



# Asia Concierge

THE ART OF TRAVEL DESIGN



COUNTRY INFORMATION, FACTS & ADVICE

*Laos*



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## ● ARRIVING INTO LAOS

All international checkpoints to Laos from Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam are now open for entry and exit by all visitors.

Note: Traveler's must check with their airlines for any travel requirements in case they transit a country with a different protocol before arriving in Laos.

### Passport and Visa

Approval is no longer required for visas to Laos. Foreign tourists are generally admitted into Laos for 30 days with a visa on arrival (obtained at most border check points) without prior authorisation or for 30 days with a visa issued at a Laotian embassy. This costs 30-45 USD (depending on nationality) and requires the filling in of an application form and two passport photos, if you arrive without passport photos, an additional fee may be charged. An additional 1 USD/person can be charged if you arrive on a weekend or public holiday. Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months beyond your expected departure date. Please contact your local Lao embassy for the most accurate information. E-visas can also be obtained via <https://laoevisa.gov.la/index>. Please check the Lao Government website or your travel designer for up to date information.

### Useful tips:

- Check your passport expiry date and ensure it is valid for more than six months beyond the date of your expected return to your country.
- Ensure you have at least two blank pages in your passport prior to arrival in each country of your journey.
- Print all important documents and keep them handy, such as airline tickets and visa approval letters.
- If your passport is lost or stolen overseas, please contact your local Asia Concierge representative or hotel staff. They will assist you in contacting the relevant embassy or consulate.

Whilst we do our best to provide the most up-to-date information, visa requirements may change at short notice. Obtaining the correct visa is the responsibility of each guest. Therefore, we recommend that you check with your consulate or embassy for current visa information before leaving home.

We highly recommend the fast-track arrival service provided by Asia Concierge at Luang Prabang (LPQ) airport, which includes visa-on-arrival process, visa fee, and all other charges. We also fill out the immigration form and then we also include also fast-track through immigration for a very quick hassle-free smooth arrival. All we need is a passport copy sent prior to travel and we take care of everything. We do not need passport photos.

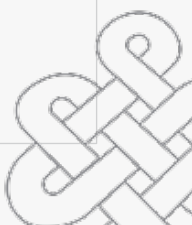
## ● KEEPING HEALTHY IN LAOS

### Vaccinations

Staying up-to-date with your vaccinations is a crucial part of your pre-holiday planning and it is important to seek professional medical advice for your specific requirements. If you are traveling to remote areas, you may also consider preparing a medical kit.

### Special Requirements

If you are on prescribed medication, ensure that you take a copy of your prescriptions in case of loss of supply. Be sure to pack enough medication in your hand luggage for the duration of your trip as it may not be available locally. It is important to keep it in its original packaging. Check with the relevant embassy or consulate that your medication is legal in the countries you plan to visit and find out whether you need to take a doctor's letter with you.





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## ● TIPPING

Tipping for good service is not expected but is always appreciated in Laos. It is customary, though not compulsory, to tip tour guides and drivers at the end of a tour. Hotel and station porters should also be tipped a small amount for their troubles.

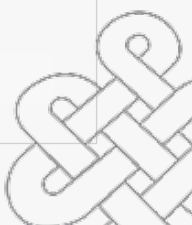
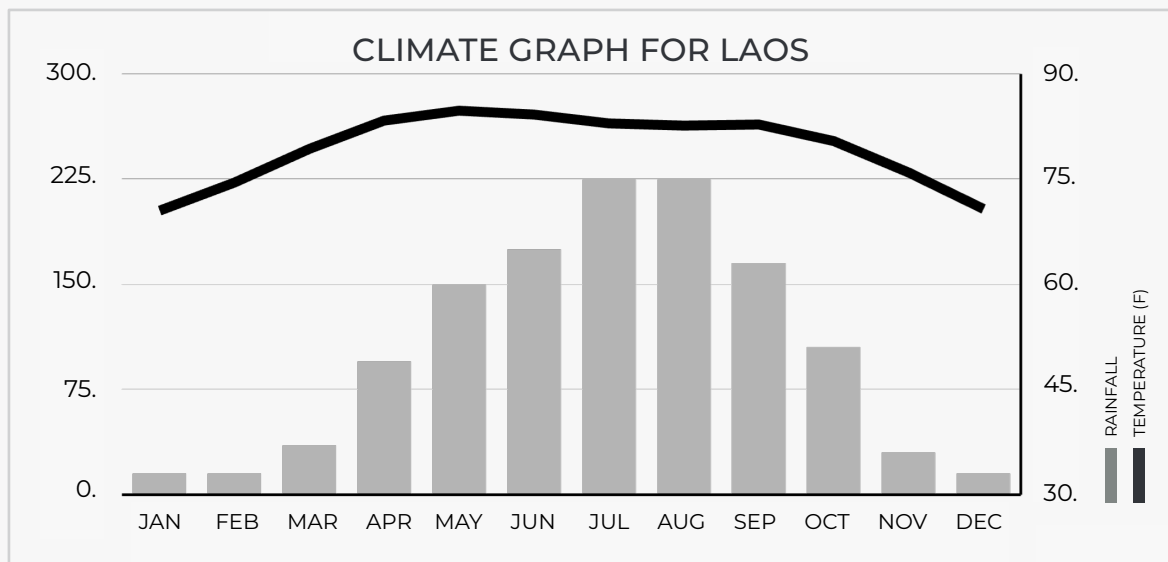
Tipping is a very personal matter and should you feel you would like to acknowledge their service, please consider the following as a rough guideline, per person per day.

