

LAOS

Luang Prabang & Vang Vieng



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Travel
Guides**

**Plus
Vientiane**



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Luang Prabang & Vang Vieng



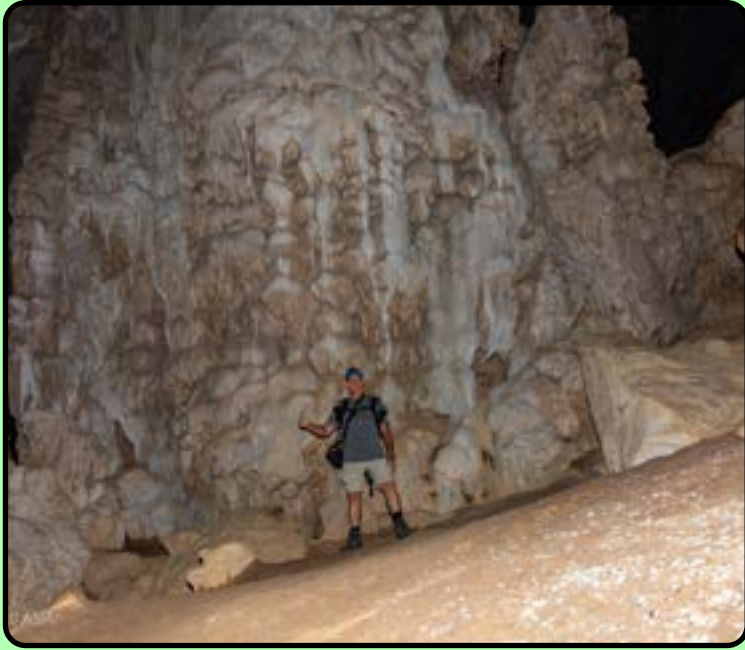
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FOREWORD



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

Luang Prabang & Vang Vieng

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**Your Next Adventure
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:



**Your Next Adventure
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VIENTIANE - GENERAL INFORMATION

Entry Point to Laos: For most travelers coming to Laos, Vientiane is your entry point. It's the nation's capital and a couple of days there, spent getting your bearings, is the normal routine. The backpacker's area, along the riverfront, is a great location for budget accommodation, a good meal, an excellent coffee, and a chance to pick up info from other like-minded travelers.

Getting there: The primary form of transport around Laos is on local buses. Bus fares can normally be booked at any guesthouse or hotel, the day prior to departure. If you're not on a strict budget then **Lao Airlines** has flights to Vientiane from provincial hubs such as **Luang Prabang**, **Savanakhet** and **Pakse**.

Lao Airlines Website

International Arrivals: If you're coming from international departure points such as Bangkok, Hanoi, or Ho Chi Minh City, regional airlines (Air Asia, Bangkok Airways, Viet-Jet) provide regular, low priced flights into Vientiane.

Click the link below to check your travel options from Bangkok to Vientiane:



Click the link below to check your travel options from Hanoi to Vientiane:



Click the link below to check your travel options from HCMC to Vientiane:



A Bustling Travel Hub

VIENTIANE - GENERAL INFORMATION

Budget Accommodation: The LUCKY BACKPACKERS HOSTEL is a BUDGET priced accommodation choice, located on RUE MANTHATHOURATH. Air-conditioned rooms dorm rooms are 7 USD per night. Air-conditioned twin rooms are 12 USD per night. **Click the link below for booking inquiries at the Lucky Backpackers Hostel:**



Mid-range accommodation: In this regard the new VKS HOTEL, on Rue Manthathourath, (next to the Lucky Backpackers Hostel) is an excellent MID-RANGE choice if you're looking for something a bit more comfortable than a one-star hostel. Rates are 20 - 26 USD per night, for an a/c room. **Click on the link below for booking inquiries at the VKS Hotel:**

VKS HOTEL



Onward travel: If you're heading north from Vientiane (Vang Vieng or Luang Prabang) and would like to travel on the new high speed rail link, you can book your train tickets at a great little travel agency directly across the road from the Lucky Backpackers Hostel. The travel agency has an attached coffee shop called the AUGUST CAFÉ, directly in front. **Note:** Train tickets can only be booked a maximum of 48 hours in an advance of the travel date.



VIETIANE - GENERAL INFORMATION

The Riverfront: The main tourist area is still the two-kilometer strip along the riverfront. There's a mix of rustic guesthouses, three- and four-star hotels, French restaurants, bakeries, and café's crammed into the small streets running back from the riverfront. In recent years the riverfront area has undergone a significant upgrade with the development of a restaurant and bar area along the edge of the river. In years past this area was just a large, empty sand bank which, in the dry season, protruded 500 meters across the Mekong.

