

# LAOS & CAMBODIA

8 – 23 FEBRUARY 2025



FROM  
**£5,895**  
PER PERSON

Tour Leader: Louisa Thompson

  
**The Ultimate**  
TRAVEL COMPANY



Our captivating tour journeys through Laos and Cambodia, encompassing some of the most fascinating parts of each country and exploring their historic and cultural heritage. Beginning in Chiang Rai in northern Thailand with its ancient temples, we set sail across the Thai / Lao border on a two-day cruise in a traditional river boat along an enchanting stretch of the Mekong River. We pass through the breath-taking scenery of Laos, a land of mountains, rapids, gorges, jungle, un-spoiled riverside villages and sacred caves filled with Buddhas. We arrive at Luang Prabang the former capital and the jewel of Laos with its dazzling wood-carved monasteries and French colonial architecture. We spend a couple of days exploring this enchanting sleepy city and discovering its ancient Buddhist traditions.

We then fly to Cambodia arriving in Siem Reap for a highlight of our tour and Asia's most magnificent archaeological remains – the Khmer Temples of Angkor – a great complex of Hindu and Buddhist temples built between the 7th and 11th centuries. We then continue to Phnom Penh, once considered the Pearl of South East Asia and one of the most beautiful cities in the Orient. Despite its recent turbulent history, it still retains an eccentric colonial charm with Khmer Royal buildings sitting alongside French villas. Our final stop is Kep which, from the early 20th century through to the 1960s, was Cambodia's premier beach town, its ritzy villas now crumbling in disrepair. Here we relax, visit the crab market and a pepper farm and take a boat trip from the nearby charming colonial riverside town of Kampot.



Wat Rongkhun, Chiang Rai



Wat Phra Kaew



Pak Ou Buddha Caves

## 16-DAY ITINERARY, DEPARTING 8 FEBRUARY 2025

### 8 February London / Bangkok

Suggested flights (not included in the cost of the tour) Thai Airways TG 911 departing London Heathrow at 11.50 hrs.

### 9 February Bangkok / Chiang Rai

Arrive in Bangkok at 06.15 hrs and connect to TG 130 departing Bangkok at 08.10 hrs arriving Chiang Rai at 09.40 hrs. On arrival transfer to the five-star Hotel Riverie by Katathani where one night is spent

Lunch under own arrangements. Afternoon orientation tour of Chiang Rai visiting Wat Rongkhun, known as the 'White Temple'. This quirky masterpiece is the work of local artist, Chalermchai Kositpipat. Its design is richly symbolic of Buddhist teachings and contains many beautiful statues. Also visit Wat Phra Kaew, the original home of the translucent green Buddha which graces the Emerald Buddha Temple in Bangkok. Welcome dinner at the hotel.

### 10 February Chiang Rai / Pakbeng

After an early breakfast at the hotel, transfer to Houei Say Pier, passing through the immigration formalities at the Thai/Lao border. Board the Le Grand Cruise boat for a two-day cruise downstream on the beautiful Upper Mekong River to Luang Prabang, today travelling as far as Pakbeng. The Le Grand Cruise boat is a 42.5-metre purpose-built

barge, and a replica of a traditional wooden Mekong river boat. Stop to observe rural life along the river at some Hmong, Yao and Khmu ethnic minority villages.

Buffet-style lunch on board. Arrive at Pakbeng before sunset and overnight at the Le Grand Pakbeng hotel. Accommodation is in separate nicely appointed villas with private terraces which overlook the surrounding mountainside and the hotel has an infinity swimming pool with splendid views of the Mekong River. Dinner at the hotel.

### 11 February Pakbeng / Luang Prabang

Visit the Mekong Elephant Park at Pakbeng, a sanctuary for rescued elephants. Continue cruising down the Mekong with a stop at a Hmong village, with a population made up of three different ethnicities – Lao Loum, Tai Lue and Shan – to observe the process of making traditional rice alcohol.

