

LAOS

THAKHEK LOOP



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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 mainstream tourist locations (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 **SABAIDEE ADVENTURES 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.



[Megaworld Asia Facebook Link](#)

[MEGAWORLD ASIA WEBSITE](#)

Your next adventure is just one click away

Safe travels,

MEGA

The Thakhek Loop & Kong Lor Cave

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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:



**Your Next Adventure
Is Just One Click Away**



THE THAKHEK LOOP: GENERAL INFO

About: The loop is a 440 km CIRCUIT, which starts and ends in the Provincial City of THAKHEK, and includes the renowned KONG LOR CAVE.
Note: This is the primary draw-card for tourists/ travelers coming to Thakhek.

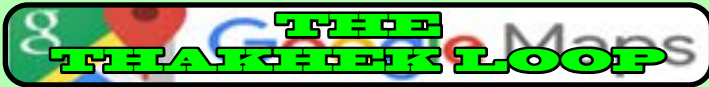
The Circuit: The STANDARD ROUTE is a COUNTERCLOCKWISE circuit, which is normally completed in 3 - 4 days. The circuit starts in Thakhek, then goes EAST along Hwy 12 to GNOMMALAT JUNCTION (where Hwy 12 intersects Hwy 1E). From Gnommalat Junction it continues NORTH on Hwy 1E to LAKSAO JUNCTION (where Hwy 1E intersects Hwy 8). At Laksao, it turns WEST onto Hwy 8 and continues to NA HIN VILLAGE, where a 42 km DETOUR (84 km round trip) is made (SOUTH) to KONG LOR VILLAGE.

Back to Thakhek: After completion of the KONG LOR CAVE tour, loopers must ride back to Na Hin Village and turn WEST onto Hwy 8 again. From Na Hin Village, they ride to VIENG KHAM JUNCTION (where Hwy 8 intersects Hwy 13) and then head SOUTH on Hwy 13 (the final leg) to Thakhek City. Click the following [GOOGLE MAPS](#) link for the full Thakhek Loop Route:



Kong Lor Cave

The following video features highlights of the Thakhek Loop and Kong Lor cave.



Thakhek City

THAKHEK CITY: GETTING THERE

Already in Laos: Thakhek has NO AIRPORT, so road travel is the only means of getting there. If you're already in Laos, it's a 6 - 8 hour bus ride South on Highway # 13 from VIENTIANE, or a three hour ride North on Highway # 13 from SAVANNAKHET. Daily busses to Thakhek depart from the SOUTHERN BUS TERMINAL (Vientiane) at 08:00. There's also NIGHT (sleeper) busses available from Vientiane. Departure times are at 20:00 and the travel time is quicker than the day bus. **Note:** If you book your ticket through a guesthouse in Vientiane, the ticket price normally includes transportation to the bus terminal. Click the following 12GO ASIA link for booking inquiries:



Lao Airlines: An easier option is to take a LAO AIRLINES flight to SAVANNAKHET, and then do a 3 hour minivan ride to Thakhek. Click the following LAOS AIRLINES link for booking inquiries:

LAO AIRLINES

From Thailand: The most direct route is to travel to NAKHON PHANOM and then take a bus across FRIENDSHIP BRIDGE NUMBER THREE into Laos. Thakhek and Nakhon Phanom sit directly opposite each other on the Mekong River. For travel options from Bangkok to Nakhon Phanom, click the following 12GO ASIA link:



Crossing the border: Once you arrive at Nakhon Phanom airport it's simply a matter of taking a taxi to the NAKHON PHANOM BUS STATION and then boarding a bus to Thakhek. Buses depart every 2 HOURS between 8 am and 5 pm. As of FEBRUARY 2026, a one way fare is 70 THB. The ride is normally approx. 2 hours from the Nakhon Phanom (Thailand) bus station to the Thakhek (Laos) bus station. The journey also includes stops at IMMIGRATION CHECK POINTS at each end of the bridge. A one month entry visa for Laos can be purchased for 40 USD when you arrive on the Laotian side of the bridge. **Note:** One passport photo is also needed for the visa.



Flights from Vientiane

THAKHEK CITY: ACCOMMODATION

About: Thakhek is a laid back town, on the edge of the Mekong River, in Central Laos. It is the capital of Khammouane Province, and the start and finish point for the THAKHEK LOOP. Keep in mind the main TRAVELERS AREA, along the RIVER FRONT, is a five km ride from the bus station. This is where most of the GUESTHOUSES, RESTAURANTS, CAFÉ'S, and ROADSIDE VENDORS are located. It's also the area where MOTORBIKES can be rented for the Loop trip, as well as DAY TRIPS to the nearby surrounds of Thakhek.