Breakfast: The best western breakfasts, croissants, and coffee are at the LA TERRASSE, on RUE NOKEOKHOUMANNE.

Evening Markets: Day time temperatures are quite high (around 35 C) so the streets are fairly quiet as people look for a shady spot, or an air-conditioned café, to get away from the heat. Once the sun dips towards the horizon, in the late afternoon, things come alive along the riverfront. Markets spring up in a large carpark area, between the two riverfront roads, and plenty of locals can be seen walking and exercising along the concourse.



Mekong sunset: For most people staying around the riverfront area, the highlight of the day is normally sitting along the concourse and watching the sun set over the Mekong. In the dry season this can be a visually impressive sight as the sky alights with an orange glow, often reflected off the river, after the sun dips below the horizon. Travelers can be seen enjoying a Beer Lao in the warm evening ambience, as the sky fades to darkness.



VIENTIANE - THE PATUXAI

About: This is probably the primary sight-seeing attraction in Vientiane. It was built as a monument to mark the nation's independence from their past French colonial rulers and has striking similarities to the Arc DE Triomphe, albeit smaller in size. **For directions to the Patuxai, click the link below:**



History: Started in 1962, its construction is an interesting tale. Also known as the vertical runway, its completion was delayed a number of years due to a lack of government funds. In the latter half of the 1960's the US Government provided finance for an airport, which the Lao officials duly redirected towards providing cement for the completion of the Patuxai. Hence the name, the **vertical runway**. **Click the link below for more in-depth about on the Patuxai:**



Upper Levels: Within the arch of the Patuxai is a stairway to the viewing levels at the top of the structure. For photography enthusiasts the best time for getting some good shots of the Patuxai is either 8 - 9 AM in the morning (a good time as it's nice and cool and the tour bus hordes generally don't arrive until around 10 AM) or 6 PM in the afternoon when the heats gone out of the day.



VIENTIANE - THE BUDDHA PARK

About: This sightseeing attraction is also known as Xieng Khuan. It is a sculpture park located **25 km southeast from Vientiane**, and situated nearby the Mekong River. The park contains over 200 Hindu and Buddhist Statues and is operated by the Lao Government as a tourist attraction. The park was started in 1958 by Luang Pu (Venerable Grandfather) Bunleua Sulilat, a priest-shaman who integrated Hinduism and Buddhism. The statues are made of reinforced concrete, are ornate, and sometimes bizarre, in design. The statues appear to be centuries old, though they are not. There are sculptures of humans, gods, animals, and demons. There are numerous sculptures of Buddha, characters of Buddhist beliefs, and characters of Hindu Lore, including Shiva, Vishnu, and Arjuna.

Getting there: The cheapest way to get there (apparently) is to take bus number fourteen from the Central Bus Station. The most expensive is to take a tuk-tuk. The round-trip price from the riverfront area is 300,000 LAK (Laotian Kip). It takes approximately thirty minutes to get there (from the river front



area). For anyone interested in going, the entry fee is 10,000 LAK (Laotian Kip) and the closing time is 5.30 pm. **Click the link below for directions from the riverfront area:**



Plenty of Buddha statues

VIENTIANE TO VANG VIENG

Vientiane to Vang Vieng: As of January 2022 the **new high-speed rail link** has opened to quickly transport you north to Vang Vieng. The trip takes just over an hour and is a breath of fresh air compared to the old days of a nasty four trip over a pot-holed road. A one-way ticket is US 9 - 15 per person.

Note: The ticket must be booked 48 hours in advance of the planned departure time. You may be able to book through your guesthouse or an agent but it seems the government prefers people to go out to the train station to book their tickets. This is a bit of a hassle because the new train station is 16 km from the riverfront area. **Click the following link for directions from the riverfront area to the train station:**



Minivan Option: Alternatively, you can go in a mini-van for 150,000 LAK. This is actually much more convenient option for getting to Vang Vieng. You can book your ticket through the hotel or guesthouse your staying at and



the minivan will pick you up at a designated time. There's a nice new dual lane highway all the way through to Vang Vieng and travel time is not much more than going on the train. If you leave Vientiane at 10 am, you'll arrive in Vang Vieng by midday.

Note: The train is the better option if you are heading to Luang Prabang directly from Vientiane. The road from Vang Vieng to Luang Prabang is still horrendous.



VANG VIENG - GENERAL INFORMATION

Mid-range Accommodation: VANG VIENG DIAMOND RESORT. **Note:** This hotel is on the outskirts of Vang Vieng. To stay here it's a good idea to rent a motorbike also. This hotel has an excellent swimming pool for cooling off after a hot day of sightseeing. **Click the link below for booking inquiries:**



Budget Accommodation: THE POPULAR VIEW GUESTHOUSE. **Note:** This guesthouse although being centrally located town has a problem with noise at night. There is often loud music being played by local people who like to sit street side and drink till late. **Click the link below for booking inquiries:**

POPULAR VIEW GH

Getting Around: The two primary modes of transport in and around Vang Vieng are by motor scooter or bicycle.

