



# Pandaw Cruises

EXPEDITION No 6

## THE LAOS MEKONG

10 NIGHTS

Enjoy the splendour of Laos on Pandaw's 10 night expedition on the Upper Mekong. Sailing between Chiang Khong on the Thai-Laos border, and through Laos toward Vientiane, the old French capital, you will witness stunning scenery, meet amazingly warm and friendly locals and learn about Laos' national animal, the majestic elephant. We stop for three nights at the UNESCO World Heritage City of Luang Prabang with its dazzling wood-carved monasteries before heading deep into the mountains, through rapids and gorges on our high-powered little Pandaw vessels.

**Please note:** During the months February to April there may be an increased risk of smog across Laos and northern Thailand. This is due to the annual crop burnings and whilst usually mild, can sometimes be quite severe. We would advise that any passengers with respiratory issues consult with their doctor before booking for this period. Most departures and travellers will be unaffected, however.

**YOUR SHIP -** [RV LAOS PANDAW](#) / [RV CHAMPA PANDAW](#) / [RV SABAIDEE PANDAW](#) / [RV LAOS LONG TAIL PANDAW](#)

[MORE IMAGES OF THE RV LAOS PANDAW](#)

[MORE IMAGES OF THE RV CHAMPA PANDAW](#)

[MORE IMAGES OF THE RV SABAIDEE PANDAW](#)

**Cruise Price Includes:** Entrance fees, guide services (English language), gratuities to crew, main meals, local mineral water, jugged coffee, teas & tisanes. Transfers Chiang Rai / Chiang Mai to ship v.v. and ship to Vientiane v.v.

**Cruise Price Excludes:** International flights, port dues (if levied), laundry, all visa costs, fuel surcharges (see terms and conditions), all beverages except local mineral water, jugged coffee, teas & tisanes and tips to tour guides, local guides, bus drivers, boat operators and cyclo drivers.

# UPSTREAM ITINERARY

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## DAY 1

### VIENTIANE

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Pick up from your hotel in Vientiane at 08.00am, followed by a local [long-tail boat](#) expedition to your Pandaw vessel upstream. Lunch and drinks will be provided on the local boat by your Pandaw chef and bar staff. Embark your Pandaw in the afternoon for a welcome briefing and welcome drinks. We moor overnight at Pak Lay.

[MORE ABOUT VIENTIANE](#)

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## DAY 2

### CRUISING THE MEKONG

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Cruise upstream on the Mekong, passing lush jungle scenery and tiny riverside villages. Morning presentation on the Lao language after a short walk at Pha Laeb village. If time permits, we will also enjoy an afternoon walk at Ban Khok Fark.

[MORE ABOUT CRUISING THE MEKONG](#)

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## DAY 3

### XAYABOURI DAM

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Morning walk at Ban Pak Bor Khummu village before passing through Xayabouri Hydroelectric Dam, taking an inside look of the workings of this somewhat controversial attraction as we navigate the locks. Afternoon visit to Ban Na San village, a Hmong minority village.

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## DAY 4

### KUANG SI WATERFALLS

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In the morning we moor at the village of Ban Mouang Khai and visit the dramatic Kaung Si waterfall. On the way back to the ship, we stop at the Laos Buffalo Farm, a social enterprise utilizing the abundant buffalo in Laos. Arrive in the heart of the temple city of Luang Prabang mid-afternoon where there is a buzzing night market and many great cafes and local restaurants. Traditional Laos Bacci ceremony and dancing on the upper deck during happy hour. Moor overnight in central Luang Prabang.

[MORE ABOUT KUANG SI WATERFALLS](#)

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## DAY 5

# LUANG PRABANG CRAFTS & CULTURE

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Today we explore the various handicrafts of Laos in more detail. We start with Ock Pop Tok, a social enterprise providing sustainable employment and training for the women of local weaving villages. We then head to TAEC (Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre) to understand more about Laos musical instruments. After lunch aboard the ship, we sail toward Ban Chan and take part in a pottery demonstration at the local pottery workshop. We finish the day with a sunset cruise on the Mekong alongside Luang Prabang, returning to moor overnight in the centre of town.

