

**Capital:** Vientiane

**Population:** 6.6 million

**Currency:** Kip (LAK)

**Language:** Lao

**Time Zone:** EST plus 11 hours

**Electricity:** 230V/50H

## Fun Facts



- Laos, particularly Luang Prabang, is considered the “culinary jewel” of southern Asia. Cooks traditionally don't waste any of their resources, but they make the absolute most of local fare.
- According to legend, the Buddha smiled when he rested in what is now Luang Prabang for a day during his travels, prophesying that it would one day be the site of a rich and powerful capital city.
- Bikes and motorbikes are some of the most common vehicles in Luang Prabang. In fact, it is not uncommon to see a parent with two or three kids all piled on a motorbike – it's the family station wagon.
- Laos' most famous product is Beerlao. It is regarded as one of the best beers in Asia grown from jasmine rice and hops imported from Germany.

Laos is a jewel of Asia – sacred and spiritual. It has a long history of turmoil, having suffered hundreds of years of attack, war, dependence on other nations, and oppression from foreign governments. But with this arduous history behind them, Laos has blossomed into one of the most beautiful and culturally fulfilling countries in Asia. Much of Laos is farming countryside and thickly forested mountains, but the prominent Mekong River flows directly through its heart.

The tradition of the Laos people, the architecture, and the countless shrines and statues symbolizing their beliefs has earned the entire city of Luang Prabang the honor of being deemed a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A classic Asian style mixes with the influence of the French in parts of the city and you can still see traces of it in some of the cuisine and activities. It's not uncommon to see crêpes or flan in shops, and a courtyard might have a game or two of boules.

## VISAS, PASSPORTS, AND OTHER ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

You are responsible for obtaining and paying for all entry documents (visas, etc.) and for meeting all health requirements (inoculations, etc.) as required by the laws, regulations, or orders of the countries you will visit. We cannot accept liability if you are refused entry onto any transport or into any country for failure to carry correct documentation.

A visa for your visit to Laos is **necessary** for US citizens. If you hold a passport from another country, check with your local consulate about requirements for travel to Laos.

Laos visas can be obtained through an embassy or visa service prior to departing the US. Alternatively, a visa can be obtained upon arrival at the airport in Luang Prabang. The embassy or visa service will be able to advise the latest requirements for obtaining a visa.

In general, going through a visa service is more expensive but it offers convenience and peace of mind. If you choose to go this route, we recommend contacting Generations Visa Services (GenVisa), our preferred

partner for visa and passport services, at least 90 days prior to departure. GenVisa has a special website and toll-free number. Call 800.845.8968, email [info@genvisa.com](mailto:info@genvisa.com), or visit their below websites for additional information. Our travelers receive discounted prices and other special services:

- For Monograms, visit: [genvisa.com/monograms](http://genvisa.com/monograms)
- For Globus, visit: [genvisa.com/globus](http://genvisa.com/globus)
- For Avalon, visit: [genvisa.com/avalon](http://genvisa.com/avalon)
- For Cosmos, visit [genvisa.com/cosmos](http://genvisa.com/cosmos)

All passengers traveling internationally are required to have a passport. Most countries require that the passport be valid for at least six (6) months beyond the conclusion of your trip, so please check the expiration date carefully. It is also recommended you have a minimum of three blank pages in your passport when traveling, as many countries require blank pages. Please carry proper identification (your passport) on you and do not leave it in your suitcase or hotel room. Most countries have laws that require you to carry your passport with you at all times.



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## COUNTRY CODES

The country code for Laos is 856. When calling to Laos from overseas, dial your international access code (011 from the US/Canada), followed by the country code, area code, and phone number. Phone numbers in Laos are 8 digits in length. Dialing from the US/Canada: 011 856 ## #### ##.



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## CURRENCY

In Laos the local currency is the Lao Kip

- Banknotes: 500, 1000, 2000, 5000, 10,000 & 50,000 Kip

As a general guideline, bring a variety of payment means, particularly in the event that you have difficulties with your preferred method of payment.

### Cash

US dollars are widely accepted throughout Laos. Alternatively, if you prefer, you can also exchange US dollars into the local currency, the Lao Kip. When paying with US dollars it is important to note that change may be given in the local currency.

It is advisable to bring newer US notes that are in good condition as some merchants will not accept those that are tattered and/or old.

ATMs are the most convenient way to obtain money in Laos. Money exchange services are also available at the airport on arrival and at some hotels.

For the most current exchange rates, please go to our website at [Globusjourneys.com/Currency](http://Globusjourneys.com/Currency).

### Credit Cards

Major credit cards are widely accepted (mostly Visa & MasterCard) but some shops and restaurants require a minimum purchase amount when using them (so they are not appropriate for incidentals such as ice creams, snacks, etc.). You might consider bringing more than one card, as some outlets may not accept all types. Due to increasing credit card fraud worldwide, be prepared to show identification (i.e. your passport or driver's license) when making a transaction with your credit card. If you use a credit card for your purchase, most transactions will be debited in the local currency, and your bank will establish the rate of exchange on the debit.

### Traveler's checks

Although a secure means of carrying money, traveler's checks unfortunately are becoming very hard to use. Due to this we recommend you plan on using cash and credit cards only.