Daily Hire Rates: The hire rates for motor scooters are approximately 100k LAK per day. If you're planning to do some extended touring in the mountainous area across the river from the township be warned, most of the roads (except the 7 km to Blue Lagoon 1) are potholed, dirt tracks. If you are on a bicycle it will take considerable time to get to Blue Lagoons 2 and 3.

Dry season: Compounding this in the dry season, is the swathes of dust which get kicked up by passing SUV's and Lorries. In this regard, if you're on a motorbike, you can quickly get out of the dust zone. With a bicycle you cannot and will eventually be coated from head to toe in dust. If you're not on a budget then there is a third option; motorised buggies. These are basically dune buggies with large, knobbly tires for safely negotiating the bumpy roads. The buggies seem to be popular with the Korean tour groups and as you're working your way around the various sightseeing attractions convoys of them will go powering past you (once again kicking up significant amounts of dust).



SIGHTSEEING AROUND VANG VIENG

Sightseeing in Vang Vieng: In this regard you're either mainstream tourist or do-it-yourself traveler. Vang Vieng is well set up for mainstream tourism (particularly for the Asian tour groups) and as such offers activities such as kayaking, tubing, zip-lining, buggy hires, and hot air ballooning. It goes without saying that participation in any of these activities always has a production line feel about it and most of the locations tend to be over-developed, expensive, and crowded.

Blue Lagoon One: Years ago, when there was no sealed road, Blue Lagoon One was quite an idyllic spot. The seven kilometers of dirt road from Vang Vieng seemed to keep the numbers riding out there to a minimum, especially in the dry season when clouds of choking dust were kicked up by passing Lorries. How things change. With development comes the tourist horde. Instead of just a few travelers/backpackers hanging out around the lagoon there are now masses of Asian tour groups swimming (with life jackets on), eating, zip-lining, and making a serious amount of noise with it.



Getting off the Beaten Track

Getting off the beaten track in Van Vieng: The following locations, in no particular order, are the less visited attractions in and around Vang Vieng:

- Pha Ngern View Point
- Nam Xay Viewpoint
- Blue Lagoon 2
- Phoukham Cave
- Phaphoungkham Cave



Blue Lagoon 1

VANG VIENG - PHA NGERN VIEWPOINT

Highest Viewpoint: Pha NgerN Viewpoint is the highest and arguably the best viewpoint in the area. The turn off to the parking area is approximately half-way along the road to Blue Lagoon number one. There's a check-point on the way in, where you pay the obligatory ten thousand Kip entry fee, before parking your bike in a secure area at the start of the trail. **For directions, click the link below:**



A well constructed trail: The trail has been made safe by local work teams and in the more difficult sections there's cement steps, hand-rails, and ladders. The trail zig zags its way up the cliff faces and passes through dense jungle. At regular intervals there's make-shift seating where you can catch your breath, drink some water, and appreciate the beauty of the natural surroundings.

Lower Viewpoint: After about 35 - 40 minutes of steady hiking you'll arrive at a fork in the trail. A left turn leads to the **lower viewpoint** and has an arrow indicating the direction and distance (50 meters).



The Upper Viewpoints: A right turn puts you on the extended trail to the viewpoints at the very top. This section of the trail is the more difficult part of the hike with increasingly steeper sections as you near the summit. In some of the most difficult stretches, fixed ropes are in place to assist with ascents and descents. In a couple of really steep sections ladders and/or stairways have been constructed to assist with access over the rugged karst terrain. Once at the very top, the view is quite spectacular.



VANG VIENG - NAM XAY VIEWPOINT

About: The Nam Xay Viewpoint is one of the only lookouts in Vang Vieng which offers 360-degree views of the surrounding peaks. The trail head is located approximately 8 km from Vang Vieng Township and a few km along the road to Blue Lagoon Three. The entry fee is 10,000 Laotian Kip. Click the link below for directions from Vang Vieng Township:



The Start Point: As mentioned the trail head, or start point, is just a few km along the road to Blue Lagoon Three. The ticket office and secure parking area is right next to the road and easy to locate. The ascent to the top starts directly from the parking area. At a steady rate it will take around 30 minutes to get to the top.

An arduous hike: The trail is steep and slippery in a number of places, and care needs to be taken when making the ascent. The owners of the site have cut steps into the steeper sections and there are bamboo handrails in place, between tree trunks, to hold on to. The arduous climb, once you get to the top, is well



worth the effort though. The views at the top are magnificent.