Budget Accommodation: Thakhek offers plenty choices for guesthouse and budget hotel accommodation. An old favourite is the MEKONG HOTEL, along the riverfront. This hotel is a bit dated, but it's still great value for money. Additionally, this hotel has a lift. As of FEBRUARY 2026, the room rates are 250k Laotian Kip per night (approx. 12 USD). The rooms are clean and comfortable, air-conditioned, with hot water showers. Note: There's only WIFI in the lobby (on the ground floor). Click the following AGODA link for the booking inquiries at the Mekong Hotel:



Budget Hotel

Mid-range Accommodation: For people wanting a more stylish/upmarket stay, try the INTHIRA HOTEL. The Inthira also has the BEST COFFEE in town. This hotel is conveniently located on the crossroads of the town center. As of FEBRUARY 2025, room rates start at 39 USD per night. Click the following AGODA link for booking inquiries at the Inthira Hotel:



The Inthira Thakhek

THAKHEK CITY: RESTAURANTS & CAFE'S

Eat and Drink: The most popular choice for inexpensive western and Lao food, continues to be the SONG FANG KHONG Restaurant. This restaurant is in the town center. As of February 2026, a local steak (with veg and fries) on a SIZZLING PLATTER, with a side salad, is 130k Laotian Kip (approx. 6 USD). Click the following [GOOGLE MAPS](#) link for the location:



Inthira Hotel: The INTHIRA is a mid-range priced hotel offering a good standard of WESTERN and LAOTIAN FOOD, albeit at a more expensive price than the Song Fang Khong restaurant. If you're staying at the hotel, breakfast is normally included in the room rate. However, the portions are small. If you're someone who enjoys a larger, hearty breakfast before your days activities, the Inthira breakfast might be a bit lacking.

Coffee: On the positive side, the Inthira Hotel serves the BEST COFFEES in town. If you're looking for a good early morning brew, this is a great spot to come to while you observe the town center coming to life.



Sizzling Platter



Inthira Cafe



Song Fang Khong

THE THAKHEK LOOP: TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Motorbike Rentals: For those wanting to do the Thakhek Loop, there's plenty of motorbike rental shops to choose from. A popular choice continues to be the long established WANG WANG Motorbike and Car Rental Service, located on the Southwestern corner of the town center. Wang Wang's have a good range of motorbikes for rent including automatic and semi-automatic scooters, and off road bikes. As of February 2026, rental rates are in the 10 - 15 USD per day range. People renting motorbikes from Wang Wang's can store their large bags/backpacks at the shop, while they do the loop. Click the following **GOOGLE MAPS** link for the location of Wang Wang Motorbike Rental:



Private Tour: If you don't want to take the risk of riding over the hazardous roads, PRIVATE TOURS in 4 x 4 VEHICLES are also available for the THAKHEK LOOP. A very good ENGLISH SPEAKING local tour guide, who can arrange a good itinerary for you, is MR. OLAXAI who runs SABAIDEE ADVENTURES. Contact details below:

Email: olaxai2024@gmail.com

Whatsapp: ~Sabaidee Adventure Tour



Car Option: If you're unable to ride a motorbike, another option is to do the loop in a pick-up or SUV. An advantage of this, during the dry season, is you can avoid the choking dust clouds along Hwy 12. Contact Sabaidee Adventures for Car Rental Services.

Off Road Bike: If you're going to rent a motorbike, and you've got the required skill level, an OFF ROAD BIKE is also a good option for better road handling and safety. WANG WANG MOTORBIKES has off road bikes for around 15 USD per day. Finally if you're using a motorbike for the loop, make sure you've got a good supply of DUST MASKS.



DOING THE THAKHEK LOOP

Thakhek Loop Stages: The standard plan for doing the loop is usually in THREE STAGES. For a 3 DAY/2 NIGHT loop:

Stage One: Thakhek - Thalang. Overnight stop in Thalang Village. **Distance = 109 km.**

Stage Two: Thalang village - Kong Lor Village. Overnight stop in Kong Lor Village. **Distance = 150 km.**

Stage Three: Kong Lor Village - Thakhek. **Distance = 187 km.**

Note: For a 4 DAY/3 NIGHT loop, the only DIFFERENCE to the above is that an EXTRA NIGHT can be spent in Kong Lor Village. The advantage of this is that DAY 3 can be an easy day with just the KONG LOR CAVE tour, and no long motorbike ride. It also gives you an EARLIER starting time, on the morning of DAY 4, for completing the zipline circuit at THE ROCK, before returning to Thakhek.

Road Conditions: As of FEBRUARY 2026, the road conditions along the FIRST STAGE of the loop, from THAKHEK to GNOMMALAT, are quite difficult due to ROAD DAMAGE caused by HEAVY TRUCKS. Many sections of the road are completely broken up and filled with potholes. In the dry season this ride on a motorbike becomes significantly worse, due to the swirling clouds of dust.

Hwy 8: Additionally, a stretch of Hwy 8, be-



tween NA HIN and VIENG KHAM, also has sections of badly damaged road. **Note:** This section of road is normally covered on the final day of the loop, on the ride back to Thakhek.

