

Welcome to Laos

A land of the lotus eaters amid the bloated development of its neighbours, Laos brings together the best of Southeast Asia in one bite-sized destination.

An Authentic Asia

Laos retains many of the traditions that have disappeared in a frenzy of development elsewhere in the region. It's hard to believe somnolent Vientiane is an Asian capital, and there's a timeless quality to rural life, where stilt houses and paddy fields look like they are straight out of a movie set. Magical Luang Prabang bears witness to hundreds of saffron-robed monks gliding through the streets every morning in a call to alms, one of the region's iconic images. Intrepid travellers will discover a country untainted by mass tourism and Asia in slow motion – this is Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), or 'please don't rush' as the locals like to joke.

A Kaleidoscope of People

Laos is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the region, reflecting its geographic location as a crossroads of Asia. The hardy Hmong people live off the land in remote mountain communities of the north, remote Kahu and Alak communities of the south have the last remaining traditional face tattoos, and the Katang villages of central Laos sleep with the spirits of the forest. Whether it is the cities of the lowlands or the remote villages of the highlands, Laos offers some wonderful opportunities for local interaction.

Fifty Shades of Green

With its dark and brooding jungle, glowing emerald rice fields, and the glistening tea leaves that blanket the mountains, the landscape in Laos changes shades of green like a chameleon. But it's not just the luscious landscapes that are green: when it comes to ecotourism, Laos is leading the way in Southeast Asia. Protected areas predominate in remote areas of the country, and community-based trekking combines these spectacular natural attractions with the chance to experience the 'real Laos' with a village homestay.

Eclectic Asia

Travellers rave about Laos for a reason. Adventure seekers can lose themselves in underground river caves, on jungle ziplines or while climbing karsts. Nature enthusiasts can take a walk on the wild side and spot exotic animals such as gibbons or elephants. Culture lovers can explore ancient temples and immerse themselves in Lao spiritual life. Foodies can spice up their lives with a Lao cooking class or go gourmand in the French-accented cities. And if all this sounds a little too strenuous, then unwind with a spa session or yoga class. Laos has something for everyone.



Why I Love Laos

By Nick Ray, Writer

I first came to Laos as a backpacker in 1995 and quickly succumbed to the natural charms of the landscape, not to mention ice-cold Beerlao while overlooking the Mekong River. Fast forward more than two decades and Laos still delivers adventures. On my latest visit, I explored the pristine province of Khammuan, took a trip into the underworld of Tham Kong Lor, got a buzz motorbiking the Loop, and spent time trawling the authentic eateries and lively bars of Vientiane, Laos' underrated capital. A travel tonic to slake your thirst for the real Asia, Laos will leave a lasting impression long after you return home.

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