

LAOS

Bolaven Loop Tour

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FOREWORD



Thanks for downloading this FREE interactive travel guide. You've made an excellent choice if you plan on **GETTING OFF THE BEATEN TRACK** in LAOS. Before you delve into the content of this travel guide, please take a few minutes to read this foreword. It outlines how to make the best use of the information contained within.

First-hand experience: This travel guide has been put together using first-hand experience gained from traveling to, and exploring, all the locations presented within. The information and photos featured in my travel guides, have been collated over years of putting boots on the ground. There is no second-hand information, or information which is plagiarized from other travel sources, within this guide. Every cave, waterfall, river, viewpoint, jungle trail, temple site, guesthouse and restaurant presented, or promoted, I have been to and seen and/or experienced myself.

Getting off the beaten track: The primary focus of my travel guides is **ADVENTURE TRAVEL** (and activities) to locations which are non-mainstream tourist destinations. As an example, there is no information for the mainstream tourist locations of LAOS (except as transit hub's before heading off to a more remote location) listed in this travel guide. As such, the information in this guide is directed towards travelers (not tourists) who are keen

for a bit of adventure - caving, climbing, jungle trekking, kayaking - in an off the beaten track location, of South East Asia. If these types of activities aren't to your liking, then this travel guide won't be much use to you. There's no information in here about the party towns in South East Asia.

Budget travel: Knowing the importance of making the most of your hard-earned currency, my travel links ([12GO ASIA](#)) and accommodation links ([AGODA](#)) are predominantly budget oriented. They provide a range of options for getting to a central hub, or base, from which you can make your daily explorations.

Independent sightseeing: Instead of going on group tours, I strongly promote the idea of renting your own vehicle (car or motorbike) and venturing out yourself. To help you get to the exact location, there's always a [GOOGLE MAPS](#) link to show the route from a hub (hotel or guesthouse) to the sightseeing attraction. If there's a local tour operator offering excellent adventure type tours, or activities, I'll provide links to their website. A good example of a great adventure tour operator is [GREEN DISCOVERY LAOS](#), who offer excellent caving, kayaking and trekking tours throughout Laos.

The Table of Contents: This is page four of the travel guide and has a sequential list of sections, which you can go to directly by clicking on the **GREEN** numbered tab.

YouTube Links: These take you directly to my YouTube Vlog ([Megaworld Asia](#)) where you can see short, high quality travel videos of the numerous attractions listed in my travel guides. If you enjoy the videos, please hit the like button and don't forget to subscribe to see my upcoming adventures.

Your next adventure is just one click away

Safe travels,

MEGA

The Bolaven Loop Tour

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Is Just One Click Away**

How To Use This Interactive Travel Guide

The Table Of Contents: To effortlessly move from the TOC to the page you want to view, simply click on the **page number**: 

YouTube Links: These will take you to a short highlights video, of the sightseeing attraction, in the section you're looking at:



Other Links: These take you to ancillary services such as recommended restaurants, or car and motorbike rental agencies, in the location you're traveling to:

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Travel Links: This takes you to **12GO ASIA**, an excellent travel group which provides a range of options for getting around the region:



The Table Of Contents: To move back to the TOC, click on the **yellow arrows**, at the bottom of each Page: 

Google Maps Links: These provide a route from a designated location (e.g., a hotel) to a particular sightseeing attraction:



Information Links: These links take you to information sites, such as Wikipedia or Wiki-voyage, to provide more in-depth info on a particular subject or location:



Accommodation Links: This takes you to the Agoda website to check accommodation availability and make bookings:



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THE BOLAVEN PLATEAU

About: The BOLAVEN PLATEAU is an elevated volcanic area, located predominantly in Champasak Province, Southern Laos. The eastern side protrudes into Sekong and Attapeu Provinces, with the north-east corner in Salavan Province. The plateau's peak elevation ranges from 1,000 to 1,350 meters (3,280 to 4,430 ft) above sea level. The name Bolaven makes reference to the Laven ethnic group which has historically dominated the region. The plateau is renowned for its majestic landscapes; where jungle covered peaks fall away to deep ravines, with some of the most visually impressive waterfalls in Laos. **Click the following link for additional information:**

WIKIPEDIA

Coffee cultivation: Due to its elevation (1350 meters at its highest point) the Plateau has an ideal climate for coffee cultivation: cool nights and warm, dry days. As one rides across the plateau, hectares of coffee plantations can be seen in abundance.

Adventure Destination: Over recent years the Bolaven Plateau has become increasingly popular as an adventure destination for the independent traveler. Those wanting to get off the beaten track of mainstream tourism can enjoy the beauty of a largely undeveloped landscape, with waterfalls being the primary sightseeing experience.

Bolaven Loop Trip: As mentioned, for travelers and adventures wanting to get off the beaten track of mainstream tourism, the plateau has a fantastic motorbike tour called the BOLAVEN LOOP. The tour starts and ends in the provincial capital of Pakse, and will typically last 3 - 4 days (depending on whether you do the BIG or SMALL LOOP). Motorbikes (scooters) can be rented in Pakse for around 100,000 Kip per day.