Thakhek Loop Sightseeing: The primary sightseeing attractions on the Thakhek Loop are the caves. The landscape en-route can be quite spectacular but, for the most part, this loop is all about the CAVES and the KARST SCENERY. The sightseeing can be broken down into the three stages of the loop.



THE THAKHEK LOOP: STAGE ONE

Stage One (Thakhek to Thalang).

The best sightseeing attractions along Hwy 12 are as follows:

1. Elephant Cave.
2. Pa Seuam Cave.
3. Xeng Liap Cave (also has a zipline circuit).
4. Nang Ene Cave.

Note: If you're tight on time, these are the best and most easily accessible sightseeing attractions along Hwy 12.

Coffee and food stop en-route: I'M IN CAFE, at Gnommat Junction - where you turn off Hwy 12 and head north on Hwy 1E.

Sightseeing attractions along Hwy 1E:

1. Golden Rabbit Viewpoint.
2. The Nakai Plateau.
2. The Nam Thuen 2 Dam.

Note: The GHOST SHIP, which was once near Nakai Village, no longer exists (even though it's indicated on Google Maps as the BIG WOODEN BOAT). As of February 2026, this attraction was set on fire and completely burned to the ground.

Accommodation in Thalang: POSEY THALANG GUEST HOUSE and SABAIDEE THALANG GUESTHOUSE. Click the following [GOOGLE MAPS](#) link for the STAGE ONE route:



Elephant Cave: This small cave site is also known as XANG CAVE. It's located 7 km east of Thakhek City and just off Hwy 12. This cave is mainly a religious site for locals to pray at. There are several Buddha Statues in the upper levels of the cave. There's also a developed pathway through the length of the cave. As of February 2026, the ENTRY FEE is 10k Laotian Kip. Click the following [GOOGLE MAPS](#) link for the location:



STAGE ONE: THAKHEK to GNOMMALAT (HWY 12)

Pa Seuam Cave: Pa Suam Cave is located approx. 16 km EAST of Thakhek Centre, just off Hwy 12. Coming from Thakhek, look for the signage on the LEFT. The cave site was closed for two years while a significant upgrade was done to make it accessible for mainstream tourism. Prior to the upgrade, the only way of getting to the rear of the cave was to go with a local guide and swim the 400 meter distance from the entrance. After the long closure, due to construction work, the cave reopened in April 2025 and now offers a spectacular sightseeing experience. **Click the following GOOGLE MAPS link for the location:**



Getting There: From Thakhek town center, head EAST onto Hwy 12. Look for a turn-off on the left (sign posted as PA SEUAM CAVE). This is a sealed road (approximately 6 km) which will take you to the ticket office and check point. After paying the entry fee, you can ride/drive all the way into the parking area next to the cave entrance. If you're starting the Thakhek Loop, this would be one of the first sightseeing stops. **Note:** The entry fee for this cave is significantly more expensive than the others, but the sightseeing experience is well worth the admission price.



Onsite: The entrance into the cave is small but it soon opens up into a SPECTACULAR, large passageway. There's a steel walkway from the entrance to the rear of the cave. The walkway sits a couple of meters above the crystal clear, spring fed stream, and offers broad views of the illuminated cave formations. If you're in Thakhek, or you're planning to do the loop, this cave site should not be missed. It is quite spectacular. **Note:** As of FEBRUARY 2026, the ENTRY FEE for foreigners is 150k Laotian Kip.



STAGE ONE: THAKHEK to GNOMMALAT (HWY 12)

Xeng Liap Cave: This site continues to be a popular stop for people doing the Loop, due to its lower entry fee, and the fact it's undeveloped for tourism and has more of an adventure feel about it. As of FEBRUARY 2026, the entry fee for foreigners is 30k Laotian Kip.

Getting There: This cave site is located approximately 14.5 km from Thakhek center, right next to Hwy 12. Coming from Thakhek, look for the turn-off on the right. **Click the following GOOGLE MAPS link for the location:**



Onsite: The parking area is right next to Hwy 12. Once you've paid the 10k Laotian Kip PARKING FEE, you follow the trail (across a suspension bridge) to the activities area across the river. There's a TICKET OFFICE, just across the bridge, where the entry must be paid. **Note:** The entry fee is 20k Laotian kip. There's also a ZIPLINE CIRCUIT near the cave entrance, which is 350k Laotian Kip per person. Payment for the zipline circuit is made at the ticket office.

The Cave: The CAVE ENTRANCE is only 200 meters from the ticket office. The trail leading to the main entrance of the cave is a dirt track which



Cave Entrance

is relatively easy to negotiate. However, because this cave is undeveloped (no pathways or internal lighting) getting to this cave's rear section involves some stream crossings and rock scrambling.

The Rear Section: This is the most scenic part of the cave. There's a large rear entrance and a pool formed by the river. The best way to get to the REAR SECTION, from the front entrance, is to cross the stream and work your way around the LEFT SIDE of the cave.



