



Pandaw River Expeditions

EXPEDITION No 6

THE LAOS MEKONG

10 NIGHTS

Enjoy a three country expedition as we will traverse Laos to touch Thailand and Burma at the once notorious Golden Triangle. From Vientiane, the old French capital, and so redolent of L'Indochine Pandaw will be the first river expedition since pre war days to cross all Laos. We stop two nights at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Luang Prabang with its dazzling wood carved monasteries and then on deep into the mountains, through rapids and gorges on our high powered little Pandaw. Visit tribal villages and explore into jungle and countryside.

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

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

[MORE IMAGES OF THE RV CHAMPA 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 / Udon Thani 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.

DOWNSTREAM ITINERARY

DAY 1

CHIANG SAEN

PLEASE NOTE: The itinerary for this expedition is indicative only and subject to reconnaissance. As we travel to remote areas, changes to the itinerary will inevitably occur. A flexible approach is required if you book this cruise.

Transfers from airports or any city hotel in Chiang Rai (2 hours) and Chiang Mai (6 hours) including a visit to the Golden Triangle and the now infamous opium museum. Embark your ship by 16.00 and cruise up river towards the Burma border for sunset.

[MORE ABOUT GOLDEN TRIANGLE](#)

DAY 2

INTO LAOS

Pass through immigration formalities at the Thai/Laos border and re-join the ship. Set sail downstream on the beautiful Upper Mekong River. After lunch, if time allows, sightseeing on foot in a Laos jungle village.

[MORE ABOUT INTO LAOS](#)

DAY 3**KHAMO VILLAGE**

Morning walk in a Khamo village. Sail downstream on the beautiful Mekong then relax with evening cocktails on a sandbank.

DAY 4**PAK OU CAVES & LUANG PRABANG**

Continue cruising downstream to Pak Ou, transfer to a local boat and enter the Nam Ou River to visit the extraordinary Pak Ou Buddha Caves. Admire spectacular limestone cliff faces in the Buddhist sanctuary.

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

DAY 5**LUANG PRABANG**

In the morning explore by tuktuk this well preserved and unique world heritage site with its many Buddhist temples, libraries and royal palace. Visit the National Museum and have the afternoon free to explore the beauty and unique atmosphere of Luang Prabang. Traditional Laos dancing on the upper deck late afternoon. Moor overnight in Luang Prabang.

[MORE ABOUT LUANG PRABANG](#)

DAY 6

KHAUNG SI WATERFALL

Early morning walking tour to observe the morning alms offering by local people to the hundreds of monks who walk around the city every morning. Drive to see the deep jungle pools at the Khaung Si Waterfall, the teak forest trails and butterfly farm.

[MORE ABOUT KUANG SI WATERFALLS](#)

DAY 7

XAYABURI DAM

Pass through the Mekong water control lock at Xayaburi Hydro Electric Power Plant (itself an interesting and perhaps controversial tourist attraction). Late afternoon walking tour of a local village.

[MORE ABOUT XAYABURI DAM](#)

DAY 8

XANAKHAM

Morning visit to Ban Pha Leab with its beautiful limestone mountain. Continue to Pak Houng-Thai Lao Border for an excursion to a plantation village and meet the local people.

DAY 9**VIENTIANE**

Pass through a dramatic landscape of jungle and mountain where the river flows fast and wild. Amazing rock formations straddle the river banks. Here we enter the cultivated plains of Vientiane province. Arrive mid-afternoon in Vientiane to moor overnight. Opportunity for independent exploration of this delightful, French influenced city.

DAY 10**VIENTIANE**

Morning exploration of the delightful French city including visits to the golden Pha That Luang Stupa, Sisaket Temple, the President's Hall, Watt Prakeo Temple and the Phatouxay monument. Opportunity for independent exploration and experience the many cafes and bistros in this charming little corner of L'Indochine. Farewell cocktails and dinner.

[MORE ABOUT VIENTIANE](#)

DAY 11**VIENTIANE**

Disembark in Vientiane after breakfast and transfer to airports or hotel in Vientiane or Udon Thani in Thailand (1.5hrs, just across the river).

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

DAY 1

ARRIVE CHIANG MAI

Our local representative will meet you at Chiang Mai airport and transfer you to the Rachamankha Hotel in a superior room for a 2-night stay on a bed and breakfast basis.

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.

DAY 3

CHIANG MAI - TRANSFER TO PANDAW SHIP

Check out after breakfast. You will be collected from the hotel lobby and transferred to your Pandaw ship in Chiang Saen or Chiang Khong.



DISCOVER

The Rachamankha Hotel, Chiang Mai Pre 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:

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](#)

PRE-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

CHIANG MAI ARRIVAL

Our local representative will meet you at Chiang Mai airport and transfer you to the Rachamankha. Chiang Mai is a Thailand's "Rose of the North" which is a cultural and natural wonderland with ethnic diversity, a multitude of attractions and welcoming hospitality.

Overnight at Rachamankha

Meals: none

DAY 2

CHIANG MAI - CHIANG DAO

Morning departure from Chiang Mai to visit Doi Angkhang, with a stop to visit Chiang Dao cave, situated among the rolling hillside. The cave consists of 4 interconnected caverns that are opened. Here you will see an array of different stalactites everywhere.

Lunch at local restaurant. After lunch, proceed to hotel for check in and afternoon at leisure. Dinner will be served at Hotel.

