Laos Cultural Capitals & Plain of Jars Expedition – 5 Days

5D / 4N	Easy	Private	USD 390 / pax
Duration	Difficulty	Tour Type	Starting From

This five-day journey through Laos unveils its rich history and stunning landscapes. Begin in Vientiane, exploring its spiritual landmarks, then fly to Xiengkhuang to witness the enigmatic Plain of Jars. Conclude in the UNESCO-listed Luang Prabang, renowned for its golden temples and serene Mekong River life.

DESTINATIONS & ROUTE

Vientiane → Luang Prabang

TOUR OVERVIEW

Embark on a captivating five-day adventure through the heart of Laos, a land brimming with ancient traditions, spiritual sites, and breathtaking natural beauty. This meticulously planned itinerary guides you from the charming capital of Vientiane to the mysterious archaeological wonders of Xiengkhuang, culminating in the serene, UNESCO World Heritage city of Luang Prabang. Experience the warmth of local communities, delve into fascinating history, and witness spectacular sunsets over the Mekong River.

Tour Highlights

Explore Vientiane's sacred temples and the iconic Patuxay Monument.

Witness the enigmatic Plain of Jars, an ancient archaeological site in Xiengkhuang.

Engage with local Hmong and Tai Dam communities in remote villages.

Journey through dramatic mountain landscapes on the scenic drive to Luang Prabang.

Ascend Phousi Mount for panoramic city and Mekong River sunset vistas.

Cruise the Mekong River to the sacred Pak Ou Caves, filled with Buddha images.

Discover the architectural grandeur of Luang Prabang's oldest temples, including Wat Xiengthong.

Browse the vibrant Street Night Bazaar for unique local handicrafts.

Visit the former Royal Palace, now the National Museum, showcasing Lao heritage.

Route Summary

Your journey commences in Vientiane, the tranquil capital, where you'll explore its significant religious and historical landmarks. From there, a short flight transports you to Xiengkhuang, home to the ancient and intriguing Plain of Jars. The adventure continues with a scenic overland drive through mountainous terrain to Luang Prabang, a city celebrated for its spiritual ambiance and colonial charm. The tour concludes after exploring Luang Prabang's cultural gems.

Who This Tour Suits

This tour is ideal for travelers seeking a comprehensive introduction to Laos's core cultural and historical sites within a compact timeframe. It appeals to those interested in ancient history, Buddhist heritage, local ethnic cultures, and picturesque natural scenery. With a mix of city exploration, archaeological visits, and scenic drives, it offers a balanced experience suitable for all types of travelers.

Practical Information

Daily activities involve moderate walking, particularly during temple visits and market explorations. The journey between Xiengkhuang and Luang Prabang is a scenic road trip through mountainous regions. Accommodations are selected for comfort and convenience in central locations. Meals are provided as indicated (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner), offering a taste of

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local cuisine. Internal flights and private transfers ensure smooth transitions between destinations.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

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* Witness the enigmatic Plain of Jars, an ancient archaeological site in Xiengkhuang.
* Engage with local Hmong and Tai Dam communities in remote villages.
* Journey through dramatic mountain landscapes on the scenic drive to Luang Prabang.
* Ascend Phousi Mount for panoramic city and Mekong River sunset vistas.
* Cruise the Mekong River to the sacred Pak Ou Caves, filled with Buddha images.
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* Visit the former Royal Palace, now the National Museum, showcasing Lao heritage.

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Day 1 Vientiane Arrival & Capital City Exploration

Meals: D | Stay: Lao Poet Hotel, Vientiane | Transport: Private car/mini van

Upon your arrival at Vientiane Capital, you will be greeted and transferred to your centrally located accommodation. After settling in and taking a brief rest, your exploration of the capital city commences. The first stop is Wat Sisaket, the oldest temple in Vientiane, renowned for housing thousands of miniature Buddha statues within its cloister walls. Next, you will visit Wat Prakeo, a former royal temple that once enshrined the revered Emerald Buddha image.
The journey continues towards the revered That Luang Stupa, a significant national symbol. En route, a photo opportunity awaits at the impressive Patuxay Monument, often referred to as Vientiane's own Arc de Triomphe, offering a striking architectural sight. As evening approaches, head to the Mekong Riverside to witness a beautiful sunset, concluding your day with a serene experience. You will spend the night in Vientiane.

Activities: Arrive in Vientiane and transfer to hotel
Visit Wat Sisaket temple
Explore Wat Prakeo, the former royal temple
Photograph Patuxay Monument
See That Luang Stupa
Witness sunset by the Mekong Riverside

Day 2 Flight to Xiengkhuang & Plain of Jars Discovery

Meals: B/L | Stay: Xieng Khouang Hotel, Phonsavanh | Transport: Domestic flight, private car/mini van

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Following breakfast, you will board an afternoon flight bound for Xiengkhouang. This region bears historical significance, having been extensively affected by bombing campaigns between 1964 and 1973. Upon landing, a transfer will take you to the remarkable Plain of Jars, an archaeological site featuring hundreds of massive stone jars scattered across a vast plateau. The origin and purpose of these ancient megalithic structures remain a subject of intrigue and speculation.
Later in the afternoon, the itinerary includes a visit to the old capital of Muang Khoun Province. Here, you will also have the opportunity to explore nearby villages inhabited by the Hmong hill tribe and Tai Dam people. This offers a chance to observe their distinct local culture and learn about their rich historical traditions. Your overnight stay will be in Phonsavanh, the main town of Xiengkhouang province.

