



◆◆ Laos : Distance & Major Cities-Attractions ◆◆

DISTANCES IN KMS BETWEEN CITY TO CITY IN LAOS

Vientiane – Luang Prabang : by route, 397 kms for 7-8 hrs, by flight only 35 minutes
Luang Prabang – Pakbeng by speed boat : 4 hrs, by slow boat 6-7 hrs
Pakbeng – Houeixay : by speed boat 4 hrs, by slow boat 6-7 hrs
Pakbeng – Oudomxay : by route 145 kms for 4 hrs
Oudomxay – Luangprabang : by route 197 kms for 4 hrs
Houeixay – Luang Namtha : by route 186 kms for 8 hrs
Houeixay – Xiengkok : by speed boat only 4 hrs
Xiengkok – Muangsing : by route 70 kms for 3 hrs
Muangsing – Luang Namtha : by route 58 kms for 2 hrs
Muangsing – Luang Namtha – Oudomxay : by route 178 kms for 6-7 hrs
Oudomxay – Nambak – Nongkhio : by route 115 kms for 4 hrs
Phongsaly – Luang Prabang : by route and boat 412 kms for 14 hrs (overnight in Nongkhio)
Vientiane – Lak Xao : by route 345 kms for 6 hrs
Vientiane – Savannakhet : by route 487 kms for 6 hrs, by flight only 1 hrs
Savannakhet – Lao Bao (Vietnamese border) : by route 250 kms for 6 hrs
Savannakhet – Pakse : by route 236 kms for 4 hrs, by flight only 30 minutes
Pakse – Attapeu : by route 198 kms for 8 hrs
Attapeu – Sekong : by route 80 kms for 3 hrs
Pakse – Champasak : by boat 1 hr, 30 kms only
Champasak – Khong : by boat 5-6 hrs, by route 100 kms for 2 ½ hrs
Pakse – Tatlo : by route 101 kms for 1 ½ hrs
Pakse – Chongmek, Ubon Ratchathani (Lao-Thai border) by route 45 kms for 30 minutes
Chongmek – Ubon Ratchathani : by route 90 kms for 1 hr

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Vientiane

The old city had suffered for sacking and wars, after being ruined by Siamese armies during the nineteen centuries, Vientiane will be reborn during the French time when they had decided to transform it into an administrative Capital.

Under the French rule during the thirties of the last century many main temples would be restored such as Vat Pha Keo, Vat Sisaket and That Luang Stupa. The cultural restoration would be led by Prince Phesatrat as Vice King of Laos and by his half brother Prince Souvannaphouma who had restored the Buddha Emerald Temple of Vientiane assisted by l' Ecole Francais d'Extreme Orient.

During the French period some administrative buildings would be erected with Neo Classic Style such as the building of Customs or La Tresorerie (recently erased).

Apart from this colonial administrative architecture style we could also admire some private houses, which are mixing French art de vivre and Lao simple life style. Among them we could visit and have Lunch or Dinner at Kua Lao restaurant.

The second most exotic day trip is to Lake Nam Ngum. Taking boats across it, it used to be that Laotians plied it as a shortcut when traveling Route 13 North-beyond Vientiane, the road to Vang Vieng, Kasi and Luang Prabang was circuitous and in bad repair. The boats are still there, small restaurants overlook the blue-green water, and the setting is almost European due to so many alpine-like peaks surrounding the lake. Nam Ngum is dotted with picturesque islands. One or two offer guesthouses. Solitude is guaranteed yet it is conveniently reached.

Rules of thumb to remember when trying to plan ahead are as simple as they are basic. Day trips can be organized a day ahead of time-morning is best. Hotels and travel agencies have a limited number of vehicles but they readily share them with one another when there is need. Therefore day trips should be planned in advance. Take provisions-- food and beverages--with you. All can be bought in Vientiane. Hotels will prepare food if given proper notice.

Medical care is limited. Embassies can provide advice. Serious cases are taken across the river to Nong Khai or Udon Thani where Thai hospitals are state-of-the-art and English speaking staff are not uncommon. Medical insurance is available upon arrival at the airport or when crossing the bridge downriver from Vientiane. Hotels like Novotel and Lao Hotel Plaza can refer guests to local physicians and Vientiane medical clinics.

Plenty of people speak English in Vientiane. There is no language barrier. However, it pays to err on the side of conservatism than on the side of liberalism. Moderation in all things will serve you well. There is an unwritten dress code for the Lao, especially women. You will see them in skirts rather than jeans. Which is to say that the Lao sense of morality has a lot in common with what it was in North American and Western Europe in the 1950s. However, the Lao are not without a sense of humor. Thanks to Thai TV and satellite television, they know exactly what is going on. It is a mistake to think them ignorant of the outside world even though they live in a landlocked one.

Vang Vieng:

Situated at 160 kilometers from Vientiane (around 3 hours by car) one has a very nice view of limestone mountains alike Guilin's landscape in Southern China. More and more tourists prefer to overland from Vientiane to Luang Phabang and then overnight at Vang Vieng. Once in Vang Vieng, kayaking on Nan Song river, trekking or bicycling are different ways to visit this well preserved natural area.

Luang Phabang:

The World Heritage town with its beautiful and well-preserved temples could be visited whether by walk or by bicycle. Luang Phabang has at its disposal more and more International standard Hotel such as Pan Sea Phouvao Hotel, The Grand Hotel, Villa Santi resort. For the next high season, another new boutique Hotel would be completed such as Souvannaphoum hotel which would be refurbished by Banyan Tree and would be named Maison Souvannaphoum, the Three Nagas and Villa Santi hotels are as well appreciated as comfortable boutique Hotels.

Plain of Jars:

Situated at the North East of Vientiane, even after having been a place of fierce battles during the Vietnam War, the Plain of Jars is still enigmatic with its different sites where antique jars are provoking interrogations to visitors.

Hongsa:

Hongsa area is exceptional as it has some unique villages with stilt houses totally built with rosewood. Elephant safari is very useful to visit such picturesque places for Lu people are excellent tamers, by the past they had provided war elephants to Luang Phabang court as well as Siam court.

Muang Sing:

During the Nineteen century Muang Sing has been the place where French and British negotiators had redesigned the borders between Burma and Laos. This former small independent Lu Kingdom had been then added to Laos's territory by the two Europeans colonial powers. This land had been long a land of trades and influences from China, Vietnam, Burma and Laos. Its today's colorful market is indicative of the past trades where different ethnic used to come.

Vat Phu (Champassack)

Situated in Southern Laos, this Pre-Angkorian temple dating back to the Eight century AD had been recently listed among World Heritage sites by UNESCO. Vat Phu is interesting as archeologists supposed that it might have been the Capital of the first Khmer Kingdom before the Khmers had decided to move South to the Ton Le Sap area. Historic records told us, until the Twelfth century that Khmers Emperors had come yearly for religious pilgrimage to this sacred sanctuary. Jayavarman VII himself had made the sacred pilgrimage to Vat Phu.

Khone Pha Pheng Waterfalls:

Situated at 155 kilometers, Khone Pha Pheng Waterfalls is very impressive, it is reputed to be the largest Waterfalls of Asia.