



# Southern Laos

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Na Dao (p219)
- ➔ King Kong Resort (p257)
- ➔ Four Thousand Sunsets (p258)
- ➔ Little Eden Restaurant (p257)
- ➔ Bolaven Cafe (p218)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Kingfisher Eco-Lodge (p231)
- ➔ Residence Sisouk (p217)
- ➔ Inthira Hotel (p225)
- ➔ Hoang Anh Attapeu Hotel (p242)
- ➔ River Garden (p256)

## Why Go?

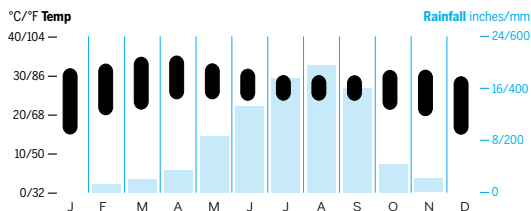
Near the Cambodian border, the Mekong awakes from its slumber, slams into Si Phan Don and disintegrates into a series of churning rapids. Downstream, a dwindling pod of Irrawaddy dolphins seek solace in a peaceful eddy. Upstream, an expanding pod of travellers find their solace in the hammock-strewn bungalows of Don Det and Don Khon.

Kayaking or bicycling around these dreamy islands is the signature southern Laos experience. But don't ignore the rest of this incredibly diverse region, where you'll also find dilapidated Angkorian temples, highland culture on the cool Bolaven Plateau, prime trekking, and raw off-the-beaten-track travel in the eastern provinces. Exploring the area by rented motorbike is a popular and rewarding pastime.

Long a magnet for backpackers, the region now lures higher-end travellers with upscale jungle lodges and boutique hotels on the banks of the Mekong. New highways and dams are changing the landscape forever, so hurry up and get here.

## When to Go

### Pakse



**Oct–Nov** Ideal time for bike touring, as rains trickle and the dust remains manageable

**Dec–Feb** Sunny and cooler – make that downright cold – on the Bolaven Plateau

**May** Pi Mai (New Year) means 10 days of water fights and Beerlao parties, but some resorts close



## Southern Laos Highlights

- 1 Ogle Mekong rapids and spot rare dolphins while touring the **Don Khon** (p222) by bicycle or kayak
- 2 Watch the sun set over the Mekong from your hammock on **Don Det** (p222), Don Khon's sister island
- 3 Gaze in awe at 100m-high waterfalls, sip fair-trade coffee

- and soak in the cool climate at the **Bolaven Plateau** (p232)
- 4 Wake up early for a dramatic sunrise at the ancient Khmer temple complex at **Wat Phu Champasak** (p228)
  - 5 Waterfall-hop and go hiking around **Tat Lo** (p235),

- a backpacker magnet with a laid-back vibe
- 6 Embark on the **Southern Swing** (p240), a bike loop through the Bolaven Plateau and the eastern provinces
  - 7 Climb aboard an elephant to explore **Kiet Ngong** (p230), the region's premier ecotourism area