Buffet lunch on board. Stop at the mouth of the Nam Ou River for a visit to the extraordinary Pak Ou Buddha Caves, one of the most respected holy sites in Laos, dating back thousands of years. The two caves, cut into a cliff, are a Buddhist sanctuary and contain over 4,000 Buddha icons. Positioned around 50 feet above the river, the caves provide views of the spectacular

limestone cliff faces. Arrive in Luang Prabang at Le Calao pier before sunset. Transfer to the boutique Satri House hotel, former residence of Prince Soupha-Nouvong, where three nights are spent. Located close to the heart of the city, the hotel's facilities include a restaurant, garden bar, library, outdoor swimming pools and spa. Dinner at the hotel. Option to visit the buzzing H'mong Night Market.

### 12 February Luang Prabang

Full-day tour of the ancient royal city of Luang Prabang, Laos' cultural capital, surrounded by mountains at the junction of the Mekong and its tributary, the Khan River. Visit a selection of the city's many Buddhist temples, considered amongst the most beautiful in Laos, including Wat Mai Temple, once the residence of the head of Laotian Buddhism; Wat Xieng Thong, said to be the most beautiful temple in town; and Wat Visoun, the oldest temple in the city dating back to the 16th century.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Visit the National Museum, the former Royal Palace, housing a collection of valuables including the famous Prabang Buddha statues and gifts from foreign dignitaries. Climb the 328 steps up Mount Phousi, a 100m-high hill in the centre of the old town, at sunset for stunning views of the surrounding temples and hills. Dinner under own arrangements.



Angkor Wat



Kuangsi Waterfalls



Ta Prohm

### 13 February Luang Prabang

This morning wake before dawn to witness and participate in offering alms to hundreds of saffron-robed monks in the Tak Bath ceremony (procession of monks). Devoted residents of Luang Prabang kneel on the sidewalk, bearing food in their hands, which they offer to the monks as they walk by in a procession. Return to the hotel for breakfast. Drive to Kuangsi Waterfalls, which, although not very high, is spectacular and really beautiful with its green surroundings. Stop en-route to visit a small village of the H'mong hill-tribe, probably the best-known minority group in Laos. At the waterfalls there will be time for relaxing, a swim in the cool water, or a walk along the forest trails.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner under own arrangements.

### 14 February Luang Prabang / Siem Reap

Morning at leisure. Lunch under own arrangements.

Transfer to Luang Prabang Airport for a Vietnam Airlines flight to Siem Reap, Cambodia. Transfer to the Shinta Mani Angkor where three nights are spent. The Shinta Mani is an upscale boutique hotel created by acclaimed architect Bill Bensley with contemporary designed rooms and public spaces in an Angkorian-inspired design in a tranquil and leafy setting and a swimming pool and spa. Dinner at the hotel.

### 15 February Siem Reap

Early morning walking tour of the beautiful and haunting Ta Prohm, built by King Jayavarman VII in 1186, as a shrine for his Queen Mother. The temple complex is overgrown with gigantic fig trees and is considered the best example of how Angkor may have looked when it was discovered. Continue to Sala Kdei, a traditional Cambodian house, for refreshments. Walk to Banteay Kdei, which was used as a Buddhist monastic complex until the mid-20th century. Continue to the small, semi-ruined Ta Nei temple, displaying classic Jayavarman VII artistry, and the vast cloistered Preah Khan

Return to the hotel for lunch under own arrangements. Visit the Angkor National Museum which houses many artefacts from the Khmer civilization. See a performance at the Phare Circus. Dinner at the hotel.

### 16 February Siem Reap & Angkor Wat

At sunrise visit Angkor Wat, the largest religious monument in the world whose famous silhouette never fails to impress. The god-king Suryavarman II ordered its construction in the 12th century and dedicated the temple to the Hindu deity with which he identified – Vishnu. Return to the hotel for breakfast. Remainder of the morning at leisure.

Lunch under own arrangements. Visit the fortified royal city and former Khmer capital of Angkor

Thom which has five monumental decorated gates, with the Bayon located in the middle. Other important sights within the complex are the pyramidal Baphuon, the Terrace of the Leper Kings and the Terrace of Elephants. Supported by sculpted stone elephants, the terrace served as a giant viewing platform for royal ceremonies. Private drinks reception at the home-atelier of the Cambodian artist and designer Lim Muy Theam. Dinner at a local restaurant.

### 17 February Siem Reap / Phnom Penh

Breakfast at the hotel. This morning visit nearby Tonle Sap Lake with its floating villages.

