

Laos & Cambodia Uncovered

Tour Style: Worldwide walking holidays

Destinations: Cambodia & Laos

Trip code: LSWHW

Trip Walking Grade: 3



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Experience the best of Cambodia and Laos on this dual-destination holiday that takes in iconic sights and plenty of cultural treasures. Highlights include exploring the ancient temples of UNESCO-listed Angkor Wat, taking a boat trip on the winding waterways of the Mekong River, and visiting the historic Laotian city of Luang Prabang. You'll also enjoy guided walks in the forest-carpeted Kulen Mountains for the chance to see rural Cambodia at its finest.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Outbound flights from London Heathrow including baggage and transfers
- Return flights from Phnom Penh including baggage and transfers
- Guided walks and sightseeing with local leaders
- HF Holidays Tour Manager
- 15 nights' touring accommodation across Laos & Cambodia
- 15 breakfasts, 9 lunches & 8 dinners
- All sightseeing and entrance fees (as per itinerary)
- All in-destination transport and internal flights

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Hiking to the spectacular Kuang Si Falls on foot
- Discovering Phnom Kulen, one of Cambodia's most sacred sites
- Exploring Siem Reap, the gateway to Angkor
- Visiting the Angkor Wat & Angkor Thom temples
- Taking guided walks in the Kulen Mountains
- A more personalised experience thanks to small group sizes (maximum 15 people)



ITINERARY

Day 1: Depart UK

Our with-flight guests depart the UK on an overnight flight to Luang Prabang

Day 2: Arrival In Luang Prabang

We arrive in Luang Prabang, where you will be greeted and transferred to your hotel. We are joined here by our without-flight guests. After checking in, you have the afternoon to explore the hotel and local area at your leisure.

In the early evening, we head out for a welcome dinner in town and visit the night market.

Day 3: Luang Prabang: City Tour

An early bird? There is an optional dawn visit (5:30am) to witness the lines of orange-robed monks leaving their pagodas to receive offerings of food from Luang Prabang residents.

After breakfast, we tour old Luang Prabang town by vintage Tuk-tuk. The first stop of this original sightseeing tour is to explore the city of Luang Prabang with the Mekong River as our backdrop, confirming why it holds World Heritage status.

One of our more interesting visits of the morning is to the local market. Just two lanes, this market is used by

locals to sell products grown or made at home.

We finish the morning with a drive to Wat Xieng Thong, the largest temple of Laung Prabang Royal City, best known for its impressive Tree of Life mural.

After lunch, we walk to the Mekong River and use a local ferry to reach Ban Xieng Mene . Here we enjoy the quietness of the afternoon, walk through lush green gardens, listen to birds singing and appreciate the pureness of a Lao afternoon stroll to Wat Long Khoun. We then finish with a heart pumping climb up 123 steps to Wat Chomphet, where we're rewarded with stunning scenic views over Phousi Mountain and the city of Luang Prabang.

Trekking distance: approx. 5 km

Trekking duration: approx. 2.5 hrs

Day grade: Easy

Day 4: Trekking To Kuangsi Waterfall

Today we leave Luang Prabang behind, and head out to Ban Long Lao, (Hmong minority village). As we wander, we'll learn more about life in this rural lowland Lao and Hmong community. Our hiking leads us through paddy fields before entering dense mixed growth jungle with a remarkable diversity of tree species. After an undulating hike through the forest, we reach Kuang Si Waterfall, where water tumbles over tiered limestone formations into crystal clear pools ideal for escaping the heat. Between cooling off in the pools, you can explore the lush forest setting around the falls. At the famous Kuang Si Waterfall, a short walk brings you down to the pool at the bottom of the waterfall with time for a swim or to enjoy relaxing by the water's edge. There's also the chance to visit the 'Free the Bear Project'.

Trekking distance: approx. 7.5 miles/12km

Trekking duration: approx. 3-4hrs

Day grade: Moderate

Ascent: 600ft/185m

Day 5: Cruise To Pak Beng (Visit Pak Ou Cave)

Enjoy a morning cruising up Mekong River to Pak Beng, taking in the beautiful countryside as you pass. We stop on the way to visit Pak Ou cave and possibly some of the numerous villages for a leisurely walk around. This is the perfect chance to learn more about the Laos villagers of the upper northern Mekong River.

Day 6: Pak Beng Explorer

In sharp contrast to riverside scenery, today's hike takes us on a narrow path through the jungle, climbing steadily towards stunning mountain views. After enjoying our picnic lunch in a local village, the afternoon sees us hike through magnificent countryside, across a stream, to another village before we return to Pak Beng, visiting the market.

