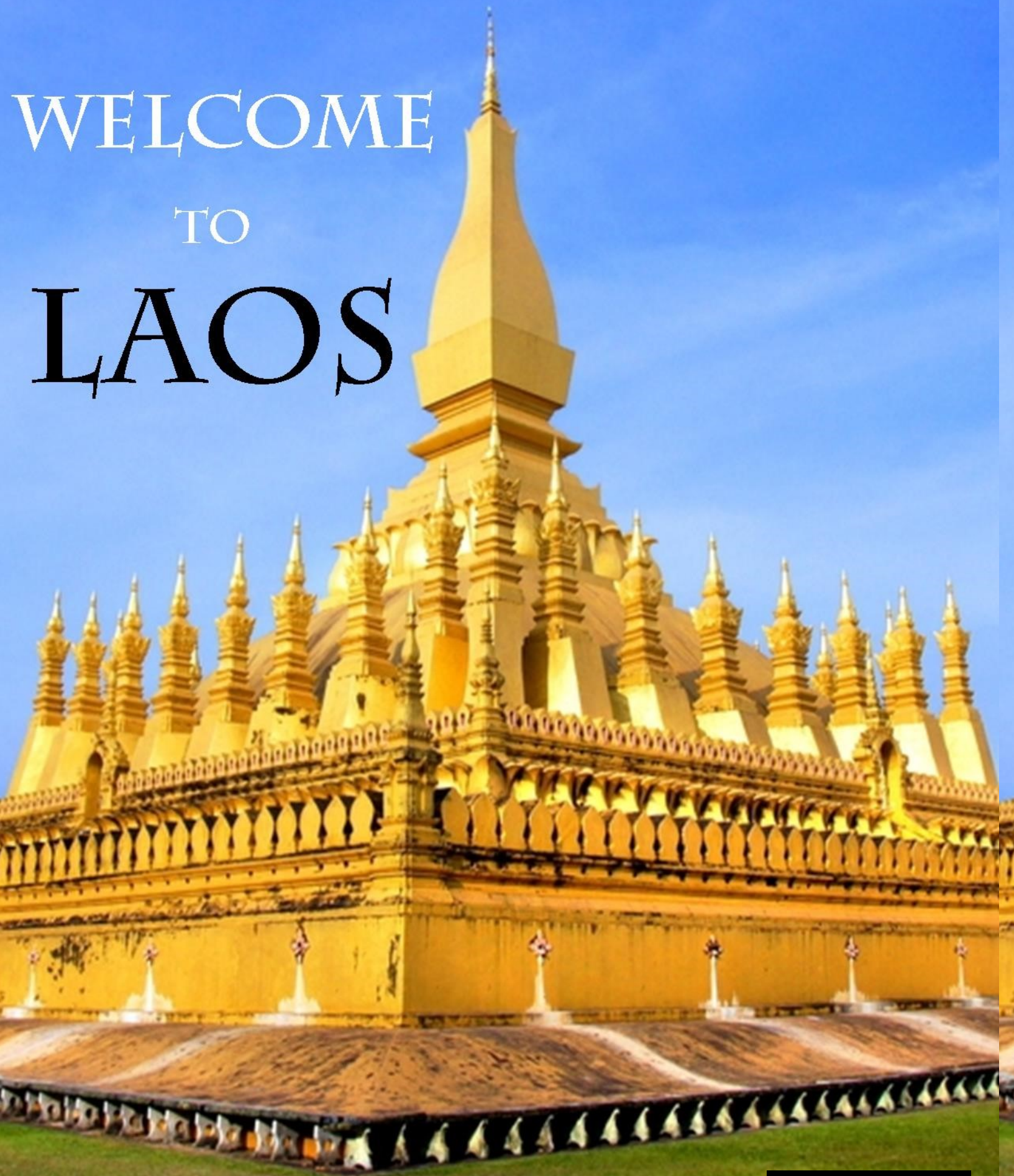


WELCOME  
TO  
LAOS



**Pre-Arrival**

# LAO PDR

## General Information



The Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic is located in the center of Indochina, sharing borders with China to the north, Myanmar and Thailand to the west, Cambodia to the South and Vietnam to the east.

