



Journeys That Capture The Soul Of The Country . . .

Gain a real insight into the country – places, history, people – whether for a few days or a few weeks.

Many of our clients come again and again – becoming immersed in the warm climate, vibrant colour, traditional cultures and ever-friendly welcome.

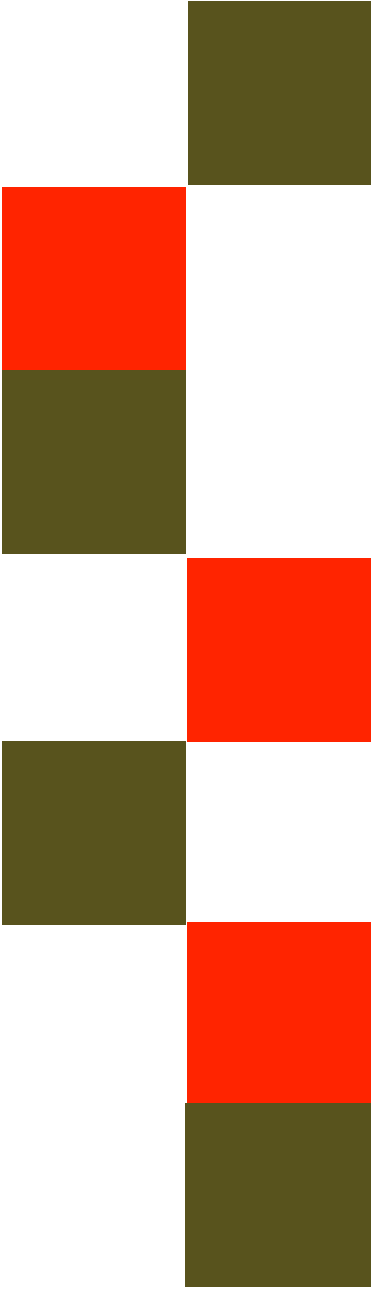
Created and managed as a social enterprise – using best business practices to realise humanitarian aims – at Carpe Diem Travel we strive to improve lives in the places we visit.

Seize the day
Find yourself
Give something back
Travel with us

Laos small group discovery

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A decorative graphic on the left side of the page consists of a vertical column of colored squares. From top to bottom, the colors are: olive green, red, olive green, red, olive green, red, and olive green. The squares are arranged in a staggered pattern, with the red squares offset to the right relative to the olive green squares.

A true voyage, this itinerary embraces the rich diversity of one of Asia's most peaceful and enigmatic countries. Our 17-day journey takes us from the waterfalls and islands of the Mekong to lush national parks, ancient historical mysteries, and the UNESCO heritage city of Luang Prabang.

Starting and ending in Bangkok, we spend some time seeing the city from the river before travelling by overnight train to the Laos border.

This journey takes a comfortable pace, punctuated by enough free time for visitors to explore for themselves or just relax a little. We believe that no-one can truly appreciate the beauty of anywhere if they have only ten minutes to see it, so we give you time at each place we visit to take photos, talk to local people or just absorb the atmosphere.

Accommodation is in clean, comfortable locally-owned guest houses or small hotels with fan or air-conditioning and private bathroom, each of which has been hand-picked by us.

Laos is dominated by the Mekong River, the "mother of South East Asia" and spectacular scenery, and to make the most of these we travel by boat and foot as much as possible.

This trip is suitable for moderately fit adults of any age and children over 10 years old. There are some short treks over uneven ground with ascents and descents, and you must be able to carry your own bags between your room and your transport, and to get yourself on and off boats.

There are also options to extend or combine this trip with any of our Cambodia itineraries.



Day 1: Arrival at BANGKOK airport and take a taxi to your hotel, situated in the centre of the city and with a fantastic view from the rooftop bar . The day is at leisure to enjoy the city or relax by the hotel's swimming pool, and your tour leader will be able to give you advice on places to see. There will be a group introduction early evening on the hotel's garden roof terrace.

Day 2: In the morning , there will be a guided boat trip on the Bangkok River. The rest of the day is free until early evening, when you transfer to the railway terminus for an overnight train to UBON RATCHATHANI. You will have sleeper carriages; food and drink can be purchased on board.

Day 3: On departing the train you head for the Laos border. After crossing, travel to DONG KHONG island, one of the "4000 islands" in the Mekong river – the final part of the journey to our locally-run guesthouse is by small local boat. On the way we will visit Champasak, home of Angkorian-era temples. Welcome your arrival in Laos with some of the delicious local fish!

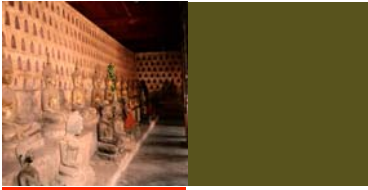
Day 4: After breakfast, travel again by boat to visit the biggest waterfalls in South East Asia – Khon Phapheng and Somphamit Falls – where you can have lunch. On the way back, make a few stops to look at the old French architecture and the old railway (still with a train abandoned in the jungle!), before returning to the guesthouse for a cool drink while watching the sunset.