Best season: The ideal time to do the loop tour is in the dry season (November to May). However, as most roads are sealed, it's also possible to make the tour in the rainy season.

Note: This is actually the best time to see the waterfalls (in full flow).



Picturesque Landscapes

EGAWORLD ASIA

GETTING TO PAKSE

Already in Laos: A bus from Vientiane to Pakse takes 12 hours of travel time. **Click the following link for booking inquiries:**



Laos Airlines: The national airline also runs direct flights from Vientiane to Pakse. If you're not on a super tight budget, these flights are relatively inexpensive; approximately US 75 Dollars one way. Travel time is one hour. **Click the following link for booking inquiries:**

LAO AIRLINES

Coming from Cambodia: There is a minivan service from Siem Reap to Pakse. Travel time is approximately 8 hours. **Click the following link for booking inquiries:**

ASIAN VAN TRANSFERS

Coming from Thailand: There is a daily bus service from UBON RATCHATHANI Station to Pakse. Due to the fact the trip across the border, and onto the Pakse bus terminal, takes 3.5 - 4 hours (this includes the time taken for exit and entry clearances) the buses only depart in the mornings at 0700, 0810 & 0930 am. **Click the following link for travel options from Bangkok to Ubon Ratchathani:**



Coming from Vietnam: Pakse is in the south of Laos, so if you're coming from Hanoi it's quite a long journey. **Click the following link for flight options from Hanoi:**



Flights to Pakse

GENERAL INFORMATION - ACCOMMODATION

PAKSE TOWNSHIP: Is in Champasak Province, Southern Laos and is the start and finish point for the Bolaven Loop. The town sits on the Eastern bank of the Mekong River and is the gateway to the most southern areas of Laos, and Cambodia beyond. In years past Pakse was a bit of a sleepy backwater that most travelers bypassed on their way north to Savanakheth or conversely, south to the magical 4000 Islands.

More recently, Pakse has seen a surge in popularity due to many travelers discovering the adventure of one of the best short motorbike tours in South East Asia; THE BOLAVEN LOOP TOUR.

Accommodation: There's plenty of accommodation choices to suit your budget range. An excellent low cost option is the NANG NOI GUESTHOUSE, situated near the center of town. Click the following link for booking inquiries at the Nang Noi Guesthouse:

NANG NOI GUESTHOUSE

Mid-range option: The ALISA HOTEL is a centrally located mid-range hotel, just off the main street. It's newer hotel with a large, comfortable, air-conditioned rooms, hot-water showers and free WIFI. If you're not on a tight budget, this is an excellent choice as it's quiet at night (being back off the main street) and also has secure parking for motorbikes. Click on the following link for booking inquiries at the Alisa Hotel:

ALISA HOTEL

High end option: For those looking for something a bit more comfortable, with a nice pool, the ATHENA HOTEL is a great high end option. Click on the following link for booking inquiries at the Athena Hotel:



GENERAL INFORMATION - CAFE'S & RESTAURANTS

Café's and restaurants: One of the great things about Southern Laos is there's plenty of great choices when it comes to getting a good coffee. The nearby Bolaven Plateau is a major coffee cultivation area in the country and as such there's wide selection of brands available in Pakse. One of the best is Sinouk Coffee, which has its own café and restaurant near the center of town; the SINOUK CAFÉ. The Sinouk is also a hotel (SINOUK RESIDENCE) with mid-range priced rooms on offer (550k Kip). **Click the following link for the location:**



French bakery and café: Le BOULANGE is an excellent spot for a morning croissant and a great coffee. The owner/manager is a French national who bakes superb breads and pastries. The ambiance of the Boulange is fantastic. It's a great place to spend an hour or so relaxing with a coffee and watching the world go by. Their breakfast's are also excellent with generous servings.

Note: one of the staff working at the Boulange is XAVIER, the guy who has the off-road motorbikes for hire (Yamaha XTR 125). If you want to rent an off-road bike in Pakse, Xavier is the only person that has them. **Click the following link for the location of Le Boulange:**



GENERAL INFORMATION - RENTING A MOTORBIKE

Renting a motorbike: There are several tour agents in Pakse who have information, itineraries, and motorbikes for rent for those wanting to do the loop. The majority of rental agencies have scooters in the 100 - 130 CC capacity with a selection of auto, and semi-auto's available. Prices vary from 100k - 120k LAK per day, and cheaper rates can be bargained for longer hires (i.e., one week). An excellent choice for motorbike rentals in Pakse is LAO GO CAR & MOTORBIKES. They have competitive rates and a helpful and informative management team. Click the link below to contact Lao Go:

LAO GO CAR & MOTORBIKES

A weekly Rate: Lao Go will often give you a better rate if you decide to take a motor scooter for a weeks rental. They will also provide you with a helmet, a lock and a good map of the loop trip which highlights all the best sightseeing locations and recommendations for accommodation. They will also allow you to leave your larger bags/packs at the office while you're off doing the loop.