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## DAY 6

# LUANG PRABANG

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Early morning walking tour to observe the alms offerings to the hundreds of monks who walk around the city every morning. We continue after breakfast to the morning market before taking tuktuks for a city tour of this well preserved and unique world heritage site with its many Buddhist temples, libraries and royal palace. The afternoon is free to explore the beauty and unique atmosphere of Luang Prabang.

[MORE ABOUT LUANG PRABANG](#)

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**DAY 7**

## PAK OU CAVES

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Morning at leisure in Luang Prabang before setting sail at midday upstream. Afternoon sightseeing by local boat exploring the unique Pak Ou Caves, a Buddhist sanctuary with spectacular limestone cliff faces. See the production of local Laos whisky at the Whisky village and shop for locally produced handicrafts.

[MORE ABOUT PAK OU CAVES AND NAM OU RIVER](#)

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**DAY 8**

## BAN TON AND SANDBANK BBQ

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Day of sailing upstream along the Mekong with morning walk through Ban Ton village. In the evening, we moor alongside a sandbank for a special riverside barbecue and cocktail party. Light paper lanterns with the crew and enjoy a dance in remote Laos.

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**DAY 9**

## PAK BENG ELEPHANT SANCTUARY

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Laos is known as 'The land of a million elephants' and today we will visit a rescue sanctuary that is helping to preserve the elephants of Laos and provide sustainable alternative employment for Mahouts who once trained and rode these beautiful creatures. Afternoon walk at Ban Pak Sith Khummu village.

[MORE ABOUT PAK BENG](#)

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**DAY 10**

## PAK SITH - CHIANG KHONG

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Today we sail the final leg of our journey upstream toward Huayxay. Cross over into Thailand via the Thai-Laos Friendship Bridge before rejoining your ship in Chiang Khong. Enjoy a ship tour of your Pandaw vessel and fruit carving demonstration from your Pandaw Chef. Farewell cocktails and Thai traditional dance on board for your last evening.

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**DAY 11**

## CHIANG KHONG

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Disembark by 8.30 in Chiang Khong and group transfer to hotel/airport. En route, explore the Golden Triangle including a visit to the opium museum. Continue to airports or city hotels in Chiang Rai (2 hours) and Chiang Mai (6 hours).

# STATEROOM

## The Pandaw stateroom is the most celebrated feature of our ships.

Finished in brass and teak, the main and upper deck rooms are very spacious at 168 square feet (15.6 sqm). Much loved by all our passengers we have ensured that with each ship we build the stateroom remains the same. Our cabins do not have mini-bars, satellite TV's, internet or phones. Pandaw passengers usually want to escape from the tiresome features found in international business hotels.

Many passengers describe life on board a Pandaw more like being a guest on a private motor yacht than a cruise ship. Where we go and what we see is intrepid in extreme. What you come back to is a floating base of discreet comfort, caring service and all the good things one looks for in life. All our cabins have the same size and Pandaw signature amenities. Choose from Main Deck, Upper Deck or Premium Upper Deck (Mekong only).

### Special to Your Stateroom

- Fruit and flowers on arrival
- Kimonos and slippers
- Spa-branded amenities
- Unlimited mineral water



# PRE-TOUR EXTENSION

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## DAY 1

### VIENTIANE

Welcome to Laos! Today you will be picked up and transfer to the airport for flight to Xiengkhuang. Upon arrival, our guide and driver will transfer you to the hotel.

Scheduled flight departing from Vientiane at 13:50.

Meals: none

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## DAY 2

### PLAIN OF JARS

A full day to explore the famous Plain Of Jars, a vast area extending around Phonsavan where over 300 huge stone jars carved out of solid rock from 1 to 3.25 meters high and weighing up to six tons each. And estimated to be 2,500 to 3,000 years old. According to local legend, King Khun Chuang had them constructed in order to store wine for the celebration of his conquest of the province in the 6th century. We visit Site I, II and III. Continue to Ban Na Pia (War Spoon Village) before returning to Phonsavan.

Meals: Breakfast at hotel, Lunch at local restaurant.

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### **DAY 3**

## **PHONSAVANH - VIENTIANE**

Morning visit to scenic Muang Khoun, surrounded by mountains, the ancient capital that was founded by Chao Noi Muang and was a stronghold for the Xieng Khouang royal family was destroyed during the Indochina War. The town was rebuilt after 1975 with rows of wooden Lao houses and a market area. We also visit the ruins at Wat Phia Wat, That Foun and That Chomphet.