Type of Service (USD)	1	2	3	4	5-9	10 >
Guide (or Trip Leader)	15.00	12.00	10.00	8.00	6.00	5.00
Driver (or Tour Assistant)	8.00	6.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	2.50
Hotel Porters			1.00 per service			
Local Service Providers			1.00 per service			

The above tipping guidelines are recommendations only and are not compulsory. Please use your own discretion in tipping based on quality of service provided.

## ● WEATHER

Laos has a monsoon climate featuring a dry and a wet season. The dry season lasts from November to May with the cooler period in December and January. At its coldest temperatures fall to as low as 15°C (41°F). It is coldest at night, in the early mornings and at higher altitudes. During the hot period of the dry season, between March and May, temperatures can reach the high 30's °C (80's°F). Rainfall in the wet season varies according to altitude. Generally speaking, the monsoon season produces severe rain that lasts for short periods of time. The wet months vary according to location. In Vientiane, they are from May to September; in Luang Prabang, August is far wetter than any other month. Laos is sunny year-round and we highly recommend bringing sun protection from your home country. Wearing sun screen and a hat are the best ways to avoid heatstroke and sunburn.





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## ● WHAT TO PACK

Light and comfortable cotton or linen clothing is recommended for the summer months, while warmer clothes for the winter months are recommended. Good walking shoes or sandals for touring are also beneficial.

For women, shorts are acceptable, however keep in mind that the Laotians tend to dress conservatively and very revealing clothing may be frowned upon. Smart/casual dress is adequate for dinner restaurants.

A hat, sunscreen, sunglasses and regular sun protection are recommended to protect against the sun and heat, particularly if you are planning to spend a lot of time visiting the many interesting sites which are outdoors.

When visiting temples and shrines, it is best to dress conservatively as visitors may be refused entry if not dressed appropriately. It is often a requirement to wear a long skirt or trousers that cover the knees as well as long sleeves to cover the arms and shoulders. Avoid any see-through clothing. You may also be required to remove any footwear, so sandals may be more convenient. Your travel expert will always be on hand to advise in such situations.

It is recommended to bring along a universal travel adaptor. The voltage supply in Laos is 220v 50Hz. Sockets are sometimes fit for two or three round prongs and sometimes two parallel blades.

## ● MONEY

### Currency & Exchange

The kip is the currency unit of Laos and are presently in distributions of 1000, 5000, 10,000, 20,000, 50,000 and 100,000 kip. US dollars, Euros and Thai baht are also accepted in many places and can be more convenient to carry than great wads of the local currency. Banks, hotels and jewellery shops all offer currency exchange.

**Note:** Should you wish to pay a bill expressed in Lao Kip with USD, ask for the exchange rate or ask your Asia Concierge Travel Expert for assistance. For everyday expenses, we recommend carrying a mix of US dollars and kip. For larger items or when the exchange rate works in your favour, use US dollars.

### Credit Cards

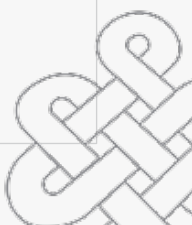
VISA and MasterCard are accepted at larger hotels and restaurants throughout the country.

### Traveler's Checks

Traveler's checks can be exchanged in most banks, authorised exchange bureaus and hotels although they are not generally accepted as payment for items in shops. However, this is often complicated and time-consuming so we recommend against using traveler's checks.