Off-road bike: A good option, for doing the loop trip in the rainy season, is to hire an off-road bike. Although this isn't absolutely necessary in the rainy season (you can still do it on a conventional scooter) an off-road bike gives much better stability in the wet and muddy conditions. If you would like to rent an off-road bike for the loop trip, **contact XAVIER in Pakse on +856 2092780140 (also on What's App).**

Motorbike security: Always lock your bike when in remote locations, and always park in the designated parking locations.



DOING DAY TOURS FROM PAKSE

Day trips: For those who don't feel like committing to the multi-day demands of the loop trip, there are other excellent sightseeing attractions in and round Pakse which can be completed as day trips. These include the the Khmer Historical site of WAT PHOU (approximately 49 km South East of Pakse) and the waterfalls at the TAD FANE Area. **For directions to Wat Phou, click the link below:**



Wat Phou: This is one of the oldest Khmer historical sites in the region, dating to a time before Angkor Wat was built. The architecture is similar to Khmer sites in Cambodia, albeit on a much smaller scale. However, one unusual feature which indicates a difference to the more well known sites in Siem Reap is the stone carving of a crocodile which, according to **Wikipedia**, may have been used for human sacrifice:

WIKIPEDIA



Tad Fane Falls

Tad Fane: At around 125 meters, the twin falls of Tad Fane is one of the highest waterfalls in Laos. This site is normally visited on the last day of the Loop trip but being just 40 km from Pakse, can also be completed easily as a day trip. Hire a motorbike and make the one hour ride up hwy 16. **Click the link below for directions from Pakse:**



Wat Phou Historical Site

DOING THE LOOP TOUR - GENERAL INFORMATION

Doing the loop tour: As mentioned, there are two options for doing the Bolaven Loop; the **SMALL LOOP** and the **BIG LOOP**. Which one you choose will simply come down to how much time you have. Generally, the time needed to do either of the loops is as follows: **SMALL LOOP = 3 days/2 nights**; **BIG LOOP = 4 days/3 nights**. Regardless of which loop you choose, the first day of travel is the same for both. An overnight stop is made in **TAD LO VILLAGE** before continuing on with either the **BIG** or **SMALL LOOPS**. Click on the following link for directions to Tad Lo Village:

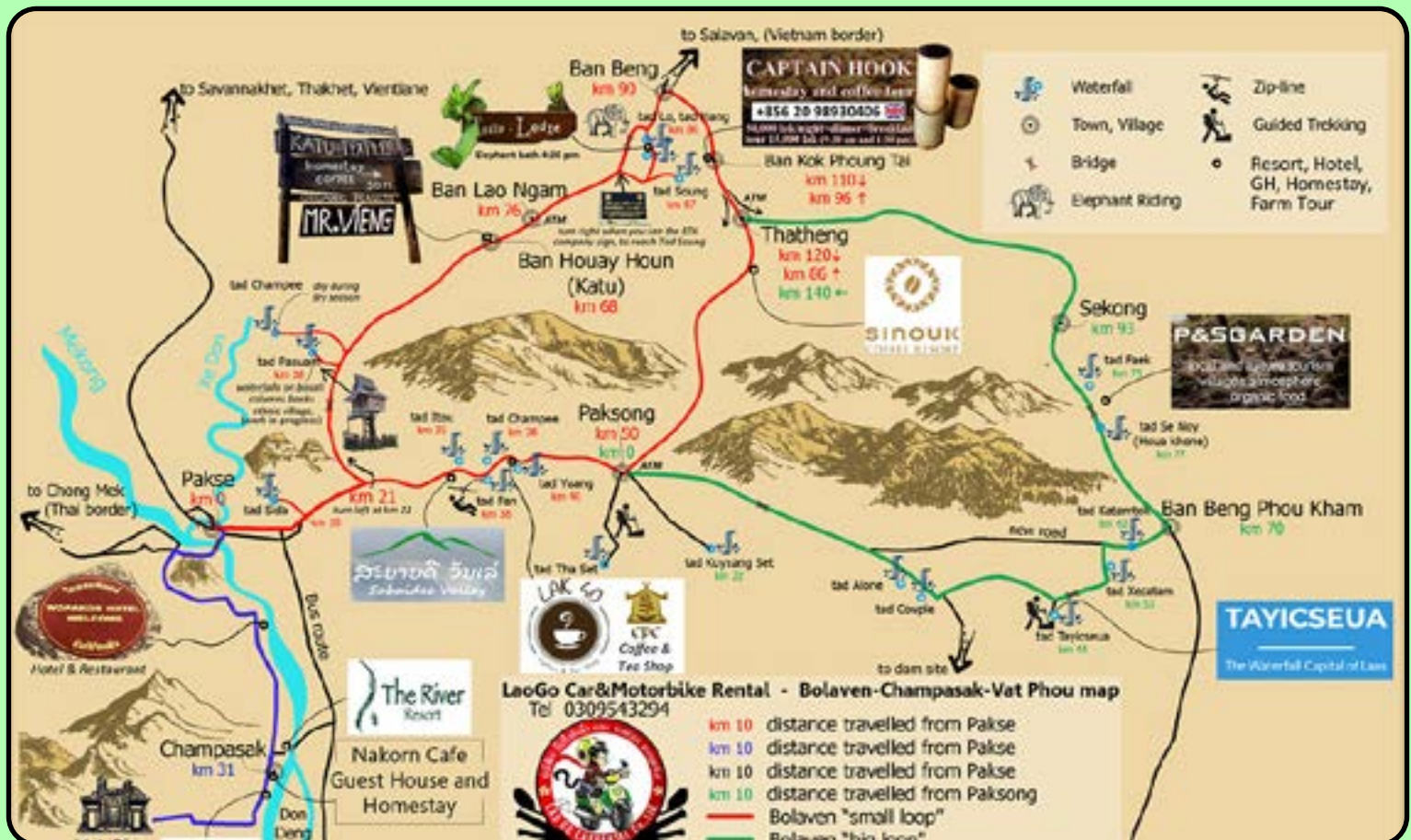


Bolaven in the rainy season: The Plateau tends to be more popular with sightseers in the dry season, due to the obvious clear skies and cooler weather. However, the more challenging rainy season is definitely the best time to see the waterfalls, as they are in peak flow. The road across the center of the plateau will take you through some of the most stunning landscapes in Laos, and also enable you to stop at



Durian season

the best waterfall locations. The rainy season (June to August) is also the **DURIAN SEASON** on the Bolaven Plateau. As you ride up from Pakse, the aromatic smell of the "King of Fruits" permeates the air from the roadside stalls. Click the following link to see a short highlights video the **LOOP TOUR**:



PAKSE TO TAD LO

About: The ride from Pakse takes you around the northern side of the Bolaven Plateau, where impressive landscapes and coffee plantations abound. The distance is approximately 86 km and travel time can take around 3 - 4 hours, if stops are made at the various sightseeing attractions en-route.

Waterfalls: There's a couple of smaller waterfalls on the way which are worth checking out. PHA SUAM FALLS and the nearby MAAK NGA EW FALLS are small, in comparison to other waterfalls on the loop trip, but are in very picturesque settings and well worth an hour or so of your time, on the way up to Tad Lo. **Click the following link for directions:**



However, if you're on a tight schedule, I'd suggest foregoing the above-mentioned waterfalls, and heading straight to the WAT PA FORESTED TEMPLE site. This is located approximately 10 km west of Tad Lo and is well worth 30 minutes to an hour of your time. The primary attraction of this site is the very large, old growth trees. Some are reputed to



be 1000 years old.

The Green Zone: Coming from Pakse the turn off to Wat Pa is on the right, at a large sign called the GREEN ZONE. Follow the dirt road into the temple grounds and park near the large golden Buddha. Spend some time admiring the 1000 years old forest giants. **Click the link below for directions:**



TAD LO VILLAGE - GENERAL INFORMATION

About: This picturesque village is located on the northern side of the Bolaven Plateau and is one of the premier stops on the loop trip. The village sits on the eastern side of the Tad Lo River with TAD LO WATERFALL being the primary sightseeing attraction.

Accommodation: The village accommodation area is 1 km off hwy 20. Coming from Pakse the turn off is on the right, immediately past the bridge.

Note: Prior to Covid there was a good selection of guesthouses, home-stays and small restaurants open for the steady stream of loopers coming through. As of July 2022, most of the guesthouses are closed. The TAD LO LODGE, situated right next to the river, is currently one of the few (perhaps the only one) still open. **Click the following link for booking inquiries at Tad Lo Lodge:**



Budget accommodation: A popular choice is the PALAMEI GUESTHOUSE. Possibly because room rates are very reasonable, and it has western food to a good standard. Prices for a fan room range between 90k - 120k Lao-tian Kip (US 6 - 8) per night. **Click on the following Link for booking inquiries at Palamei Guesthouse:**



PALAMEI GUESTHOUSE



TAD LO SIGHTSEEING - WATERFALLS

About: With the advent of Covid a lot of the activities and attractions in and around Tad Lo Village have been stopped, or put on hold, until picks up again. This will probably occur in the coming dry season (starting November 2022). One of the most popular attractions was the daily ELEPHANT BATHING on the grounds of Tad Lo Lodge. The elephants are no longer on site and according to lodge staff, the bathing will not resume until tourist numbers increase significantly.

Walkways: Prior to Covid there were boarded walkways and a solid bridge crossing the river, just south of Tad Lo Lodge. This is no longer the case as flooding over the past couple of years has destroyed both. There's still a walkway and viewing platform on the western side of the river (giving a nice view of TAD HANG FALLS) but to bet there you need to go back out to hwy 20, and come up the small road on that side. **Click the following link for directions:**



Damaged walkways

Walking north from Tad Lo Lodge: Alternatively, if you if you are staying at Tad Lo Lodge, you can follow the jungle trail downstream for 100 meters and get a nice view of TAD HANG FALLS. On the way you'll probably see local villagers going about their daily bathing and laundry activities in the shallow side pools of the river.