Transfer to Phonsavanh airport for flight to Vientiane followed by transfer to your hotel.

Meals: Breakfast and Lunch.

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### **DAY 4**

## **EMBARKATION**

Pick up from your hotel at 08:00am and transfer to your Pandaw expedition.

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### **DISCOVER**

## **The Plain of Jars - Pre Cruise Upstream Laos**

**The Plain of Jars offers fascinating insights into Phuan, Hmong, Khmu and Tai Dam culture. Very little is known about the civilization that created The Plain of Jars, but you can only imagine the greatness of the ruler who constructed these unusual and enormous storage jars.**

**This is a Pandaw group tour depending on how many guests booked this extension.**

**Rates include:**

English speaking guide, 2-nights at a hotel in the Plain of Jars and 1 night at a hotel in Vientiane on a bed and breakfast basis, 1x lunch at local restaurant, return domestic flights from Vientiane to Phonsavanh, taxes, all transfers and excursions as described and entrance fees.

## **PRE-TOUR EXTENSION**

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### **DAY 1**

## **VIENTIANE ARRIVAL**

Upon arrival the airport, our driver will wait you at the airport and transfer to your hotel.

Meals: none

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## DAY 2

# VIENTIANE FULL DAY CITY TOUR

Depart with your local guide for a full day city tour exploring Laos' French colonial capital. Visit Talaat Sao - Vientiane's Morning Market, Wat Sisaket, Haw Phra Kaew and Putousay, the victory gate inspired by the Arc of Triumph in Paris. After lunch at a local restaurant, head out of town to visit one of Laos' slightly stranger attractions - Xieng Khuan Buddha Park.

Meals: Breakfast and Lunch

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## DAY 3

# EMBARKATION

Check out of your hotel and be picked up at 08:00am for the transfer to your Pandaw ship.

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DISCOVER

# Exploring Vientiane 2 Night Pre Tour (La Seine Hotel)

**Vientiane, the capital city of Laos has been given many evocative nicknames, such as the City of Sandalwood and the City of the Moon, at certain points in its history. Explore this French colonial city with a 2 night extension to your Pandaw expedition.**

**This tour may be operated on a private basis or as a group tour with your fellow passengers depending on bookings.**

## **Rates include:**

English speaking guide, 2-nights at La Seine Hotel Vientiane on a bed and breakfast basis, 1x lunch at local restaurant, taxes, all transfers and excursions as described and entrance fees.

## **Rates exclude:**

International flights, visa, travel insurance, not mentioned beverages and meal.

LA SEINE HOTEL

160 Quai Fa Ngum

Ban Sithan Neua

Sikhottabong District n13

Vientiane

Tel: +856 (0)21 253800

[Visit Hotel Website](#)

## PRE-TOUR EXTENSION

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## **DAY 1**

# **VIENTIANE ARRIVAL**

Upon arrival the airport, our driver will wait you at the airport and transfer to your hotel.

Meals: none

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## **DAY 2**

# **VIENTIANE FULL DAY CITY TOUR**

Depart with your local guide for a full day city tour exploring Laos' French colonial capital. Visit Talaat Sao - Vientiane's Morning Market, Wat Sisaket, Haw Phra Kaew and Putousay, the victory gate inspired by the Arc of Triumph in Paris. After lunch at a local restaurant, head out of town to visit one of Laos' slightly stranger attractions - Xieng Khuan Buddha Park.

Meals: Breakfast and Lunch

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## **DAY 3**

# **EMBARKATION**

Check out of your hotel and be picked up at 08:00am for the transfer to your Pandaw ship.

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**DISCOVER**

## Exploring Vientiane 2 Night Pre Tour (Settha Palace)

**Vientiane, the capital city of Laos has been given many evocative nicknames, such as the City of Sandalwood and the City of the Moon, at certain points in its history. Explore this French colonial city with a 2 night extension to your Pandaw expedition.**

**This tour may be operated on a private basis or as a group tour with your fellow passengers depending on bookings.**

### **Rates include:**

English speaking guide, 2-nights at Settha Palace Hotel Vientiane on a bed and breakfast basis, 1x lunch at local restaurant, taxes, all transfers and excursions as described and entrance fees.

