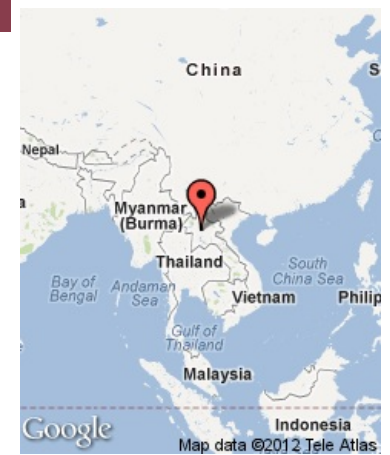


Cycling Tour in Luang Prabang



Highlights

Have you ever thought about spending your holidays in Laos? Set amidst lush tropical forest and chequered rice paddies, Luang Prabang is one of the best-preserved ancient cities in Southeast Asia. This four-day cycling tour is the ideal way to explore this fascinating town and its surrounding countryside.

Discover the East on two wheels! Asia and the South Pacific are home to some truly incredible cycling routes, combining millennia-old cultural heritage with scenery of breathtaking majesty, from the mighty Himalaya to the volcanic isles of Polynesia! A cycling tour gives you the chance to explore these epic landscapes under your own steam; there are no trains to catch, no 4am starts, no watching the sublime country pass you by from the back seat of a packed bus. Better still, a bike holiday allows you to interact with peoples and places in a much more intimate fashion than is possible on many tours, where you're forever surrounded by coachloads of other tourists in default travel mode: stop, snap, shop, split. On tours like these the main things are planned for you – hotels, routes, even the best time of year to travel – leaving you free to enjoy the awesome cycling!

This four-day cycling tour features some of Laos' most magical sites. From the leafy colonial avenues and vibrant night markets of Luang Prabang to the crumbling palaces and hilltop temples of its rural environs, the region is crammed full with cultural gems. More spectacular still is the landscape itself; your route takes you across the Mekong and Nam Khan rivers (the latter by longtail motortaxi), past the mysterious Pak Ou caves with their myriad gold-lacquered Buddha statues and up to Tad Sae, a towering forest waterfall footed by a natural swimming pool, the perfect place for a refreshing dip! Add to this stilted village clusters, sacred gilded stupas and patchwork paddies and you have as intriguing and atmospheric a cycling adventure as you're likely to find. And why not give something back on your holidays in Laos by purchasing and distributing English textbooks to the remote villages en route.

Is it for me?

This is a fantastic cycling tour through some of the region's most iconic scenery. As such, we'd recommend this to absolutely everyone, so long as they have some cycling experience and are in fairly good shape. You won't be covering any mammoth distances – the daily average is about 25 miles – and there are no steep hills to tackle, so you don't need to be Lance Armstrong to enjoy this one! The roads are relatively quiet too, meaning you don't have to worry about negotiating frenzied traffic or deciphering alien road signs. If for any reason you are struggling with the riding, you can always get a lift in the back-up van at either the beginning or end of the day, so there's no danger of you holding up the other riders. The daily itinerary is in fact very flexible – you can see what you want to see at a pace that suits you – which means early starts can be avoided if you need your full eight hours!

Accommodation

For this tour you'll be based at The Chang Heritage Hotel, a delightful boutique hotel designed in accordance with the principles of traditional Laotian architecture. Here you'll find super-comfortable rooms, neat gardens and an excellent bar with colonial era furnishings. Food-wise you're in for a treat. Hearty breakfasts are served in the hotel restaurant, and each day you'll enjoy tasty picnics at some suitably picturesque point en route. On the first evening there's a slap-up welcome dinner, but on other nights it's up to you to find somewhere to eat. Fear not, in Luang Prabang you'll be spoilt for choice, with everything from street food (including a very good vegetarian market) to haute cuisine on offer.

Prices from

455 GBP (4 days) per person

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Itinerary

Day 1 – Arrive at hotel. After a short rest, you'll begin cycling to some of the major sites in this fabulous city, including the impressive stupa of Wat Visoun, the shrine of Wat Aham and the city's oldest temple, Wat Sene. You'll visit these sights as you'll as the magnificent Wat Xiengthong, its exterior architecture is remarkable with decorated gilded stuccoes and doorways, a "tree of life" mosaic pattern set in coloured glass on the back wall and its three tiered roofs sweeping low to the ground representing classical Laotian architecture. A visit to Luang Prabang would be incomplete without ascending the 329 steps to the top of Mount Phousi for an enjoyable exploration of the sacred gilded stupa and a beautiful sunset view of the city and its glowing reflection in the Mekong River. From there you'll experience the hustle and bustle of the colourful Night Market where you can find a selection of traditional textiles, gifts and souvenirs made by the local people. (Cycling -15 to 25km)

Day 2 - After breakfast, you'll set off south of Luang Prabang, enjoying splendid mountain and unspoiled forest scenery. Upon reaching the river, you'll take a small long tail motortaxi downstream on the Nam Khan River, passing stunning soft green mountains and observing the local activities at various small villages on your way. En route you'll stop at Tad Sae, a large beautiful waterfall which cascades through the forest with a cool natural swimming pool, a refreshing break. After lunch, you'll continue our boat trip downstream to retrace the tomb of the French explorer Henri Mouhot, who stumbled across Angkor Wat in 1860, but succumbed to a malaria attack in Luang Prabang on 10th November the following year. Your bike will be ready at the local pier near Ban Phanom for your journey back to Luang Prabang. You'll take an alternative route back to Luang Prabang, riding through and stopping over at the well-known weaving village of Tai Lue. You'll then ride to Luang Prabang, arriving by the late afternoon, to enjoy a short guided cycling tour in Luang Prabang before sunset. (cycling - 50 km)

Day 3 - An early knock will wake you to participate in giving alms to the Buddhist monks, as the sun rises. Then you'll head northbound from Luang Prabang to the village of Ban Pak Ou. After enjoying a picnic lunch surrounded by picturesque countryside, you'll cross the Mekong River to Pak Ou and Thamting Caves, located on the Mekong riverbank. You'll visit the interesting and mysterious Pak Ou Caves, which are two linked caves crammed with thousands of gold lacquered Buddha statues of various shapes and sizes left by devoted pilgrims. You'll then embark on a traditional boat downstream the Mekong River with your bicycle. On the way, you'll stop at the village of Ban Xanghai, where you can sample the local produce of Lao rice wine. Your next stop will be at Wat Long Khoune, a royal family temple, then it's Sakkarine Caves and Ban Xieng Mene, a traditional pottery kiln village. You'll then return to Luang Prabang by bike. (Cycling - 42 km)

Day 4 - After breakfast this morning, you'll will visit The National Museum at the former Royal Palace, which displays a lovely collection of the artifacts reflecting the richness of Laos culture dating from the days of the early kings right through to the last sovereign. You'll also visit the Phousi Market, where you will see such diverse offerings as dried buffalo skin, local tea and saltpeter among the chickens, vegetables and hill-tribe weavings. The tour ends and you will be transferred to the airport for your onward flight.

Details

Getting there

Transfer from Luang Prabang Airport

Price includes

Price quoted is per person for a group of 2 to 5 travellers. For groups of 6 or more the price is \$595 per person.

Breakfasts, lunches, welcome dinner (subsequent dinners not included), accommodation, van support, transfers, bike, guide.

Available

Jan—Dec

Typical Duration

4 days

Comfort level

Refined (boutique or luxury accommodation and food)

Experience required

Some previous experience is needed