



11 Days

# Vietnam & Laos

## Monks and Meditation

Join us on this diverse adventure into the wonderful world of South East Asia as we explore the extraordinary beauty, tradition and adventure that this region conjures up so effortlessly. Be prepared for a packed itinerary as we are totally immersed into Buddhism in northern Vietnam and Laos. Living alongside monks in remote monasteries, we will participate in tea ceremonies, morning meditation and religious discussions. We will soak up the culture of South East Asia and watch cultural shows, sail the Mekong Delta, and swim in spectacular turquoise waterfalls. Get ready to experience the vibrant colours and wonderful welcome of Vietnam and Laos.



# Recommended tour itinerary

Day  
1-2

## Arrive Hanoi

Departing London we will fly overnight and arrive in Vietnam the following day. On arrival in Hanoi our guide and driver will welcome us at the airport and take us to our hotel. This afternoon we can relax to get over the jet lag and long journey. Tonight we will enjoy our first Vietnamese dinner at a local restaurant before taking in a cultural water puppet show. Water puppetry is a tradition that dates back as far as the 11th century.

Day  
3

## Hanoi Tea Ceremony

This morning we will enjoy a fresh morning tea ceremony in the city center. An English speaking tea specialist will teach us more about tea and its tradition in Vietnam. After lunch at a local restaurant, we will take a city walking tour of Hanoi and learn about the Mother Goddess of Vietnam. This afternoon we transfer to a Zen Monastery in Truc Lam. We will have a briefing on arrival on the etiquette of visiting monasteries. Tonight we will enjoy a communal vegetarian dinner and overnight at the monastery!

Day  
4

## Zen Monastery

Our Zen Master will meet us early (4am!) to introduce us to walking and sitting meditation before we practice ourselves. We then take breakfast, join in with morning prayer and learn about the benefits of meditation for the body and mind. During our time at the monastery we will eat alongside the monks in a communal dining hall. After lunch we will clear the table as a mark of respect to our hosts. This afternoon we will spend an hour discussing Buddhism in Vietnam with our Zen Master. After another communal meal we will join in with the evening prayers before overnighting again at the monastery.

Day  
5

## Hanoi's Temples

Another early start this morning for walking and sitting meditation before breakfast at the monastery. Our Zen Master will then talk to us about the Noble Eightfold Path, followed by an hour's discussion on Dharma. After lunch we will help with various tasks at the monastery to show our gratitude for our experiences over the last few days. This is likely to include planting trees surrounding the monastery and helping with cleaning the grounds and temples. Having said our goodbyes we will hike up through the forestry out of the monastery, meet our transport and travel back to Hanoi where we will enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

Day  
6

## Hanoi Cooking Class

We have a short language lesson this morning before setting off to the local market with a list of ingredients to buy including fresh herbs, spices, vegetables, fish and fruits. Next we will be taught how to prepare, marinate and cook several traditional Vietnamese dishes. Our host will also show us how to beautifully decorate the dishes with carrot flowers, lemon grass stems and banana leaves. We can then feast on a lunch of our own creation! This afternoon we will join a two hour tea ceremony at Thien Son Tra with a Tea Expert.





Day  
7

## Hanoi to Luang Prabang

Today we take a morning flight to Luang Prabang in Laos. On arrival we will check in to our hotel and quickly freshen up before setting off on an orientation tour of the city, the National Museum and Royal Palace. The collection of former sovereign artefacts and treasures here reflects the rich extravagance of the Lao throne from the early Kings to the last sovereign. We then climb up to the top of Mt Phousi to explore the sacred, gilded stupa, boasting a spectacular panoramic view of the city and Mekong River. Tonight we visit the famous night market, famous for its selection of handmade textiles from the hill tribes surrounding Luang Prabang.

Day  
8

## Luang Prabang Alms Ceremony

Today we rise early to experience the alms giving ceremony. Monks in saffron robes walk from Luang Prabang's temples in a long, silent procession searching for offerings left to them by the faithful. We return to our hotel for breakfast and then meet with a monk at a nearby temple to discuss various Buddhist topics and Laos meditation. This afternoon we take a short guided tour of the city's oldest temple, Wat Sene, and the magnificent Wat Xiengthong with its roofs sweeping low to the ground, typical of classical Laotian architecture. We also visit the impressive stupa of Wat Visoun and the shrine of Wat Aham and Wat Mai. This afternoon we return to the temple to participate in afternoon chants, meditation and a Dhamma Talk lead by the temple monks.