The Rear Section

STAGE ONE: THAKHEK to GNOMMALAT (HWY 12)

Nang Ene Cave: Is 20 km from traveler central in Thakhek, and 5 km further along Hwy 12 from Xieng Liap Cave. The turn off is on the right, and there's a directional sign approximately 100 meters before the turn-off. **Click the following GOOGLE MAPS link for the location:**

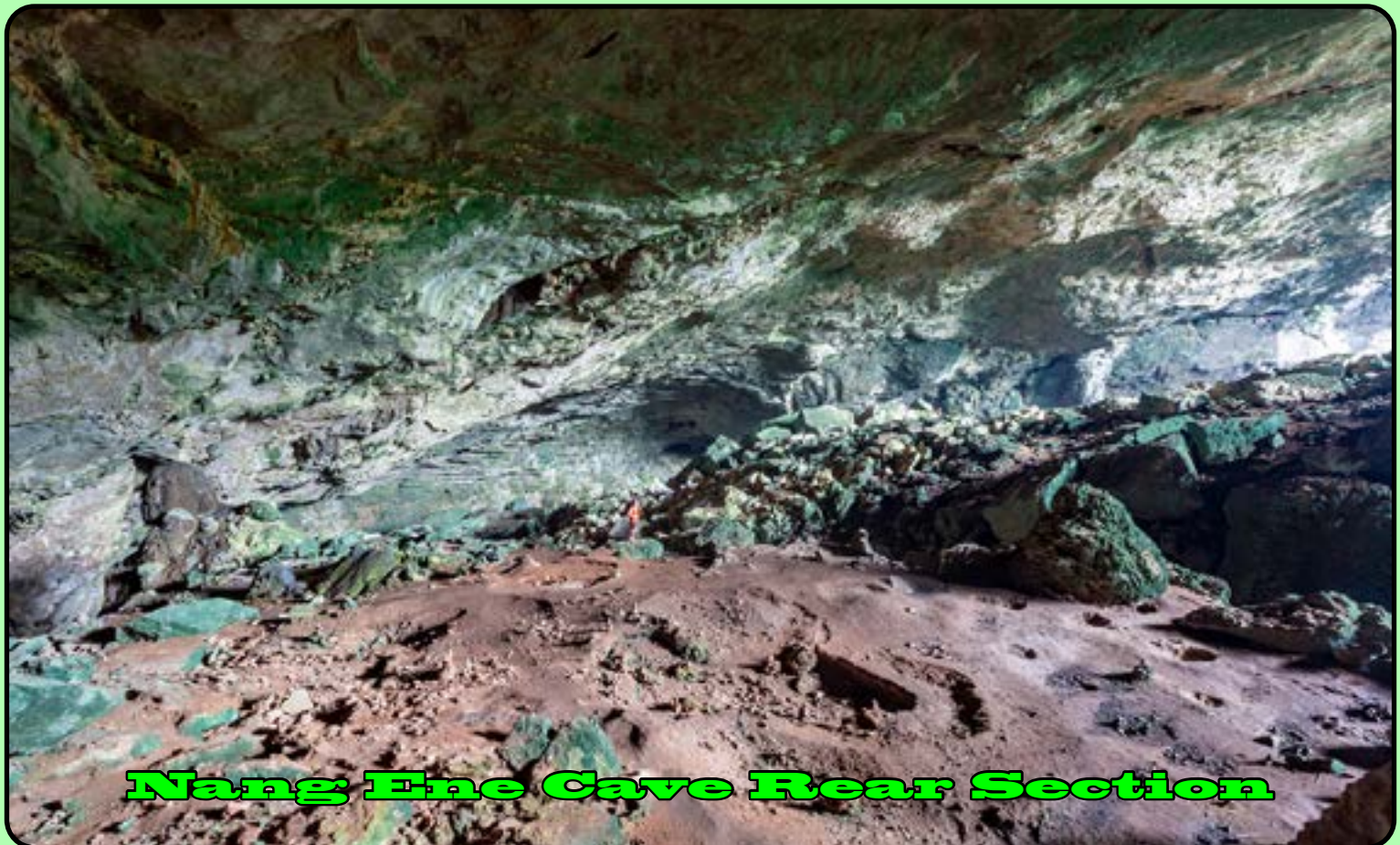


Sightseeing Options: 1. The front section only; 2. The additional boat tour, which takes in the much more spectacular rear section. As of FEBRUARY 2026, the entry fee for the front section is 50k Laotian Kip. Pay an additional 150k Laotian Kip and you will be able to do the entire cave system, which includes the boat trip, and the walk through the rear section (which is actually the highlight of the cave). **Note:** A minimum of two paying customers is needed for a boat tour. Life jackets are included with the ticket price, and must be worn at all times while in the boat. Additionally, the boats are small so unnecessary movement should be kept to a minimum to avoid capsizing.

The Cave Tour: The FRONT SECTION of the cave is a short penetration which takes just 30 minutes to see. If you take the boat tour option, this can take 1.5 - 2 hours to complete.



