

**Thailand & Laos – ‘Northern Laos and the Golden Triangle’**  
All year round: 15D/14N ex London or 14D/13N Chiang Mai to Bangkok

A superb introduction to the spectacular scenery and traditional culture of this truly fascinating, yet little known country. From Thailand’s infamous Golden Triangle region, we’ll travel by road and by boat through the unspoilt mountains and jungles of remote Northern Laos to the ancient capital, now World Heritage Site, Luang Prabang. Explore the beautiful temples and colonial architecture of what is acknowledged to be the best preserved city in Southeast Asia, followed by a spectacular drive through the central highlands to the fascinating and mysterious Plain of Jars, before completing the tour in the present day capital of Vientiane.

**Day 1** Depart London.



**Day 2** Arrival in Bangkok and transfer to [Chiang Mai](#), the cultural and historic capital of Northern Thailand. Afternoon free to explore this charming, friendly city or just recover from jetlag by the pool before an evening tour of the famous night-bazaar.

**Day 3** Leisurely morning to wander around one of the local markets or relax by the pool. Afternoon scenic drive through the mountains to neighbouring Chiang Rai Town, formerly the main commercial centre for the infamous ‘Golden Triangle’ region – so called because of its previous notoriety for warlords and opium cultivation.

**Day 4** Day tour of some of the main sites of this far northern region. Beginning at the magnificent, mountain-top, botanical gardens at [Mae Fah Luang](#) and on to Sob Ruak where Burma, Laos and Thailand meet. Visit the unusual Opium Museum, before following the Mekong River via the historic ruined city of Chiang Saen to our day’s destination, the scenic riverside town of Chiang Khong.



**Day 5** Time to cross the Mekong into Laos itself where we’ll begin with a drive up-country through mountains and jungle to the remote town of Luang Nam Tha near the Chinese border. Stop off on the way to visit the scenic Kao Rao limestone cave system, only recently discovered, as well as some of the area’s traditional minority villages. Accommodation at a beautifully situated [eco lodge](#) on the banks of the Tha River.

**Day 6** Day trip into the surrounding Nam Ha National Protected Area to hike through some of the spectacular scenery and visit some of the local hill-tribe villages to discover the traditional way of life of the area's ethnic Akha people. Guides will show you some of the various forest plants used by the hill-tribe peoples as medicine or food, as well as cooking a traditional Akha jungle lunch.

**Day 7** Continue across the mountains of Oudom Xai Province to the picturesque village of Nong Khiaw on the banks of the Ou River. Stopping to visit a Hmong village and hill-tribe market on the way and staying overnight in traditional Lao style wooden chalets set spectacularly on the banks overlooking the river.

**Day 8** Boat trip up the scenic Nam Ou. The section north of Nong Khiaw is perhaps the most spectacular stretch of the river, winding through dramatic limestone escarpments. We will stop at a Khmu/Hmong village inaccessible by road. Return to Nong Khiaw in the afternoon with some time to relax in this superb mountain setting. Time to discover the area on foot or bicycle or just sit back on your balcony and admire the mountains and river below.

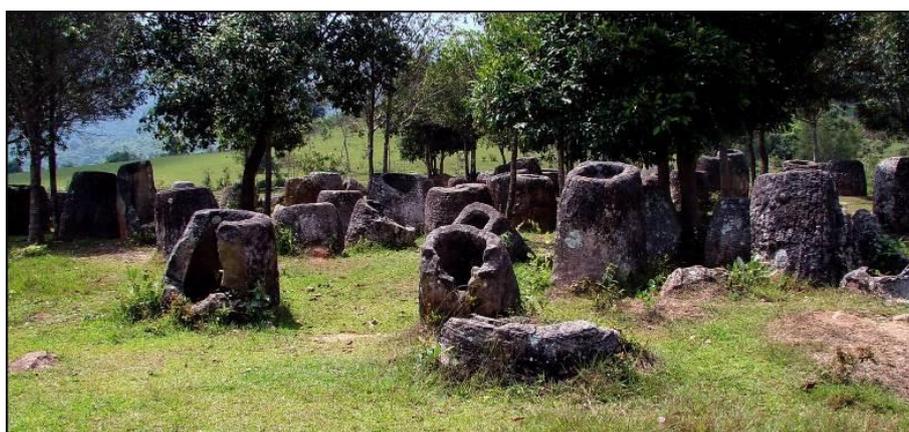
**Day 9** Morning drive south, following the Ou River Valley, to the famous cave temples near Pak Ou. Lunch in a riverside café. Visit a local village, with an afternoon arrival in the ancient Lao capital of [Luang Prabang](#). Sunset at the nearby Phu Si hill temple.

