

blogs/AsiaTracks\_LAO - Vang Vieng - Rice fields copy\_5df97d1b7ff22.jpg

# Practical info Laos

Here you will find a short summary of useful facts, tips and advice for planning a trip to Laos. Does the overview below not answer your questions? Feel free to contact Asiatracks for tailored advice! Please email us at [info@asiatracks.nl](mailto:info@asiatracks.nl)

## Travel documents

It is possible to apply for an e-visa for passport holders for almost all countries when entering Laos for a maximum of 30 days. Please [check here](#) if your country is eligible for an e-visa or [apply here for an e-visa](#). It takes about 3 working days to apply for an e-visa. Do not forget to print your e-visa and take it with you! Are you travelling through Laos for more than 30 days or do different rules apply for your country? Then you must apply for a visa at [a Laos embassy or consulate](#).

**Notice:** Your passport must be valid for at least six months after leaving Laos and must contain at least one empty visa page. You are always responsible for being in possession of valid documents and visas.



## Vaccinations

For a valid vaccination advice please contact a recognised travel clinic, as the current vaccination advice often differs per instance. In general, the following vaccinations are recommended for Laos: DTP and Hepatitis A. For different parts of Laos other advice may apply. Your health insurer will sometimes partially reimburse these costs. Consult your health care policy and check in advance through which health care institution these vaccinations may be reimbursed.

## Health and medicines

Bring a compact travel pharmacy, which offers a solution for the first, small accidents. Iodine, band-aids and painkillers are practical items. ORS, a salt-sugar solution to be mixed with water, is also a good remedy for diarrhoea to prevent dehydration. Also diarrhoea inhibitors (iodine, loperamide) can be useful. These things are also available on location, but it is convenient in case of an emergency when you already have it with you.

If you are on daily medication, please check if you need a medical passport or certificate. If your medication falls under the Opium Act, you might have to submit a medical certificate upon arrival. Opiates include sleeping pills, strong painkillers and medication for ADHD.

**Tip:** No matter where you travel, you should carry all medications (even vitamins) in their original packaging, along with their original prescription. It is also a good idea to carry a letter from your doctor explaining what the medications are (using generic names, what they're for and dosage instructions).

Water from the tap is not drinkable in Laos: for this you buy bottles of water. Other risks: avoid ice cubes, peeled fruit, food from street stalls, raw vegetables (salads). Make sure food has been properly heated.

## Money matters

The currency in Laos is the Laos Kip. Look for today's exchange rate on for example [xe.com](https://www.xe.com). It is most practical to withdraw cash directly from an ATM upon arrival at the airport. Always take some cash euros or US dollars (clean notes, without tears, folds, scratches) with you from home. These are easy to exchange and can come in handy. Finally, a credit card is also highly recommended: it allows you to pay and/or withdraw money from an ATM in case of an emergency (i.e. your regular bank card does not work).

**Important:** some bank accounts require you to set your debit card to 'World' so that you can also withdraw money and pay outside your country or continent. It is best to use ATMs that are affiliated with your bank.

As a spending indication, we estimate you to spend at least around 225 euros per person per week on activities, meals, admission tickets or entrances to National Parks.



**Tip:** download the taxi app Grab (Uber of Asia): with this you can order a (car or motorbike) taxi anywhere, with the price indicated in advance.

## Entrance fee

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## Tipping

Tipping is common in many tourist spots in Laos; in larger restaurants (about 10% of the bill), in hotels (----- per bag for a porter) and also for drivers. For a driver who stays with you for a longer period of time, you can assume about ---- euro per person per day (depending on the number of travelers and the number of days). For a guide staying with you for several days we recommend an amount of --- euro per person per day (depending on the number of participants). Further global guidelines: A tip for someone providing a one-time, small service: approx. ?N ----; for someone you really want to reward for a special, one-time service (e.g. a day guide): ?N ---- in total.

## Climate

Laos has two seasons. The rainy season runs from May to October and the dry season from November to April. It is best to visit Laos in the first part of the dry season, November to January, because then the temperature is a bit cooler. The temperature is tropically warm all year round and fluctuates from just below to above 30 degrees. In high altitude areas it is logically a bit fresher and especially in the evening it may be necessary to put on a jacket or coat. More information about the weather [can be found here](#).

## Public holidays

In Laos most holidays are related to Buddhism. In addition to the usual New Year's Eve, Lao also celebrate the Boun Pi Mai. This is the traditional new year for the Lao and is celebrated for three days in April. Boun Pi Mai is one big water festival where water is used to wash away any sins through water fights on the streets. In Luang Prabang monks are ceremoniously poured with water in the temples in the city. A month later, during Bun Bang Fai, beautifully dressed monks with homemade bamboo fireworks rockets light these on an open field. The rockets are fired to evoke the water for the rainy season. More information about holidays in Laos [can be found here](#).

