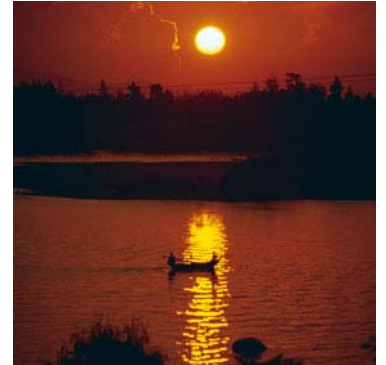
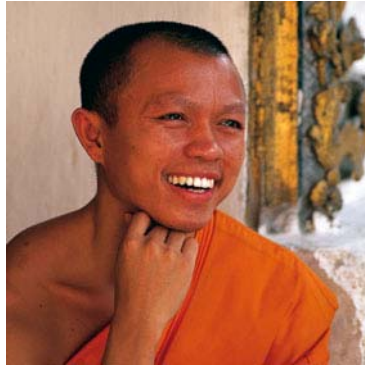


# laos: eco tourism development project



## trip highlights

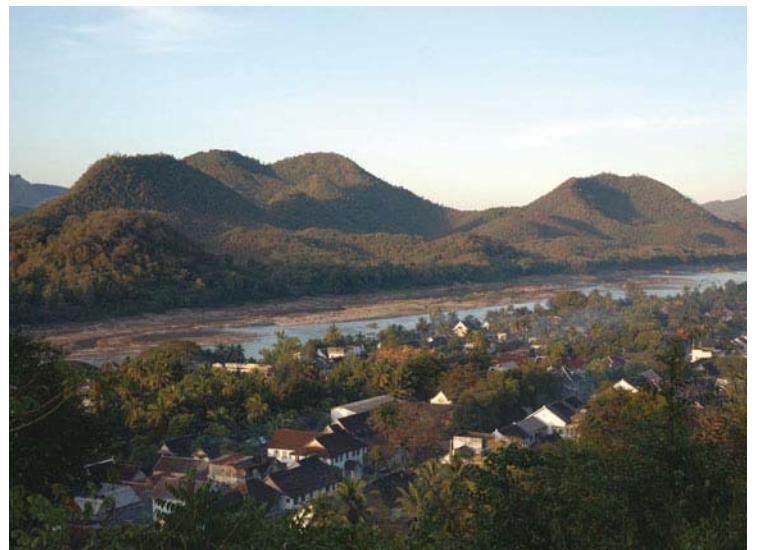
The project work you participate in will fight poverty while protecting the local environment and enhancing ethnic cultures

Each encounter with the Lao people is warm and friendly since their Buddhist beliefs are entrenched in every aspect of life

Watch life on the Mekong River from a riverside cafe in Luang Prabang and marvel at the beautiful countryside which is dotted with stupas, pagodas and temples

An early morning watching the streets of Luang Prabang come alive with the saffron robes of the Buddhist monks during the daily alms-giving ceremony

The astounding beauty of Kung Sii waterfalls, the sights of the Capital Vientiane and the picturesque town of Vang Vieng



<b>Trip Duration</b>	13 days
<b>Grade</b>	Adventure touring level
<b>Activities</b>	Community Project Travel, Adventure Touring
<b>Accommodation</b>	13 day trip, 4 days Community Project, 7 nights hotel/guest house, 5 nights homestay

## welcome to World Expeditions

Thank you for inquiring about our Laos: Eco Tourism Development Project trip. Here at World Expeditions we are passionate about giving our clients the best chance to experience some of the remarkable cultures and wilderness regions of this very special part of the world. We are committed to making sure that our range of unique itineraries are well researched, affordable & tailored for the enjoyment of our small groups. These philosophies have been with us since 1975 when we began operating adventure holidays. We also put great effort into making sure that wherever we go we show a true respect for the local cultures and their environment. In Peru we have worked with our trek and tour staff for more than 20 years and have always managed to benefit from a tremendously good relationship that is reciprocal in every sense. We pay our staff well over award wages and provide them and their families with insurance and medical support. For the last two decades we have set up many help projects in the local villages where our staff live.

