



Pandaw River Expeditions

EXPEDITION No 8

THE MEKONG: FROM LAOS TO CHINA

14 NIGHTS

For the first time it is possible for travellers to sail on the mighty Upper Mekong River from Laos to China or vice versa. This will be an incredible, pioneering 14-night river expedition discovering charming villages, stunning scenery, pristine jungle, the Golden Triangle and the very different emerald green Mekong in China's Yunnan province. Our journey also includes overnight stops in Luang Prabang, Chiang Saen and Jinghong.

The river recces sail aboard a Pandaw, specifically designed and built for sailing on the Upper Mekong with low draft and extra powerful engines.

Pandaw's founder, Paul Strachan, said: "it has been a long held dream to sail the length of the navigable sections of the Mekong River; now we can. There is much to explore in this undiscovered region; travellers need to be up for a real adventure as the daily itinerary might change, but with a flexible attitude will have the adventure of a lifetime".

Please note this expedition is **NOT** suitable for anyone with walking difficulties.

We are also offering pre and post cruise extensions visiting Kunming, Dali and Lijiang in Yunnan Province and the Plain of Jars in Laos.

IMPORTANT NOTE: These are reconnaissance voyages and the itinerary is indicational only subject to daily revisions and many a change. Travellers

should be up for a real adventure and be prepared for such uncertainties. This will be the first time a river expedition ship will have made this expedition and there may be delays at border crossing points when dealing with formalities. Travellers who might find sudden changes of plan or delays stressful should not book this trip. Our guides will do their best to ensure that we cover as much of this indicational itinerary as possible but some excursions may be changed for others. We can assure we will see and do as much as we can, hopefully more than indicated in the itinerary below.

YOUR SHIP - [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 from Luang Prabang airport/hotel to ship in Luang Prabang (until May 2019) or Vientiane / Udon Thani airport/hotel to ship in Vientiane (as of September 2019) v.v. Transfers from Jinghong airport/hotel to ship in Jinghong.

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

Up to May 2019

DAY 1

LUANG PRABANG

Embark by noon for a lunch followed by an afternoon walking tour of this World Heritage Site with its delightful traditional Laos wooden houses and many gilded monasteries. Return to ship for drinks and dinner and a welcoming Lao baci ceremony.

[MORE ABOUT LUANG PRABANG](#)

DAY 2

LUANG PRABANG

Further visits in Luang Prabang: The Royal Palace was built in 1904 during the French colonial era for King Sisavang Vong and his family. After the death of King Sisavang Vong, the crown Prince Savang Vatthana and his family were the last to occupy the palace.

We will visit the Buddhist temples Wat Xienthong and Wat Mai, the latter being the biggest and most decorated temple.

Afternoon at leisure for individual exploration. In the evening visit Luang Prabang's lively night market and savour the buzzing café life.

[MORE ABOUT LUANG PRABANG](#)

DAY 3

KUANG SI FALLS

05.30am walk to the town centre to watch the alms giving and ceremony. Visit the morning market before returning to the ship for breakfast.

Our bus will take you to the butterfly park, founded by a Dutch couple in 2014 as a research and preservation centre of Laotian butterflies. After a brief journey we reach our next stop, the stunning Khaung Si Waterfalls with stunning jungle pools and scenery. Don't forget your swimsuit!

This afternoon we will sail upstream towards Pak Ou.

DAY 4

PAK OU BUDDHA CAVES

Visit to Pak Ou, a Buddhist sanctuary and one of Laos' most respected holy sites with spectacular limestone cliff faces. Packed with over 4,000 Buddha icons, the caves which are a shrine to the river spirit and Lord Buddha, are set in a dramatic limestone cliff at the point where the Mekong joins the Nam Ou River.

We continue upstream and visit a village by small boat known locally as the "Whisky Village". Learn how they produce their alcohol.

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

DAY 5**SAILING THE MEKONG**

An exciting day spent sailing through dramatic scenery with lush jungle and forest punctuated by tiny villages clinging to the river bank.

Pause for a walk ashore at Ban Huay La village with wooden houses and women at work weaving. Later presentation by the guide on Laos language and culture.

[MORE ABOUT CRUISING THE MEKONG](#)

DAY 6**PAK BENG**

The scenery becomes even more dramatic and the river faster and more treacherous. This passage can be very exciting and most passengers sit spellbound on deck. Morning cooking demonstration of favourite Laos dishes by our Pandaw chefs. Afternoon walk around the market town of Pak Beng. Jungle mooring.