**Area:** 236,800 square kilometers

**Capital City:** Vientiane

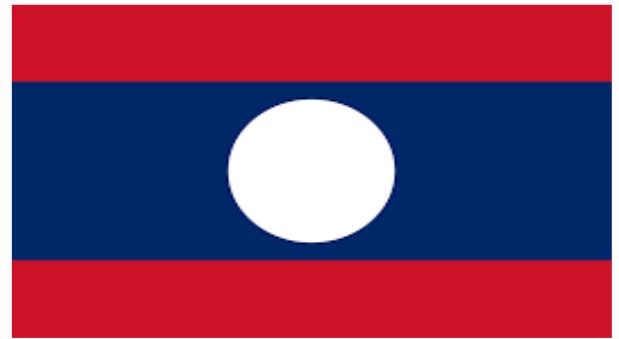
**Climate:** 3 seasons— hot / rainy season ( June-Oct), cool season (Nov– Feb), hot/dry season ( Mar-May)

**Population:** 6.9 million ( 2014 est.)

**Religion:** Buddhist 67% Christian 1.5%, other 31.5%

**Language:** Lao

**Currency :** Kip ( US 1 = 8000 LAK)





## Do's and Don'ts

If you are travelling to Laos, either for a short visit or for a longer stay, it is important to know some necessary cultural rules.



- A formal greeting for most Lao people is the “Nop” (joining one’s hands together in a praying gesture at chin level). Handshakes are also commonly used among male friends and with foreign visitors. The Lao word for “Hello” is “**Sa-bai-dee**”. Say it with a smile and you’ll be well received.

- The head is considered high. It is not acceptable to touch Lao people’s heads, so bear that in mind.

- Feet are low. Placing them on furniture or pointing at things or people with your feet is not acceptable.

- Before entering a Lao person’s home, take your shoes off and leave them outside the house or on the stairs.



OMG.....  
I LOVE THIS PLACE!!!



- Lao people speak softly and avoid confrontation. Please do not shout or raise your voice. Try to avoid yelling at people or embarrassing them in public.

- It is polite to gently crouch down when walking past someone who is seated, especially older people.

- There are many sacred items and sites in Laos. Please do not touch or enter these places without permission.

- Monks are revered and respected in Laos, however women should not touch a monk or a monk’s robes



# Preparing for Your Visit



## Vaccines and Medicines

Make sure you are up-to-date on routine vaccines before every trip. These vaccines include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine, varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, polio vaccine, and your yearly flu shot.

Get travel vaccines and medicines because there is a small risk of these diseases in Asia: Hepatitis A, Typhoid, and Polio.

Please bring mosquito repellent as dengue fever is present in Vientiane (Malaria is not a risk in Vientiane)

In Laos the standard voltage is 230 V. The standard frequency is 50 Hz. The power sockets that are used are of type A / B / C / E / F.



Type F: This socket also works with plug C and E



Type C: This socket also works with plug E and F



Type A: Japanese plugs can be used in the US but often not the other way around



Type B: This socket also works with plug A



Type E: This socket also works with plug C. Plug F will also do, but only with an additional pinhole.

You may need an adapter or converter depending on the voltage, frequency and power plugs in the country you live in.

## Packing Suggestions

- Passport with **minimum 6 months validity**
- A second photo ID other than your passport
- Travel insurance
- Important documents
- Blood donor/type card in case of emergency
- Prescriptions for any medication you require. Be assured that most Lao chemists will sell medicine without a script, but if you are questioned by immigration it's good to be able to show you need the medicine you carry.
- Sun protection, a hat, mosquito spray and sunscreen
- Rain protection (*specially in June-October*): travel umbrella or waterproof jacket
- Basic toiletries
- At least one pair of long pants or skirt and modest shirt to wear at temples



# THINGS TO DO IN VIENTIANE



- **COPE Visitor Center** is a large, free exhibit where you will learn about the history of UXO in Lao PDR and the work undertaken by the Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE) and the Centre of Medical Rehabilitation (CMR) to provide other impairments services for people affected by UXOs.
- **Wat Si Saket** is a Buddhist temple famous for its cloister wall housing thousands of tiny Buddha images and rows with hundreds of seated Buddhas.
- **That Luang Stupa** is a national symbol of Lao PDR and also the most sacred monument in the country.
- **Patuxai** is a war monument dedicated to those who fought in the struggle for independence from France.
- **Wat Si Muang** is one of Vientiane's most popular temples and sites of Buddhist worship.
- **Black Stupa** (That Dam) is a mythological structure that many locals believe was once inhabited by a seven-headed dragon that stood to protect the city from the threat of the Siamese.
- **Chao Anouvong Park** commemorates King Anouvong, the last king of the Lao Kingdom of Vientiane. In the evening, this is a popular exercise and walking place for locals and also the home to the night markets.
- **Hor Pha Keo** was built in 1565 to house the Emerald Buddha. It was converted from a place of worship into a museum and now houses the finest national collection of Buddhist sculptures and artifacts.
- **Lao National History Museum** is an excellent way to learn about the history, culture, and people of Laos.



