



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. As the first year of operation, please anticipate many a change - but a great adventure!

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

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

Cruise Price Includes: Entrance fees, guide services (English language), gratuities to crew, main meals, locally made soft drinks, local beer and local spirits, jugged coffee and selection of teas and tisanes, mineral water. 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), imported beverages such as wines, premium spirits and liqueurs, fancy soft drinks like Perrier, espressos and cappuccinos at bar and tips to tour guides, local guides, bus drivers, boat operators and cyclo drivers.

UPSTREAM ITINERARY

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.

Transfer from airports or hotel in Vientiane or from Udon Thani (1.5hrs) in Thailand just across the river. Embarkation 11.30am, followed by lunch and afternoon explorations of the delightful French city including visits to 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

Today we 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 where we more 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. We return to the ship at Ban Muang where we overnight.

[MORE ABOUT PAK LAI](#)

DAY 4

BAN PARK BOR VILLAGE

Afternoon visit and walking tour of Ban Park Bor (Kmu Tribal) Village, a typical village, set on the banks of the Mekong amidst lush jungle.

DAY 5

BAN MOUANG KHAI VILLAGE

In the morning we pass the newly constructed lock that forms part of the Xanyaburi Hydro Electric Power Plant. Continue upstream to the village of Ban Mouang Khai.

DAY 6

LUANG PRABANG

Morning sightseeing by mini coach to visit the jungle pools and dramatic Khaung Si waterfall. We also visit a butterfly garden and elephant camp. Arrive in the heart of the temple city of Luang Prabang. After lunch, explore by tuktuk this well-preserved and unique world heritage site with its many Buddhist temples, libraries and royal palace. There is a buzzing night market and many delightful cafes and some quite good restaurants ashore.

[MORE ABOUT LUANG PRABANG](#)

DAY 7

LUANG PRABANG

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 walking tour visiting the National Museum and morning market. Afternoon free to enjoy the beauty and unique atmosphere of Luang Prabang on your own explorations ashore. Enjoy traditional Laos dancing on the upper deck late afternoon. We moor overnight in Luang Prabang.

[MORE ABOUT LUANG PRABANG](#)

DAY 8

PAK OU BUDDHA CAVES

Morning sightseeing by local boat exploring the unique Pak Ou Caves, a Buddhist sanctuary with spectacular limestone cliff faces. Sail upstream on the beautiful Mekong towards Ban Bo. After lunch, enjoy a cooking demonstration on the upper deck.

DAY 9

PAK BENG

Morning walking tour of the market town of Pak Beng. After lunch, if time permits, we explore Ban Pak Sip, a traditional riverside village full of charm and life.

DAY 10

CHIANG KHONG

Scenic cruising to the border between Laos and Thailand at Huay Say. Here we cross into Thailand where our waiting transport takes you to re-join the ship at the bustling and pretty Thai port town of Chiang Khong. Enjoy farewell cocktails and dinner on board the Laos Pandaw tonight.

[MORE ABOUT CHIANG KHONG](#)

DAY 11

GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Disembark by 8.30am in Chiang Sean and explore the Golden Triangle including a visit to the opium museum. Continue to airports or city hotels in Chiang Rai (3 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

DAY 1

VIENTIANE

Welcome to Laos! We will meet you at the airport and transfer to your hotel in Vientiane. Rest of day at leisure.

Meals: None.

DAY 2

VIENTIANE - PHONSAVANH

8:30: Pick up at hotel and drive to Vat Sisaket, the oldest original temple in Vientiane. Built in 1818, Vat Sisaket is the sole survivor of an invasion in 1828. The temple features remarkable frescoes and 6,840 Buddha images. Nearby is Ho Phra Keo, once the royal temple of Lao monarchy. Built in 1565, Ho Phra Keo has been used as a museum since 1970 and contains some of the finest Buddhist sculptures and artifacts in the country. The main structure originally housed the famous Emerald Buddha that now resides in Bangkok's Wat Phra Keo. One of the most photographed images of Vientiane is Patousay, the victory gate also known as Anousavari. Constructed in 1958, its architecture is inspired by the Arc of Triumph in Paris. Another famous Vientiane landmark is the That Luang Stupa. King Setthathirath built this great sacred stupa in 1566. Its central structure is 45 meters tall and echoes the curving lines of an elongated lotus. The original stupa was said to contain relics of Lord Buddha. Continue to visit the Morning Market (Talaat Sao), known for its superior silk weaving, metal work, and woodcarving.

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

Meals: Breakfast at hotel.

DAY 3

THE PALIN OF JARS

A full day to explore the famous Plain Of Jars, a vast area extending around Phonsavanh 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 Phonsavanh.

Meals: Breakfast at hotel, Lunch at local restaurant.