[MORE ABOUT PAK BENG](#)

DAY 7

SAILING THE MEKONG

A long sailing day covering a considerable distance but punctuated by a morning walk around Ban Pak Sit village, a traditional riverside village full of charm and life, and an afternoon walk around Pak Tha village. Village mooring.

[MORE ABOUT CRUISING THE MEKONG](#)

DAY 8

INTO THAILAND

After an afternoon visit to the local pagoda, we proceed to Lao and Thai Immigration, joining the Pandaw ship again in Chiang Kong. Sail further into Thailand in the late afternoon and moor overnight in Chiang Kong.

DAY 9

CHIANG SAEN

This morning we visit a Thai hill-tribe village to appreciate a very contrasting culture from Laos.

After lunch on board we explore Chiang Sean and the Wat Phangao Pagoda. In the evening traditional Thai dancers perform on deck. Overnight in Chiang Saen.

[MORE ABOUT CHIANG SAEN](#)

DAY 10

GOLDEN TRIANGLE

In the morning transfer by bus to the smuggler city of Tachilek in Burma where we will visit the "extraordinary" market (essentially one massive duty free area), Chinese temples and the Tachilek Shwedagon Pagoda.

After lunch a visit to the Hall of Opium. The Golden Triangle used to be infamous as one of the largest producers of opium. Various Thai organizations led by the Royal Project and Doi Tung Development Project have spent decades battling this trade. As part of this campaign, the Hall of Opium 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.

To end the day we will reunite at the Buddha Statue at the Golden Triangle to take in the view over the three bordering countries Thailand, Laos and Burma.

Overnight in Chiang Saen.

[MORE ABOUT GOLDEN TRIANGLE](#)

DAY 11

BAN DOM MOON

Leaving behind the bustle of the Golden Triangle we return to a Mekong that is now narrower and faster than anything encountered so far on this journey. Afternoon walk around the Pok Lok village followed by a talk by our guide on the region's ethnography.

DAY 12

SOB LUOY PROVINCE

Visit Ban Pak Keo, its villagers and walk up a small hill adorned with a pagoda and enjoy the beautiful view over the Mekong.

Stop at Ban Na Kor (Sob Luoy Port) in the afternoon and sail on to a remote sand bank to moor for the night. Canapés and cocktails are served on the sundeck followed by local Laos folklore stories and traditional floating fire lanterns.

DAY 13

GUAN LEI

Crossing into China at Guan Lei Port in the morning, we are free to take a walk and explore before passing immigration. Sail the final stretch of the scenic and dramatic Mekong in China to Jinghong where we moor overnight.

Note: In the event that water levels are too low, too high or the flow too fast, we may not reach Jinghong. In this case you will be transferred for the final stretch by speed boat and lodged in the best available four or five star hotel.

DAY 14

JINGHONG

Jinghong was founded in 1180 by Tai King Phanya Coeng. Its turbulent history has been influenced by Thai, Burmese and Chinese occupations, which can be seen in its buildings and the local language.

In the morning we will visit the fascinating Tropical Plant Institute, a vast garden with over 13,000 plant species and 35 exhibits. We then continue to Manting Park, the oldest park in Xishuangbanna, dating back 1300 years. Previously a Dai Imperial Garden, the park's attractions include the opportunity to learn about the culture of the Dai people. Manting Park is also called 'Chunhuan Park' which means the place where people can have relieve their mind and soul of all earthly worries.

On our final evening in Jinghong, experience an evening cultural show at Maxmumbani, where dancers from 38 different ethnic groups display their traditions with acrobatics and fascinating story of China and its people. Moor overnight in Jinghong Port.

[MORE ABOUT JINGHONG](#)

DAY 15

JINGHONG

Disembark after breakfast.

[MORE ABOUT JINGHONG](#)

Sep 2019 Onward

DAY 1

VIENTIANE

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.

Embarkation 12.30, followed by lunch and afternoon exploration of the delightful French city including visits to the golden Pha That Luang Stupa, Sisaket Temple, the President's Hall, Wat Prakeo Temple and the Phatouxay monument. Set sail late afternoon, enjoy a welcome dinner on board and overnight near Vientiane.

[MORE ABOUT VIENTIANE](#)

DAY 2

CRUISING THE MEKONG

Cruise upstream on the Mekong, passing lush jungle scenery and tiny riverside villages. Morning presentation on the Lao language. Afternoon cooking demonstration on the upper deck. Arrive in Ban Xanakham to moor overnight.