The Boat Tour: This begins at the front area of the cave. A 600 meter river passage takes sightseers to the much larger REAR SECTION. At the far end, there's a steel walkway which allows sightseers walk additional 1 km into the deeper passages. The cave system has internal lighting throughout for a safe and enjoyable sightseeing experience. **Click the following YOUTUBE link for a highlights video of Nang Ene Cave:**



STAGE ONE: GNOMMALAT to THALANG (HWY 1E)

Gnommalat to Thalang: Gnommalat Junction is where you turn left off Hwy 12, and head north on Hwy 1E. It's a few km before the start of the ascent on to the NAKAI PLATEAU and an important marker on the Loop trip. If you miss the turn off you'll be heading towards the Vietnam border.

Golden Rabbit Viewpoint: The only sightseeing attraction of significance at Gnommalat is the GOLDEN RABBIT (Pha Katai Viewpoint). Click the following [GOOGLE MAPS](#) link for the location of Golden Rabbit Viewpoint:

[8 GOLDEN RABBIT VIEWPOINT Google Maps](#)

The Nakai Plateau: A few km beyond Gnommalat Junction, the steep winding ascent up to the Nakai Plateau begins. There is some spectacular jungle covered terrain en-route, but care should be observed at all times due to some of the precipitous drop offs. After a few km of twisting and turning, the road eventually levels out at the top of the plateau.

Coffee Stop: The I'M IN CAFE is located right on the junction of Hwy 12 & 1E. It's an air-conditioned cafe with good coffee and inexpensive western and Lao food. Click the following [GOOGLE MAPS](#) link for the location:

[8 I'M IN CAFE Google Maps](#)



Gnommalat Coffee



Nam Thuen 2 Dam



Golden Rabbit Viewpoint Sunrise

THALANG VILLAGE: GENERAL INFORMATION

Thalang Village: This is traditionally the first overnight stop on the loop trip. It sits approximately at the mid-point of the Nakai Plateau and is at the edge of a huge lake, formed when the dam was built. The lake's surface is broken by thousands of the dead trees, the remnants of forests which were inundated by the rising waters. The water-filled landscape is visually impressive.

Thalang Accommodation: The two most popular guesthouses in Thalang are the SABAIDEE THALANG GUESTHOUSE, and the POSEY THALANG GUESTHOUSE. Both are bungalow style accommodation with fan and air-conditioned rooms. As of FEBRUARY 2026, the Sabaidee Thalang has NEW (air-conditioned) BUNGALOWS overlooking the Nam Thuen Waterway. The Sabaidee Thalang Guesthouse continues to be the more popular choice due to the BARBECUE BUFFET they offer every night for 130 Laotian Kip. Click the following AGODA link for booking inquiries at the Phosy Thalang Guesthouse:



The sunrise boat tour: The highlight of a stay at Thalang has to be the sunrise boat tour. If you're staying at either of the guesthouses, the staff can arrange a tour for you. Prices are 100,000 LAK per person and a minimum of three passengers is normally required. The departure time is just before 6 am and the tour lasts for approximately 1.5 hours. Click the link below for video highlights:



STAGE TWO: THALANG to KONG LOR (HWY 1E)

About: The second stage of the Thakhek Loop is a 150 KM LEG from Thalang Village to Kong Lor Village. There are several interesting sightseeing attractions enroute, the highlight being the renowned COLD SPRING (aka Cool Pool). This leg can take up to 8 hours to complete, due to the time taken enroute to checkout the various sightseeing attractions. **Note:** The DRAGON CAVE also has a hike to a lookout which can take 1 - 2 hours to complete (including the tour through the cave). Click the following **GOOGLE MAPS** link for the stage two route:



The best sightseeing attractions along Hwy 1E (north of Thalang) are:

1. The flooded landscape and dead trees.
2. The Buddha carvings

The best sightseeing attractions along Hwy 8 are:

1. The Dragon Cave & Lookout)
2. Cold Springs (aka Cool Pool)

Coffee and food stop enroute: Dragon Cave Café.

Note: REFUEL and get CASH in Na Hin Village. There's no gasoline station or ATMs in Kong Lor Village.



The Flooded Forest Viewpoint: Approximately 13 km north of Thalang is a roadside stop called the Flooded Forest Viewpoint. It's an elevated stretch of road where the waters of the dam can be seen on both sides. On the western side dead trees, like white skeletons, protrude from the wide expanse of water.

Sandstone Buddha Carvings: Another 10 km further on, Buddha images have been sculptured in to the SANDSTONE ROCK along the edges of the road. **Note:** These carving are right next to the road.