## Safety



For visitors, Laos is a travel destination with some security risks, check [the foreign travel advice here](#). Risks that you as a traveller should always be aware of are petty crime (pickpockets, bag theft).

**Tip:** Scan your travel documents/credit cards/insurance details and keep them on your phone or in a folder in your mail, so you can access them anywhere on the internet. Use the lockers in your accommodation or carry your valuables in a money belt on your body.

## Electricity

In Laos you may need an adapter and/or inverter, [please check here](#) if this is the case for you. It might be useful to purchase a travel plug just in case. In some remote areas there is no 24-hour electricity, so it might come in handy to bring a flashlight on your travel.

## Communication

Laos has a good mobile network. Calling over regular lines is possible, but often the most expensive option. Calling via internet and apps is easy to do and much cheaper. After arrival in Laos you can possibly buy a local SIM card with an internet bundle, so you are also online during the trip. Many hotels also offer free Wifi, which you as a guest can use with a password.

## Time difference

The time zone in Laos is GMT+7 and they do not make use of summer time. Here you can find the [actual time](#) in Laos.

## Language

The official language of Laos is Lao and has a unique alphabet. Most people can only speak a few words English, many young people who have to deal with tourists speak English. In addition, older Lao sometimes speaks French.

## Eating and drinking



The Lao food is similar to Thai cuisine but is less refined. This is because Lao do not go out to eat very often. That is why you will not always find eateries or restaurants outside the tourism area or larger towns. However, there are often noodle soup places available where is eaten with chop sticks. Fruit juices are also available in abundance and good thirst-quenchers.

**Tip:** if you want to learn more about the Laos kitchen, we can organize fun cooking workshops in different places.

## Visiting

If you are invited to a family home in Laos, take off your shoes at the door. Make sure you are dressed appropriately (shoulders and knees covered). You can bring a present (e.g. a tin of biscuits or other snacks) and this will be accepted and out of courtesy only opened out of sight. Remember that it is rude to show the bottom of your feet to the company or point at someone.

If you want to give something to children along the way, think of pencils, notebooks or children's books (and not candy or money). Do not distribute directly to children, but do so through an adult, who will distribute it to the children for you.

## Clothing

Despite the tropical climate, it is not common in Asia to go scantily clothed on the streets. Especially, when visiting someone's house, temples and other religious buildings it is advisable to dress with respect: knees and shoulders covered, shirts with (half long) sleeves and 'just in case' always bring a thin scarf or sarong. During normal days shorts/skirts up to the knee and a T-shirt with sleeve are acceptable in most areas. Avoid cleavage with, for example, singlets (for women) or mountain bikes with a loose-fitting T-shirt. Swimwear should only be worn on the beach or by the pool. When visiting the jungle, it is best to wear closed shoes with a good profile. In an area with a lot of mosquitoes, we always recommend long sleeves and long trousers.

## Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in air-conditioned areas, all airports and some other public areas. Make sure you do not run into a fine and check in advance whether smoking is prohibited.

## Photography



People in Laos generally like to be photographed if you ask permission in advance. If you want to photograph people in Laos, always ask permission first. You run the risk of them asking if they can photograph you. Some tribes or ethnic groups don't appreciate it, so be cautious about this. It can also happen that people only want to be photographed for a fee. At some temples, Wat Phu in Champasak for example, you have to pay extra entrance fees for your camera or video. It is forbidden to take pictures of post offices, barracks, airports, bridges.

## Travel guides and books

- **ANWB**-wereldreisgids Indonesië (Nederlands): complete gids over de meeste eilanden.
  - **Michelin gids** Indonesië (Nederlands): complete gids voor Java, Bali, Lombok, Flores en Sulawesi.
  - **Dominicus** Indonesië (Nederlands): Java, Bali, Lombok, Sumatra, vooral veel achtergrond-info; minder praktische info.
  - **Elmar** reishandboek Indonesië (Nederlands; 2018): Java, Bali, Lombok & Komodo
  - **Trotter** reisgids Indonesië (Nederlands): Java, Bali, Lombok; kwalitatief goede informatie maar weinig uitgebreid.
  - [Gids Historische Stadswandelingen Indonesië](#) (Nederlands): stadswandelingen in 9 Indonesische steden
  - **Reisgids Indonesië oorlogsplekken 1942-1949** (Nederlands): uitgebreide informatie over alle locaties van kampen en gebeurtenissen in Nederlands-Indië uit die tijd.
  - **Rough Guide** Indonesia (Engels): Bijzonder uitgebreide reisgids voor heel Indonesië. Veel praktische informatie.
  - **Lonely Planet** Indonesia (Engels): de bekendste reisgids voor heel Indonesië, vol met praktische informatie. Er bestaat ook een versie met alleen Bali & Lombok. Alle teksten zijn ook digitaal te verkrijgen.
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