Tad Hang Falls

TAD LO SIGHTSEEING - WATERFALLS

Tad Lo Waterfall: As mentioned, this is a featured attraction on the loop trip. Prior to Covid there was a solid bridge across the river (south of TAD HANG FALLS) which allowed sightseers to crossover to the western side and follow a boarded walkway up to the base of TAD LO FALLS. As of July 2022, that bridge no longer exists (destroyed by flooding).

Jungle trail: From the lodge it's approximately 600 meters (upstream) to the waterfall. The jungle trail runs along the eastern side of the river and is clearly indicated. On the way you'll pass the entry point to the suspension bridge, which is about 100 meters downstream from the face of the falls. If you continue on you'll eventually see a wooden stairway down to the base of the falls. Note: If you are there in the rainy season, use due care when descending as the stairway is steep and slippery. In the dry season, when the water flow is much less, this is a great spot for swimming.

The suspension bridge: This is an addition to the sightseeing attractions around Tad Lo. With the destruction of the bridges downstream, the suspension bridge was construct-



Rainy season flow

ed to negate the effects of flood damage. This is an excellent way to get a good elevated view of the waterfall, and provides quite a spectacular sight in the high flow of the rainy season.

Bridge sway: If you don't have a head for heights, or you're unsteady on your feet, going out on the suspension bridge probably isn't advisable as it tends to sway as you move across it. In the interests of safety, there's a zip-line (above head height) which sightseers can clip onto, while wearing a harness.



As viewed from the suspension bridge

TAD LO WATERFALL - PHOTOS & VIDEO



Click the link to the right to see video highlights of the TAD LO WATERFALL:



CONTINUING THE SMALL LOOP

THE SMALL LOOP: Continuing on with the loop trip you'll head around the Northern side of the Bolaven Plateau, eventually arriving at the provincial town of Thatheng. At the T-Junction go straight for the small loop and PAKSONG, or turn left for the big loop and SEKONG. To get to Paksong, click on the following link:



Paksong: The distance from Tad Lo to Paksong is approximately 65 km and the travel time is 1 - 2 hours. Keep in mind that Paksong is the highest point of the Bolaven Plateau (1350 meters above sea level) and as such is also the coldest. There will be a noticeable temperature change as you ride up from Thatheng.

Coffee Culture: On the ride from Thatheng to Paksong you'll notice a significant number of coffee plantations, on either side of the road. Many of them also offer accommodation with the pick of the bunch being The SINOUK RESORT. At US 50 per night it's probably a bit too expensive for most travellers on the



loop trip but for those without budgetary constraints, the Sinouk offers excellent three star chalets and the chance for an in-depth look at the coffee cultivating industry. Click the link below, to arrange accommodation at the Sinouk Resort:



DOING THE BIG LOOP

THE BIG LOOP: As mentioned previously the initial direction for doing the big loop, when you depart from Tad Lo, is the same as doing the small loop. However, when you get to THATHENG, make a LEFT TURN at the T-Junction, and head to SEKONG on Hwy 16.

Thatheng: There's a couple of roadside restaurants (near the T-Junction) where you can get local food such as fried rice, or noodle soup, before continuing your trip.

Highway 16: The distance from Thatheng to Sekong is approximately 47 km, and there's a noticeable drop in elevation. This is also a very scenic ride and as you drop in altitude, the air temperatures become noticeably warmer again. Due to the remoteness, and wild terrain, there's an additional hazard on the roads; wandering livestock. Ride with due care because herds of cows and goats are often standing, or sitting, in the middle of the road.

Sekong: The provincial capital is a picturesque town next to the Xe Namnoy River. The majority of loopers tend to pass through here in their haste to get to TAYICSUA or, if you're heading in the opposite direction, to TAD LO.

Overnight in Sekong: If you're traveling a bit late in the day, and you decide to have a night in Sekong, the selection of guesthouses isn't that great. **Note:** Between Sekong and TAYICSUA there are not many guesthouses of any worthwhile standard that are open. As of July 2022, the PS GARDEN camping ground is closed (this will probably open again when the dry season 2022 starts).

The Sekong Hotel: One of the few that is open is the SEKONG HOTEL. The nightly rate is 120,000 Kip for an air-conditioned room and hot water. The hotel is quite run down and although the rooms are quite spacious, the beds are probably the hardest I've ever slept on. Being in Sekong is like stepping back in time; think Thailand in the 1980's and you'll get the picture. The only thing of note in the town is the five km of dual roadway, with street lights which are powered by solar panels. A rather unusual sight for a largely undeveloped area of the country. **Click the following link for the location of the Sekong Hotel:**



The main road through Sekong

THE BIG LOOP - SEKONG PROVINCE

Sekong Province: The mountain road eventually drops to the plains on the eastern side of the Plateau. The T-Junction of the mountain road and route 11 is actually in Attapeu Province. There's a small village at the T-Junction. To get to Sekong, make a left turn and head north. The road to Sekong is a truly scenic ride with the imposing bluff of the Bolaven Plateau on your left, and A green landscape of jungle and rice paddies all around.