A motorbike on the mountain: A bonus is the unusual sight of an old motorbike, sitting at the edge of a precipice. There is a ladder in place to enable nimble sightseers to climb down to the motorbike and get a memorable selfie. When considering the tough hike to the top, one can only wonder at the amount of effort that went into getting the motorbike up there.



VANG VIENG - BLUE LAGOON TWO

The Blue Lagoons: There are a number of blue lagoons located around the Vang Vieng area. Most of them are on the western side of the NAM XONG RIVER. To get to the various sites you'll need your own means of transportation (motorbike or bicycle). The blue lagoons are excellent freshwater swimming holes, for a cooling dip after a hot day of hiking. Blue Lagoon One is the closest to Vang Vieng Township. Accordingly, it's the one which most of the tour groups and locals go to. It's also the smallest of all the lagoons so it tends to get crowded and noisy very quickly.

Blue Lagoon two: This is probably the best swimming lagoon in the Vang Vieng Area. It's located approximately 10 km from Vang Vieng Township and sits next to a very scenic mountain range. The road from the turn off to Blue Lagoon One is rough dirt, so care should be exercised if you're on a scooter. As with all the other Blue Lagoon sites, the entrance fee is 10,000 LAK. **Click the following link for directions from Vang Vieng to Blue Lagoon 2:**



A scenic location: As mentioned, Blue Lagoon 2 is a beautifully scenic location and a great spot for a refreshing swim after an arduous hike to one of the viewpoints. There are three pools to choose from but the best is probably the one next to the cliffs, where the water has a blue tinge to it. To avoid the tour groups, which tend to arrive at around midday, try to get there by 10 am at the latest.



VANG VIENG - PHOU KHAM CAVE

Most well-known: Phou Kham is probably the most well-known cave in the Vang Vieng area and ironically it sits directly above Blue Lagoon # 1. If you are a person who likes caves or you're developing a fascination for exploring caves, then this is a good one to have a look at. For directions, click the link below:



The Cave Entrance: Its location is rather at odds with the tourist circus which has developed around Blue Lagoon # 1 but as you ascend the steep pathway to the entrance, you'll quickly leave that behind. The quiet interior of the cave is only broken by the shrieks of the zip-liners back down the cliff face. The shrieks can still be heard in the first room of the cave (where the reclining Buddha is) but once you move further inside, all becomes quiet.

Inside the cave: There is a large hole at the front of the cave which provides plenty of ambient light in this first room. From below it may be mistaken for the cave entrance. However the actual entrance and trail down to the



reclining Buddha is just a few meters beyond the top of the access trail.

Note: A very disappointing sight was the amount of muddy hand prints to be seen not only on the rocks, but also on the surfaces of the formations. Caves are fragile environments and even muddy handprints on the surfaces of the formations can have a damaging effect. Please respect the cave environment at all times.



VANG VIENG - PHOU KHAM CAVE

Caving Safety: The best section of the cave is at the very rear where there are some impressive formations. Ideally to go to this section (approx. 500 meters from the entrance) you should have a good flashlight (torch). Preferably a head lamp which will leave your hands free for holding on, when climbing up and down. You should also have good, solid footwear (hiking boots or trainers) as many of the surfaces are jagged and/or slippery. **Note:** GOING TO THE REAR SECTION OF THE CAVE IN FLIP FLOPS IS NOT A GOOD IDEA.

Moving through the cave: When you move from the first big room of the cave you'll see some red arrows painted on the rocks. This is the marking for the trail to follow. After clearing the jagged rocks in the first big room you'll move into a second which is completely dark, apart from a small hole in the ceiling. The floor in this second room is relatively flat but you'll need lights to follow the trail as the markers are less visible. From here the trail basically does a circuit down one side of the cave, around the rear, and back along the opposite side.



Red Arrows

The rear section: As you get closer to the rear of the cave the internal volume opens up spectacularly to reveal an array of visually impressive concretions along the back wall. The trail goes in behind the formations. However, sure footing is advised as this area has a good number of mud patches to work around. If you have good lighting the visual experience is one worth going there for.



The Rear Section

VANG VIENG - PHAPHOUNGKHAM CAVE

Sinkholes & Adventure Caves: The access road to Tham Phaphoungkham Cave is approximately 3 km from the junction to Blue Lagoon # 1. The site is well signposted and the track down to the parking area is approximately 700 meters from the main road. The track is also very bumpy, so drive carefully. The entrance fee is 10k LAK. For directions, click on the following Google Maps link.



Note: The viewpoint (as indicated on Google Maps) is in a different location to the caves. You need to continue on the dirt road for another 500 meters (beyond the viewpoint) to reach the caves parking area.