Trekking distance: approx. 8.5 miles/14km

Trekking duration: approx. 5-6hrs

Day grade: Medium

Day 7: Pak Beng – Nam Kat Yorla Pa Resort

Today we head deep into the wilderness of North Laos. Departing Pakbeng, we hit the road to the Northeast towards Oudomxay province and Muang Xay town. Here we visit a temple and enjoy some nice views over the surroundings before continuing to our lodge. Nested in what feels like the middle of nowhere, this is a perfect base for fun outdoor activities.

Day 8: Full Day Forest Immersion

Today we explore the region further with a walk across the Namkat rain forest. It's an exciting adventure which includes walking over a total of 13 flying bridges hanging deep in the lush jungle. We will stop by a scenic waterfall for a well-deserved picnic lunch and, if you fancy it, a refreshing dip in the natural pools.

In the afternoon, we continue walking in the shade of some giant trees until we reach the meeting point with our vehicle to transfer back to the hotel.

Trekking distance: approx. 4.5miles/7km

Trekking duration: approx. 5hrs

Day grade: Easy

Day 9: Oudomxay – Luang Prabang

After breakfast, we depart to Luang Prabang which will take approx 5 hours. We stop on the way to visit Ban Xangkhong village, where traditional Sa paper and silks are made. Meet the craftsmen and observe them at work as we explore the village. When we reach our hotel in Luang Prabang, you'll have time on your own to go stroll around the peninsula or relax at the hotel.

Day 10: Luang Prabang - Siem Reap

Enjoy a morning of leisure. Around midday, we transfer to the airport for your flight to Siem Reap. Upon arrival, your local guide and driver will welcome you and take you to a beautiful hotel right in Siem Reap's center. Check-in and make yourself comfortable before gathering in the lobby where the guide will be waiting for you.

Tonight, we enjoy the vibe of Siem Reap's old quarter on a walking orientation tour. Our guide will us to the riverbank and the old market, venturing along some narrow alleys filled with shops, cafés and restaurants with the time to stop by and try some local foods along the way.

Day 11: The Temples Of Angkor

Get your camera ready for a day filled with amazing sights and experiences as we explore the UNESCO World Heritage site and temples of Angkor, where we visit the most-wanted temples of Angkor Park.

We explore the ancient city of Angkor Thom, surrounded by an 8m high wall. Angkor Thom was the last capital of the Great Khmer Empire under the reign of Jayavarman VII. Continuing to Bayon Temple in the exact centre of the city, this 12th century masterpiece is a study in grandeur, its exterior gallery walls featuring extensive, superb bas-reliefs, particularly the East and South Galleries.

We also visit the Ta Prohm Temple which, unlike most other Angkor temples, has been left just it was when rediscovered: a photogenic and atmospheric maze of trees growing out of temple ruins amidst jungle surroundings, making it one of Angkor's most popular temples with visitors.

In the afternoon there is the opportunity to further explore Angkor Wat, easily the most famous and best-preserved of all temples within the Angkor complex. It is a massive three-tiered structure crowned by five lotus-like towers rising 65 metres from ground level. The centrepiece of any visit to the temples around Siem Reap, Angkor Wat offers many iconic sights for amazing pictures.

This evening enjoy a special treat with a performance from PHARE, the Cambodian Circus. They have long been famous for their performances, and teaching streetkids to become circus artists is a regular at international circus conventions worldwide. Enjoy their interpretations of modern life and issues in Cambodian society.

Trekking distance: approx. 3-5 miles/ 6-8km

Trekking duration: approx. 3 hours

Day grade: easy, flat walking. To climb the temples for the views, you will need to climb stairs.

Day 12: Siem Reap – Kulen Mountain

We drive to the Kulen Mountain Range, approximately 60km from Siem Reap. Phnom Kulen is considered by Khmers to be the most sacred mountain in Cambodia and is a popular place of pilgrimage during weekends and festivals.

A small Wat at the summit of the mountain houses a large Buddha carved into the very sandstone boulder on which the structure is built. Arriving at the top, we move by foot on trails leading to the area's hidden villages. Enjoy the natural jungle setting while exploring the hidden remains of the Khmer Empire, such as life size elephant statues. Back from the jungle, we have the opportunity to visit a waterfall and take a refreshing dip in its pool.

