

LAOS: THE LAND AND PEOPLE **November 17 – December 2, 2014**

We meet in Bangkok and fly to Vientiane to begin our trip around this interesting and diverse country. As we go from Vientiane to Luang Prabang, the Plain of Jars, and then the Hilltribe areas of remote Houaphan we pass through spectacular canyons and mountains and fascinating villages. We will visit villages and schools, see how people live and work, and watch weavers create beautiful silk and cotton textiles.

The trip to Laos has long been recognized by the Lao government as an example of “responsible tourism” and as a “traveling and giving” tour in International Travel News. This year we will again take books and other materials to three schools, shirts to students in two schools, and reading glasses to villagers. In 2014 there will be more meetings with NGOs, we will meet with bomb removal workers, and go to a village where useful utensils are made from war debris.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Night</u>
<u>November</u>		
17 M	Gather at the hotel in Bangkok. Meet at 6 PM in the lobby for orientation, optional group dinner.	Bangkok
18 T	Fly to Vientiane, orientation, sundowner at the Mekong River, Lao language, craft sellers by river, Wat Phra Keo, Wat Si Sa Ket.	Vientiane (B)
19 W	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 : To the National Museum. Interesting exhibits.	Vientiane (B)
20 Th	Fly to Luang Prabang. Walking tour, dinner by the river.	Luang Prabang (B)
21 F	By small boat up the Mekong to the Pak Ou Caves. Stop at village where they make rice whiskey. Also weaving and other crafts. Later the museum in Luang Prabang.	Luang Prabang
22 S	By van 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
23 S	Fly / drive to Phonsavan. Visit markets, orientation. Evening : Movie about war in Laos. Our hotel , the Maly, has the best food in northeastern Laos.	Phonsavan
24 M	All day trip to the Plain of Jars, visiting Sites One, Two, and Three. Also a village and rice threshing. May see opium poppies.	Phonsavan (B)
25 T	First to the wet market in Phonsavan to see farm products, endangered species then dry market to buy school supplies. Stop at bomb removable center. Drive to school in Muang Kham, take books to school.	M Kham

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| 26 W | 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 here alone several times and led at least 20 tours to the area and seen about 25 tourists. | Xam Neua |
| 27 Th | 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 F | East 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, fish, etc, and while villagers prepare lunch we will be shown around the neighborhood. Back to Xam Neua. | Xam Neua |
| 29 S | West by van. Lunch at Nam Neun
Silk weaving. Visit Tam Pieu Cave (Google it). | Phonsavan |
| 30 S | AM : Individual activity visit downtown
Noon : Fly to Vientiane, visit Wat Inpeng, craft shops. | Vientiane |
| <u>December</u> | | |
| 1 M | AM: To Wat Si Sa ket, Wat Phra Keo, That Luang
Later : Fly to Bangkok
Evening group dinner (option) | Bangkok |
| 2 T | Tour ends after breakfast. | (B) |

The cost of \$1,995 includes all hotels, flights, vans, boats, guides, admits, and some food. Single supplement is \$383.

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 23 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 1.

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