Few Visitors: This is a remote site with very few visitors and the two caves, especially the upper cave, are **adventure caves** meaning there is no lighting. If you are visiting you should come properly prepared: use real flashlights (not hand phones), use good footwear, and carry drinking water.



The Lower Cave: The hike up to the lower cave (on the left) is not so difficult and you can reach it within a few minutes from the parking area. The cave itself is quite big and has some seriously **deep sinkholes** within (the one at the entrance area is very deep). For this reason there's fencing to keep people away from the edges of the drop offs. The penetration into the cave is approximately 600 meters and ends at a barricade in front of another massive sinkhole.



VANG VIENG - PHAPHOUNGKHAM CAVE

The Upper Cave: Is at the end of a 300 meter hike up the cliff face. Many sections of the trail are steep with loose rocks. The climb up from the junction (where the sign says 300 meters) will take approximately 25 minutes. When you arrive at the cave entrance it looks hardly remarkable and quite small. At the entrance you will need to climb up an incline before descending into the cave. The passages then become narrow, and cramped, and there are ladders in place to climb down from one level to the next.

Warning: this is a serious adventure cave meaning it is wet, slippery and treacherous. The trail eventually leads to a massive internal room (approximately 100 meters in diameter) which is quite possibly the biggest in the area. The trail runs around the right wall of the cave and has handrails in place for safety. It eventually leads to a point high up in the huge internal room where there are some very impressive formations. **Finally: have good footwear, have back-up lights, and carry bottled water.**



Internal trail



Cave Formations



The Upper Cave

VANG VIENG TO LUANG PRABANG

Two options: The travel options available for the trip from Vang Vieng to Luang Prabang are the bus and the new rail link. At just under two hours of travel time, the rail link is a considerably faster and more comfortable than the road trip. Even though the highway has been upgraded, the bus trip will still take just over four hours. The only negative aspect of traveling on the train is you will need to buy your ticket 48 hours before departure from the station ticket office, some 9 km north of Vang Vieng.

Arrival in Luang Prabang: The train station is some 13 km from Luang Prabang Riverfront. To get there you'll need to pay 35000 LAK (Laotian Kip) for a minivan ride. If you've got a hotel or guesthouse pre-booked the driver will do his best to drop you off at the front door. If you haven't got accommodation booked you will probably get dropped at a central point in town. If travel up on the bus, you'll disembark at the southern bus terminal. From there you'll need to get a tuk-tuk to whichever guesthouse hotel you've booked.

Budget Accommodation: An excellent choice for inexpensive accommodation, along the riverfront, is the APPLE GUESTHOUSE. They offer nice air-conditioned rooms for 150000 - 180000 LAK per night. **Click the following link for booking inquiries:**



Mid-range Accommodation: If you're looking for a hotel right along the riverfront (with a balcony view of the Mekong River), the MEKONG SUNSET VIEW HOTEL is a well-priced mid-range option at around 300000 - 400000 LAK per night. They have large air-conditioned rooms and the rate also includes breakfast. **Click the following link for booking inquiries:**



LUANG PRABANG - GENERAL INFORMATION

Transportation: If you don't feel like going on group tours, the best way to check out all the sightseeing attractions around Luang Prabang is by hiring a motorbike (scooter). These can be rented on a daily basis from most hotels or guesthouses. The two listed in the above page can arrange motorbike rentals fairly quickly. As of June 2022, rental rates are 90,000 LAK per day.

Cheap eats: There are plenty of restaurant choices around Luang Prabang. Along the riverfront there's some great restaurants which overlook the Mekong. However, these tend to be a bit more expensive than locations back off the riverfront (possibly because you're paying for the view as well). A great place for inexpensive food is the food court, at the southern end of the night market. **Click the following link for the location of the food court:**



The night market: This is set-up every evening along a blocked off section of SIS-AVANGVONG ROAD. The market runs along

the northern wall of PHOUSHI HILL and has an excellent selection of local goods, including clothing, textiles, artwork and handicrafts.

Coffee: A great choice for your morning caffeine hit is the SAFFRON CAFÉ, located along the riverfront road. The Saffron uses excellent local coffee from the north of Laos, and they also serve a very good western breakfast. **Click the following link for the location of the Saffron Café:**



Sightseeing attractions: There's a number of excellent sightseeing attractions, in and around Luang Prabang. **In no particular order, the best are:**

- Phousi Hill;
- The Night Market;
- Haw Pha Bang Buddhist Temple;
- Kuang Si Waterfall;
- Nam Dong Nature Park;
- Tad Sae Waterfall;
- Pak Ou Caves.



