

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Beyond the Mekong (BM 2017)



TRIPDURATION
16
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Moderate

Tour Type: Small Groups
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Trip Code: BM

Trip Highlights - Beyond the Mekong

- ✓ Bangkok - Discover the glittering Grand Palace and the temple of the Reclining Buddha at Wat Po
- ✓ Chiang Mai - Explore the bustling old walled town full of ancient temples
- ✓ Mekong River - Take a boat journey past rugged cliffs, fishing villages and jungle covered hills
- ✓ Luang Prabang - Wander through the sleepy French Colonial riverside town
- ✓ Angkor Temples - Marvel at the iconic and awe-inspiring Khmer temple complex of Angkor

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 3 nights Premium Hotel
1 night Simple
Overnight Train
5 nights Standard Hotel
1 night Simple
Guesthouse
5 nights Simple Hotel

Included Meals: 14 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 1 dinner

Start Point: Join trip: Bangkok

End Point: Trip ends: Bangkok

Transport: Bus, Train, Boat, Flight

Countries: Thailand, Laos, Cambodia

Beyond The Mekong

This exciting journey uncovers northern Thailand before taking us deep into South East Asia's less visited countries of Laos and Cambodia. We cruise along the Mekong River through a countryside of jungle covered hills and small fishing villages as we journey to Luang Prabang, Laos' sleepy riverside gem. We fly on to French colonial Vientiane then make our way further south to Cambodia, where we discover the buzzing capital city of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, the gateway to the epic temples of Angkor.

Why Book this trip

This classic route through this part of Indochina is a favourite with our customers. You will take an in-depth look at the north of Thailand before travelling into Laos and then on to Cambodia. You will see the highlights of three countries in two weeks and experience the diversity of the region. This is a great holiday for travellers who want to see as much as possible in a relatively short time.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Standard

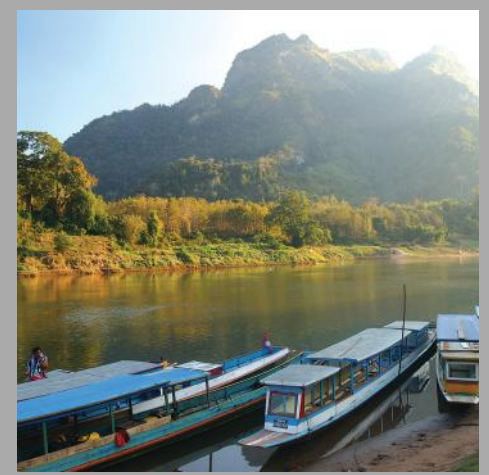
Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Moderate

These moderately paced tours provide some busy days with plenty of experiences to enjoy, as well as time to relax along the way.



Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

DAY 1 Tour starts in Bangkok

Arrive in Bangkok and check-in at our hotel. The rest of the day is free to relax after your flight. Alternatively, you may choose to take an optional cruise in a traditional longtail boat along the city's network of meandering waterways, known as Klongs. Stops include the Royal Barge Museum and the iconic Wat Arun, the Temple of the Dawn, which was built to represent the towering slopes of Mount Meru, the home to the gods of Khmer mythology.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

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 **Included Meals:** None

DAY **2** In Bangkok, visit the Grand Palace and Buddhist temples; take sleeper train to Chiang Mai

This morning's sightseeing takes us by bus and boat to Bangkok's iconic sights including the spectacular Grand Palace complex with its collection of palace buildings, golden stupas, temples, known as wats, and decorative statues. The most revered of the wats here is Wat Phra Kaeo, the temple of the Emerald Buddha, a small statue carved out of a single piece of jade. We leave the Grand Palace and walk to the largest wat in Bangkok, Wat Pho, famous for its impressive 46 metre gold-plated reclining Buddha. This evening we board the overnight train for Chiang Mai.

Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **3** In Chiang Mai, free day to explore or try a Thai cookery class

Thailand's second city of Chiang Mai, in the north of the country, is surrounded by jungle covered hills at an elevation of 300m and offers a respite from the heat and noise of Bangkok. Today we enjoy an orientation walk of the old walled city, with its many ancient temples. There is free time this afternoon to explore further, perhaps taking an optional excursion to the golden Doi Suthep temple that sits on a hill overlooking the city, or perhaps try your hand at Thai cookery at a class. A visit to Chiang Mai's famous night market is a must this evening; here you will find everything from t-shirts to jewellery to traditional hilltribe crafts.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY **4** From Chiang Mai journey by road and boat along the Kok River to Chiang Rai

This morning we leave Chiang Mai and drive further north through hilltribe country to Tha Ton, a small rural town on the Kok River. Here we board longtail boats for the relaxing cruise downstream towards Chiang Rai. Chiang Rai has a large hilltribe population, attracted by the cool climate and the rolling forested hills. This evening there will be time to explore Chiang Rai's night market, well known for its many food stalls, so a great place to enjoy some street food for dinner.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **5** From Chiang Rai travel via the Golden Triangle across the border into Laos

Today we travel to the interesting fortified city of Chiang Saen which can only be described as a lively one street town surrounded by scattered ruins of temples, crumbling stupas and grass covered walls and ramparts. Founded in 1328, the town was once a Burmese stronghold that was destroyed and re-built many times. From here we continue on to the infamous Golden Triangle, the point of confluence between Thailand, Burma and Laos. Here you will have the option to visit the fascinating opium museum. Towards the end of the day we cross the border at Chiang Khong into Laos and drive a short distance to the small village of Ban Houei Sai, where we can settle back and begin to enjoy the slow pace of life in Laos.

Overnight: **Simple Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **6** Cruise along the Mekong River, overnight in Pakbeng village

This morning we board our boat and start to cruise along the Mekong River. Travel today is slow, but this allows us to absorb the sense of remoteness and timelessness of life on the river. We pass hills covered with dense vegetation, rugged cliffs, small fishing villages with nearby rice paddies and white sandy riverbanks. The Mekong has long been the major trade route for caravans from Yunnan in China to Chiang Mai in ancient Siam. Even today there are few roads through the undulating countryside, so the river remains the lifeblood of the region. In the late afternoon we arrive in Pakbeng village for our overnight stay. Here we can enjoy the warm orange glow of the sunset over the river.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7 Continue boat journey via Pak Ou Caves to Luang Prabang

This morning we continue our journey along the Mekong River towards Luang Prabang. En route we will stop and visit Pak Ou Caves where we climb steps up a limestone cliff to reach the sacred Buddhist shrine, crammed with small Buddha images of all shapes and sizes. We arrive at Luang Prabang, the country's former capital, in the afternoon. Situated among the rolling hills of the Upper Mekong River, this tranquil little town is celebrated for its exceptionally lovely setting and its sleepy vibe. We take an orientation walk which includes a visit to Wat Xien Thong, located in a delightful garden on the banks of the Mekong River.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 8 In Luang Prabang, free day with the option to visit the traditional village of Lao Loum

One of the most peaceful experiences in Laos is seeing hundreds of saffron-robed monks of Luang Prabang walking through the streets at sunrise collecting alms. You may choose to get up early to enjoy this experience. Today has been left free for you to enjoy Luang Prabang as you wish. You may decide to simply wander the streets and absorb the pleasant atmosphere of this former Royal capital, or perhaps visit the Royal Palace Museum. There is also the option to take a tuk-tuk trip to the traditional Lao Loum village, where you can witness women weaving, see paper-making and watch blacksmiths at work. Later this afternoon, we suggest you climb to the temple on top of the small Mount Phousi to enjoy sunset views over town.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 9 From Luang Prabang, visit Kuang Si Waterfalls; afternoon flight to Vientiane

After breakfast we travel by bus to the beautiful Kuang Si Waterfalls, around 45 minutes from Luang Prabang, with a short stopover at Wat Mai temple. Passing forested hills and several ethnic minority villages we arrive at the limestone falls that cascade into several clear pools below. We return to Luang Prabang for our afternoon flight to the Laos capital of Vientiane.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 10 In Vientiane, morning city tour; free afternoon with the option to visit the Buddha Park

This morning we explore the low-rise French colonial capital and explore some of the main sights including the Victory Gate, a Triumphal Arch affording us good views of the city; That Luang stupa, said to contain a hair of the Buddha; and Wat Sisaket, packed with fine Buddha images. The afternoon is left free, you may choose to take a visit out of the city to the Buddha Park. In the evening, it is pleasant to promenade along the banks of the Mekong whilst the sun sets over the Thai city of Nong Khai across the border on the western bank.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 11 Fly to Phnom Penh in Cambodia, visit Royal Palace and National Museum of Arts

