



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.

DOWNSTREAM ITINERARY

DAY 1

CHIANG KHONG

Transfers from airports or any city hotel in Chiang Rai (2 hours) and Chiang Mai (6 hours) including Lunch at Ban Rai Sabaidee Farm plus guided visit to the Golden Triangle and the now infamous opium museum. Embark your ship by 16.00 and enjoy welcome drinks on the sundeck with traditional Thai dancing.

[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, Morning presentation on the Lao language. After lunch, if time allows, sightseeing on foot in Pak Sith.

[MORE ABOUT INTO LAOS](#)

DAY 3

PAK BENG ELEPHANT SANCTUARY

Morning walk at Ban Luang Tong Lao Lowland village. Laos is known as 'The land of a million elephants' and after Lunch 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. In the evening we moor at a sandbank for a special riverside barbecue and cocktail party. Light paper lanterns with the crew and enjoy a dance in remote Laos.

DAY 4

BAN BOR AND YOI HAI KHMU VILLAGES

Today we discover the Khmu minority group and learn about their remote way of life. In the morning we will visit Ban Bor village, home to the Lao & Khummu people. We will have the opportunity to support locally produced handicrafts and walk through the Khummu village of Yoi Haoi in the afternoon.

DAY 5

PAK OU CAVES

Continue cruising downstream to Pak Ou, 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 before sailing into the World Heritage City of Luang Prabang. Moor overnight in central Luang Prabang.

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

DAY 6

LUANG PRABANG CRAFTS & CULTURE

Today we explore the various handicrafts of Laos in more detail. We start with a morning walk up the 228 steps to Phousi temple where the best views of Luang Prabang can be found. After lunch aboard the ship, we visit 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. Cocktail hour is accompanied by a traditional Bacci ceremony onboard highlighting some of the instruments seen in the afternoon.

DAY 7

LUANG PRABANG

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. 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](#)

DAY 8

KAUNG SI WATERFALL

After breakfast sail downstream to Ban Chan where we take part in a pottery demonstration at the local pottery workshop. After Lunch we moor at Ban Mouang Khai and take a short drive to see the deep jungle pools at the Khaung Si Waterfall where you can swim in the crystal-clear waters. We then stop at the Laos Buffalo Farm, a social enterprise utilizing the abundant buffalo in Laos before rejoining the ship. We sail downstream for a sunset cruise and moor overnight at Ban Na San.

[MORE ABOUT KUANG SI WATERFALLS](#)

DAY 9

XAYABOURI DAM

Morning walk through Ban Na San Hmong Village. In the afternoon we pass through Xayabouri Hydroelectric Dam and take an inside look of the workings of this somewhat controversial attraction as we pass through the locks. Afternoon walk at Ban Khok Fark and moor overnight.

DAY 10

BAN PAK YUN TO PAK LAY

Explore Ban Pak Yun Mixed minorities tribe in the morning, a rural local village before setting sail to Pak Lay, our final destination. Enjoy a tour of your Pandaw ship and fruit carving demonstration on the sundeck in the afternoon before farewell cocktails and dinner in the evening.

DAY 11

VIENTIANE

Disembark at 08:30am followed by a local [long-tail boat](#) expedition downstream to Vientiane. Lunch and drinks will be provided on the local boat by your Pandaw chef and bar staff. Arrival to Vientiane around 17:30 with drop off at your hotel or Vientiane airport.

[MORE ABOUT VIENTIANE](#)

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

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

DAY 3

CHIANG MAI - DOI ANGKHANG

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. 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.

In the late afternoon, transfer to Mae Chan and check in to your hotel.

Overnight at Katiliya Mountain Resort & Spa

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4

MAE CHAN – DOI TUNG

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. 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

DAY 5

CHIANG KHONG - PANDAW CRUISE

After breakfast. Check out and 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 will be provided at Baan Rai Sabai Dee (or similar). Continue to Chiang Khong to embarkation to Pandaw Cruise.

Meals: Breakfast & Lunch (dinner aboard your Pandaw)



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

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

VIENTIANE

Welcome to Vientiane! After your afternoon disembarkation in Vientiane our guide and driver will transfer you to your hotel. We recommend enjoying a walk at the night market.

Meals: none

DAY 2

VIENTIANE - PHONSAVANH

After breakfast at the hotel, we commence a city tour of the Laos capital, visiting Vat Sisaket, the oldest original temple in Vientiane, Ho Phra Keo, once the royal temple of Lao monarchy and Patousay, the victory gate also known as Anousavari whose architecture is inspired by the Arc of Triumph in Paris. After lunch in a local restaurant transfer to the airport for your flight to Phonsavanh.

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

Meals: Breakfast at hotel, lunch at local restaurant.

DAY 3

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 4

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 Phonsavan airport for flight to Vientiane and your onward journey. Scheduled flight arrival to Vientiane at 15:45

Meals: Breakfast and Lunch.



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 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.

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

VIENTIANE ARRIVAL

Check in to your hotel after your disembarkation transfer from the ship.

Meals: none.

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

DAY 3

VIENTIANE DEPARTURE

Check out of your hotel and our driver will transfer you to the airport for your onward flight.

Meals: Breakfast



DISCOVER

Exploring Vientiane 2 Night Post 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](#)

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

VIENTIANE ARRIVAL

Check in to your hotel after your disembarkation transfer from the ship.

Meals: none.

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

DAY 3

VIENTIANE DEPARTURE

Check out of your hotel and our driver will transfer you to the airport for your onward flight.

Meals: Breakfast



DISCOVER

Exploring Vientiane 2 Night Post 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](#)

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](#)