Haw Pha Bang Buddhist Temple

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LUANG PRABANG - PHOUSHI HILL SUNSET HIKE

Sunset hike: A popular attraction is viewing the sunset over Luang Prabang, from Phousi Hill. A lot of sightseers head up there to get a memorable selfie before heading back down to the night markets for some tasty local food. If you have the time, and the energy, an excellent option is to walk around the small headland formed by the conjunction of the Mekong and Nam Khang Rivers, before heading up Phousi Hill.

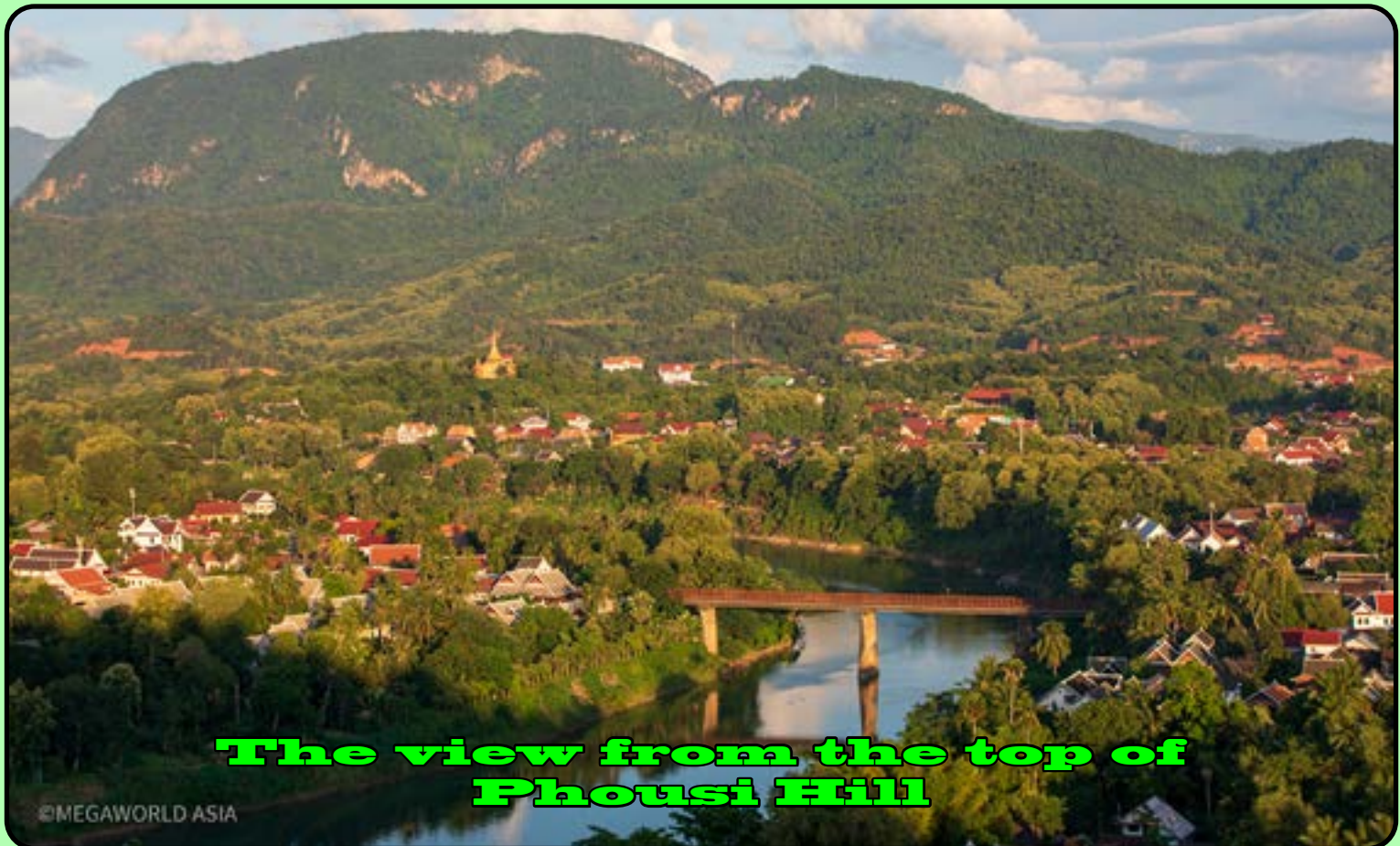
Two colours viewpoint: At the tip of this small headland there's a small park/lookout where you can observe the mixing of the two different coloured bodies of water. In the rainy season, the green of the Nam Khan merges with the muddy brown of the Mekong. **Click the following link for directions to the viewpoint:**



The night market: From this point you can walk straight down Sakkaline Road to the night market which, at around 6 pm, will be up and running.



Directly opposite the HAW PHA BANG BUDDHIST TEMPLE, there's a stairway which takes you up to the top of Phousi Hill. Unfortunately, going up there isn't free any more. You are now required to pay an entry fee of 20,000 LAK (the ticket office is at the bottom of the stairway). **Note:** The viewpoint at the top of the hill tends to get quite crowded on weekends, when a lot of local vacationers come up from Vientiane.



