

NBCAS

The National Biodiversity Conservation Area (NBCA) system was established in Lao PDR in 1993. NBCAs are multi-purpose areas and not national parks in the conventional sense. This means people live inside the NBCA and farm plants and animals as rural livelihoods. There are 19 NBCAs in the whole country. Currently the NBCAs have very different levels of access to foreigners.

There are many unique animals still found in Laos, but they are hard to see, because they are hunted. Several animal species are on the verge of extinction. To slow these declines, do not buy or eat wildlife in the restaurants and be very careful with fire especially during the dry season.

People living in the NBCAs often belong to minority ethnic groups. When travelling in these areas, please dress modestly and respect local traditions. Do not touch anything that may be of religious significance and always ask before taking close-up portraits. Also do not give anything to the children.

cancellation policy

1. Roundtrips & Overnight Packages

30 days or more prior start of service:	No charge
Between 29 days and 15 days prior start of service:	30% of package price
Between 14 days and 7 days prior start of service:	70% of package price
6 days or less prior start of service OR no show:	100% of package price

2. Accommodation

Actual cancellation terms are subject to each individual hotel policy.

3. Transfers & Day Excursions

6 days or more prior start of service:	No charge
Between 5 days and 3 days prior start of service:	50% of price
2 days or less prior start of service OR no show:	100% of price

4. Groups

60 days or more prior start of service:	No charge
Between 59 days and 45 days prior start of service:	25% of package price
Between 44 days and 30 days prior start of service:	50% of package price
Between 29 days and 15 days prior start of service:	75% of package price
Between 14 days prior start of service or less:	100% of package price
Remark: based on a cancellation of the entire group movement.	

### **Terms & Conditions:**

Cancellation charges shall be calculated from the day the written notification is received by the company or agent as a percentage of the net total tour price as shown, plus any surcharges (e.g. ticketed air sectors and other penalties imposed by suppliers, such as hotels).

Certain hotels, lodges, chalets, rest-houses are subject to stricter and specific cancellation terms. Specific cancellation terms will be advised at a time of proposal.

Some type of transportation and experiences (e.g. a full day yacht charter or a specific language guide) can be subject to stricter and specific cancellation terms. Such cancellation terms will be advised at a time of proposal.

Cancellation of air arrangements will be subject to fees charged in accordance with the type of airfare used and airline tariff regulations.

Refunds will not be given for unused or cancelled services after the tour arrangements have commenced.

Cancellation terms and conditions are subject to individual inquiry and are based on the services requested.

## **climate**

Laos can be visited throughout the year. However, those planning to travel extensively by road in the northern part of the country and/or south of the Boloven Plateau should avoid the last two months of the rainy season when some countryside roads may be impassable.

Laos enjoys a tropical climate with three distinct seasons. The dry or cool season begins end of October and lasts until end of February (average 20-25°C). Take along a pullover or jacket during the cool season, as nights can be cold, especially in the mountainous areas such as Luang Prabang, the Plain of Jars, Saravane and Houeixai (0-5°C). The hot season lasts from March to June, light cotton clothes and hats are recommended (average 35°C). From June to early October is the rainy season (average 25-30°C). Most precipitation comes in the afternoon and in the evening. Rainfall varies considerably from area to area with the highlands in the Phou Louang range along the Lao / Vietnam border receiving the most precipitation (300+ mm per year). Vientiane sees an average of 150 - 200 mm per year and Luang Prabang 100 - 150 mm per year.

## **currency and exchange**

The local currency is the kip. Notes come in denominations of 500 / 1,000 / 2,000 / 5,000 / 10,000 / 20,000 / 50,000 and 100,000. The rate of exchange is approximately 8097.35 kip to USD 1 (1 June 2016). In Vientiane, notes of most international currencies can be exchanged either at banks or at licensed moneychangers. Outside Vientiane, most provincial banks and licensed moneychangers accept only USD, Thai baht and sometimes euros. Only major banks accept traveller's cheques. Credit cards are accepted mostly only at major hotels and up-market shops and restaurants in Vientiane, Pakse and Luang Prabang.

ATMs are available in Vientiane, Pakse and Luang Prabang and can dispense a maximum amount of 700,000 - 2,000,000 kip (depending on the bank and card) at a time with a withdrawal fee of about USD 5.

## **customs and formalities**

Arrivals at Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Pakse International Airports are generally rather casual events. Carry-on bags are usually not inspected if that is all you have brought. For checked-in baggage, when claimed at counter, passengers are sometimes required to declare if they have brought antiques and silver items with them. Simple formalities should be observed also when entering the country overland.

Passengers have to complete immigration and customs declaration forms during the arrival flight or upon arrival and must submit

## **Contact**

info@la.diethelmtravel.com



www.diethelmtravel.com



these documents on arrival. A Diethelm Travel representative or a guide will meet travellers at the exit point in the arrival hall after immigration and customs clearance. Our representative or guide will display a Diethelm Travel signboard with the name of guests or group for easy recognition.