DAY 4

DEPARTURE TO 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 Pandaw vessel.

Meals: Breakfast at hotel.



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 the Vasana Plain of Jars Hotel and 1-night at the Ansara Hotel on a bed and breakfast basis, 1x lunch at local restaurant, return domestic flights from Vientiane to Phonsavan, taxes, all transfers and excursions and described and entrance fees.

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

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.

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 AIRPORT

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



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

DAY 1

ARRIVE CHIANG RAI

Disembark in Chiang Khong or Chiang Saen (depending on water levels) and transfer to Lanija Lodge. At the Lodge, enjoy a presentation covering the Hmong and Lahu tribes, the Golden triangle and the giant catfish (locally known as Pla Buek) - the world's biggest fresh water fish found in the Mekong River. Learn about current factors affecting the Mekong River and people whose lives depend on it. We tour the Hmong and Lahu hill tribe village, including a visit to the shaman house of the Hmong. Drink tea with the shaman and discover why the fireplace is important to the Hmongs and why they bury the placenta and umbilical cord of their newborn babies.

Meals: Lunch at lodge / Dinner with Traditional Hmong Dance performance.

DAY 2

CHIANG KHONG - GOLDEN TRIANGLE - DOI ANGHANG

After breakfast, get firsthand experience on how to make a Hmong batik handkerchief with Hmong people. Alternatively, you can learn how to make and set animal traps. From the lodge we walk uphill towards the Lahu community. You will see families cooking their meals, children at play and other village folk relaxing as the farmers gather their tools and head back home. At the edge of the Lahu village, high on the edge of the hill, we follow the trail that takes you to the edge of the Mekong River, where you will see Laos to your right. The path takes you through some beautiful parts of the valley as you pass plantations and corn fields with small bamboo huts scattered throughout. You will learn about the burial ground of the Hmong Hill tribe where tall grass grows under the shade of the trees. Along this route you will see farmers working their rice and crop fields. As we circle back and walk along the path on the other side of the hill, you can enjoy the diverse landscape of mountain ranges descending steep into the valleys.

In the afternoon continue to the Golden Triangle. On the way, stop at the Golden Buddha viewpoint to enjoy the spectacular 360 degree view. Visit the Hall of Opium Museum 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. Then proceed to Doi Angkhang where you will stay overnight at the natural resort.

Meals: Breakfast at lodge / Lunch at local restaurant / Dinner at resort.

DAY 3

DOI ANGKHANG - HILL TRIBE VILLAGES

Begin the day visiting the Muser Hill tribe at Baan Khob Dong village, This tribe believe in ghosts and spirits and still hold on to a very simple way of life. The Royal Project has supported this village in promoting agriculture and handicrafts. The Young Local Guide project is underway to demonstrate to visitors the local lifestyle and beliefs, as well as to create a non-migration awareness in the younger generation. We continue to Baan Nor Lae village, located on the Thai-Burmese border. The people of No Lae migrated from Myanmar about fifteen years ago. They speak their own language and are Buddhists. On every Buddhist religious day, they stay home to practice their instruction. Nor Lae village offers a magnificent view of the spectacular natural scenery around the Thai-Burmese border. We continue to Baan Khum which is a village located near the Royal Agricultural Station. This is a small community comprising people of various races such as Burmese, Hwa, and Thai Yai. They settled in the area and now run souvenir shops and restaurants. After lunch, transfer back to Angkhang Nature Resort for an afternoon at leisure.

Meals: Breakfast at hotel / Lunch at local restaurant / Dinner at hotel.

DAY 4

DOI ANGKHANG - CHIANG DAO - CHIANG MAI

Depart for Chiang Mai, en route reach Doi Angkhang National Park, enjoying the stunning mountains backdrop on the way. This area has a cool climate all year round, particularly from December to January, when even frost can be encountered. You will also visit Doi Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station which is a demonstration site for planting and the research of flowering plants, temperate fruit trees, vegetables and other crops under the patronage of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej (King Rama IX).

After lunch we continue to the Chiang Dao cave. There are four interconnected caverns to see. Be prepared to bend down and perhaps even crawl between incredible stalactites. Transfer to your hotel in Chiang Mai.

Meals: Breakfast at hotel / Lunch at local restaurant.

DAY 5

CHIANG MAI DEPARTURE

Chiang Mai is Thailand's "Rose of the North" which is a cultural and natural wonderland with ethnic diversity, a multitude of attractions and welcoming hospitality. Day at leisure until your transfer to airport or train station.

Meals: Breakfast at hotel.



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 Pandaw group tour
- The sightseeing at the Angkhang Nature Resort and Lanjia Lodge are join-in groups
- All accommodation will be booked after your deposit is received
- On day 4 of your post 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 the last day. You will have this covered during this post tour on DAY 2 instead.

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](#)