LUANG PRABANG - NIGHT MARKET



Click the link to the right to see video highlights of the NIGHT MARKET:



LUANG PRABANG - KUANG SI WATERFALL

About: KUANG SI WATERFALL is undoubtedly the highlight sightseeing attraction in the Luang Prabang area. It's a multi-level waterfall with steps which have pools with a greenish tinge to them. However, as picturesque as it is this site is has now been developed for mass tourism.

Getting there: The site is 30 km to the southwest of Luang Prabang Township. Travel time to get there is approximately 30 mins, over a sealed road. **Click the following link for directions from Luang Prabang Township:**



Arrival: There's a large, secure parking area where your transportation will drop you off. If you come on a motorbike, there's a parking fee of 2000 LAK. The parking area has a ticket office where you pay 25,000 LAK for a ride on a golf buggy up to the waterfall site entrance. The distance from the parking area to the entrance gate is 1.2 km. The golf buggy drops you at the small parking area next to the food stalls, and trinket sellers. From there it's a short uphill walk to the entrance.



Mass tourism

On-site: Once you enter the park you have two options for getting to the base of the main falls. The quickest way to get there is to take the sealed road. About 200 mtrs uphill, there's a side track (on the right) which takes you past the toilets and café to the **swimming area**. From here it's a short walk up to the falls. The second option is to take the longer jungle trail, which goes past the bear compound. This is a large fenced off area which has a number of Asiatic Bears within.



The swimming area

KUANG SI WATERFALL

The jungle trail is the more scenic route up to the base of the main falls. On the way you'll pass a number of small falls which resemble steps with the green tinged pools. When you arrive at the base of the main falls, there's a bridge across the front of it to enable you to get pictures in an elevated position. NOTE: if you go on the weekend and after midday, this location will be packed. You'll need to wait your turn to get a selfie. To avoid the crowds, the best time of the day to go is in the morning. The ticket office opens at 0830 am.

Going to the top: For those who are feeling energetic there's a jungle track up to the very top of the falls. It starts at the base of the main falls, on the left, and zigs-zags up the cliff face to the top. For the most part it's a dirt track with rough-hewn steps for the ascent. In the rainy season it can be quite slippery, so it's advisable to use the bamboo handrails in place for a safer climb up.

At the top: The landscape is level. The trail is a combination of dirt track and boarded walkways, across the wide pools of water which feed the falls. A thick forest completely



shades the entire area, so you can cool off after the demanding hike.

Peace and quiet: Generally, very few people go up to the top so it's a world of peace and quiet, compared with the base of the falls. There's even a nice little pool there for a refreshing swim. Continuing on, the trail descends down the right-hand side of the falls. Once again, the going can be steep and slippery, so use the hand holds and descend with caution.



KUANG SI WATERFALL - PHOTOS & VIDEO



Click the link to the right to see video highlights of KUANG SI WATERFALL:



LUANG PRABANG - TAD SAE WATERFALL

About: For those seeking a more off the beaten track location, TAD SAE is a less developed and less visited waterfall site. While not quite as impressive as Kuang Si, Tad Sae (in the rainy season) is a picturesque landscape of small waterfalls and plunge pools. It's also a less crowded site than Kuang Si, has a better ambiance and is a great spot for a refreshing swim.

Getting there: It's located approximately 17 km from Luang Prabang and will take approximately thirty minutes of travel time to get there. Note: If you go there on a motorbike, there is approximately 2 km of rough dirt road to negotiate, from the turn-off from hwy 13, to the secure parking area. **Click the following link for directions from Luang Prabang:**



Fees: Getting there also involves a short boat ride along the Nam Khan River. The fees are as follows:

- **Parking = 5000 LAK;**
- **Boat ride = 30000 LAK;**
- **Park entry = 15000 LAK**



On-site: As mentioned, getting to the waterfalls involves taking a short boat ride along the Nam Khan River. The distance is only 1 km and is a scenic ride with jungle covered terrain down to the waters edge. Once you arrive at the boat landing, there's a short stairway up to another ticket office where you'll be required to pay an additional 15,000 LAK to enter the waterfall area. From the ticket office it's only another 100 meters to the swimming area at the base of the main falls.



LUANG PRABANG - TAD SAE WATERFALL

Boarded walkways: Around the lower (first) falls there are several boarded walkways which take you from one side of the river to the other. This is a very picturesque area and in the rainy season (when there's a good flow) the green tinged pools are full and spilling from the higher steps to the lower. Directly in front of the main swimming hole, there's large boarded platform where swimmers can hang out, get a tan and enjoy the beauty of the natural surroundings.