### **Rates exclude:**

International flights, visa, travel insurance, not mentioned beverages and meal.

SETTHA PALACE HOTEL

6 Pangkham Street

Vientiane

Tel: +856 (21) 217 581

[Visit Hotel Website](#)

## POST-TOUR EXTENSION

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### DAY 1

## ARRIVE CHIANG MAI FROM PANDAW SHIP

Arrive from your Pandaw ship transfer at the deluxe Rachamankha Hotel, Chiang Mai where you stay in a superior room for 2-nights on a bed and breakfast basis.

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## **DAY 2**

# **EXPLORE CHIANG MAI**

After breakfast, you will be met by your guide for a morning visit of Chiang Mai including Suan Buak Hat, a lovely park full of flowers that lies just inside the moat. From here, you take a local rickshaw (three-wheeled bicycle taxi) to Wat Pan Tao. Wat Pan Tao is essentially built of wood and, although rarely visited, is certainly one of the most charming temples of Chiang Mai. Then, continue to Wat Phra Sing – the most famous temple in the old city centre. Afterwards, visit Warorot Market, Chiang Mai's biggest market and well known for its huge choice of flowers. Lunch is included at a typical local restaurant serving Northern Thai food.

After lunch, drive up Doi Suthep Mountain and visit Wat Doi Suthep, Chiang Mai's most revered temple on the mountaintop. According to an old legend, Monk Sumana presented the king with a bone relic of the Lord Buddha. He then tied it to the back of a royal elephant that stomped through the jungle for days. The elephant finally stopped at the actual place of the temple where he died. Both the king and monk Sumana agreed that this would be the place where Doi Suthep temple would be built.

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## **DAY 3**

# **CHIANG MAI - TRANSFER TO AIRPORT**

Check out after breakfast. You will be collected from the hotel lobby and transferred to Chiang Mai airport for your onward flight.

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**DISCOVER**

## The Rachamankha Hotel, Chiang Mai Post Tour

**Enjoy the comfort and charm of the deluxe Rachamankha Hotel and explore Chiang Mai on our included full day excursion.**

### **Rates include:**

Airport transfer; sightseeing as per itinerary with English speaking local guide; 2-nights accommodation in superior room at the Rachamankha Hotel on bed and breakfast basis; lunch on day 2; entrance fees to specified sights; service charges, room tax and baggage handling.

### **Rates exclude:**

Compulsory Gala Dinners at Rachamankha Hotel on 24 & 31 December 2016, travel insurance, visas, tips, items of a personal nature.

### **Public facilities**

Public areas include the Library with over 2,000 books and an enchanting open-air massage pavilion overlooking a tranquil 20-meter pool where drinks and light snacks are served pool-side throughout the day. You can dine in al fresco or in the stylish restaurant. Antiques from different periods around the world, from Europe, Africa, China, Burma and Thailand are scattered throughout the hotel. The spacious and comfortable air-conditioned superior rooms are fully equipped with wireless Internet connection, TV and CD/DVD

player.

THE RACHAMANKHA HOTEL

6 Rachamankha

9 Phra Singh

Chiang Mai 50200

Thailand

Tel: +66 53 904 111

[Visit Hotel Website](#)

## POST-TOUR EXTENSION

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### DAY 1

## PANDAW CRUISE – MAE CHAN

Upon arrival at Chiang Khong, meet and greet by our local guide for pick up and transfer to Mae Chan Mountain and your resort for the evening. (approx. 90 minute drive)

Overnight at Katiliya Mountain Resort

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

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## DAY 2

# GOLDEN TRIANGLE – DOI TUNG

After breakfast. Drive to Chiang Saen, a small crossroads town on the banks of the Mekong. Scattered throughout the town are the ruins of the Chiang Saen Kingdom, founded in 1325, including chedis, images of the Buddha, and earthen city ramparts. Continue to visit the Golden Triangle where the Ruak river empties into the Mekong river bringing together the boundaries of Thailand, Burma and Laos. Next visit is the Hall of Opium which was built to educate people about the dangers of the drug through an entertaining exhibition which traces opium's history from its first use 5,000 years ago to current issues of drug abuse and addiction.