## Why travel with World Expeditions?

Community Project Travel is a unique "giving back" program that we have operated since 2005 as a 'not for profit' division of our company. The program aims to assist impoverished communities that receive little or no funding from its government. Each project is sustainable in that the work is started and completed by the time you leave the community, resulting in a tangible benefit. Additionally we run the projects jointly with the community, encouraging ownership of the project at the local level and transferring skills to the local community, which assists in the long-term continuity of the project. Each project is selected on a consultative basis with the community, ensuring that the project is a real need of the community. Lastly, no particular skill is required to join a project; you just need to pack an open mind and a keenness to commit to physical work in a team environment.

# laos: eco tourism development project

*Work with Laos villagers to construct eco-tourism infrastructure that provides alternative sustainable livelihoods to slash and burn agriculture, hunting and illegal deforestation.*



## trip dates

**2009** 03 Oct - 15 Oct

**2010** TBA

## trip cost

**\$1890 joining Vientiane**

**For competitive airfares and stopover ideas to join this adventure, contact our expert staff today to receive a detailed quote.**

World Expeditions does not require single travellers pay a surcharge for travelling alone. On all of our adventures we will arrange for you to share accommodation with another traveller of the same sex and if we can not match you up we will provide a single room at no extra charge. If you prefer not to share a single supplement is payable to guarantee your own room. The cost of the single supplement is \$POA.

## the trip

Our community project journeys to the heart of Laos to explore its deeply entrenched Buddhist culture, stunning landscape of limestone karst mountains and life along the mighty Mekong river for which Laos has become so loved. While the people of the Seuang river valley live close to one of the world's fastest growing tourism destinations, Luang Prabang, they receive virtually no benefits. Our community project will work with the villages to construct Eco-tourism infrastructure, including a lodge, that provides alternative sustainable livelihoods to slash and burn agriculture, hunting and illegal deforestation. The Seuang river makes a stunning backdrop to our project as we work along side the local people for an enriching cultural experience. Commencing in the capital of Vientiane we travel to Vang Vieng to immerse ourselves in its laid back ambience before exploring the golden temples and markets of the UNESCO town, Luang Prabang on the banks of the Mekong river.

## at a glance

DAY 1	ARRIVAL VIENTIANE
DAY 2	VIENTIANE TO VANG VIENG
DAY 3	VANG VIENG FREE DAY
DAY 4	VANG VIENG TO LUANG PRABANG
DAY 5	LUANG PRABANG KHUANG SII WATERFALL
DAY 6	LUANG PRABANG FREE DAY
DAY 7	LUANG PRABANG SEUANG RIVER PROJECT ORIENTATION
DAYS 8-11	SEUANG RIVER COMMUNITY PROJECT WORK
DAY 12	SEUANG RIVER. BASI SU KHOUAN. PAK OU CAVES & RIVERBOAT. LUANG PRABANG
DAY 13	LUANG PRABANG. TRIP CONCLUDES.

## what's included

- all domestic land and water transportation as listed in the itinerary
- all meals as listed in the itinerary
- service of English speaking guides
- a Community Project facilitator for project orientation
- all accommodation as listed in the itinerary
- all entrance fees
- government taxes and VAT

No local payments policy: Local cash payments are becoming increasingly popular with many operators. The policy seems to benefit the tour operators, more than the local economies or travellers, as it avoids local taxes and transfers the cost and risk of cash handling to travellers. In accordance with our Responsible Travel practices.

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## **Day 1:** ARRIVAL VIENTIANE → Meals:

After custom and immigration formalities you will be met by your World Expedition guide who will take you to your hotel. After check in we will meet briefly in the adjacent restaurant for a short tour briefing and answer any questions you may have. This afternoon enjoy some free time to explore the city on your own and start to get a feel for the Lao way of life. Vientiane highlights include; Wat Sisaket with its thousands of miniature Buddha statues; Vientiane's own Victory Monument, which looks like the Arc de Triomphe; Wat Simuang and Wat Prakeo, once home to the famous Emerald Buddha, which today lives in Bangkok. There are small entrance fees to these locations between 5,000 to 20,000 kip or \$0.50 to \$2.00. You can easily find a nice meal at the many local restaurants close to the hotel. There are both Lao and international cuisine on offer. We suggest a stroll along the Mekong River around sunset!