Leaving Laos we fly to Cambodia and another of Indochina's charming French colonial capitals, Phnom Penh. Here we visit the National Museum of Arts, which contains a notable collection of Khmer Sculpture that has been rescued from the temples of Angkor, giving us a flavour of things to come. We also explore the ornate Royal Palace with its stunning Silver Pagoda.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 12 In Phnom Penh, visit Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and the 'Killing Fields'

Today we continue our sightseeing in Phnom Penh and discover some of Cambodia's dark history. We pay a visit to the emotive Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, once a high school that became the Khmer Rouge's main torture and interrogation centre. We then take a short drive out of the city to the infamous 'Killing Fields' of Choeung Ek, a grim place featuring a huge glass tower memorial filled with human skulls, a truly sombre reminders of the scale of Pol Pot's atrocities. Some people may find Tuol Sleng and the 'Killing Fields'

distressing. In the afternoon there is time to explore Phnom Penh further perhaps visiting one of the many bustling markets in the city such as the Russian market; alternatively or we can arrange a private good luck blessing at a local monastery or a cooking class so you can try your hand at Khmer cuisine.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 13 Drive to Siem Reap; late afternoon visit Angkor Temples for sunset

We make an early start for today's drive to Siem Reap, we will pass through small provincial towns and stop somewhere for lunch along on the way. Later in the day after we have checked in to our hotel in Siem Reap we begin our exploration of the ancient temples of Angkor. This incredible ruined city, built between the 9th and the 15th centuries is spread out over some 400 square kilometres, scattered with walled cities and magnificent stone temples, sculptures, causeways and reservoirs, amongst forested areas. Today we will visit some of the earliest of Angkor's temples including Ta Keo, Kravan, East Mebon and Pre Rup. We stay for sunset over the historic temples.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 14 From Siem Reap, return to Angkor to explore temples of Ta Prohm, Banteay Srei and Angkor Wat

Today we pay a visit Ta Prohm, lying half consumed by the jungle and made famous by the movie 'Lara Croft'; Banteay Srei, a small temple with exquisitely carved lintels, and finally the most iconic of all - Angkor Wat itself. Built in the early 12th century by King Suryavarman II Angkor Wat was first a Hindu and later a Buddhist temple and it is without doubt the epitome of Khmer architecture, a huge three-step pyramid adorned with nine towers, covering an area of 2.5 square kilometres. Its Hindu past is apparent in the beautifully preserved bas reliefs depicting episodes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata stories.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 15 From Siem Reap, option to see sunrise at Angkor Wat; explore Angkor Thom; afternoon flight to Bangkok

We have a few final hours this morning to visit the temples one last time. You may choose to make an early start and watch the sunrise at Angkor Wat. This morning after breakfast we visit the temples of King Jayavarman VII, including the walled city of Angkor Thom, home to the Bayon, with its serenely beautiful faces and the Terrace of Elephants. Later today we bid farewell to Angkor and fly back to Bangkok.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel**

Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 16 Tour ends in Bangkok

Our tour ends after breakfast. If you have time you may wish to wander through Chinatown for a different flavour of the city or visit one of the many markets or shopping malls.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 14 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 1 dinner included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Thailand

Lunch £: 3.00 - 5.00

Dinner £: 4.00 - 8.00

Laos

Lunch £: 2.00 - 4.00

Dinner £: 6.00

Cambodia

Lunch £: 6.00

Dinner £: 10.00 - 12.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Thailand

Bottle of Beer £: 1.50

Water £: 0.50

Laos

Bottle of Beer £: 0.75

Water £: 0.75 - 1.50

Cambodia

Bottle of Beer £: 1.30

Water £: 0.60

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Bangkok - Longtail boat excursion on the klongs including visit to Royal Barge museum £14

Chiang Mai - Cookery class £23

Chiang Rai - Golden Triangle Opium Museum entrance fee £2

Vientiane - Buddha Park US\$11

Siem Reap - Scenic helicopter flight over Angkor temples from US\$202; Optional sunrise at Angkor Wat US\$12

Phnom Penh - Private Blessing US\$34; Private Cooking class US\$36

The prices stated are based on a minimum number of participants (usually 5-6). Please be aware that the optional excursions can run with fewer people but the price may be higher. Likewise, a slightly reduced price may be applicable where the participation is greater. These excursions are generally run via our agent in the country. Local companies may offer similar excursions at a cheaper price. Should you want to use these companies please be aware that a lower price may mean that not all costs are included (entrance fees etc.) or services will not operate at the same safety and quality standards

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 30.