Tad Faed Waterfall: Approximately seven kilometers from the T-Junction is the turn-off to TAD FAED WATERFALL. This is a less visited waterfall site on the loop, possibly because it's not that spectacular in the dry season. In the rainy season however, it's visually impressive and well worth an hour or two of your time. The turn-off is on the right, just past the bridge across the Xe Namnoy River. It's then a four km sealed road to the parking area. On the way you'll pass the turn off to another smaller waterfall; TAD HUA KHON (next to PS Garden).

Widest waterfall: The viewing area at Taed Faed is quite well set up for sightseeing. There's a restaurant, restrooms and a walkway



In full flow

over to the island in the middle of the river. Tad Faed doesn't have a big drop but when it's in full flow, it's possibly the widest waterfall on the Bolaven Plateau. To get closer to the falls you can cross the bridge to the Island, then follow the trail to the centre of the falls. From there you can climb up the rock face to the top of the falls, for an exceptional view. Click the following link for directions:



Tad Faed Waterfall

THE BIG LOOP - THE MOUNTAIN ROAD

The Mountain Road: From Tad Faed Waterfall it's only a short distance (7 km) to the BAN BENG PHOU KHAM T-Junction (this is the point where you turn right and head back up the Bolaven Plateau). For the first few km the mountain road is relatively flat going but then rises dramatically, and weaves through a spectacularly rugged landscape, en-route to Tayicsua. **Note:** For some strange reason this part of the hwy (between Sekong and Attapeu) becomes hwy # 11).

Tad Katamtok: Approximately 16 km from Ban Beng Pho Kham T-Junction is arguably the biggest and most impressive waterfall on the Bolaven Plateau. It's situated approximately 47 km east of Paksong (on the mountain road) in an uninhabited and remote area a few kilometers past the hydro-electric development. The area has magnificent jungle covered peaks and deep ravines, and is quite spectacular if you're on a motorbike. The turn off is approximately 2 km East of the old bridge, and next to a large Banyan tree. Prior to covid, a track continued along the edge of the cliff face, giving a better view of the falls. That is now overgrown with jungle.



Mountain road scenery

Waterfall viewing: There's a small viewing area, just a few meters from the large tree (where you park your bike). This is currently the only location where you get an unobstructed look at the waterfall. Unfortunately, due to the forest growth in the distance, you can't see the full waterfall (from top to bottom). **Click the following link for directions from Tad Faed to Tad Katamtok:**



Tad Katamtok Waterfall

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THE BIG LOOP - TAYICSUA

Getting to Tayicsua: Tad Katamtok is an important marker in finding your way to the TAYICSUA HOME-STAY. Approximately five km further on from Tad Katamtok waterfall there's a dirt road on the left which you must take. There's a sign post (which indicates it is the correct turn off) which says "**Tayicsua Guesthouse 5.3 Km.**" Take this and ride for approximately another 4 km until you reach the turn-off down to the home-stay. **Click the link below for directions form Tad Katamtok to Tayicsua:**



Tayicsua: In Years past, Tayicsua was the highlight of the Big Loop Tour. Unfortunately Covid, and two years lack of up-keep, have seen this once amazing waterfall site fall into a state of disrepair and neglect. As of October 2022 there's no accommodation open, and the restaurant is also closed. The fabled waterfall trail is now largely overgrown with jungle, and many of the wooden handrails have rotted and collapsed. Sadly, it seems the owners have just given up.



Important marker

Day visit: As of October 2022 the only waterfall sightseeing option available is a day visit. The upper section of the waterfall trail is still accessible and JAIROU HALANG, the best waterfall, can still be reached. The cost of a day visit is 20,000 Kip per person. **Click the link below to see a highlights reel of the waterfalls at Tayicsua:**



Jairou Halang Waterfall

THE BIG LOOP - HEADING TO PAKSONG

Getting to Paksong: The ride through Paksong is on the last leg of the Big Loop and is a fairly straight run to the waterfall area of Tad Fane. There is two options for getting to Paksong. The first, and easiest, is to retrace your steps back to the sealed road (mountain road) The second, and more difficult, is to take the alternate route - which has 12 km of dirt road before reaching the mountain road.

Tad Koo Waterfall resort: The great thing about taking the alternate route is it takes you past a location with two waterfalls and a large natural swimming pool, called TAD KOO WATERFALL RESORT. The site is just a short distance off the dirt road and is an excellent place for a swim, and a bite to eat. The entry fee is 15,000 kip and there's also a restaurant on-site. This site might well be one of the hidden gems of the Bolaven Loop Tour and to be honest, stopping here, instead of Tayicsua is a much better option. **Click on the link below for directions from Tayicsua to Tad Koo:**



THE BIG LOOP - PAKSONG

Paksong: This is a small township at the top of the Bolaven Plateau. Its elevation is 1350 meters and as such, is markedly cooler than temperatures in Pakse. The town is built on a flat, open plain which is exposed to the cool winds blowing across the plateau. During the rainy season it's often wet and foggy. **Note:** In the months of December and January, over-night temperatures often get down into single figures.

