

LAOS: THE LAND LESS VISITED
November 17 – December 4, 2011

From the capitol of Vientiane to storied Luang Prabang, the mysterious Plain of Jars, and then Hilltribe villages in Xiengkhuang and Houaphan. Spectacular canyons and mountains, fascinating tribal groups and interesting people. Wonderful crafts, especially the hand woven silk and cotton fabrics.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Night</u>
<u>November</u> 17 Th	Gather at the hotel in Bangkok. Meet at 6 PM in the lobby for orientation, optional group dinner.	Bangkok
18 F	Fly to Vientiane, orientation, sundowner at the Mekong River, Lao language, craft sellers by river.	Vientiane (B)
19 S	AM: Wat Phra Keo, Wat Si Sa Ket, That Luang, Talaat Sou (The huge market). PM: Walk near hotel, identify coffee shops, fabric shops, etc. Then National Museum, which has become a good museum. Evening: Dinner and cultural program (option).	Vientiane
20 S	AM: To the Army Museum. At this time the recent history of Laos is pretty much a history of the armed struggle for independence and later from foreign influence. The museum is well done. Afternoon: PM: Free. I can take you to specific shops, to the Textile Museum, etc.	Vientiane (B)
21 M	Fly to Luang Prabang, a World Heritage Site and everyone's favorite town. Later: Walking tour of town, craft center near hotel. Sundown by Mekong.	Luang Prabang (B)
22 T	By Small boat up the Mekong to the Pak Ou Caves. Stop at a village where they make rice whiskey. Also weaving and other crafts. Later the museum in Luang Prabang.	Luang Prabang (B)
23 W	By vans to the large wet market and then south to the Kwang Si Falls. Afternoon: To the craft area of town: weaving, sa paper, carving, pottery, painting.	Luang Prabang (B)
24 Th	To Phonsavan by air/van. Stop at markets in Phou Khoun. Then the large wet market in Phonsavan. Vegetables, fruit, endangered species. Our hotel, the Maly, has the best food in northeastern Laos.	Phonsavan
25 F	All day trip, visiting Sites One, Two, and Three. Also a village and rice threshing. May see opium poppies. Visit dry market to buy school materials.	Phonsavan
26 S	By van east to Xam Neua. Beautiful mountains, Hill Tribe villages, remote tribal areas (Hmong, Tai Dam, Tai Daeng, Khmu), weaving villages. The most interesting drive on any of my trips. Xam Neua is an isolated city of great historical significance. I have been alone several times and led at least 20 tours to the area and seen about 20 tourists.	Xam Neua

27 S	Southeast through karst landforms to the caves at Vieng Xai. Leaders of the Pathet Lao (Laotian communists) lived in the caves for many years during the American (Vietnam) War. Hospitals, offices, an amphitheatre holding thousands. It is now sort of a shrine; like Valley Forge, but much more. Despite years of bombing we did not kill any of the leaders.	Xam Neua
28 M	North to a Yao/Tai Dam village. The Yao often have striking traditional dress. We will take books to the Yao elementary school and some English books to the junior high. I will take a few chickens, etc, and while villagers prepare lunch we will be shown around the neighborhood. Back to Xam Neua.	Xam Neua (L)
29 T	Southwest, stopping at weaving centers, a Khmu-Pong village, lunch at Nam Neun. Stop at Tam Pieu Caves (Google it). Late afternoon: As part of the "See the World" program we will distribute reading glasses to older people.	M. Kham
30 W	Visit local elementary school, give out books and other materials from the Books for Laos program. Lunch or Baci ceremony with the teachers. Afternoon: Fly to Vientiane.	Vientiane
<u>December</u>		
1 Th	AM: To Carol Cassidy Silks, then to Anou Savari PM: Individual activity. To Textile Museum, last minute shopping, packing. I can take you to places.	Vientiane (B)
2 F	AM: To Nong Khai in Thailand To riverside Indochina Market, lunch along the river. Later: To Village Weaver, a self-help project (Google it)	Nong Khai (B)
3 S	AM: To Ban Chiang, a World Heritage Site, perhaps the oldest known agriculture and metal working in the world. The very well done dig and museum. Evening: Group dinner option.	Bangkok
4 S	End of tour	(B)

The cost of \$1,882 includes all hotels, flights, vans, boats, guides, admits, and some food. Single supplement is \$400.

Most food is excluded, along with laundry, individual taxi, any tips, visas. The Thai visa is free; the one 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 20 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 September 20.

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