Activities: Take an afternoon flight to Xiengkhouang
Transfer to the Plain of Jars archaeological site
Explore the ancient stone jars
Visit the old capital of Muang Khoun Province
Discover local Hmong and Tai Dam villages

Day 3 Phonsavanh Market, Hill Tribe Road Trip & Luang Prabang Sunset

Meals: B/L | Stay: The Sanctuary Hotel, Luang Prabang | Transport: Private car/mini van

Your day begins with an early morning visit to Phonsavanh's Central Market. Here, various hill tribe communities gather to engage in lively bartering and exchange of goods, providing a fascinating glimpse into local commerce and culture. Afterwards, you will commence a scenic drive from this small town towards Luang Prabang, a journey that promises stunning natural beauty.
Along the route, stops are made to observe a site featuring Buddha images over 200 years old at Thampra, and to visit diverse Hmong and other hill tribe minority villages. These communities are known for their welcoming nature, offering opportunities for interaction and cultural insight. The drive continues uphill, presenting splendid mountain scenery, lush forests, and picturesque landscapes. A break for tea or coffee will be enjoyed at Sala Phoukhoun, a significant junction where routes to Vientiane, Xiengkhouang, and Luang Prabang converge. The journey then takes you over a mountainous region, eventually arriving in Luang Prabang, a town celebrated for its tranquility, charm, natural beauty, and cultural landmarks.
After checking into your hotel, if time permits, you will begin exploring some of Luang Prabang's impressive sites. These include the stupa of Wat Visoun, the shrine of Wat Aham, and Wat Mai. The highlight of the late afternoon is a climb up Phousi Mount, offering an enjoyable exploration of its sacred, gilded stupa and culminating in a beautiful sunset view over the city and the Mekong River. From Phousi Mount, you will descend to explore the Street Night Bazaar, where you can find a lovely collection of handmade textiles and crafts created by local artisans and hill tribe people from the surrounding areas of Luang Prabang. Overnight in Luang Prabang.

Activities: Visit Phonsavanh Central Market
Drive from Phonsavanh to Luang Prabang
Stop at Thampra to see ancient Buddha images
Visit Hmong and other hill tribe villages
Enjoy mountain scenery and landscapes
Take a break at Sala Phoukhoun
Explore Wat Visoun, Wat Aham, and Wat Mai (time permitting)

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Climb Phousi Mount for sunset views
Browse the Street Night Bazaar

Day 4 Luang Prabang Temples & Mekong River Cruise to Pak Ou Caves

Meals: B/L | Stay: The Sanctuary Hotel, Luang Prabang | Transport: Boat trip on Mekong River, private car/mini van

Today's itinerary features a guided exploration of Luang Prabang's ancient temples. You will begin by visiting Wat Sene, recognized as the city's oldest temple. Following this, you will discover the magnificent Wat Xiengthong, famous for its gracefully sweeping roofs that extend low to the ground, embodying the classical architectural style characteristic of Luang Prabang temples. These sites offer deep insight into the region's spiritual heritage and artistic craftsmanship.

Next, you will embark on a scenic cruise upstream along the Mekong River. This journey provides breathtaking views of the tranquil countryside, showcasing the serene rural life along the riverbanks. The cruise leads to the mysterious Pak Ou Caves, a significant spiritual site filled with thousands of gold-lacquered Buddha statues of various shapes and sizes, placed there by devotees over centuries. This unique cave system offers a profound cultural experience.

Along the return journey, a stop is made at the village of Ban Xanghai, known for its production of local rice wine, where you can observe the traditional methods. Afterwards, a short drive will take you to Ban Phanom, a village celebrated for its exquisite hand weaving traditions. You will spend another night in Luang Prabang, reflecting on the day's discoveries.

Activities: Tour Wat Sene, the city's oldest temple
Visit the magnificent Wat Xiengthong
Embark on a Mekong River cruise upstream
Explore the mysterious Pak Ou Caves
Stop at Ban Xanghai village to see rice wine production
Drive to Ban Phanom, known for hand weaving

Day 5 Royal Palace Museum & Luang Prabang Central Market Departure

Meals: B | Transport: Private car/mini van

Your final morning in Luang Prabang includes visits to two significant sites. First, you will explore the National Museum, housed within the former Royal Palace. This museum showcases a fascinating collection of artifacts that reflect the rich tapestry of Lao culture, spanning from the era of early kings to the last sovereign. It provides valuable historical context and insight into the royal heritage of Laos.

Following the museum, a visit to the Central Market is highly recommended. This bustling market offers a vibrant atmosphere and a chance to observe local daily life, with vendors selling a variety of goods, including fresh produce, local delicacies, and handicrafts. These morning excursions allow for a final immersion into the charm of Luang Prabang before you are transferred to the airport to catch your departure flight from this small, enchanting city, once the royal capital.

Activities: Visit the National Museum at the former Royal Palace
Explore the Central Market
Transfer to the airport for departure

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WHAT'S INCLUDED

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- v Hotel accommodation as specific or similar
- v Domestic airport tax & air ticket Vientiane - Xiengkhuang
- v Private car/mini van
- v Boat trip on Mekong River
- v All entrance fees
- v English speaking guide
- v All meals as per program

NOT INCLUDED

- x Drinks, except otherwise mentioned
- x International flight and international airport tax on departure
- x Insurance, Personal expenses & Tips
- x Lao Visa - apply and issue at airport with cost 30$/pax

PRICE INCLUDES

- v Hotel accommodation as specific or similar
- v Domestic airport tax & air ticket Vientiane - Xiengkhuang
- v Private car/mini van
- v Boat trip on Mekong River
- v All entrance fees
- v English speaking guide
- v All meals as per program

CANCELLATION POLICY

Tour Code: IMP-4162226B2DAE