Trekking distance: approx. 7 miles/11km

Trekking duration: approx. 3-4hours

Ascent: 430ft/130m ascent

Day grade: Moderate

Day 13: Siem Reap – Sihanoukville (By Flight)

We catch a morning flight to Sihanoukville. Upon arrival we are transferred to the heart of the wild Cardamom Mountains. It's an approx 2.5-hour drive to the North and the lands of the Trapeang Rung's community. Freshen up at the lodge before embarking for the hour's trip over the Preak Tachan River to the hidden Cardamom Tented Camp. Make yourself comfortable in your private safari-style tent. Follow the guide on an exploratory hike in the jungle around the camp, the diversity of the fauna will amaze you.

Later on, chill at the riverside restaurant as the sun sets over Botum Sakor.

Day 14: The Big Outdoors Of The Cardamoms

After an early breakfast, Wildlife Alliance Rangers will meet us and, together with an English speaking guide, embark on patrol over a network of abandoned poaching and logging trails through the dense forest. Keep your eyes peeled for wildlife like Macaque, Gibbon or Hornbill.

The half day trip will stop by the Ranger Station, where confiscated snares, traps and improvised hunting rifles are on display. After taking lunch at the station, you can choose to use one of the kayaks, or hike back to the camp.

Day 15: Drive To Phnom Penh

Enjoy breakfast at your leisure. If you are an early riser, there are plenty of self-guided hiking trails around the camp, or other activities such as the early morning wildlife boat ride which can be arranged with the guide.

Mid-morning we board the boat back to Trapeang Rung, then head towards to Phnom Penh (approx. 4-5 hours), the capital of Cambodia.

Day 16: Phnom Penh Behind The Scene

Phnom Penh is an Asian capital; the kind of destination you need to scratch the surface and explore beyond its classic sites to really know what it's made of. Get ready for a fun and experiential day around some popular but also lesser known corners of the city. The guide picks us up at the hotel and we take off by local remork to an off-center district. Have a coffee on the street, visit a true local market, wander around narrow alleys and immerse yourself into some fascinating daily life. A van loaded with bicycles will pick us up and take us on a ferry to a big island of the Mekong River. There we start a 15-kilometer ride on a small concrete road around the island; the opportunity to soak up a bit of rural life just outside Phnom Penh and to visit a silk weaving workshop.

We stop for lunch at a local home and are hosted by a charming couple of islanders. We return to the city

afterwards and will devote some time to dive into History at the Tuol Sleng museum.

We end the day with a stroll in the garden complex of the Royal Palace and the Silver Pagoda before ending our journey in style. Following our exploration of the city, we hop on a small wooden boat for a sunset cruise. Make yourself comfortable while the boat goes gently along the Tonle River. Our final dinner is on the other side of the river, a floating lounge and restaurant, which offers unique views over the city's skyline. Sip a cocktail while the chef preps the barbecue.

Day 17: Phnom Penh Departure

We have the morning at leisure before with-flight guests transfer to the airport for the overnight flights back to the UK.

Day 18: Arrive UK

With flight guests arrive back in the UK

ACCOMMODATION

Santi Resort & Spa – Luang Prabang, Laos & Cambodia

Surrounded by mountains, rice fields, and tropical greenery, the Santi Resort & Spa is a sanctuary for those seeking rest and relaxation. The resort has 67 elegantly designed rooms with traditional dark wood furnishings and private balconies. Facilities include an outdoor swimming pool, a gym, sauna, and a spa offering a range of treatments. Tuck into traditional Laotian specialties and international cuisine in the hotel's restaurant, while a choice of two bars takes care of the drinks.

Le Grand Pakbeng Resort - Pak Beng, Laos & Cambodia

With an enviable location overlooking the Mekong River, Le Grand Pakbeng has everything you'd want from a luxury resort. All 45 villas and suites boast mountain or river vistas as far as the eye can see plus private terraces for admiring the scenery in peace. There's also an outdoor, rooftop panoramic pool complete with a bar, alongside a selection of restaurants serving local and international specialities. Its serene jungle outlook, teak wood décor, and local artwork add to this resort's charm.

Namkat Yorla Pa - Oudomxay, Laos & Cambodia

The luxury resort's design draws heavily from the architectural and cultural influences of the historic Oudomxay region. Namkat Yorla Pa offers some of the world's most spacious accommodations, from our beautiful setting to our acclaimed restaurants and outstanding spa. We stay in superior rooms which are modernly furnished with 2 twin beds with private bathroom, with walk-in shower and private balcony.