### Banks & ATMs

Banks are typically open Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 12:00 and 14:00 to 15:00. In Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Pakse, and other major towns you can find ATMs to withdraw money (ATMs distribute only Lao kips with a maximum of 1,000,000 – 2,000,000 per transaction).





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## ● TIME ZONE

Laos is GMT + 7 hours, Pacific time + 15 hours, and Eastern Time + 12 hours. Daylight saving is not observed.

## ● SHOPPING

The best buys in Laos are ethnic minority handicrafts and textiles. The Lao sarong or pha sin made from silk or cotton is also a beautiful and popular souvenir. Other souvenirs to look out for include silverware, in particular from Luang Prabang, wood carvings and embroidery.

### Useful tips :

- Take your purchases home with you wherever possible to avoid complications with additional shipping fees, customs duties and regulations. Also, airfreight and shipments can sometimes take months to arrive.
- Avoid purchasing expensive items unless you are certain of its quality and value. Some vendors may overstate the value of their goods, even in shops recommended by Asia Concierge. While our guides will try to assist wherever possible, they are not authorities on antiques or rare items.
- Take the time to read credit card slips and calculate the exchange rate before signing.
- Retain receipts of your purchases as you may be asked to provide proof of purchase to local officials when exiting the country. You may also need to present it to customs on your return home.

Your travel expert may suggest vendors for specific items as a courtesy. This is not an endorsement. All purchases are your responsibility. Asia Concierge is not liable for product issues or shipping problems.

## ● LOCAL FOOD & DRINK

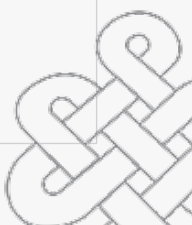
### Food

Lao cuisine has many similarities to Thai – especially the bordering province of Issan Thailand, with lots of aromatic herbs and spices such as lemon grass, chilies, ginger and tamarind used to flavour dishes. Sticky rice, or khao niao, is the main staple in Lao cuisine, usually served with fermented fish and a fish sauce similar to that used in Vietnamese cuisine called nam pa. Chicken and pork dishes are also popular but beef is expensive in comparison. Soups served with noodles, bamboo shoots and fresh vegetables can be found everywhere.

### Drinking Water

Do not drink the tap water in Laos and avoid ice in your drinks unless it is made from clean water. When eating or drinking with your travel expert, he/she will ensure that all food and drink is safe and will inform you if otherwise. Exercise caution when eating and drinking outside reputable hotels and restaurants, and please dine at places recommended by your Asia Concierge travel expert or representative as many local restaurants do not follow typical food hygiene practices.

***\*\*Please advise Asia Concierge Travel Designer of any special dietary requirements or allergies at least four weeks prior to departure. Every effort will be made to comply with your request\*\****





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## ● CUSTOMS, ETIQUETTE & USEFUL INFORMATION

### Travelling During Weekends & Public Holidays

Laos has a very small population (less than 8 million) so weekend and public holiday travel is not as affected as in neighbouring countries, however, the Laotians will use any excuse to have a good party, and participating in any local festival in Laos is guaranteed to be a good time. There are many festival dates, many are based on the lunar calendar. Of the more significant festivals celebrated in Laos are Lao New Year (Boun Pi May) which always falls between 13/14-15/16 of April, End of Buddhist Lent (Boun Ok Phansa), which is celebrated on the 15th day of the 11th lunar month (October/November) with boat races in Vientiane and Luang Prabang), and That Luang Festival in Vientiane (full moon of 12 lunar month, usually November). During these times the streets become crowded with merrymakers and accommodation gets booked early with local and international visitors. Check with your travel designer when travelling during these times or if you want to partake in the festivities.

Although not an official public holiday, Luang Prabang is best avoided during Chinese New Year as the town is at full capacity with Chinese that have traveled down by road or on the new train from China.

### Language

The national language of Laos is Lao, which is closely related to Thai and is spoken in many different dialects. Lao, like Thai, is a tonal language. In Luang Prabang and Vientiane, English is widely spoken and French is still spoken by many government officials and educated members of the older generations. Many ethnic minority groups (there are 54 in Laos) speak their own languages.

### Religion

As in the neighbouring countries of Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia Theravada Buddhism is the dominant religion and saffron-robed monks are a common sight in Laos, observing the monks on the early morning alms rounds has become a major activity in Luang Prabang. Many of the ethnic minority groups continue to practice animism and their traditional belief systems. There are also a small number of Catholics and Protestants.

*Laos*

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