## electricity

The electric current is 220 volts AC, 50 cycles.

## food and dining

Laos has abundant food supplies and the cuisine is simple and fresh. Sticky rice is the staple of the Lao diet and food is enhanced by such spices as lemongrass, hot chili, peanuts, coconut milk and ginger. In addition to Lao cuisine, the larger hotels also serve a wide variety of continental, Vietnamese and Chinese cuisine. In the smaller cities, when the hotels only have one restaurant, ordering a-la-carte may involve a slight wait, consequently it is advised that you take advantage of the large and diverse buffets available at these hotels to minimise any delay.

Bottled mineral water is available at all hotels throughout Laos. The most popular beverage in Laos is the domestically produced Beer Lao. Lao coffee, grown in the fertile south of the country, is some of the best in the world.

## general advice

Use an insect repellent against mosquitoes, especially when travelling up-country and in forested areas. Since Laos has a hot and humid tropical climate, casual and light clothing is best all year round, preferably made from natural fibres. A sweater or jacket may be useful in hill areas, particularly during winter months when evenings can be cold. A windproof jacket is essential when touring along the Mekong River during November to February. An umbrella or raincoat is recommended if visiting the country during the monsoon months (from June to September). A hat and a high-factor sun block cream are advisable a protection against the hot tropical sun when sightseeing outdoors. Shoes are generally removed at the entrance to temples and private homes.

Colour standard films and digital camera are available in the main cities. Photography and video in airports and near any military installations and government offices are forbidden and discretion should be observed when photographing people especially monks and hill tribes.

## getting there

### By Air

Presently, Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Pakse and Savannakhet are the four international airports.

### Overland

The country can be entered or exited overland at the following immigration checkpoints, which are open daily from 08.30 AM to ca. 05.00 PM (only Friendship Bridge Vientiane from 06.00 AM to 10.00 PM).

### Laos-China

Boten, Luang Namtha province, from / to Bohan and Mengla (Yunnan, China)

### Laos-Thailand

## Contact

info@la.diethelmtravel.com



www.diethelmtravel.com



Friendship Bridge from / to Nong Khai (Thailand) crossing the Mekong River by shuttle bus (from 06.00 am to 10.00 pm)  
Houei Xay by crossing the Mekong River by ferry from / to Chiang Khong (Thailand) (from 08.00 am to 06.00 am)  
Bolikhamxay from / to Bungkan District, Nong Khai province (Thailand) crossing the Mekong River  
Thakek from / to Nakhon Phanom (Thailand) by ferry crossing the Mekong River  
Savannakhet from / to Mukdahan (Thailand), actually by second Friendship Bridge, spanning the Mekong River  
Vang Tao from / to Chongmek, Ubon Ratchatani (Thailand)

**Laos-Vietnam**

Muang Mai ( Sop Hun ), Phongsaly province from / to Tay Trang, Dien Bien Phu ( Vietnam )  
Sam Neua ( Na Meo ) from / to Pa Hang on route No. 6 to Vietnam  
Nonghet, Xieng Khouang province, from / to Nam Can (Vietnam)  
Namphao, Borikhamxay province, from / to Cau Treo (Vietnam)  
Naphao / Chalo, route No. 12, which links Thakek to Ving or Dong Hoi (Vietnam)  
Denesavanh from / to Lao Bao (Vietnam)  
Bo Keua, Attopeu province from / to Bo -Y, Kuntum province, High land (Vietnam)

**Laos-Cambodia**

Dong Kalor from / to Strung Treng (Cambodia)

Note: visa on arrival at Houexay and at the Friendship Bridge is possible. For most other border crossings the Lao visa must be obtained prior to travel. For updated information please contact us.

**health requirement**

An adequate supply of any essential medication should be brought along, as certain medicines may not be available locally. A spare pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses is also advisable. Extra personal insurance is recommended in case of illness, or situations where medical evacuation by air is required, as Laos hospitals are generally not up to international standards.

**internet**

Internet is available at most hotels and public internet cafes can be found in the main cities. Recommended websites are:

[www.diethelmtravel.com](http://www.diethelmtravel.com)  
[www.photos-of-laos.org](http://www.photos-of-laos.org)  
[www.vientianetimes.org.la](http://www.vientianetimes.org.la)  
[www.ecotourismlaos.com](http://www.ecotourismlaos.com)

**language**

The official language of Lao PDR is Lao and is spoken throughout the country. In spite of the colonial past, French is still spoken by the elder generations, while English is in common use among business sectors and young generations. That said, English and French still are not widely spoken except in the capital and in major tourist sites such as Luang Prabang, Pakse and Vang Vieng.

**passport and visa**

Visas are required for all nationalities (subject to exceptions for Japanese, Swiss, Luxembourg and Russian citizens as of February 2013). For people holding a normal passportm including ASEAN countries, the passport should be valid at least 6 months. Visas can be



obtained from Lao Embassies and Consulates abroad or upon arrival at the following immigration checkpoints. The visa on arrival fee depends on the nationality of the traveler but the minimum cost is USD 30 per person and admitted to Laos for the stay of 30 days. Two passport photos are required for each visa application.