Day 5: After breakfast, drive from Dong Khong Island to Dong Daeng. Local villagers will take you on a boat and for a short walk to the village, where you can enjoy a local lunch. Continue to BOLAVEN PLATEAU, stopping a few times on the way to see some of the local minority villages. Stay overnight in a local resort in the middle of the forest – an ideal place to relax, with opportunities for swimming in the waterfall.

Day 6: Today is a walking day in the mountains to appreciate the truly beautiful scenery. There will be a packed lunch (included).

Day 7: Drive to the town of SAVANNAKHET on the Mekong River, which is in an area inhabited by many ethnic minorities. The journey will take around 4 hours and there will be a stop for lunch in this lovely town. When you look over the river you will see 'modern' Thailand. Go on a short trek through the forest accompanied by guides from an Environmental NGO which has set up a project in the region, and learn about the plants and animals in the region.

Day 8: Drive to VIENTIANE, the capital city of Laos. On the way appreciate the magnificent views and open spaces – there are many opportunities to take photos. In the evening, you can visit the riverside for a local barbecue and a cool drink.



Day 9: A guided walking tour of the city – including Ho Phra art museum, That Stupa national monument, the National Museum and Wat Sisaket, the oldest temple in Vientiane.

Day 10: In the morning walk to the morning market, one of the oldest ones in Vientiane, and an NGO that helps street children, to learn more about their project. The afternoon is free.

Day 11: Early morning travel by minibus through the mountains and rivers to Vang Vieng. After you have checked in at your local resort – right next to the river – make a small boat trip to visit one of the stunning caves for which Vang Vieng is justifiably famous.

Day 12: Early morning, drive to Phonsavan, site of the PLAIN OF JARS. These huge jars (some weigh six tons each!), of unknown age and origin, are scattered over a number of sites. On the way you may also be able to visit a few minority villages which grow delicious fruit. Stay overnight in a small, locally-run hotel.

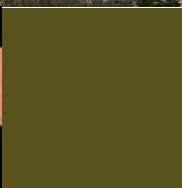
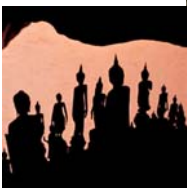
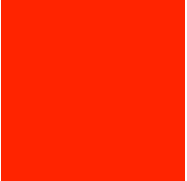
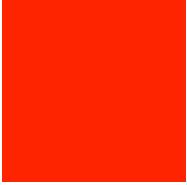
Day 13: Travel by minibus to LUANG PRABANG. This is a very scenic trip – driving through many mountains, and you can stop to see the tea plantations. Also you will probably see many different kind of ethnic groups walking besides the road. On arrival, it will be possible to go for a traditional Laos massage, before visiting the night market – an opportunity to buy some beautiful locally-made items at very reasonable prices.

Day 14: Luang Prabang is the best-preserved traditional city in Southeast Asia and a World Heritage Site. In the morning visit the Kwang Xi Waterfall, where you can swim surrounded by jungle and eat a packed lunch (included). In the afternoon, visit the Royal Palace Museum and Vat Xieng Thong – considered the most beautiful temple in Luang Prabang with its classical Lao architecture.

Day 15: Take a boat trip up the Mekong River to the famous caves of Pak Ou housing thousands of retired Buddha statues. We will have a packed lunch here (included) overlooking the river. On the way back, visit a village making paper using traditional methods and the home of your boat driver, a young student who lives with his family on the site of the Mekong in a village with only 14 houses,

Day 16: The morning is free until your afternoon flight to BANGKOK.

Day 17: Trip ends after breakfast.



Social Enterprise

Giving something back

Carpe Diem Travel is a social venture, established to empower local people and provide direct support to humanitarian projects on a profit-reinvestment basis.

We believe that truly responsible travel should benefit both the client and the destination in equal measures. The client gains an insight into other countries and cultures, learning a little bit about themselves in the process. The destination receives economic benefit and opportunities for self-development – but never at the sacrifice of their culture or integrity.

In order to achieve these aims we operate two policies alongside each other: the first to minimise what we take, the second to maximise what we give back.

Respect for local people, their culture and their surroundings is key to our philosophy. In undeveloped areas, we work closely with local communities and village elders to minimise the impact our trips have on the region. In addition to this, all our clients receive pre-trip guidelines on cultures, customs and environmental considerations relating to the destination they are visiting.

Most of our journeys include visits to local development, conservation or community-based projects. We aim to provide all our clients, even those who just come for a couple of days, with as much appreciation of the country as possible.

Self-administration of projects and funds we enable and sponsor ensures that **100%** of our support goes **directly** to the people who need it. Our country representatives, as well being there to ensure your journey runs smoothly, are responsible for monitoring the progress of projects and overseeing how funding is used.

As a social enterprise, most of our work is undertaken on the ground. Our sales and administrative functions are almost entirely internet based, utilising modern technology to minimise unnecessary overheads such as flashy storefronts and glossy brochures. In this way we maximise the benefit our destinations receive from your holiday.

Carpe Diem Travel is a UK registered limited company and complies fully with EC legislation to ensure your security and peace of mind.