COPE Visitor Center



Wat Si Saket



That Luang Stupa



Patuxai



Black Stupa



Chao Anouvong Park



Hor Pha Keo



Lao National History Museum

# Day Trips / Weekend Trip Ideas



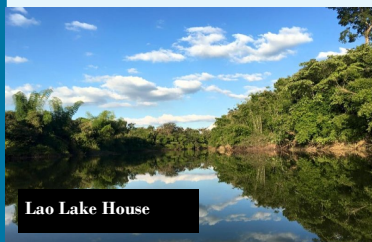
- **Lao Lake House:** (located in Nam Houm) only 35 km from the city centre. It is a good place for a weekend getaway for those wishing to escape the hustle of Vientiane and relax by the lake in lush garden surroundings or take a swim in the pool. (1 hour driving from Vientiane / day trip or overnight)

- **Tha Ngon/ floating restaurants:** Boat cruises from Tha Ngon village charm local and foreign visitors, who enjoy the fresh food and relaxing scenery. This place is very popular, with many people visiting each weekend to relax while eating, drinking, enjoying the scenic view or going on a river cruise. (45 minutes driving from Vientiane / day trip)

- **Buddha Park:** a famous sculpture park with more than 200 religious statues including a huge 40-metre high reclining Buddha image (45 minutes driving from Vientiane/ day trip)

- **Vangvieng:** (located 150 km in the north of Vientiane Capital) A place with a dreamlike landscape of limestone mountain peaks and scenic cliffs with the Song River bisecting the town. At the base of the town's limestone mountains are a network of caves. Water sports such as kayaking and tubing are popular and rock climbing is also a growing pastime. (3 hours driving from Vientiane/Weekend)

- **Luangprabang:** (situated in the centre of northern Laos) The former ancient capital of Laos, Luang Prabang is classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its outstanding cultural, historic and architectural values and its harmonious relationship between the natural and built environment (1 hour flight from Vientiane/ Weekend)



Lao Lake House



Buddha Park



Tha Ngon



Luang Prabang



Vang Vieng



Vang Vieng



Luang Prabang



# RELAXING AND SHOPPING

## Massage and Beauty:

**Champa Spa:** massage, facials, waxing, manicures, pedicures

**White Lotus:** massage, facials, manicures, pedicures

**Alida Beauty:** hairdresser, hair washing and styling, pedicure / manicure

**Papaya Spa:** a little more expensive but more of a complete spa package

## Shopping/ Minimarts :

- **Night markets on the river** – open from 5pm – 10pm for souvenirs, clothes, shoes, etc.
- **Talat Sao Mall** – open 10am – 4pm for souvenirs, clothes, shoes, electronics, CDs, jewelry, etc.
- **Saoban Handcrafts** — Social enterprise for handicrafts and jewelry supporting local communities.
- **Vientiane Centre** — new shopping mall in town open from 10 am-9pm (with a cinema)
- **Monument Books** — Monument Books is the biggest book shop in Vientiane and holds a vast range of new and second-hand books in various languages.
- **Phimphone Minimart** – good selection of western food, drinks, snacks, cosmetics, toiletries, alcohol, maps, magazines, newspapers, etc.
- **M point Mart:** Convenience store — open until midnight
- **Riverside Minimart** - good selection on the river of snacks, drinks, cosmetics, toiletries, alcohol, maps, magazines, newspapers, etc.





## TRANSPORTATION AND BANKING

### Transport

The city centre is small enough to walk around, however buses, tuk-tuks and taxis can be found if needed.

**Tuk Tuks** – ride around town for a reasonable price, but you may get wet in the heavy rain.

**Taxis** – Vientiane has a handful of taxis. Great option to travel to the airport and back, but not a common option day by day.

**Buses** – Green buses travel from the morning market on limited routes.



### Banking

**Money Exchange** can be made in every bank or at currency exchanges.

There are many ATMs but money will come out in KIP only (maximum withdrawal is 1,000,000 or 2,000,000 kip). Exchange BCEL bank on the river is open until 7pm and on the weekend. Other banks open M-F 8.30am – 3.30pm. You can pay in KIP, USD and Baht everywhere, but good to have kip for smaller, day-to-day things.