STAGE TWO: THALANG to KONG LOR (HWY 8)

Dragon Cave: This small cave site is located approximately 19 km WEST of Lak Sao Township, along Hwy 8. Coming from Lak Sao, it's on the right. It's a standard stop on the second day of the loop. The ticket office, parking area, and café are right next to Hwy, meaning it can be accessed without difficulty, or a long detour. The cave is set up for safe tourism with a developed internal walkway and lighting. As of FEBRUARY 2026, the entry fee for foreigners is 50k Laotian Kip. **Click the following GOOGLE MAPS link for the location of Dragon Cave:**



Cave Tour: Once you enter the cave, a steel walkway takes you deeper into the internal areas along the edge of a stream. Approximately 100 meters in, there's a low ceiling where you'll need to duck down (crouch) as you move forward for approximately 50 meters. The cave then opens up to reveal a large inner room with some nice formations. The PRIMARY FEATURE is the large formation at the center of the large cave room. The steel walkway takes you up into the rear section of the cave where more interesting formations can be seen.



The Lookout: An additional bonus is being able to hike up to a lookout (indicated as NICO'S LOOKOUT on Google Maps), after viewing the cave's internal area. In the midsection of the cave, there's a stairway which takes sightseers up to an exit point on the roof of the cave. **Note:** Do the tour to the rear section of the cave before taking the stairway up to the LOOKOUT EXIT. From here, the trail continues on to the lookout where you can get some great views over the surrounding terrain. The cave and the lookout are worth 1 - 2 hours of your time.



STAGE TWO: THALANG to KONG LOR (HWY 8)

Cold Spring: This site (aka COOL POOL) is one of the most popular attractions on the loop trip. The turn off is a further 18 km beyond the Dragon Cave. There's a large advertising sign on the right of hwy 8. From there, it's an additional 4.5 km of dirt road to the parking area.

Note: In the rainy season the track to the Cool Pool is extremely difficult to negotiate and many sections are flooded with large pools of water. If you want to visit in the rainy season, it's highly recommended to rent an off road bike. As of FEBRUARY 2026 the entry fee is 50k Laotian Kip per person. Click the following **GOOGLE MAPS** link for the location:



Cool Pool



The primary attraction: Is the clear, turquoise waters of the Cool Pool. It's a spring fed natural pool where sightseers can cool off after the heat of the 90 km ride from Thalang. It's a great spot to relax and chill out, while swimming and taking in the surrounding scenery. **Note:** Something to keep in mind, if you're planning to make it to KONG LOR VILLAGE on the same day, is you still have a 60 km ride in front of you from the Cold Springs.

Kong Lor Road: This is a 42 km detour off Hwy 8, with the turn-off being at NA HIN VILLAGE. This stretch will take at least one hour to complete due to wandering farm animals, road damage, and ongoing road works. Try avoid riding this road in the dark. The risk of having an accident increases significantly. Click the following **GOOGLE MAPS** link for the location of the Na Hin ATM:



Cool Pool (aka Cold Springs)

KONG LOR VILLAGE: GENERAL INFORMATION

About: KONG LOR CAVE is probably the premier attraction of the THAKHEK LOOP TOUR. At 7.5 km end to end, it's one of the largest river tunnels in Southeast Asia. Tours through the cave are done in a motorized boat which takes you all the way through the cave to the remote encampment beyond the upstream entrance. A trip through Kong Lor Cave is one of the highlights of travel in Laos. Click the following [YOUTUBE](#) link to view a highlights video of Kong Lor Cave:

KONG LOR CAVE HIGHLIGHTS

Accommodation at Kong Lor Village: There are several budget priced guesthouses in the village to choose from. **Note:** During the peak season (December to February) it's recommended to book in advance as the place fills up quickly with people doing the loop. **EASY GO BACKPACKERS HOSTEL.** Rooms are clean, comfortable, and air-conditioned. As of FEBRUARY 2026, room rates are 260k Lao-tian Kip per night. Click the following [AGODA](#) link for booking inquiries:



Eat & Drink: For anyone staying at EASY GO HOSTEL, there's an excellent restaurant called the **HAPPY RESTAURANT & BAR**, just 100 meters away from the hostel gate. Happy restaurant probably has the best WESTERN FOOD in Kong Lor Village, with the CHICKEN SCHNITZEL & CHICKEN CORDON BLEU being great choices for dinner. Their BANANA PANCAKES (with honey) are also an excellent choice for breakfast. This restaurant also uses ARABICA beans from the BOLAVEN PLATEAU for their coffees. Click the following [GOOGLE MAPS](#) link for the location:



KONG LOR CAVE TOUR

Tour Prices and Ticketing: Tour tickets must be purchased at the **TICKET KIOSK** next to the **CAVE LAGOON** (approximately 500 meters from the cave area entrance gate). **Note:** You can ride all the way to the parking area next to the lagoon. As of **FEBRUARY 2026**, the tour price is **200K Laotian Kip** per person, with a minimum of two paying customers per boat. For **SOLO** sightseers, the ticket price is **300K Laotian Kip**. Life jackets are included in the tour price. **Note:** Headlamps can be hired at the lagoon kiosk for **10k LAK**. The operating times for the boat trip are **08.00 - 17.00**, daily. The price for taking a **MOTORBIKE THROUGH THE CAVE** is **1 Million Laotian Kip** per person.

