam past this verdant backdrop, your boat now turns north, heading towards Pak Tha. You spend a last relaxing dinner and evening aboard, celebrating with a farewell dinner.



Day 11: Pak Tha – Chiang Rai – farewell (B,L)

At the small village of Pak Tha you go on a long-tail boat excursion along the Namtha River to visit a local Khmu village. The small village school enjoys frequent sponsorship by Mekong cruise guests.

After reboarding your cruise vessel, you continue towards the Thai-Laotian border at



Chiang Khong (Thailand) and Ban Huay Xay (Laos). The unspoiled landscape is accented by the occasional sight of small villages and local herds of cattle. In the afternoon you say goodbye to your Laotian crew, check out, and transfer across the Thai-Lao Mekong friendship bridge, where you also pass immigration. You are then transferred to your Chiang Rai hotel (within city limits) or to the airport, where frequent flights to

Bangkok are available (*no flights departing before 20:00pm can be reached*).

End of services,

Price includes:

- 10 overnights in selected cabin type aboard your boutique river cruise ship
- Local English- and/or German speaking guides
- Entrance fees for sightseeing mentioned in the itinerary
- Excursions as mentioned in the itinerary
- Tours and transfers as mentioned, by air-conditioned vehicles
- Water in the vehicles and on the ship
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary (B= Breakfast, =Lunch, and D=Dinner)
- Coffee, tea, and table water during meal times onboard your boutique river cruise ship
- Presentations and lectures onboard by the cruise director
- Transfers from/to Chiang Rai and Vientiane airports or hotels within city limits (only guaranteed if information was correctly provided 4 weeks prior to embarkation, at the latest)

Price does not include:

- Flights
- Meals and services other than those noted in the itinerary
- **Visas for Thailand and Laos***
- **Laundry, telephone calls, and personal expenditures**
- Gratuities for guides, drivers, porters, boat crew, and personal, non-itinerary services
- Alcoholic and soft drinks other than mentioned
- Personal Insurance

Nous vous souhaitons un beau voyage!