

Laos Cycle

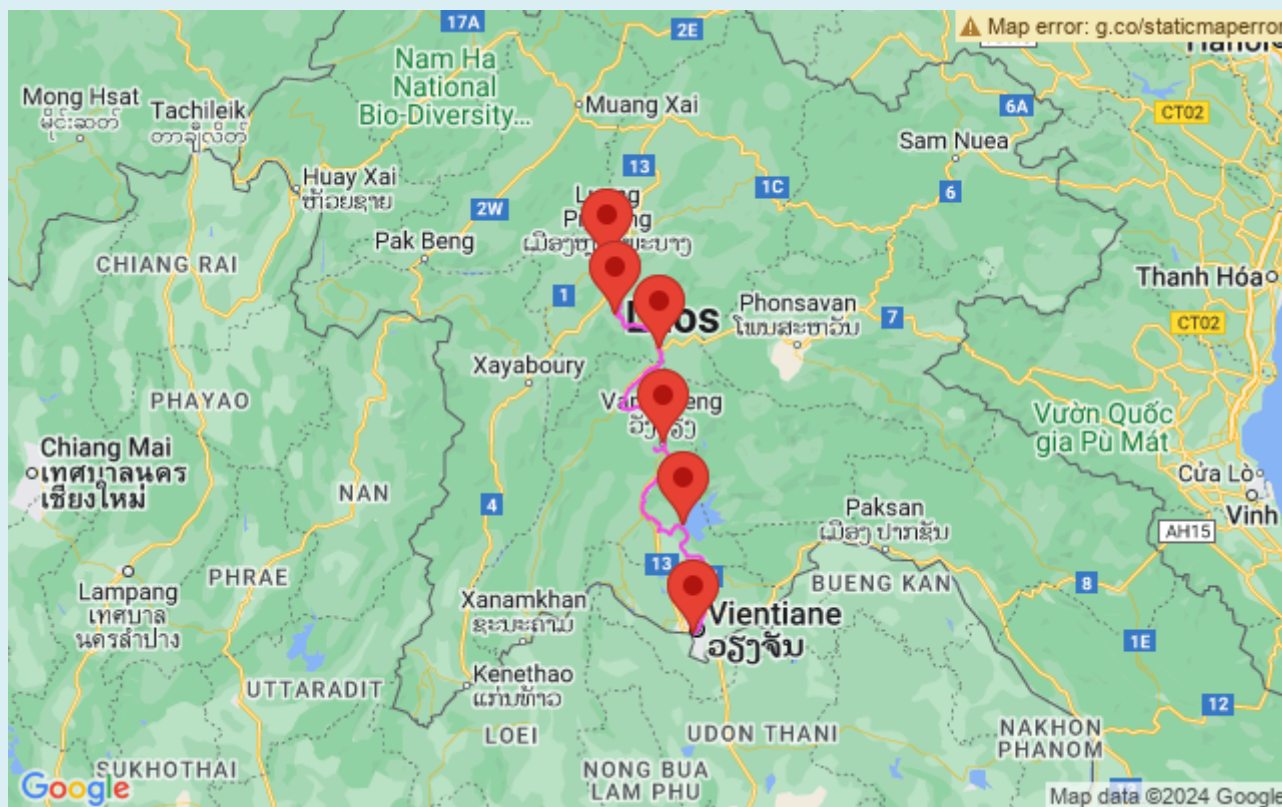


Duration: 11 days

Our exciting and challenging route takes us from the Mekong valley through spectacular mountain scenery to ancient Luang Prabang, witnessing the traditional way of life in the remote, friendly villages we pass. Challenging cycling and cultural discovery – this trip has it all!

Laos is a country of dense forests, rugged mountains and dazzling green rice paddies, with the Mekong River dominating the lowlands. The landscapes are dotted with ancient Buddhist temples, graceful French colonial houses and picturesque hill-tribe villages where the local people still wear traditional dress. Our adventure ends in Luang Prabang, one of the most impressive cities in South-East Asia, with its serene gilded temples and riverside scenes.

DETAILED ITINERARY



Day 1: Depart London

Day 2: Arrive Vientiane

On arrival we transfer to our hotel and have time to freshen up and prepare our bikes for the start of our exciting cycle challenge. Depending on our arrival time, we'll take a city tour around this laid-back capital, which lies on a bend of the Mekong River. We'll return to the hotel in time for dinner and a detailed trip briefing before getting a good night's sleep, ready for the start of our challenge! Night hotel.

Day 3: Vientiane – Nam Ngum Lake

The cycling begins! Leaving Vientiane on busy roads, it's not long before we leave the city behind and start to appreciate the beautiful Laotian countryside. Roughly 90% of Laos is mountainous, and as we ride along the flattish valley we can see misty green mountain slopes in the distance. We share the road with tuk-tuks and jumbos – the colourful motorised local taxis – and some pedal-powered samlaws. Motorcycles often transport bulky goods or entire families with fascinating demonstrations of balance. This is a wonderful introduction to the local culture! We stop for a break at a local market, which provides a very photogenic introduction to the huge variety of colourful exotic produce available. Frequented by the Hmong people, one of the many ethnic hill-tribes living in Laos, this allows us to witness yet another side of Laos's cultural diversity. As we near our destination, we have a sharp climb up to our hotel at the edge of Nam Ngum Lake, a man-made reservoir ringed with forested

mountains and dotted with wooded islands formed when the lake was created. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 96km