The Downstream Entrance Area: Once you've paid for your tour, you'll be issued a life jacket (and headlamp) and assigned to a boat driver. The boat driver will then lead the way around the opposite side of the lagoon and into the cave **DOWNSTREAM ENTRANCE**. The boat departure area is approximately **200 meters** inside the cave. **Note:** If you're taking a motorbike through the cave, getting to the boat departure area will take a lot longer due to the amount of work required by a team of drivers to get there (there's a rock barrier at the front of the cave).



Tour Duration: The round trip will take approximately **2.5 hours**. This also includes stops at **TWO FORMATIONS PLATEAUS**, and the **ENCAMPMENT** on the upstream side of the cave.

Tour Safety: The **MAXIMUM** number of **PASSENGERS** per boat, is **THREE**. Life jackets **MUST** be worn at all times while in the boat. If you don't have your own flashlight it's highly recommended you **RENT** a headlamp. Without a light you won't see very much. **Note:** The only areas of the cave which are illuminated are the formations plateaus.



KONG LOR CAVE TOUR

The Boat Departure Area: This is approximately 200 meters inside the DOWNSTREAM ENTRANCE. There's a cement pathway along the right-hand side of the cave which takes you to a small beach where the boats are parked. Once the boat driver has readied the boat, and you've donned your life jackets, you'll be on your way.

The Run Through the Cave: The run to the upstream entrance will take approximately 1.5 hours and includes stops at TWO DIFFERENT FORMATIONS viewing areas. The first area is on the right and only 600 meters from the departure point.

First Stop: The first viewing area is a new addition to the cave tour (opened just recently) and is safe to access. There's a boat landing where sightseers can disembark and a series of metal stairs and walkways which take you up into an elevated area of the cave. The walkway is approximately 200 meters in length and there's a viewing platform at the end, giving you an up close look at the massive stalactites and stalagmites.

Second Stop: The second formation viewing area is only a short distance (400 meters) beyond the first, and on the left side of the cave. This is the original formations area which was developed when the cave first opened to tourism, some fifteen years previously. This area is also set up with



a solid pathway to follow, and ILLUMINATION to highlight the formations. This second is also on an elevated plateau and runs for approximately 300 meters before a stairway takes you down to the river to rejoin the boat. **Note:** Both formations viewing areas are ILLUMINATED for a safe and enjoyable sightseeing experience. Click the following YOUTUBE link to see a highlights video of the tour through Kong Lor Cave:



KONG LOR CAVE TOUR

The Cave Run: From the second formations plateau it's another 6.5 km to the upstream entrance (exit point). During the dry season there will be several shallow areas where the boat may scrape the bottom getting through. In March and April, it's possible that sightseers may have to alight and wade for a few meters as the boat clears the shallow spot.

The Upstream Entrance: As the boat approaches the exit point the glow of daylight penetrates well into the cave. Approximately 400 meters from the exit (upstream entrance), there's a change in the river level. Passengers will need to alight so the drivers can haul their boats up and over the barrier created by the abrupt one meter drop in water levels. At this point sightseers can take some time to walk along the underground beach, on the left side of the river, and admire the sheer size of the cave.

The Upstream Side: After clearing the obstacle the boat trip continues on to a lost world, beyond the upstream entrance. A place where jungle clad, jagged peaks encroach on the river and groups of water buffaloes graze along its banks. Approximately 1 km beyond the upstream entrance, there's a landing point where passengers



The Upstream Encampment

can alight and spend some time at the nearby encampment. There is some small restaurants selling drinks and snack foods.

The Return Run: After relaxing for 20 - 30 minutes at the encampment, sightseers on the standard tour will re-join the boat for the 45 minute run back through the cave. Once again the world of daylight is left behind as one enters the darkened, primordial world of Kong Lor Cave; an experience which is a highlight of a tour through Laos and perhaps, even South East Asia.



The Upstream Boat Landing

STAGE THREE: KONG LOR TO THAKHEK (HWY'S 8 & 13)

Kong Lor to Thakhek: After completing the trip through Kong Lor Cave, the majority of Looper's normally ride back to Thakhek on the same day. The distance back to Thakhek (along HWY'S 8 & 13) is 187 KM and care should be taken due to the number of heavy trucks on the road. Click the following [GOOGLE MAPS](#) link for directions back to Thakhek:



Sightseeing attractions on the Road back to Na Hin:

1. NAM NONE CAVE.

Sightseeing Attractions along Hwy 8:

1. The ROCK VIEWPOINT - zipline circuit and adventure activities.

Sightseeing attractions along Hwy 13:

1. The SECRET VILLAGE cave tour.

Nam None Cave: This large volume cave is located 10 KM BEFORE Kong Lor Village. Coming from Kong Lor, look for the turn off (advertising billboard) on the RIGHT. In years past, this cave wasn't a standard stop on the loop due to the fact it was largely UNEXPLORED and had no tourism infrastructure in place.