Levels two and three: For the adventurous, the trail continues up-hill to waterfalls higher up the river. From the large platform, in front of the main swimming area, take the boarded walkway across to the left side of the river. The distance from the first level to the second is approximately 400 meters. However, the trail further up is lacking maintenance. There are two wooden bridges further up the river which are in a state of disrepair. The first one has collapsed entirely and now sits at a hazardous 45-degree angle. Use due care if you decide to push on. A few meters further on is the second wooden bridge.



On the trail to waterfall # 2

While this hasn't collapsed, it has a number of boards (slats) missing at the center of the structure. Once again, use due care when crossing. From this point it's only another 150 meters to the second waterfall. However, the trail becomes overgrown with jungle so tread carefully in the slippery conditions. The second waterfall is surrounded by thick jungle but when the water is flowing (rainy season) it's a visually impressive sight with a number of drops and a large green tinged pool at the base.



Waterfall # 2

TAD SAE WATERFALL - PHOTOS & VIDEO LINK



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



LUANG PRABANG - NAHM DONG NATURE PARK

About: This is one of the less visited sight-seeing attractions in the Luang Prabang area. Possibly because getting there involves a ride over eight kilometers of rough dirt road. The site is located in mountains, approximately eleven kilometers south west of Luang Prabang Township. Travel time to get there is around thirty minutes. **Note:** for anyone considering going to this attraction, it's recommended to go only in the rainy season. In the dry (December to May), there's very little water flowing over the falls. **Click the following link for directions from Luang Prabang:**



On-site: The park is located in a fairly remote area so it's advisable to take your own supply of drinking water when you set out from Luang Prabang. There is a secure parking area just inside the entrance gate, where you can safely park your motorbike. The park has a nature trail, a small ADVENTURE CIRCUIT and a nice swimming with a small café and restaurant nearby. **Fees:** The entry fee for the park is 25,000 LAK per person.



LUANG PRABANG - NAHM DONG NATURE PARK

The nature trail: This starts at the swimming and restaurant area. The trail is well sign-posted and takes you up to a lookout, where you can get some nice views across the mountains and back to Luang Prabang. The trail is actually a circuit which drops down to a small river from the lookout. When you reach the river you'll see a swing bridge, suspended between large jungle trees, which takes you across the river. From there you have the option of continuing further downhill to a small ethnic village, or coming back across the river and following the trail up the water fall levels. **Note:** if you choose to follow the trail down to the ethnic village, due care is advised. The trail, although having handrails, becomes a fast-flowing creek in the rainy season.

The waterfall levels: This is actually the best part of the nature trail. It takes you along the edge of the river and slowly ascends a number of levels, which have picturesque waterfalls and small swimming holes. The trail eventually leads back to the restaurant/café area but on the way there's a couple of covered rest points where you can relax next to the river and/or go for a refreshing swim.



LUANG PRABANG - PAK OU CAVES

About: Pak Ou Caves is an interesting small cave complex located approximately 30 km north of Luang Prabang. It sits right next to the Mekong River, and is generally considered to be more of a local religious site due to the large number of Buddha statues contained within the caves.

Note: If you're a caving enthusiast (spelunker) you'll find this cave site to be unimpressive. It is not a large cave, and certainly not an adventure cave. It is purely a local religious site.

Getting there: There are two options for travel to the cave site. The easiest, but also the more expensive, is to do a river cruise from Luang Prabang (along the Mekong) which also includes a tour through the cave. The less expensive way of getting there is to hire a motorbike, in Luang Prabang, and ride to Pak Ou Village (which sits directly opposite the cave site). [Click the following link for directions from Luang Prabang:](#)



LUANG PRABANG - PAK OU CAVES

Sightseeing fees: If you come on a motor-bike you'll need to pay 5000 LAK, at a village checkpoint on the outskirts of town, to get down to the secure parking area at the edge of the river. Once there you'll then need to pay 25,000 LAK for the boat trip, to and from the caves. Once you arrive at the boat landing (at the bottom of the lower cave), you need to pay another 20,000 Kip to go into the caves. **Total fees = 50,000 Kip (US 3.30)**

The lower cave: This is a small cave just above the boat landing. It's actually more of a religious site for the locals who come to pay their respects to the large number of Buddha statues within. If you've been to any other larger caves in Laos, you'll find this one a bit underwhelming.

The upper cave: This is approximately 50 meters above the lower cave. A stairway, to the left of the lower cave, takes you around the cliff face to the entrance of the upper cave. This cave is substantially bigger but it's also a religious site with lots of Buddha statues at the back-end of the tunnel. **Note:** the upper cave has internal lighting.



Inside the upper cave



View from inside the lower Cave

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