Day 4: Nam Ngum Lake – Vang Vieng

Today's ride is on quieter roads as we ride north through small villages. We'll see friendly children playing in the streets – usually stopping to wave curiously at us – and crops such as rice are often laid out on the road to dry. Different generations work side-by-side in the rice-paddies, often knee-deep in water, wearing traditional conical hats with simple woven baskets on their backs. Our day today is hillier, with some particularly steep inclines, but the reward of witnessing daily life in this beautiful country more than makes up for our efforts. We arrive in riverside Vang Vieng, a lovely town surrounded by beautiful sheer karst outcrops and dense jungle. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 85km

Day 5: Vang Vieng

A more relaxing day today to give our legs some respite before the more mountainous roads ahead of us! We set off through the back-roads east of Vang Vieng, enjoying the stunning scenery and the scenes of daily village life. This area is known for its karst mountains and caves, some of which are home to ancient shrines. Most of our route is off-road and takes us through rarely-visited villages; you'll gain an insight into how most people live in rural Laos. If you love experiencing different cultures, today will be a real highlight! Our route returns via some limestone caves where we'll have the opportunity for a refreshing swim – welcome relief after our hot ride. Back in Vang Vieng, we'll have time to explore the shops and markets, or just relax. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 35-45km

Day 6: Vang Vieng – Phou Khoun

An early start today, as we continue north through low rolling hills, fields and more villages. To the west the views over the mountains are absolutely stunning. After our first notable climb there's a great descent and our road levels out as we pass along the valley of the Nam Lik River and the small town of Kasi. Roughly marking our halfway point, Kasi is ringed with hills and rice-paddies, with some karst outcrops punctuating the green. It marks our long ascent into more mountainous terrain, and we ride along hill-ridges with breath-taking views of mountains and jungle that stretch for miles. This is the old Royal Road, leading to the royal capital Luang Prabang. The road levels out at times, but we are predominantly climbing till the end of the day, and parts of it are tough – though our higher elevation does make it cooler! Our day ends at Phou Khoun, a small market town, formerly a French outpost. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 99km

Day 7: Phou Khoun – Kiewkacham

A shorter day today, but a very demanding one; many may find this the toughest day of our challenge. The scenery is as beautiful as ever, with villages of thatched houses nestling among forests of bamboo, tropical hardwoods and

evergreens, and you may see waterfalls tumbling down the green slopes. With these beautiful surroundings to distract us, we tackle the winding hair-pin bends and steep inclines with determination! We negotiate a long, strenuous climb which contours the mountain ridges, followed by a thrilling descent. The only way onward is up again, and we pace ourselves steadily as we climb and descend through the mountains, until a lovely freewheeling descent brings us into Kiewkacham. Staying in this small friendly mountain village provides us with a wonderful cultural experience. Night guesthouse.

Cycle approx. 55km

Day 8: Kiewkacham – Luang Prabang

Our last day of cycling! Leaving the village behind, we have another relatively demanding climb to summit, but our highest ridges are behind us! A long sweeping downhill stretch takes us through a landscape of lush forest and limestone mountains; the small Hmong villages that we pass seem even tinier in contrast. We descend to the Nam Khan River and follow this for a few miles as it meanders through idyllic countryside. Turning west, we pedal our last few miles towards Luang Prabang, the ancient capital of the Lao kingdom – a spectacular city and a fitting end to our challenge. A World Heritage Site since 1995, it is enclosed by rivers and mountains and feels very remote. Studded with monasteries and temples, golden spires and teak mansions, the city is a delight to explore. We check into our hotel and relax, enjoying our surroundings. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 78km

Day 9: Free Day Luang Prabang

This morning we have a city tour, visiting the impressive Royal palace and Wat Xieng Thong (meaning 'Golden City Monastery'), as well as some of the other main temples in the city. After lunch you are free to explore as much or as little as you like – there are plenty of other temples to visit, wander the cobbled lanes of the old town, try a Lao massage or simply sit by the Mekong and watch the world go by. Tonight we meet again for a big celebration to mark our huge achievement. *(Lunch and Dinner not included)*

Day 10: Depart Luang Prabang

We have free time until a transfer takes us to the airport for our homebound flight (usually via Vientiane). *(Lunch not included if not in-flight)*

Day 11: Arrive UK

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All transport from London to Vientiane / Luang Prabang return
- All meals except where specified, accommodation
- Discover Adventure leaders; doctor with a group of 15 or more participants; local guides and cooks
- Vehicle support and back-up on the trips

- 21-speed mountain bike (Trek / Giant or equivalent)
- City tour in Luang Prabang and any other sites visited as part of the itinerary

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Three meals as specified in the itinerary
- Travel insurance
- Cycle helmet (compulsory) and 2 water bottles
- Personal spending money, souvenirs and drinks
- Tips for the local guides and support crew
- Inbound airport departure tax (no tax applied at the time of writing)
- Laos entry visa
- Fees for any optional sites, attractions or activities
- Airline taxes; we cap these so that £250.00 is the maximum you will pay
- Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions

GRADE | TOUGH (3)



Trip grades range from Challenging (1) to Extreme (5).

TOUGH trips can involve tough terrain, with some very rigorous days; weather, altitude and/or basic living conditions will add to the challenge. They demand good stamina, fitness and a determined attitude.

See [Trip Grading Explained](#).



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Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 26 Apr 2024, and the challenge is subject to change.