Lunch is at a local restaurant before we drive uphill to visit Doi Tung Royal Project, Hall of Inspiration and Mae Fah Luang Garden. Doi Tung Royal Project is a sustainable project founded by Princess Mother of King Rama IX aiming to support communities in Chiang Rai.

Overnight at Katiliya Mountain Resort & Spa

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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### DAY 3

## BAAN LORCHA – DOI ANGKHANG – CHIANG MAI

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel before we head to an Akha hill tribe village called Ban Lorch. This community-based tourism (CBT) project at Ban Lorch was established in the mid-1990s and ensures that money from tourism activities is distributed evenly throughout the village. Continue to Doi Angkhang National Park. The area has a cool climate all year round, particularly from December to January. We visit Doi Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station which is a site for planting and researching for flowering plants, temperate fruit trees, vegetables and other crop under the patronage of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej (King Rama IX).

After lunch at a local restaurant, we visit the Muser Hill tribe at Baan Khob Dong village who believe in ghosts and spirits and still hold on to simple ways of life. The next stop will be Baan Nor Lae village, located on the Thai-Burmese border it is home to the No Lae people who migrated from Myanmar about 15 years ago. They speak their own language and are Buddhists. From here we continue to the villages of Baan Khum located near the Royal Agricultural Station. It is a small community comprising of people from various races such as Burmese, Hwa, and Thai Yai. They settled in the area and run souvenir shops and restaurants.

Overnight at the Rachamankha

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

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#### DAY 4

## HILLTRIBE EXPERIENCE

After breakfast we travel to the outskirts of town to Mae Tang area to visit a traditional Lisu Village. Our Lisu guide will take you for a guided walk through the village, observing village life as it happens. If we are lucky, we may have a chance to meet the village Shaman and learn about his traditional and spiritual healing methods.

In the afternoon we visit Araksa Tea Garden and plantation. Your local guide and our resident plucker will lead you to the tea bushes where they will show you how to pluck tea leaves. At the roasting station, we will demonstrate the art of making tea by hand from kneading to roasting tea leaves. During the process, learn from your guide about the different processes and methods used to cultivate young tea plants.

Overnight at the Rachamankha

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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#### DAY 5

## CHIANG MAI DEPARTURE

Today will be your own leisure until check out time at noon. We will transfer you to boarding either flight or train depending on your selection of transportation to next destination. Rachamankha to Chiang Mai Airport: 15-20 min.

Meals: Breakfast

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**DISCOVER**

## **The Hill Tribes of North Thailand Post Tour**

**Travel off the beaten track with your English speaking guide and discover the hilltribes, beautiful scenery and history of the land of opium, in our exclusive post cruise arrangement.**

### **Rates include:**

Accommodation at selected hotels with daily breakfast, check-in time is 2.00PM and check-out time is 12.00PM. Early or late service is subject to availability with surcharge, meals as mentioned, english speaking guide, tours and transfers as mentioned by air-conditioned vehicle, sightseeing fees and permits during guided time, service charge and current government VAT tax.

### **Rates exclude:**

Early/late check in/out service at hotels (surcharge if requested), tips and gratuities, services and meals if not mentioned in itinerary, all drinks, including water, soft drink and alcohol on all included or optional excursions, laundry, telephone calls and expenditure of a personal nature, travel Insurance (Compulsory).

### **Note**

- This is a group tour exclusively for Pandaw guests

- All accommodation will be booked after your deposit is received

## River Conditions Warning!

The rivers you will sail on are subject to seasonal rises and falls of water level, in some places as much as 30 metres. Water levels can change dramatically overnight and a sudden rise can impede our progress upstream considerably and even prevent us from passing under certain bridges. A sudden fall can result in our being unable to get into certain places or go as far upstream as we would hope. Groundings on sandbars are not infrequent and are part of the excitement of any Pandaw expedition. Published itineraries are indicational only and subject to sudden change. In such events alternative itineraries will be provided and we do our best to ensure that if a stop is missed we make up for it with another stop. Passengers are thus forewarned and expected to be flexible and patient. River cruising in Asia can be a dramatic and adventurous experience - not like cruising the controlled waterways of Europe or America. Note also that we operate in areas with little or no developed infrastructure and subject to the strictures of local officialdom. Be prepared for this and it is all more the fun!

## Useful Links

[Terms & Conditions](#)

[General Information & Life on Board](#)

[Visa Information](#)