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## **Day 2:** VIENTIANE TO VANG VIENG → Meals: B, L

After breakfast we will leave Vientiane by minibus for a three hour drive north toward Vang Vieng. Vang Vieng today is mainly a backpacker town with guest houses, bars, restaurants, internet cafes and tour agencies. Yet, this small town is set against a back-drop of dramatic karst limestone mountains and the Nam Song River. It is not only an ideal place to stop over on the journey between Vientiane and Luang Prabang but offers a wealth of activities. We will visit the Vang Vieng Organic Farm <http://www.laofarm.org/index.html> for lunch and look around the farm. There are a number of activities going on here and those who would like can spend some time teaching English or if you want a more relaxing afternoon or float down the Nam Song River on a tube. In the late afternoon we will check into the Guest House and then enjoy some free time exploring the town and having a cold drink while enjoying the sunset. Dinner will be on your own at one of the many restaurants to choose from.

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## **Day 3:** VANG VIENG FREE DAY → Meals: B

Today is a free day to relax and enjoy the local scenery, or ask your guide about the many modestly priced, outdoor activities available including mountain biking, trekking and river rafting (these optional activities not included in the price).

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## **Day 4:** VANG VIENG TO LUANG PRABANG → Meals: B, L

After breakfast we will leave Vang Vieng by minibus for the six hour drive north toward Luang Prabang. The route will wind through scenic mountain passes and there will be plenty of opportunity to stop along the way for photos. Lunch will be at a local restaurant on the way. After check-in at the guesthouse we set out on an enjoyable two hour stroll around Luang Prabang to introduce the historical and cultural importance of this scenic town and you will understand why it deserves the World Heritage title! We will first climb 350 steps to enjoy commanding views from Wat Phu Sii. This sits atop a mountain right in the center of town, and provides a wonderful view! Next we will wander along the shaded banks of the Mekong River and through the cobbled alleyways to get an up-close look at the town. Next visit Wat Xieng Thong that emphasizes the uniqueness of Luang Prabang, its several roofs sweeping low to the ground. See also the impressive "tree of life" mosaic on the exterior of the chapel depicting episodes from the Ramayana. During our walk your guide will introduce Lao language, culture and etiquette to help you interact with Lao people respectfully and politely. The remainder of the evening is free for you to explore this wonderful town. Tonight dinner will be on your own at the many fine local restaurants. If time and energy permits take a walk through the evening market.

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# laos: eco tourism development project

*Work with Laos villagers to construct eco-tourism infrastructure that provides alternative sustainable livelihoods to slash and burn agriculture, hunting and illegal deforestation.*



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**Day 5:**  
**LUANG PRABANG KHUANG SII WATERFALL**  
→ Meals: B, L

If you wish, get an early start (5:30 am or so) and go watch or participate in the traditional Lao rite of Almsgiving to the monks. In the city, some 300+ monks file through silently collecting alms. This is an amazing sight and your guide will be on hand to demonstrate and explain this important ritual. Return to your hotel for breakfast. After breakfast we will go out to the Tad Khuang Sii waterfall. The falls cascade over many calcified tiers and down several hundred feet into a series of cool, turquoise pools. The water has a clear blue-green tint due to the high mineral content and you can climb stairs to enjoy the beauty from various viewpoints. This is a popular swimming spot and also now home to Care for the Wild International (CWI) Asiatic Black Bear refuge [www.careforthewild.com](http://www.careforthewild.com). Lunch will be served beside the highest waterfall. Return to the hotel to relax or explore on your own. Tonight dinner will be on your own at the many fine local restaurants.

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**Day 6:**  
**LUANG PRABANG FREE DAY**  
→ Meals: B

Today is a free day to relax and enjoy the historical town, or ask your guide the day before about the many modestly priced, activities available including textile and natural dye workshop, elephant park project and renting a mountain bike to explore the surrounding area (these optional activities are not included in the cost of this trip). Lunch and dinner are on your own at the many local restaurants.