Paksong stopover: There are a few basic type guesthouses in town but the fact is there's not really much to do in Paksong. It's mainly for this reason, most loopers pass through quickly to get to the Tad Fane Waterfall area.

Coffee & food: There are a few local restaurants and small cafe's along the edge of the highway. However, for a decent place where you can get a coffee out of the chill weather, head to the **AMAZON CAFE** at the **PTT GAS-OLINE STATION**. **Click the following link for the location of the Amazon Cafe:**



COFFEE		Hot	Ice	Frappé
		17,000	25,000	27,000
Americano	medium	17,000	25,000	27,000
Espresso	medium	17,000	25,000	27,000
Cappuccino	medium	22,000	25,000	27,000
Mocha	medium	22,000	25,000	27,000
Milk Extra	medium			27,000
COLD BREW medium		27,000	30,000	

DRINKS		Hot	Ice	Frappé
		17,000	20,000	22,000
Cocoa	medium	17,000	20,000	22,000
Green Tea	medium	17,000	20,000	22,000
Pink Milk	medium	17,000	20,000	22,000
Tea Latte	medium	17,000	20,000	22,000
Milk	medium	17,000	20,000	22,000

Highlands Coffee: This is a great place to stop for a coffee as you're heading up to paksong. It's a large plantation, with an attached cafe, located just a few km before Paksong - on the mountain road. They have great coffee and also sell small packs of ground coffee and beans. **Click the following link for the location of highlands coffee:**



THE THREE SISTERS AREA - TAD GNEUANG

About: Coming from Paksong, this is the first of the three waterfalls, you'll come to. The turn-off is on the right, and approximately 10 km west of Paksong. During the dry season, base of the falls is accessible. In the wet, the draft and mist blowing of the falls is so intense that going beyond the lookout (half way down) will certainly have you soaked through.

Note: The turn-off is one km post the km 40 marker post. There's a large billboard/advertising sign, indicating the turn-off, to the parking area (on the left).



Access: From the turn-off follow the 800 meter dirt track down to the parking area and checkpoint, pay your parking and entry fees, and then walk a further 200 - 300 meters to the head of the falls. **Fees:** Parking fee = 5000 Kip; Entrance fee = 10000 Kip.

Amenities: The area is well set up with toilets, showers and a large open style restaurant which looks out over a picturesque stream coursed landscape (at the top of the falls).



Bottom of falls: Beyond the restaurant a wide stairway will take you to the lower level viewing area. At the far right corner of this lower level there's a steep stairway leading all the way down to the swimming hole at the foot of the falls. Take care with the climb down and make use of the handrails provided at all times. Tad Gneuang is a great spot for a swim but the current, particularly at peak flow times, can be quite severe. Additionally the terrain surrounding the pool, being predominantly volcanic lava, is quite slippery.



Tad Gneuang Falls

THE THREE SISTERS AREA - TAD FANE

About: The turn off to Tad Fane is at the Km 38 marker on hwy 16 (approximately 2 km beyond Tad Gneuag), and the track to Tad Champee is directly opposite. If you're keen for a swim then either Tad Champee or Tad Gneuag are your best choices as it's not possible to hike down to the foot of Tad Fane falls. Of the three sites, Tad Fane is the most developed for tourism. **For directions from Paksong, click the link below:**



Access: A dirt road (approx. 800 meters) will take you directly to the secure parking area. **Fees:** Parking = 5000 Kip; Entry = 10000 Kip.

Zip-line: Additionally it has a seriously good adventure activity; a zip-line circuit which takes thrill seekers across the valley (450 meter zip line), across the top of the falls, and then back to the start area. The current cost is USD 30 person and safety gear and basic training are provided before doing the run. The zip line operators are GREEN DISCOVERY LAOS.



Click the following link for a highlights video of the Tad Fane zip-line adventure:



Stay a night: Enjoy a night at the TAD FANE RESORT. Click on the link below for booking inquiries:



THE THREE SISTERS AREA - TAD CHAMPEE

The waterfall cave: The Bolaven Plateau is a draw card for its impressive waterfalls. Most are in locations which are reasonably easy to access and have facilities (restrooms and restaurants) in place for sightseers. TAD CHAMPEE is one of the more remote waterfalls on the plateau. On first viewing it appears hardly remarkable, but a closer look reveals a unique feature: a large cavern behind the curtain of water.

Getting there: Getting to the site entails riding down three kilometers of rough dirt track (in the rainy season it's red mud). Prior to covid the site catered, at a basic level, for the small number of sightseers who made the ride down there. Above the falls there was a rustic style restaurant selling cold drinks and simple rice and noodle dishes. Three years on the restaurant is deserted. The track down to the falls is now encroached by tree growth but still able to be negotiated. The walk along the sloping embankment provides glimpses of the waterfall through the thick tree growth.