Resort: As of 2025, there's now a SMALL RESORT (Bungalows & restaurant) located near the cave entrance. Nam None is a true ADVENTURE cave, meaning there's no developed trail and no internal lighting. The entry fee for a SHORT PENETRATION (1 hour) into this cave, without a local guide, is 50k Laotian Kip. Entry fees can be paid at the restaurant, where you'll also be issued a head-lamp. Click the following [GOOGLE MAPS](#) link for the location of Nam None Cave:



THE ROCK VIEWPOINT: GENERAL INFORMATION

About: The Rock Viewpoint is an adventure activity base on Hwy # 8 (the top of the loop) owned and operated by GREEN DISCOVERY LAOS. Click the link below for the location of the Rock Viewpoint:



The Rock Zipline Circuit: If you haven't done the zip-line circuit, then it's worth checking out on your way through. **Note:** The BASIC ZIPLINE CIRCUIT normally takes around 2.5 HOURS to complete. So it's recommended departing Kong Lor Village in the morning to allow enough time to get back to Thakhek, before darkness. As of FEBRUARY 2026, the basic circuit price is 30 USD per person. The basic circuit has 5 ZIPLINES, a NET BRIDGE, and a SUSPENSION BRIDGE. At the top of the circuit, a few minutes are spent on the ROCK VIEWING PLATFORM looking back over the limestone forest and circuit below.

The Nature Trail: For those looking for something a bit more sedate than the zip-line circuits, a 650 meter nature trail has been installed. The trail is constructed of steel and timber and is configured in a loop which takes you down into the karst terrain, via a series of stairways and boardwalks.



The Nature Trail

Khop Chai Deu: This is a great little restaurant/cafe where you can chill for a while after completing the zipline circuit. The cafe serves good coffees and also has plenty of cold Beer Lao in the refrigerator. The restaurant/cafe has a fantastic viewing platform providing a magnificent panorama across the limestone forest. The restaurant also has an excellent menu with WESTERN and LAO FOOD on offer. Click the following YOUTUBE link for a highlights video of the Rock Viewpoint:



The zip-line circuit

THE SECRET VILLAGE TOUR

Along Hwy 13: Many loopers get told to avoid Hwy # 13 (the main route to Vientiane) due to the amount of heavy truck traffic and also because "there's nothing to see." The advice about truck traffic is quite correct but being told there's nothing to see is plainly wrong.

Getting off the beaten track: There is, in fact, a fantastic full day adventure just a few km down the road from the junction of Hwy # 8 and Hwy # 13. The SECRET VILLAGE, and THAM HUEP CAVE, are hidden gems which most loopers miss but need not, because the locations are clearly indicated on Google maps. There's a couple of remote villages on the far side of a 300 meter high karst peak, and the only way of getting there is going through a 1 KM RIVER CAVE. **Click the link below for directions from the Rock View-point to Ban Nakhok Village:**



Doing the tour: Sightseers will need to hire the services of a local guides, to make this tour. **Note:** The local guides don't speak English, but they are experienced and knowledgeable about the tour through the cave (the local guide is also the boat driver). The local guides have a small office next to the river at NAKHOK VILLAGE.



Boat Ride: The first activity is a short RIVER CROSSING (by boat) followed by a 2 KM TREK to the cave entrance. The official name for this cave is THAM HUEP and its approximately 1 KM LONG. This cave is a river passage which, in the dry season, the water level is low enough to pass through.

Organised tour: The best way of seeing this attraction is to do a tour with SABAIDEE ADVENTURES, from THAKHEK. They can provide transport and an experienced, English speaking guide.

Sabaidee Adventures WhatsApp Contact:
~Sabaidee Adventure Tour



THE SECRET VILLAGE TOUR

The Temple Village: After exiting HUEP CAVE it's then a 1 KM HIKE to the first village, simply known as the TEMPLE VILLAGE. The only thing of note here is the LARGE GOLDEN BUDDHA, which is on the temple grounds. The village is enshrouded in tree growth which, after 4 km of hiking, is a welcome relief. There's a seating area in a shady spot which the guides will use for the lunch break.

The Secret Village: This is a further 1.4 km past the Temple Village and, to be honest, it's not as picturesque. Where the Temple Village has lots of trees providing a shady respite, the Secret Village is fully exposed to the sun. The 1.4 km hike is quite taxing simply because for much of it, you're fully exposed to the midday day heat. For anyone considering doing the tour, pack a hat and sun-block.

Conclusion: The tour to the Secret Village, and the walk through Tham Huep Cave, is an excellent days outing and doing it with SABAIDEE ADVENTURES is highly recommended. The total distance to walk is about 10 - 11 km, but most of it is FLAT GOING and not difficult. Click the following [YOU-TUBE](#) link to see a highlights video:



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