



Southern Laos

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Best Places to Eat

- Four Thousand Sunsets (p242)
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- King Kong Resort (p241)

Best Places to Sleep

- Kingfisher Ecolodge (p218)
- Captain Hook Coffee Break (p222)
- Residence Sisouk (p203)
- Sala Done Khone (p241)

Why Go?

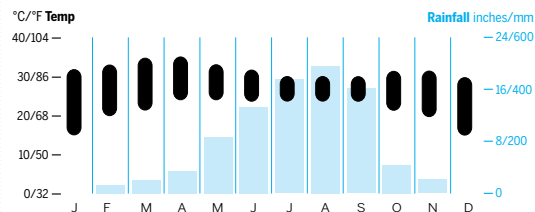
Near the Cambodian border, the Mekong awakes from its slumber, slams into Si Phan Don (Four Thousand Islands) and disintegrates into a series of churning rapids. Downstream, a dwindling pod of rare Irrawaddy dolphins seek solace in a deep river pool. In between, an expanding pod of travellers find their own solace in the hammock-strewn bungalows of Don Det and Don Khon.

Kayaking or bicycling around these bucolic islands is the signature southern Laos experience, but the rest of this incredibly diverse region – home to Angkorian temples, highland cultures, waterfalls, prime trekking, and raw off-the-beaten-track experiences – remained off the radar until recently.

No longer just the realm of backpackers, southern Laos now has a scattering of upscale rural lodges and boutique hotels. 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 dust remains manageable.

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

Apr It's terribly hot, but the three-day Pi Mai (New Year) means water fights and Beerlao parties.



Southern Laos Highlights

- 1 Don Khon** (p236)
Ogling fierce cascades and spotting rare dolphins while touring the island by bicycle or kayak.
- 2 Kiet Ngong** (p218)
Taking a trek and a boat trip in the jungle around the region's premier ecotourism area.
- 3 Wat Phu Champasak** (p215)
Exploring this ancient Khmer temple complex.
- 4 Bolaven Plateau** (p219)
Gazing in awe at 100m-high waterfalls, sipping fair-trade coffee and soaking in the cool climate on a motorcycle trip around this plateau.
- 5 Si Phan Don** (p232)
Watching the sun set over the Mekong from the horizontal perspective of your hammock at this tropical island paradise in the Mekong River.
- 6 Tat Lo** (p221)
Waterfall-hopping and village visiting around this backpacker magnet with a laid-back vibe.