A wooden walkway which once crossed the stream, to a relaxation and swimming area directly in front of the falls, is long gone. Crossing the stream now entails wading through waist deep water. The effort is worth it though as its easier to access the cavern behind the falls from the far side of the stream. **Click on the following link for directions from Pak-song to Tad Champee:**



ATTAPEU PROVINCE

About: Attapeu Province (and Attapeu Township) is a lesser visited area of Laos and lies along the southern edge of the Bolaven Plateau. It's in a remote area in southern Laos and is a detour from the conventional big loop. Attapeu is a picturesque provincial town situated on a peninsular formed by a pronounced v-bend in the Xe Khong River. The sheer wall of the southern edge of the Bolaven escarpment provides an impressive backdrop to the town.

Getting to Attapeu: You'll need to ride around the eastern side of the Bolaven Plateau and south on hwy 11, via Sekong. This is the standard route for the big loop but instead of turning right at the Ban Beng Phou Kham T-Junction, you continue straight on Hwy 11 to Attapeu Township. **Note: This is a detour from the big loop.** The road is sealed all the way and a morning ride will provide some beautifully scenic views of the Bolaven Escarpment. **For directions from Tad Lo to Attapeu, click on the link below:**



Xekhong River: Attapeu Township sits on a peninsular formed by a hairpin bend in the Xekhong River. It's situated near the Vietnam border and as such there's a strong Vietnamese presence in the town. Highway 11, which runs straight through the middle of the business area, is a main artery for transport trucks coming from (and going back to) Vietnam. The center of town has an abundance of Vietnamese owned businesses - hotels, cafes, and restaurants - with Viet language signage being prominent.



ATTAPEU PROVINCE

Accommodation: There is not much to do in Attapeu but it's a recommended overnight stop before riding out to the visually impressive Sae-pha and Saeponglai Falls. A centrally located accommodation option for one night is the **THAN NGA HOTEL**. This is on an intersection of the main street, in an area which has some Vietnamese restaurants selling Banh Mee (baguettes) and Pho (soup). To kill some time, head down to the river for to view a memorable sunset. **Click on the following link for inquiries at the Than Nga Hotel:**

THAN NGA HOTEL

Highway 18: The road from Attapeu Township to the waterfalls is just on 60 km of dirt. The road is elevated above the surrounding landscape, so it doesn't get washed out during the rainy season. However, for most of the way it's covered in loose gravel which makes traveling on a scooter a definite accident hazard if you're doing more than 40 km hour. It's for this reason the trip will take at least two hours, and maybe more with refueling and drinks stops.

Note: To ensure you have enough fuel for the return to Attapeu, or the ride up to PAK-SONG, it's recommended you refuel in SANA-MXAI (approx. 34 km from Attapeu). The turn off to the waterfalls is just a few km further on from Sanamxai (immediately over a bridge and on the right) and takes you through HIN LAT, an area devastated by the dam bust in 2018. **Click the following link for directions from Attapeu to Sae-pha Waterfall:**



Hin Lat Village: The road to the waterfall runs through a deserted village with a tragic tale to tell. On the July 23rd, 2018, a dam which had been constructed at the headwaters of the Xepian River, high up on the Bolaven Plateau, burst due to overflow erosion. A massive surge of water raced down the canyon, wiping out all that lay in its path, including Hin Lat Village. Four years later the place is a ghost town. All that remains are the empty shells of the houses, being slowly consumed by the encroaching jungle.



Hin Lat Village

ATTAPEU PROVINCE

Billboard: Approximately 6 km further on from HIN LAT VILLAGE, you'll see a large billboard on the right, indicating the direction to the falls.

Saepha Waterfall: This is the biggest in the area and at peak flow, is only surpassed by the falls at the Four Thousand islands. Prior to Covid, local entrepreneurs had tried setting up tourist facilities, such as bungalows, restaurants, and restrooms, nearby. The abandoned, dilapidated buildings tell the story of the ongoing effects of the Covid era on the Laos tourism industry.

Few visitors: These days, the only visitors are locals who come for an hour or so, get their selfies, and depart. The road through the abandoned tourist facilities, down to the parking area above the falls, is the only one in the area which has been sealed. An indication, perhaps, of future hope for the site. From the parking area, a rocky dirt track leads down to a sandstone plateau at the base of the falls. Those coming in four wheeled vehicles make the walk. With an off-road bike there's no problems riding down to the plateau.



Saeponglai Waterfall: This is another impressive waterfall, located another 10 km upstream from Saepha. Getting there, from Saepha, involves another patience testing ride up a muddy track. While still an impressive sight, Saeponglai is smaller and less spectacular than Saepha. With the track being the way it is, very few sightseers make it to this waterfall. **Click the following link for directions from Saepha to Saeponglai:**



ATTAPEU WATERFALLS - PHOTOS & VIDEO



Click the link to the right to see video highlights of ATTAPEU WATERFALLS:



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