Important note: Travellers arriving from Vietnam overland must have their Lao visa arranged and stamped prior to arrival at the Laotian border.

Referring to the notice no 589 dated 11 February 2008 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning visa on arrival, please note that a number of nationalities will not be able to obtain a visa on arrival into Lao P.D.R., except those who have an official letter from the Lao government or Lao authorities concerned. Please do contact our offices for further information.

## post and communications

The General Post Office (GPO) is located next to the Talat Sao Morning Market in Vientiane. Its branches are available in the main cities and in almost all the districts throughout the country. It offers postal services and public telephones for local, national and international calls. International roaming with major international communication companies is available and Lao communication companies offer SIM cards and prepaid phone cards at reasonable prices. Most hotels in the main cities have IDD lines. The normal mail service is inexpensive and generally reliable. For urgent or valuable mail (either or to or from Laos), it is advisable to use DHL or other courier service.

## shopping

### Luck out at Laotian markets

The serene settings of Luang Prabang and Vientiane are a haven for bustling local markets. When you explore these colourful scenes, your eyes will feast upon handicraft goods and local art a plenty. Whether you like to shop during the day or late at night, there's a market to fit everyone's taste in Laos.

### Night Markets

Located along the iconic Mekong River, the Night Market in Vientiane is just the place to explore traditional arts and crafts. Another option is the Night Market in Luang Prabang, which is packed with silver, native costumes and silks. Vientiane also features a morning market for travellers looking to start their day off on the right foot: filled with vibrant trinkets, you're sure to find countless souvenirs to snap up. Art related to Buddhist mythology is also usually available for sale. Hill Tribe Handicrafts  
When searching amidst these markets, be on the lookout for products made by people from northern hill tribes. They're traditionally known for their quality silverwork, as well as gemstone collections and ceramic sculptures.

### Helpful Tips

Know your rights: visitors are not obligated to purchase anything, no matter what their guide says. Do your best to suss out scams and instead focus on finding products that speak to you. Handicrafts made by local people are a great investment: they give back to the local economy and offer a unique cultural souvenir you can't find anywhere else.

## some fast facts

### Official Name

Lao People Democratic Republic (Lao PDR )

## Contact

info@la.diethelmtravel.com



www.diethelmtravel.com



**Land Area**

236,800 km squared

**Population**

ca. 6.5 million

**Capital**

Vientiane

**Latitude**

14-23 degrees north / Longitude 100-108 degrees east.

Laos, officially known as the Lao People's Democratic Republic, covers an area of 236,800 square kilometres. It is an entirely landlocked country located in the centre of Indochina sharing borders with Cambodia, China, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. The population of Laos, estimated at 6.5 million, is comprised of some 49 ethnic groups divided into four main linguistic families: Lao-Thai, Mon-Khmer, Tibeto-Burmese and Hmong-Loumien. Each group has its own distinct customs, culture, clothing and dialect. The official language of the country is Lao and the major religion is Theravada Buddhism. Vientiane is the capital and the largest city in the country.

Geographically, Laos is divided into three main regions: the north, the centre and the south. While mountains and forests cover most of this land, the majority of the population is settled along the fertile Mekong River valley. The main rivers are the Mekong (flowing 1,898 km through Lao territory), the Nam Ou (448 km), the Nam Ngum (354 km), the Nam Xebanghiang (338 km), the Nam Tha (325 km) and the Sekong (320 km).

**time zone**

Laos runs at GMT + 7 hours, it lies in the same time zone as its neighbors Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia.

**Working Hours**

Government offices are generally open Monday to Friday from 08.00 am – 12.00 pm, and from 01.00 pm – 04.00 pm. Shop and private business offices open and close a bit later and usually stay open during lunchtime.

Diethelm Travel Laos opens from 08.00 am – 12.00 pm, and from 01.30 pm – 05.30 pm from Monday to Friday. On Saturday, we open only in the morning from 08.00 am – 12.00 pm.

**tipping**

Tipping for good service is always appreciated in Laos and it is widely practised to tip tour guides and drivers at the end of a tour. Hotels and station porters should also be tipped at the client’s discretion.

**transportation**

Depending on the road conditions of each province, visitors are provided with bus, minibus or car, most of the time with air conditioning, for the excursions.

**vaccination**





Please always consult an experienced medical doctor in good time before departure to receive correct professional advice about the most topic recommendations when traveling in Laos!

Although no vaccinations are officially required for entry to Laos, it is highly encouraged that they are obtained prior to arrival. Visitors are advised to check with their doctor or a travel immunisation clinic regarding protection against rabies Japanese Encephalitis, typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis A and B. Any essential medications should be brought with you as there is no guarantee that they will be available in Laos. The country is classified as a Zone 3 country for malaria; please consult your doctor before your departure for advice.

## Contact

info@la.diethelmtravel.com



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