**Bank Hours:**

Mon. - Fri. 8:30am - 11:30am

1:30pm - 3:30pm

Sat. - Sun. Closed



## BUDGETING AND SHOPPING

The following budget guidelines are just approximate values or starting values for meals and are per person. Actual prices will vary widely by restaurant and city within a country but below are some averages as provided by our experienced personnel.

- The approximate cost of a soft drink/mineral water/coffee is US \$2.
- An average lunch consisting of a salad or sandwich and a soda or water starts at approximately US \$10.
- Dinner at a mid-range restaurant with dessert and a non-alcoholic beverage starts at approximately US \$20.

### Shopping

Prices are as marked in department stores, though in markets it is customary to barter. Start negotiating with an offer at one-third or half the vendor's initial price.

Please be warned that if you buy items on tour to be shipped to your home, customs import charges are hardly ever included in the price. Sales tax or G ST (Goods & Services Tax) is normally already included on price tags; G ST refunds, if applicable, are processed at the departing airport from the relevant country.



## TIPPING

We recommend leaving 10% of the restaurant bill as tip. A service charge may already be added to the bill, but an additional tip left in cash is recommended to ensure the tip gets to the wait staff.

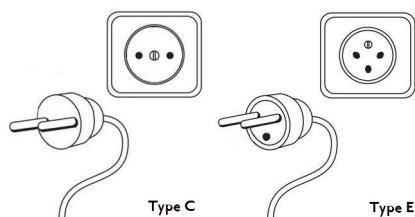
- For a taxi, pre-negotiate the price before getting in and then add \$1 to the fare as tip.
- Tip hotel staff \$1 for room and bar service (not including portorage which is included).



## ELECTRICITY AND ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

Voltage for outlets is 230V. North American voltage is generally 110V. Some, but not all, hotels feature multi-region outlets that accept different types of plugs. Due to this, for dual voltage electronics, we still recommend you bring an adapter. If you have single voltage electronics (110V) a converter is also required. Bathroom outlets are usually for razors only.

The outlets look like:





## TEMPERATURES

Laos' summers are hot and experience the most rainfall. Winters are generally mild, dry, and the best time to travel to Laos. Rain gear is recommended year-round.

To help you plan, below are average low and high temperatures.

### Luang Prabang

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
56/82°F		63/93°F		73/95°F		74/90°F		73/91°F		64/85°F	
	58/89°F		69/96°F		74/93°F		74/90°F		69/89°F		59/81°F

To convert to Celsius, subtract 30, then divide by 2. While not exact, this simple formula will give a close estimation.



## FOOD SPECIALTIES

Sticky rice, blue ginger, lemongrass, eggplant, and fish sauce are important ingredients in Lao cuisine. Local favorite dishes include spicy, marinated meat or fish sometimes prepared "ceviche style" with herbs and greens (Larb), papaya salad (tam mak hoong), and steamed fish and rice wrapped in banana leaves.

### Drinking Water

Tap water is generally not safe to drink throughout Asia. For sightseeing and excursions, bottled water may be included; otherwise we recommend you bring bottled water with you from your hotel. Bottled water is also common in restaurants.



## CUSTOMS AND CULTURE

- Try not to point with your feet.
- In the company of monks or elders, never cross your legs.
- Do not touch people on the head or upper body.
- When beckoning someone to come over do not flap your hand in the standard Western 'come here' motion; instead turn the hand round so that your palm flaps down towards yourself.
- Do not shake hands with monks or nuns as people in general rarely shake hands; rather smile and nod away.
- Ladies should never sit down next to a monk.
- Shorts and skirts should be longish (below the knee) for both sexes and it is okay to expose arms when visiting temples. Shoes generally need to be removed.
- Smoking is common in Asia so locals tend to be less sensitive to issues regarding smoking around others and often ignore "non-smoking" signs.



## A FEW WORDS OF THE LOCAL LANGUAGE

Lao:

**Good morning/day:** Sa-Bai-Dee, **Good evening:** Sa-Bai-Dee, **Hi:** Sa-Bai-Dee, **Please:** Ka-Lu-Na, **Thank you:** Kob-Jai, **You're welcome:** Bo-Pen-Yang, **Yes:** Jao, **No:** Bo, **Do you speak English?** Jao paak phasa angkit dai bor?, **I don't understand:** Bo-Khao-Jai, **How much?** Thao-Dai?, **1:** Neung, **2:** Song, **3:** Sam, **4:** Si, **5:** Ha, **6:** Hok, **7:** Jed, **8:** Pad, **9:** Kao, **10:** Sib, **Where is...?** Yu-Sai?, **Telephone:** Tho-La-Sap, **Bathroom:** Hong- Nam, **Tea:** Nam- Sha, **Coffee:** Ga fe, **Bottled water:** Nam-deum (carbonated=So-da, non-carbonated=Nam- La la), **Cheers!** Yok, **Have a nice day!** Shok dee der!

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## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE COUNTRY INFORMATION

Additional country-specific information for US citizens can be found on the US Government's website [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). Here, you can find the most up-to-date information about destination descriptions, passports/visas, safety and security, transportation, travel local laws, alerts/warnings, vaccinations, and more. For citizens of other nations, we recommend you consult your local consulate for travel information, regulations, and requirements.

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