[MORE ABOUT CRUISING THE MEKONG](#)

DAY 3**PAK LAI**

Afternoon visit to the French administrative town of Pak Lai with many colonial buildings and a bustling local market. This town boasts the largest elephant festival in South East Asia, usually in February.

[MORE ABOUT PAK LAI](#)

DAY 4**BAN PARK BOR VILLAGE**

Morning visit and walking tour to Khamo tribal village, a typical village, set on the banks of the Mekong amidst lush jungle. In the afternoon pass through the Xanyaburi Hydro Electric Power Plant.

DAY 5**BAN MOUANG KHAI VILLAGE - LUANG PRABANG**

In the morning visit a Hmong village and continue upstream to the village of Ban Mouang Khai. Afternoon sightseeing by minibus visiting the jungle pools and dramatic Khaung Si waterfall then on to a butterfly garden. Arrive in the heart of the temple city of Luang Prabang where there is a buzzing night market and many great cafes and some good local restaurants.

DAY 6

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 on your own. Enjoy traditional Laos dancing on the upper deck late afternoon. Moor overnight in Luang Prabang.

[MORE ABOUT LUANG PRABANG](#)

DAY 7

PAK OU CAVES

Early morning walking tour to see the alms offering by the local people to hundreds of monks who walk around the city every morning. Passengers are invited to join in with offerings we provide for the alms giving. Morning sightseeing by local boat exploring the unique Pak Ou Caves and Elephant camp, a Buddhist sanctuary with spectacular limestone cliff faces. Evening cocktails on a sandbank. Sail upstream on the beautiful Mekong towards Ban Bo.

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

DAY 8**PAK BENG**

Morning visit to a local Khamo village. Sail upstream on the Mekong passing Pak Beng towards Pak Sit.

[MORE ABOUT PAK BENG](#)

DAY 9**BAN HOUAYXAY**

Early morning walking tour in a Khamo village then cruise through stunning scenery to the border of Laos and Thailand. The night is spent on the Lao side in the Huay xay area where we take a late afternoon village walk.

DAY 10

THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

In the morning transfer by bus to the smuggler city of Tachilek in Burma where we will visit the "extraordinary" market (essentially one massive duty free area), Chinese temples and the Tachilek Shwedagon Pagoda.

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[MORE ABOUT GOLDEN TRIANGLE](#)

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DAY 13**GUAN LEI**

In the early morning continue by speed boat up the white waters, through the gorges, to cross into China at Guan Lei Port in the morning. Free time there to walk and explore before passing immigration. Then transfer by road to Jinghong to overnight in a four-star hotel.

DAY 14

JINGHONG

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Overnight in hotel.

[MORE ABOUT JINGHONG](#)

DAY 15

JINGHONG

After breakfast transfer to the airport or your hotel in Jing Hong.

[MORE ABOUT JINGHONG](#)

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

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

JINGHONG TO LIJIANG

Disembark after breakfast. Morning visit to Dai village and a tea Plantation. Continue to Jinghong airport for afternoon flight to Lijiang. Transfer to the 4* Jinfu Hotel (or similar) on a room and breakfast basis.

DAY 2

LIJIANG

Lijiang is home to the Naxi minority people and today you will have the chance to understand their unique culture and traditions. We visit Lijiang's famous old town including Yufeng Lamasery, Baisha Mural, Black Dragon Pool and the excellent Dongba Museum. Lunch is included today.

DAY 3

DALI

Travel by coach to Dali for a 2-night stay at the 5* One Resort, Dali on a room and breakfast basis. After an included lunch we visit Dali's famous old town with its alleyways, bell tower and cobbled streets.

DAY 4

DALI

Full day visit (including lunch) to Xizhou to explore the market and local unique architecture. Also visit Three Pagodas in the Chongsheng Temple.

DAY 5

DALI TO KUNMING

Travel by Bullet train to Kunming for a 2-night stay at the 5* Crown Plaza Hotel on a room and breakfast basis. Lunch included. Afternoon city tour to the Green Lake Park.

DAY 6

THE STONE FOREST

Full day visit to the incredible Stone Forest with its enormous limestone formations and known since the Ming Dynasty as the first wonder of the world. Lunch in local restaurant is included today.

DAY 7

KUNMING

Transfer to Kunming airport for your onward flight.



DISCOVER

Scenic Yunnan Province - Post

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

Rates include:

All transfers as described, hotel accommodation on a bed and breakfast basis, all sightseeing, 6 breakfasts, 5 lunches, services of an English speaking guide and economy class domestic flight from Jinghong to Lijiang.

Rates exclude:

Visas, travel insurance, personal items.

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](#)