Shinta Mani Resort, Siem Reap - Laos & Cambodia

The Shinta Mani Resort is a newly renovated boutique property centrally located in the leafy French Quarter between The Royal Gardens and the Old Market Area just 15 minutes from Angkor Wat. The courtyard-style resort's 62 rooms enjoy direct access or first floor balcony views to the stunning swimming pool and flourishing tropical gardens.

Cardamom Tented Camp, Koh Kong - Laos & Cambodia

The eco-camp is equipped with nine comfortable safari-style tents located inside Botum Sakor National Park that minimize the human footprint on nature and promote sustainable tourism. Each of the nine tents provides visitors with a fully-enclosed and mosquito-protected 32.6m² canvas tent. In-tent amenities include Twin,

Double or Triple beds; standing fans; bamboo and rattan furniture; bathroom facilities with hot water, rain showers, and locally-sourced soaps and shampoos; and spacious patios with sun chairs. This camp, which opened in November 2017, sees a percentage of its revenues go directly to Wildlife Alliance and its conservation efforts in the park. Any additional profits are then reinvested locally. Wildlife Alliance is also supported by the Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation, an initiative of The Minor Group.

Duong Chan Hotel - Phnom Penh, Laos & Cambodia

This 4-star hotel is nestled in the heart of Phnom Penh's historic district within easy reach of all the main sights. Once you step through its front doors, the hotel's focus on relaxation will allow you to unwind in style. Decor-wise you'll find Khmer-inspired design throughout and guest rooms include air conditioning, tea and coffee-making facilities, and bathrobes and slippers for heading to the outdoor pool and spa. Meals and drinks come courtesy of the Chantrea Restaurant & Skybar where you can admire excellent views over the city as you dine.

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Weather & Seasonality

Both Laos and Cambodia are tropical countries and generally hot all year round with a high level of humidity. There are two seasons – wet and dry – so it can be hot and wet, or hot and dry.

The average temperature in north Laos can vary from 23°C in November, to 29°C in March. Temperatures in Cambodia follow a similar pattern with November being the coolest month to travel. All of our travel dates are in the dry season.

Joining Instructions (With Flights)

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from a range of UK airports* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

Joining Instructions (Without Flights)

If you prefer to book the holiday without flights and make your own travel arrangements you will still be able to make use of the return group transfers between the airport and hotel, which are included in the cost of your holiday. You must contact us on [+44 \(0\)20 3974 8865](tel:+44(0)2039748865) or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk at least 8 weeks before your holiday start date to provide your flight details if you wish to join the transfers. If you do not contact us, we will assume you are making independent travel arrangements.

If you are arriving ahead of the group, and are meeting them at the first hotel, please leave a message at the hotel reception for the HF Holidays' leader or local leader, detailing your room number, and a mobile telephone number if possible. The leader will contact you once the group arrives. If you are arriving after the group, a message will be left for you at the hotel reception, welcoming you and giving details of the time and place to meet the group.

Essential Information

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket

- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags
- Rubbish bags
- Insect repellent

Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device

Safety On Your Holiday

Once you have made your booking, you will receive a pre-holiday questionnaire where we ask for details of next of kin and insurance details. **You must complete and return this to us - we need to have this from you at least 10 weeks before travel.**

Please also inform us of any medical situation which may affect your enjoyment of the holiday. This is important because our leaders must consider both group and individual safety at all times.

Whilst out with the group, we respectfully request that you:

- Please listen to any safety instructions and other directions from the leader
- Keep group members in view, especially if weather or visibility is poor
- Please stay where you are if you become separated from the group. The leader will retrace their steps to find you.

Each leader carries a first aid kit but is not allowed to supply any medication including aspirin, paracetamol, antihistamines and antiseptic cream. You may wish to bring these items with you in your own kit (see Suggested Kit List).

In the unlikely event that your leader is incapacitated, please use any emergency kit in their rucksack and call emergency services on 911. Please then call our emergency number (sent in your final dispatch) and let us know there is a problem.

Dietary Requirements

Please contact us as far in advance as possible if you have any specific dietary requirements and we will do our best to meet your needs.

If you require a specific meal on the flight, please let us know as soon as possible, and no later than 96 hours before travel.

Vaccinations & Health

Before booking, you should check with your doctor to see if any health precautions are needed.

The following websites provide a wealth of information on travelling and health:

<http://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/> or www.redplanet.travel/mdtravelhealth

The following vaccinations are recommended, Hepatitis A, Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid. Some may also want to consider Cholera, Hepatitis B, Japanese Encephalitis, Rabies, Tuberculosis. Laos & Cambodia are both malaria zones, so please ensure you take measures to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes, and you will need to take anti-malarial tablets.

