



WORLD DISCOVERY
— HISTORY CULTURE WILDLIFE —

Laos and Cambodia



Pak Ou Caves, near Luang Prabang.

DAY 1 - Depart from UK.

DAY 2 - Arrive Luang Prabang.

On arrival in Luang Prabang you will be met outside customs by a representative of World Discovery and taken by private car direct to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure.

DAY 3 - Luang Prabang.

Surrounded by thickly forested mountains and situated at the confluence of the Khan and Mekong rivers, Luang Prabang has a tranquil, old-world charm rarely found in Asia today. This fascinating town was the capital of the Lane Xang (million elephants) kingdom until the mid 16th century. In French colonial times it served as the provincial headquarters of the north, and the heritage is clear to see in the French architecture and careful street planning that blends delightfully with the 30 golden Buddhist temples to create a town rich in atmosphere and history. After breakfast your guide will collect you and take you on a tour of this beautiful town, awarded World Heritage status by UNESCO. Highlights will include **Wat Phu Sii**, reached via 350 steps for a panoramic view over Luang Prabang, **Wat Mai** built in 1796, and the beautiful **Wat Xieng Thong** or 'Golden City Monastery', where the gilt panel on the exterior of the chapel depicts semi-erotic episodes from the Ramayana. Continue to the National Museum, once a king's palace, which has a lovely collection of personal effects of the royal family. The afternoon is free. Luang Prabang is a wonderful place for walking, so you can spend the rest of the day exploring its fascinating street and temples. You can have dinner at your hotel or at any number of clean and well-run restaurants offering delicious food. Lao beer is an excellent pilsner, and many types of French wine are also available at reasonable prices.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 4 - Luang Prabang. Pak Ou Caves.

After breakfast begin a riverboat trip with your guide on the mighty Mekong River to visit the sacred Pak Ou Buddha Caves. These caves have been home to thousands of Buddha images that were placed here by local people since the 16th century, when King Setthathirat discovered the caves and declared them a holy spot. Today many still pay respect to this ancient tradition. Walk through the caves before returning to your boat and to Luang Prabang, enjoying lunch en route. Then visit the village of **Ban Phanom**, where weaving of Lao textiles takes place on traditional wooden looms. The rest of the day is free in Luang Prabang.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.

DAY 5 - Kuang Sii Waterfall. Fly to Vientiane.

There is the option of an early rise (at about 6am) to watch or even participate in the traditional Lao rite of almsgiving to the monks. More than 300 monks file through the town 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. This morning you will travel by car to the Kuang Sii Waterfall, where the waters cascade over many calcified tiers and down hundreds of feet into a series of cool, turquoise pools. The water here has a clear blue-green tint due to the high mineral content. You can climb the stairs and look down from various viewpoints on the way to the top. Enjoy a local lunch before returning to your hotel in the afternoon to check out and drive to the airport for the short flight to Vientiane, capital city of Laos. You will be met and taken to your hotel in Vientiane. Vientiane is a low-rise city located on a bend of the Mekong River and is markedly more quaint and easygoing than South East Asia's other busy capitals. Your hotel is located right in the centre, within walking distance of shops and restaurants.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.

DAY 6 - Vientiane.

First stop this morning is the **Wat Sisaket** with its thousands of miniature Buddha statues. Other sites you will see include the huge golden **That Luang** monument and the adjacent Victory Monument modelled on Paris's Arc de Triomphe. Also visit **Wat Simuang** and **Wat Prakeo**, which was the original home of the Emerald Buddha that today resides in the Royal Palace of Bangkok. Enjoy lunch in a local restaurant before returning to your hotel. The afternoon is at leisure.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.

DAY 7 - Fly to Siem Reap.

Morning at leisure. In the afternoon fly to Siem Reap in Cambodia. Upon arrival, clear customs and immigration and then meet your English-speaking driver, who will take you to your hotel.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 8 - Angkor Sightseeing.

During the next three days you will enjoy the most comprehensive exploration of this exceptional area, visiting all the major temple groups. Today you will be shown some of the earliest temples in the Rolous area, starting with **Preah Ko** (879 AD), **Bakong** (881 AD) devoted to Shiva, and **Lolei** (893 AD) built on an island in a reservoir; there are beautiful sandstone carvings in the temple's niches. The afternoon is devoted to the best known of all the temples, which has become a symbol of Cambodia - **Angkor Wat**. Built in the first half of the 12th century, this enormous temple maintains some of the most breathtaking murals in the entire complex. The Upper reaches of the complex represent the Hindu idea of heaven.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 9 - Angkor Sightseeing (continued).

This morning visit the monumental magnificence of **Angkor Thom** - last capital of the Khmers, with its **Elephant Terrace**, the **Terrace of the Leper King** and the stunning **Bayon**. This 12th century masterpiece lies at the very centre of Angkor Thom and is an archaeological wonder of symmetry and grandeur. The exterior gallery walls have extensive bas-reliefs but the highlight is the "faces", more than 200 of them, silent but with the famous half-smile playing on their lips. In the afternoon, visit **Ta Prohm**, the temple that has been left largely in its natural state since its re-discovery by French explorers. Surrounded by jungle, its labyrinth of stone hallways is overgrown with the roots and limbs of massive banyan trees, which envelop the stone like tentacles.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 10 - Angkor Sightseeing (continued). Depart for home.

This morning visit **Preah Khan** "The Sacred Sword", an extensive monastic complex covering over 56 hectares built by the Khmer King Jayavarman VII as a monastery and teaching complex. Preah Khan is the site of the World Monuments Fund 'prime' Asian project a painstaking renovation whilst maintaining its mysterious allure and original structure. The rest of the day is free until the evening flight to Bangkok to connect with your homeward flight.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 11 - Arrive UK.

Your homeward flight leaves in the early hours, arriving in London the same morning.