Foreign Exchange

Thailand

ATM Availability: ATMs are available in Bangkok but are limited on the islands.

Credit Card Acceptance: Major stores and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques: Can be exchanged at banks and exchange offices throughout the tour although rates may not be as favourable.

Local Currency: Thai Baht

Recommended Currency for Exchange: We recommend that you bring your money in GBP or US\$.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns and on the islands - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Laos

ATM Availability: ATMs are available in most major towns and cities including Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Vang Vieng and Savannekhet.

Credit Card Acceptance: There is very limited credit card use.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers cheques are exchangeable only in the main towns.

Local Currency: Kip.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US\$ are the easiest to exchange in Laos.

Where to Exchange: All major currencies and travellers cheques are exchangeable in the main towns.

Cambodia

ATM Availability: There are ATMs in most towns and cities.

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are accepted in some large shops and restaurants in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap.

Travellers Cheques: They can be hard to change outside of Siem Reap and Phnom Penh; we recommend them for emergencies only.

Local Currency: Riel.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: In Cambodia, US\$ is the most commonly used currency (small denomination notes are easier to use).

Where to Exchange: Large towns.

Joining your Trip

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

EXPLORE!
The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Thailand: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens for a stay of less than 30 days. All passports must have at least 6 months validity remaining on entry to Thailand.

Laos: A single visa is required for UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. This is obtained on arrival into Laos at a cost of 30USD for New Zealand & Australian citizens, 35USD for UK & US citizens and 42USD for Canadian citizens. You will need 1 passport photo for this visa.

Cambodia: A single visa is required by all nationalities and can be obtained upon arrival at Phnom Penh airport at the current cost of 30USD. You will also need one passport photo to arrange this. Alternatively you can now obtain an e-visa prior to departure from www.mfaic.gov.kh for 25USD. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on **0208 5431846**.

Vaccinations & Protection

Thailand

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and infectious hepatitis. Although not compulsory, travellers may also wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on Malaria and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Laos

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Although not compulsory, travellers may wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Cambodia

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, infectious hepatitis, tetanus, typhoid, diphtheria and polio. Consult your GP regarding tablets advised for malaria. Though not compulsory, travellers may wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Preparing for your Trip

Climate

Thailand

Generally hot with high humidity. There is some rainfall from April to September with most days being hot (around 33 Degrees) and a light breeze on the islands. If it does rain, it will be more of a heavy tropical downpour that lasts a few hours. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>.

Laos

The area of Laos and Thailand is tropical 'cool' from November to February, (15 to 27 Degrees Centigrade); 'hot' from March to May (up to 38 Degrees); 'wet' from June to October (rainy, hot and muggy). Bangkok and lowland areas are sticky all year round, but the northern highlands (Luang Prabang) are more temperate with a drier heat. The so-called 'cool' season can get very cold in the uplands at night and in the morning, bring a fleece.

Cambodia

Cambodia is a hot and tropical country, being hottest in April and coolest in January (still high 20s). Although rainfall is at its maximum in October, Phnom Penh and Siem Reap receive very little rain compared to the coastal areas, and when it does rain it tends to be in the form of sporadic mid afternoon downpours. There is normally very little rain between December and March.

Clothing

Days are hot and humid. Lightweight rainwear or an umbrella can be purchased cheaply if required locally. The northern region is cold at night during the winter (Dec - Feb). A fleece or coat is advisable during this period, in particular during our days on the Mekong. Laundry facilities available from Luang Prabang onwards. Please note that when visiting temples men and women will need to cover their shoulders (shawls over clothing are not accepted) and shorts are also not appropriate for either sex.

Equipment

Bring a torch and a water bottle.

Footwear

Comfy shoes, trainers & sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Thailand

Population: 67,000,000

Size of Country: 514,000 sq km

Major Language: Thai

Religion: Buddhism

Time Difference to GMT: +7

Laos

Population: 6,800,000

Size of Country: 236,800 sq km

Major Language: Lao

Religion: Buddhist

Time Difference to GMT: +7

Cambodia

Population: 14,805,358

Size of Country: 181,035 sq km

Major Language: Khmer

Religion: Buddhism

Time Difference to GMT: +7

Electric Supply & Plugs

Thailand

2 Pin Round

Laos

2 Pin Flat

Cambodia

2 Pin Round



Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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