Lunch under own arrangements. Transfer to Siem Reap Airport for a Cambodia Angkor Air flight to Phnom Penh. Transfer to the Raffles Hotel Le Royal where one night is spent. Opened in 1929, this historic hotel, which lies within easy reach of all the city's attractions, offers comfortable accommodation, combining modern facilities with old-world charm. Dinner at the hotel.

### 18 February Phnom Penh

Tour of Phnom Penh including the National Museum, with its stone, wood and bronze sculptures; the Royal Palace which includes the Chan Chaya pavilion, the 1930s Khemarin Palace, the Officers' Club and Phochani (Throne) Hall with its glazed roof tiles; the adjacent



Silver Pagoda – a royal chapel built in 1962 with 5,000 silver floor tiles in the main temple statuary and royal artefacts; and Wat Phnom, a temple set on a hill, which has views over the city.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Option to visit the infamous Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide Crimes, a chilling memorial to the genocide that took place here under Pol Pot's regime. Alternatively, explore the colourful Russian Market. Dinner at a local restaurant.

### 19 February Phnom Penh / Kep

Depart Phnom Penh by road to Kep on the south coast passing through some beautiful rural areas. Arrive at the old French-era beach resort of Kep and check in at the Knai Bang Chatt resort where three nights are spent. Knai Bang Chatt consists of three villas, one of which was built in 1962 by a protégé of Vann Molyvann, the renowned Khmer pupil of Le Corbusier. Rooms have terraces with breath taking views out to sea and are surrounded by gardens. The hotel has a large pool, three dining venues serving contemporary cuisine and a spa offering massage treatments.

Lunch at hotel. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner under own arrangements.

### 20 February Kep & Kampot

Morning at leisure.

Head to Kep crab market and buy seafood for lunch at local restaurant. Drive through the countryside to

Phnom Chhnork, a large cave that contains a 7th century brick temple in remarkable condition. This hidden temple is a very sacred place for local Khmers. Continue to the charming and characterful riverside town of Kampot and walk around its French colonial streets. Board a private boat for a sunset cruise on the Kompong River past idyllic villages and see the sun drop behind the mountain of Bokor. Dinner in one of the riverside restaurants in Kampot.

### 21 February Kep

Morning visit to La Plantation Pepper Farm to learn about this famous Kampot spice. Tour the farm and take part in a pepper tasting session to sample the different types of pepper.

Pepper-themed Cambodian lunch at the pepper farm. Afternoon at leisure. BBQ Buffet dinner at the pool side.

### 22 February Kep / Phnom Penh / Bangkok

Morning at leisure.

Lunch under own arrangements. Late check-out out from the hotel and transfer to Phnom Penh airport. Suggested flights (not included) Thai Airways TG 585 departing Phnom Penh at 20.55 hrs arriving Bangkok at 22.00 hrs.

### 23 February Bangkok / London

Connect to Thai Airways flight TG910 departing Bangkok at 00.15 arriving London Heathrow at 06.20 hrs.

## TOUR PRICES PER PERSON

Tour Price	£5,895
Single Supplement	£1,865

*Please note we have not included the cost of the flights in the tour price. Please contact us for prices should you wish to book them through us.*

## PRICE INCLUDES

- Accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- Breakfast daily; 8 lunches; 10 dinners
- All entrance fees, visits and excursions as per the itinerary
- All transportation as detailed in the itinerary
- Gratuities in restaurants for included meals
- Gratuities to driver/s and guides
- Portage
- Local English-speaking guide/s
- The services of your tour leader throughout

## PRICE EXCLUDES

- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Meals 'under own arrangements'
- Items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls / laundry etc.)
- Visas
- Government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 01/03/24





# YOUR TOUR LEADER

## LOUISA THOMPSON



Louisa joined Ultimate Travel in 2016, where she joined the Escorted Tours team, organising cultural and wildlife trips worldwide. She now sells tailor made trips, focusing mainly in Australasia. Louisa's led and accompanied tours in Spain, Russia, eastern and southern India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Antarctica. She loves anything to do with the outdoors, and is always planning unique and off the beaten track trips to some whacky destinations. She really enjoys photography and cooking, and is always up for an adventure.



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