Overnight at Azalea Village Resort

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3

CHIANG DAO - DOI ANGKHANG - BAN THATON

After breakfast, check out from the hotel and proceed to Doi Angkhang National Park. The area has a cool climate all year round, particularly from December to January. During this period, visitors should be prepared to cope with cold weather. Doi Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station 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).

Lunch is at a local restaurant.

Afternoon visit Muser Hill tribe at Baan Khob Dong village, The tribe believe in ghosts and spirits and still hold on to simple ways of life. The Royal Project has supported this village in promoting agriculture and handicrafts. The Young Local Guide project is underway to guide visitors on the local lifestyle and beliefs, as well as to create a non-migration awareness in local youths.

The next stop will be a visit to Baan Nor Lae village, this village is located on the Thai-Burmese border. The people of No Lae 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 which is a village 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.

In the late afternoon, transfer to Ban Thaton for check in at your hotel.

Overnight at Maekok River Village Resort

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4

BAN THATON - GOLDEN TRIANGLE - CHIANG KHONG

Today, we make our way to Chiang Khong in Chiang Rai. On the way you will visit Golden Triangle with Golden Buddha viewpoint to enjoy the spectacular view for 360 degree. From there we continue to visit the Opium Hall. The hall was built to educate people about the dangers of the drug through an entertaining exhibition which traces the opium's history from its first use 5,000 years ago to current issues of drug abuse and addiction.

Lunch at local restaurant.

After lunch, then continue to Chiang Khong along the scenic route. Arrive at Lanjia lodge. Here you will get firsthand experience on how to make Hmong batik handkerchief with Hmong ladies or alternatively, you can learn how to make and set animal traps. Dinner and watch traditional Hmong performances.

Overnight at Lanjia Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5

CHIANG KHONG - PANDAW CRUISE

After breakfast, (09h40) watch a presentation on the Hmong and Lahu tribes, the Golden triangle area and the giant catfish (locally known as Pla Buek) – the world's biggest fresh water fish found in the Mekong River. Learn about the activities that affect the Mekong River and the people whose lives depend on the river. Tour the Hmong and Lahu hill tribe village, including a visit at the shaman house of the Hmong. Drink tea with the shaman and discover why the fireplace is important to the Hmongs.

Lunch will be provided on the charming terrace that looks to the Mekong River and Laos.

Then continue to Chiang Khong to embarkation to Pandaw Cruise. On the way you might be able to stop at Chiang Khong City to visit local Buddhist temple if time allows before embarking to Pandaw Cruise.

Meals: Breakfast & Lunch



DISCOVER

The Hill Tribes of North Thailand Pre 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 pre 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
- On day 5 of your pre tour we do a hike to Lahu village. This tour including visits/stops takes 2.5 to 3 hours. The mountain road is steep and can be demanding. Medium fitness is required. If you do not want to walk then transport will be provided
- The cruise itinerary includes the Golden Triangle and Opium House on Day 1, you have this covered during this pre-tour already, therefore we have arranged an alternate itinerary for you on the last day of this tour
- If twin beds are required at Azalea Village Resort there will be a upgrade supplement charge of US\$138, as you would require a room upgrade from a Superior Cottage room to Suite Cottage 2 Bedrooms (1 king size bedroom & 2 queen size bedroom)

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

VIENTIANE - PHONSAVANH

We will pick you up 09.00am after disembarkation from your Pandaw vessel. Drive to visit the surroundings of Vientiane including the Buddha Park, located 24 km south of Vientiane, and take a look at the impressive Friendship Bridge. Continue to visit the National museum which is highlighting the revolution of the 1970s and is located in a French colonial building. Afternoon visit to Cope Visitor Center: After the war ended in 1975, the country is still littered with a significant amount of UXO's (unexploded ordnance). COPE stands for Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise and provides prosthetics and mobility devices for those people who require them, free of charge if they cannot afford to pay for them. An interactive exhibit about the UXO problem tells how UXO affects communities, with stories of injured people and their experiences through their rehabilitation process.

Transfer to the airport for your afternoon flight to Phonsavanh, the gateway to the plain of jars. Transfer to your hotel.

Meals: Breakfast at hotel, lunch at local restaurant.

DAY 2

THE 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.

DAY 3

MUANG KHOUN - 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 Phonsavan airport for flight to Vientiane followed by transfer to your hotel.

Meals: Breakfast at hotel.

DAY 4

VIENTIANE

After breakfast, transfer the airport.

Meals: Breakfast at hotel.



DISCOVER

The Plain of Jars - Post Cruise Downstream 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 the Vasana Plain of Jars Hotel and 1-night at the Ansara Hotel on a bed and breakfast basis, 2x lunches at local

restaurants, return domestic flights from Vientiane to Phonsavanh, taxes, all transfers and excursions and described and entrance fees.

Note

Lao Airlines does not operate flights on Saturday to/from the gate way of the Plain of Jars. This affects post tours of following cruises:

- Monday, 27 August 2018
- Wednesday, 26 September 2018
- Wednesday, 10 October 2018
- Monday, 14 January 2019
- Wednesday, 27 February 2019
- Wednesday, 4 September 2019
- Wednesday, 18 September 2019
- Monday, 30 December 2019
- Wednesday, 12 February 2020
- Monday, 9 March 2020

[Click here](#) for details and pricing for an adjusted 4 night extension to match the airline's schedule.

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](#)