**Day 10** Nestled in the mountains, long isolated from the outside world, we'll discover World Heritage Site, Luang Prabang's fabulous temples, French colonial architecture and taste Lao delicacies (and the famous Lao beer!) in riverside cafes. Morning walking tour of the town including the National Museum & former king's palace, Wat Xiengthong, Phu Si Hill Temple and the Fine Arts School to see how traditional Lao arts and handicrafts are being preserved. The afternoon is at leisure to allow you to wander the quiet, picturesque lanes or check out the hill-tribe handicraft market?

**Day 11** Day trip through the surrounding hills to visit the spectacular Kuang Si Waterfalls and to discover the fascinating, traditional village life of some of the local peoples.



**Day 12** Early departure for a drive along scenic mountain roads to Phonsavan Town in Xieng Khouang province – location of the famous and mysterious 'Plain of Jars'. Stops on the way include; Ban Kiu Kam Pone, a Khmu village, Phou Khoun for lunch, and the Hmong village of Ban Son Boom. Our final stop of the day is a reminder that this region played a major part during the Vietnam War as we visit a hidden cave temple that served as an army hospital during the combat. Late afternoon arrival in Phonsavan and atmospheric dusk visit to one of the famous jar sites.



**Day 13** Morning visit to the [Mines Action Group](#) or MAG office to learn about the work they do in clearing land mines and unexploded ordnance in the area. We then transfer out to the picturesque Jar Site 2, and begin our 1 hour trek along the ridge to the impressive Jar Site 3, consisting over around 150 jars located on top of a hill, offering great views over the surrounding countryside. Lunch in Phonsavan before a flight to the Lao capital of Vientiane and time perhaps to stretch our legs with a stroll along the Mekong waterfront for sundowners in a riverbank cafe?

**Day 14** Day tour of some of the city's fascinating sites; Si Saket Temple with its thousand Buddha images, the bustling morning market and Vientiane's most famous monument – the That Luang Stupa as well as the unusual 'Buddha Park'. Less cheerful, but we feel important and highly informative stops, will also be made at the excellent [COPE](#) exhibition centre, highlighting a major problem many of the local people face daily in the form of unexploded ordnance as a result of the heavy bombing campaigns during the Vietnam War era and the Lao Disabled Women's Centre, which provides valuable training and schooling for disabled women in Laos.



**Day 15** Morning departure from Vientiane via Bangkok and evening arrival in London.

**Notes:** this tour is offered inclusive of return flights from London. Those persons not wishing to take up the flight option would join the tour in Chiang Mai on day 2 and finish in Bangkok on day 15. (Flight from Vientiane to Bangkok **included**.)

**Highlights:** Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Golden Triangle, Luang Nam Tha, hill-tribe villages, Nong Khiaw, boat trip on Ou River, Pak Ou Caves, temples and colonial architecture of World Heritage Luang Prabang, Plain of Jars, Vientiane, Thai and Lao food

**Fitness:** easy to moderate, maximum hiking – 5-6 hrs on day 6 but all hikes can be tailored to suit any ability

**Accommodation:** hotel, eco-lodge

**Transport:** minibus, boat, tuk-tuk, flight

**Meals;** full board except lunch on days 2, 10 & 15 and dinner on days 8, 11 & 14

A banner for All Points East Tours &amp; Travel. It features a row of seven small images: a circular logo with '5318 ATOL PROTECTED', a tropical beach with a boat, a temple spire, a tree with roots, a lake with mountains, a woman and child, and an elephant. To the right is the 'ALL POINTS EAST TOURS &amp; TRAVEL' logo. Below the images, the contact information is displayed: 'UK +44 (0) 2392 258859', 'Thailand +66 (0) 81 885 9490', 'www.allpointseast.com', and 'info@allpointseast.com'.