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**Day 7:**  
**LUANG PRABANG SEUANG RIVER PROJECT ORIENTATION**  
→ Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast, we introduce our community service learning project with a survey of Seuang River Community site (approximately 1 hr drive north of Luang Prabang). This session will also introduce the principles of Sustainable Tourism for the Elimination of Poverty, a central theme of our time in the villages. Our first stop will be at the Seuang River valley village where we will base our operations over the next few days. After meeting our hosts and receiving a welcome from the community we will start to settle into our community stay. We will tour the village and start to learn about local lifestyles. Bathing, eating and sleeping arrangements will all be well explained (traditional toilets and bathing Lao village style) and your guides will be on hand to assist with communications. Lunch will be served and provide a wonderful opportunity to get to know our hosts better. Meals at the village are prepared by the villagers and typically include fresh river fish and locally grown organic vegetables. To ensure everyone is well fed and happy we also provide an assistant cook and supplies from town. After lunch we will get started on our project! Our service project's goal is to provide eco-tourism infrastructure to allow 12 villages create alternative livelihoods. The schedule for work within the villages will be discussed and agreed to ensure the largest impact can be achieved. (NB: the nature and scope of the project will be adjusted according to the capacity of volunteers - large or small you will experience first hand the effects of your support).

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**Days 8-11:**  
**SEUANG RIVER COMMUNITY PROJECT WORK**  
→ Meals: B, L, D

Over the next four days we will continue to work with our village hosts on the community project.

# laos: eco tourism development project

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**Day 12:**  
**SEUANG RIVER. BASI SU KHOUAN. PAK OU CAVES & RIVERBOAT. LUANG PRABANG**  
→ Meals: B, L

In the morning we will have a chance to say good bye to our hosts with a traditional Basi Su Khouan ceremony. Basi is Pali for "ties of thread," and su khouan is Lao for "defending the spirit or soul." A group will perform the ceremony to mark a recent or upcoming event such as a birth, marriage, departure for a trip, or arrival from a trip. The group gathers around a centerpiece made from banana leaves on a tray with offerings to the spirit or spirits. The master of ceremonies is a male village elder who chants to the participants' spirits. The ceremony is a group event that bonds the community together and demonstrates the persistence of animist beliefs in Lao culture. After saying goodbye to our hosts, we drive to the village of PakiOu for a Mekong Riverboat trip to visit the famous and sacred Pak Ou Buddha Caves. The caves overlook the confluence of the Mekong and Ou Rivers. It is home to thousands of Buddha images consecrated by local people since 16th century, when King Setthathirat found the caves and declared them a holy site. Today many still pay respect here to the teachings of Buddha and we will gain a greater understanding of the importance the religion plays in Lao culture. Explore the caves before returning to your boat and a cruise down river to Luang Prabang. In the afternoon we will return to our hotel in town for nice hot shower and a good night's rest or a night out depending on how you feel! Tonight dinner will be on your own at the many fine local restaurants.

**Day 13:**  
**LUANG PRABANG. TRIP CONCLUDES.**  
→ Meals: B

After breakfast enjoy some free time before transfer to the airport for your onward flight.

Note: This itinerary is subject to change with any change in Community regulations as well as Governmental changes and natural circumstances beyond our control.

# laos: eco tourism development project

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## fast facts

<b>Countries Visited:</b> Laos
<b>Visas:</b> Yes*
<b>Vaccinations:</b> Yes*
<b>Group size:</b> Min. 10 Max. 16
<b>Private Groups:</b> Yes*
<b>Singles:</b> a single supplement is available for this trip*
<b>Leader:</b> Expert local leader
<b>Brochure Reference:</b> Community Project Travel
<small>*Ask our staff or your agent for more information</small>

## responsible travel

The environments we travel through are fragile. It is our responsibility as visitors to minimise the impact of our presence. World Expeditions were the proud recipients of the inaugural Australian National Travel Industry's Environmental Achievement award for our Responsible Travel Guidebook. This detailed guide to responsible & sustainable travel is provided to all World Expeditions clients before they travel. Please ask your consultant if you have not received your copy of our award winning book. Alternatively, you may like to download a copy from our website [www.worldexpeditions.com](http://www.worldexpeditions.com)

