

LAOS: THE LAND LESS VISITED
January 22 – February 8, 2011

From the capitol of Vientiane to storied Luang Prabang, the Plain of Jars, and then Hilltribe villages in the remote mountains of the northeast. Spectacular mountains and canyons, diverse tribal groups and interesting people. Wonderful crafts, especially the hand woven fabrics.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Night</u>
January 22 S	Gather in Bangkok. Orientation walk near hotel. Group dinner (option).	Bangkok
23 S	Fly to Vientiane, orientation, to Talaat Sou (The huge market). Early evening: Lao language. Later: Dinner and cultural program (option).	Vientiane
24 M	Wat Phra Keo, Wat Si Sa Ket, That Luang. Afternoon: National Museum. Sundowner at Mekong.	Vientiane
25 T	AM: Fly to Luang Prabang, a World Heritage Site, everyone's favorite town. PM: Walking tour of town, craft shops, riverside. Later: Sundowner by Mekong, dinner (option).	Luang Prabang
26 W	AM: Small boat up the Mekong to Pak Ou (Tam Ting) Caves. Stop at whiskey/craft village. Later to museum in Luang Prabang Evening: Dinner, monks chanting at Wat Visoun.	Luang Prabang
27 Th	AM: To large wet market, then on to Kwang Si Falls south of town. Afternoon: To a weaving village and craft centers. Sa paper, carving, silk, pottery. Evening: Nite Club (option)	Luang Prabang
28 F	Fly to Phonsavan on the Plain of Jars. Walk center of town, visit market with rare and endangered species. Dinner in hotel.	Phonsavan
29 S	Early morning to market, may see opium sold. Day tour of Plain of Jars. Visit the three principal sites. Visit Hmong village. Probably see opium poppies. Evening: Dinner in town (option).	Phonsavan
30 S	By van east to Xam Neua. Beautiful mountains, hill top villages, remote tribal areas. The "Lao Stonehenge", rock pillars set along ridge tops for seven miles. This trip and the drive are the most interesting of any on my trips. We should see opium poppy fields and there are several weaving villages. Xam Neua is an isolated city of great historical significance. I have been here alone several times and led at least a dozen tours and seen about fifteen tourists.	Xam Neua
31 M	Southeast through karst landforms to the caves at Vieng Xai. Leaders of the Pathet Lao (Lao communists) lived in the caves during the (American) Vietnam War. Hospitals, offices, an amphitheatre holding thousands. It is now sort of a shrine; like Valley Forge, and more. Only 50-70 foreigners get there per year. Despite years of bombing we didn't kill any of the leaders.	Xam Neua

February

1 T	Northeastward to Yao village. See homes, village facilities, farms and gardens. Take books to school, reading glasses to those who need them. Back to Xam Neua	Xam Neua
2 W	Southwest, stopping at weaving centers, Khmu – Pong village, Nam Neun. Late afternoon: As part of the “See the World” Program we will distribute reading glasses to local people who cannot afford them. Evening: Dinner with local teachers.	Kham
3 Th	AM: Visit local elementary school, distribute books from the Books for Laos program. Lunch or Baci ceremony with the teachers. To Phonsavan, fly to Vientiane.	Vientiane
4 F	Around Vientiane. Carol Cassidy Silks, weaving centers Army Museum, antique fabric shop.	Vientiane
5 S	AM: To Anou Savari, nearby park, then lunch. Afternoon: Free or to Talaat Sou. Vientiane has dozens of wonderful shops now, as well as nice restaurants and coffee shops.	Vientiane
6 S	AM: To Nong Khai in Thailand. Then the Indochina Market along the Mekong. Lunch at a riverside restaurant. PM: To Village Weaver, a Catholic initiative to provide work for rural women; they have excellent crafts at reasonable prices. To Wat Kek and the fanciful sculptures. Evening: Dinner cruise on the Mekong (option).	Nong Khai
7 M	AM: Riverside market. Then fly to Bangkok. Afternoon & evening: Shopping along Sukhumvit, group dinner (option).	Bangkok
8 T	Tour ends after breakfast. Return home or travel elsewhere in Asia, etc.	

The cost of \$1,842 includes all hotels, air travel, land travel, boats, guides, airport transfers, admits, and some food. Single supplement is \$400.

Excluded is most food, individual taxi, laundry, any airport tax, visa. Currently there are no airport taxes, the Thai visa is free, and the visa to Laos is \$35.

The tour is organized and led by Professor Robert Phillips, who has lived for half of the past 20 years in Thailand and Laos; he has taken about 16 groups to Laos, including remote areas and perhaps the only tour along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Dr. Phillips will be with us all of the time.

Weather should be clear and sunny, with day temperatures around 70 degrees and nites of 50-60.

A deposit of \$500 will hold a place. Final payment by November 20.

Information: Robert Phillips, Mekong Tours
7135 Fawcett Creek Road,
Tillamook, OR 97141
503-842-7198 mekongtour1@hotmail.com
www.MekongTours.com

It is best to communicate by email as I am away from home a lot of the time.