Paying for things by credit card is uncommon in Laos except in large hotels and shops.

**1 USD = 8,082Kip**

**1 EUR= 8,954Kip**

**100 Baht = 23,000KIP**

**( Exchange Rate on 14/7/2016)**





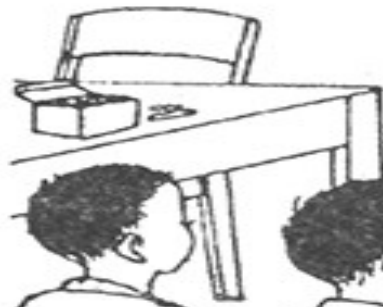
## Where to Eat and Drink in Vientiane

Lao food is similar in many ways to Thai. Lao food is based on the elements of sweet, salty, sour and spicy. Famous Lao dishes include laap, papaya salad and morning glory.

- **Lao Kitchen ( Khoua Lao)** —is famous for its laap, papaya salad and sticky rice with mango dessert!
- **Makphet Restaurant**—offers creative Lao fusion cuisine and is staffed by underprivileged youth (a project of INGO Friends International Program).
- **Kop Chai Deu**—The oldest and best located restaurant in Vientiane. It has always been “The Place Where The World Meets”. A mix of western and local dishes, with live music inside.
- **Spirit House**— offers a charming riverside setting in which to enjoy the greatest spectacle Vientiane has to offer – the sun setting into the majestic Mekong River.
- **PVO**—offers authentic Vietnamese cuisine (pho, spring rolls, ban xeo, etc.) for a great price!
- **Nazim Restaurant Indian Halal Food**– is described as “a little Indian gem tucked away in Vientiane.”
- **Joma**— serves freshly made sandwiches and is a popular spot for locals and expats craving a morning cup of coffee alongside a freshly prepared snack
- **Via Via**—is a restaurant famous for its wood-fired pizza.
- **Ray’s Grille**— boasts the “best burgers in Vientiane.”
- **Pimenton**— offers wonderful Spanish tapas and great steaks.
- **Le Provençal French Restaurant**—a longstanding restaurant in Vientiane specializing in traditional French cuisine.
- **Benoni/ Le Trio**— is a nice place to stop by and grab some coffee, cakes, and delicious food (breakfast/lunch)
- **Belgian Beer Café** —on the main river front in Vientiane with hundreds of imported beers to choose from.
- **Bor Pen Nyang’s**—fourth floor location with pool tables, drinks and food, overlooking the stunning Mekong River.
- **Jazzy Brick**– near the fountain with excellent cocktails and happy hour 6-8 every day.
- **Wind West**– The oldest pub in VTE. Live music late night pub with 2-3 different bands. Music starts around 9pm



# Basic Lao Language



ທັດອຳນ  
 ໂຮງຮຽນຂອງຂ້ອຍ  
 ໂຮງຮຽນຂອງຂ້ອຍ ຈະອາດມີ ທັດອຳນ ມີ ທັດອຳນ ມີ ທັດອຳນ

Hello	ສະບາຍດີ (sabaidee)
Thank you	ຂອບໃຈ (khàwp jai)
Thank you very much	ຂອບໃຈຫລາຍໆ (khàwp jai lai lai)
Sorry/excuse me	ຂໍໂທດ (khǎw thôht)
Never mind/ you are welcome	ບໍ່ເປັນຫຍັງ (baw pen nyǎng)
Goodbye	ລາກ່ອນ (la khǎwn)
Please	ກະລຸນາ (khâluna)
Yes	ເຈົ້າ/ໂດຍ (jâo/dooy)
No	ບໍ່ (baw)
Pleased to meet you	ດີໃຈທີ່ໄດ້ພົບເຈົ້າ
How much is this?	ອັນນີ້ເທົ່າໃດ? (anh nee thao dai?)
Where are you going?	ເຈົ້າຈະໄປໃສ (jâo ja pai sai?)
Where to?	ໄປໃສ (pai sai?)
To Morning market	ໄປຕະຫລາດເຊົ້າ (pai ta lard sao)
I want to go to the airport	ຂ້ອຍຢາກໄປເດີນບິນ (kháwy yark pai dern bin)





# Resources

<http://www.visit-laos.com/>

<https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g293949-Laos-Vacations.html>

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/laos>

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/laos>

<http://www.tourismlaos.org/>

<http://www.laos-guide-999.com/learn-lao.html>