Day  
9

## Pak Ou Caves & Kuang Si Waterfall

This morning we set out to explore the mystery of the Pak Ou Caves, home to thousands of sacred Buddha statues. To reach the caves we travel by boat along the great Mekong River, passing rice paddy fields and impressive limestone cliffs. This afternoon we visit local Hmong, Laoloum and Khmu villages. Here we will learn more about rural lifestyle in Laos and the different traditions, cultures and religions of these ethnic groups.

Kuang Si Waterfall is up next and an absolute highlight of our time in Laos. This is a stunning three levelled waterfall where we can explore the forest paths and bathe in the turquoise pools. We will also visit a nearby bear sanctuary run by the Free the Bears Fund who rescue hundreds of bears from exploitation and other endangered species. The sanctuary is home to dozens of bears, leopard cats, tortoises, civets, macaques and even red pandas. We return to Luang Prabang for a final group meal.

Day  
10-11

## Depart Laos

This morning we participate in our final morning temple meditation session. We then catch our return flight home to the UK.

# Further information

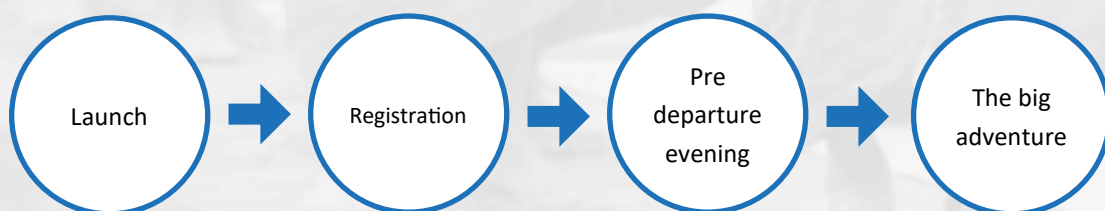
## Look what's included!

- International flights
- All accommodation
- All food
- All transportation and activities
- Bi-lingual, first-aid qualified local tour leader
- Parent and student trip launch evening
- Pre-departure preparation evening
- 1-day offsite safety INSET day for staff
- ATOL financial protection
- Medical Emergency / Repatriation Travel Insurance
- Group first aid kit and prescription meds pack
- BS8848 safety management and risk assessments
- Detailed pre-departure information and kit lists
- Comprehensive teacher travel packs
- Permanent operations team in your destination
- 24-hour UK operational support whilst overseas
- Carbon offsetting of all flights
- Free t-shirt for every participant and teacher

## What's excluded?

- Transport to airport in UK
- Drinks (advice will be given on purification of water)
- Visas or tourist cards if required
- Any required inoculations
- Personal spending money
- Tips for guides, drivers and porters
- Airport departure taxes paid locally
- Cancellation and personal effects insurance

## Your educational journey timeline



## Physical journey rating:



Some low level physical activities included in your trip, including walking on uneven terrain, maybe a morning/afternoon trek of two to four hours. That said, no physical preparation is required to make the most of the tour. High humidity and temperatures can occur at certain times of the year.

## Culture shock rating:



Students should expect some culture shock. You'll be exposed to signs of poverty. The food will be quite different to home and English, whilst still spoken, will be less prevalent. Respecting the local culture will make it easier to fit in and get the most out of your trip. We're likely to visit remoter locations on this tour where access to western style services may be sporadic. Often on trips of this grading there are parts of the itinerary which are more remote, interspersed with sections which are more 'comfortable'.



# A journey of 1,000 miles...

Starts with a single step... Contact us now to start your educational journey.

## 1 Get your tailor-made proposal and further information

If this itinerary doesn't quite scratch your educational travel itch then let us tailor-make one for you. Our wealth of experience and expert in-country contacts means we can design an itinerary just for you. Contact us for more information and a detailed quote.

## 2 Ask for risk assessments and marketing materials

We can provide initial risk assessments and destination threat assessments to help you with your expedition approval process. Ask for posters and your pre-booking information pack too.

## 3 Arrange a trip launch evening at your school

This is a chance for students and parents to hear more about the planned adventure with a comprehensive information evening and an opportunity for questions.



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