Passports & Visas

Passports

Your passport should be valid for a minimum period of 6 months from the date of entry into Laos.

Visas

Visas are required for entry into Laos and Cambodia and can be done on arrival in both countries. Requirements vary depending on where your passport was issued. Visa conditions also change regularly.

For the most up-to-date information, contact the nearest Lao Embassy or Consulate and the Royal Cambodian Embassy, or visit the Cambodia Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation website. You should also check your residing countries website for up-to-date visa information.

For entry into Laos, you can get a visa on arrival in Laos for around \$40, plus an admin fee of \$1. If you don't have a passport photo, you will be fined \$1. Alternatively, UK passport holders can get an e-visa through the Lao e-visa website: <https://laoevisa.gov.la/index>. You must apply at least 5 days in advance.

At the Laos/Cambodia border, you may be required to fill out a departure form and, if leaving on a weekend, you may be required to pay a \$2 exit fee. For entry into Cambodia, you can get a visa on arrival which costs \$35 and you will need a visa photo. You must also fill in an arrivals form. Alternatively, UK travellers can get an e-visa through the e.visa Kingdom of Cambodia website: <https://www.evisa.gov.kh/>. This must be done at least 5 days in advance.

Useful Information

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so, and advise us of the insurance company and policy number.

We work with Campbell Irvine to provide you with competitive single and annual multi-trip insurance. Please see our website for more information and details of how to contact them for a quote: <https://www.hfholidays.co.uk/about-us/booking-information/insurance>.

For more information about healthcare abroad and its costs, please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/>.

If you are arranging your own travel insurance, please ensure it is adequate for your specific itinerary. Generally, this should include cover for walking at altitudes over 2,000m.

In Laos, the language spoken is Lao; more specifically, it is the dialect spoken and written in Vientiane. Many identical syllables are differentiated by their tone only – there are six tones in Vientiane Lao.

Some Lao basics include:

'Sabai dee' – Hello / Goodbye

'Kor toht' – Excuse me

'Ga-lu-nah' – Please

'Korp jai' – Thank you

In Cambodia, the official language is Khmer although English is widely spoken – it is fast becoming Cambodia's second language – and some French.

Some Khmer basics include:

'Johm riab sua' – Hello

'Lia suhn hao-y' – Goodbye

'Sohm toh' – Excuse me/sorry

'Sohm' – Please

'Aw kohn' – Thank you

The currency in Laos is the Lao kip (LAK). It is better to pay with small notes when buying from vendors because they often lack sufficient change. Laos currency cannot be obtained outside of the country, and prices are often quoted in US dollar (£1 = 11,064 LAK)

The currency in Cambodia is the riel (KHR), which similarly cannot be obtained out of the country (£1 = 5,356 riel). US dollars are widely accepted.

Credit cards are widely accepted in major towns and cities, but ensure you have enough currency when you're staying in more rural areas.

Note - if taking dollars, they must be clean, and not ripped, or bent.

The Cambodian authorities have issued an official dress code for visiting Angkor Wat and other religious sites. Visitors should not wear skirts or shorts above the knee or tops that reveal bare shoulders; visitors not following the dress code are liable to be refused admission to the sites.

Modest Dress

On your trip we advise you to dress modestly and respectfully. Both men and women should aim to cover their shoulders and knees, especially if visiting religious sites or rural areas. Opt for loose-fitting and conservative clothing to show respect for local customs and traditions.

Local Currency

Local Currency In Laos the Kip is the local currency but many transactions are done in USD. In Cambodia the local currency is the Riel but transactions are usually done in USD. It is advisable to take dollars with you for both countries to avoid any ATM transaction fees and non-functioning machines. Dollars must be as new as possible, clean and not torn otherwise they will not be accepted. Get plenty of \$1 bills for tipping porters and waiters.

Tipping

Tipping is at your discretion; however, it is customary in Laos and Cambodia. If you have received good service and want to tip then include hotel porters, waiters and your local leaders and drivers.

Local Time

Laos and Cambodia are GMT + 7.

Electricity

Laos: 230v, flat and round pins

Cambodia: 220v, mostly two flat pins

All hotels on this tour have a variety of plugs.

Round pin plugs European style, and two pin flat plugs, US style. Some also have the world plug configuration, so we recommend a universal plug adaptor.

Power cuts are the norm in both countries, but hotels have back up generators for these situations.

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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