## country information

Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, is situated on the Mekong River, one of the world's great river systems, and is the center of northern Lao arts and culture. The town has rightfully been awarded UNESCO World Heritage status. Easily accessible with direct flights daily, Luang Prabang and the natural beauty of the Seuang River Valley, create the perfect setting for community service groups. Lao is landlocked by its neighbors Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, China and Vietnam. The mighty Mekong River runs the entire length of the country, providing fishing, irrigation and fertile farmland along the delta. Its population of 6 million people is distributed through modern towns, rural villages and isolated, ethnic, mountain tribes. The deeply entrenched Buddhist culture touches every part of life, making encounters with the Lao people one of friendship and warm welcomes. Temples, pagodas and stupas dot the country, with glints of golden rooftops visible as the sun rises over the mountains and the early morning alms-giving ceremonies see the towns flooded with saffron-robed monks. The Mekong River and its many tributaries are integral to the Lao way of life. They provide water for laundry, cooking, washing, playing, fishing, travelling and irrigation. Through your service and travel options you will see Laos as a truly captivating country, where the gentle pace of life invites the visitor to slow down, relax and absorb the beauty of their surroundings.

## climate

The dry or cool season begins at the end of October and lasts until the end of February. It is necessary to take along a warm jumper or fleece during the cool season, as nights can be very cold, especially in mountainous areas such as Luang Prabang. The hot season lasts from March to June and light cotton clothing and hats are recommended. The rainy season starts in June and ends in October. In the Mekong river valley temperatures rise to 38 degrees Celsius in March and April, and fall to as low as 15 degrees Celsius in December and January. On average you can expect daytime temperatures of between 25 and 32 degrees Celsius, with cooler night temperatures.

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## trip grading

Our Community Project Travel adventures can be undertaken by anyone with a reasonable level of health and fitness. For the community project part of your trip you will not require a certain level of strength or physical ability, just an enthusiastic and positive attitude. A project manager will direct and distribute the workloads amongst participants on a daily basis. There is no pressure to exert yourself physically beyond your limits during the project but you should be prepared to give 4 -6 hours of physical labour each day. A certain level of fitness will be required where there is trekking involved.

## a typical day

While the people of the Seuang River valley live close to one of our world's fastest growing tourism destinations, they receive virtually no benefits. Upward of 80% of villagers live in poverty of which 40% in extreme poverty. The majority of the population does not have access to adequate housing and sanitation. Most do not have access to basic health care. Our time at this project has the aim of working with villagers to construct eco-tourism infrastructure (community lodge, hiking trails, reforestation, wildlife protection, etc.) that provides alternative sustainable livelihoods to slash and burn agriculture, hunting and illegal deforestation. This project is owned by, and directly benefits villagers.

When the group arrives at the Seuang River Project you will be given an orientation of the site as well as an introduction to the principals of Sustainable Tourism for the Elimination of Poverty. We will meet our hosts and settle into our simple, comfortable and clean village home stays. Food during our time at the project will be prepared by the villagers and typically include fresh river fish and locally grown organic vegetables. An assistant cook and supplies from town will also be on hand to ensure that everyone is well fed and happy.

A Community Project facilitator will be on hand to provide logistical support during the project. In advance of your arrival, all materials for the project will have been purchased and carried in to site. Normally, the group will be divided into sub groups to work on different components of the project. There will be a good deal of flexibility in the hours that you work each day but it is anticipated that you will be involved in labour work for up to 6 hours a day. The people from the nearby villages will of course be very receptive to your visit. You can expect them to interact with you daily.

## what you carry

In your daypack you will need to carry extra warm clothing (depending on the altitude, location and weather), a rainjacket, water bottle, film and camera gear, valuables and personal items such as sunscreen, lip-eze etc.

## equipment required

Although all the equipment required for the community project will be provided, we do suggest that you bring tough work gloves and a lightweight set of overalls or old clothes to use during the project workdays.

## what's not included

- international air tickets
  
- Laos Visa fee
- airport departure taxes and fees
- meals not listed in the itinerary
- tips and gratuities for guides, drivers, etc
- items not listed in the itinerary