



### **CAPITAL CITY**

The capital city of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR is the official name of Laos) is **Vientiane**.

### **SIZE**

Inland area: 236,800 Km<sup>2</sup>.

### **GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION**

Laos is a landlocked country on the eastern coast of the Southeast Asian Indochinese Peninsula, shares its borders with 05 countries: China to the north, Myanmar to the northwest, Thailand to the west, Cambodia to the south, and Vietnam to the east.

Around 70% of its terrain consists of rugged mountains, dense jungles, and plateaus, with peaks ranging from 1,500 to 2,500 meters. The highest point is Phou Bia, at 2,820 meters.

The 1,800-km-long Mekong River is Laos's main transportation route. Most farmland and half the population are concentrated along the river's plain.

### **POPULATION**

**As of 2025**, Laos has an estimated population of **7.87 million**.

Laos is home to 69 ethnic minority groups, categorized into three main groups: Lao Loum (lowland), Lao Theung (midland), and Lao Sung (highland).

The population includes 48% Lao, 14% Tribal Thai, 13% Sino-Tibetan (e.g., Hmong, Yao), 24% Mon-Khmer, and 1% Vietnamese and Chinese.

65% of the population practices Buddhism.

### **LANGUAGE**

Lao is the official language of Laos.

The Lao writing system is based on the Lao script, which comes from the Khmer script and has roots in the ancient Indian Brahmi script. It uses a combination of consonants, vowels, and tone markers to represent the sounds of the Lao language.

French and English are used in business and tourism regions.

### **CURRENCY**

The currency of Laos is the **Lao Kip (LAK) (₭)**.

As of **March 2025**, the exchange rate is: 1 USD = 21,300 LAK, 1 EUR = 23,200 LAK

Banknotes: 1,000 LAK, 2,000 LAK, 5,000 LAK, 10,000 LAK, 20,000 LAK, 50,000 LAK and 100,000 LAK.

### **ATM & Credit Card Usage**

- ATMs are widely available in cities and tourist areas, dispensing Lao Kip.
- Visa and MasterCard are commonly accepted, but American Express and UnionPay may have limited acceptance.
- Cash is preferred in rural areas, so carrying small denominations of Kip is recommended.

**Travel Tip: Cash Recommendations**

- Prepare US Dollars in cash for convenience, or exchange Euros for USD in your home country for better rates.
- Carry small USD notes for initial expenses and small Lao Kip (₭) notes for minor purchases.
- Avoid using old, scribbled, or stained banknotes for exchanging Kip, as banks and exchange offices may not accept them.

Banks are usually open from 08h00 to 15h30 from Monday to Friday. Only a few banks open half-day on Saturday.

**CLIMATE**

Laos has a tropical monsoon climate with two seasons:

- **Dry Season (November–April):** Sunny and dry, with lower humidity. Temperatures range from 20–30°C (68–86°F), making it the most popular time for travel.
- **Green Season (May–October):** Characterized by heavy rainfall and high humidity. Temperatures range from 25–35°C (77–95°F).

Temperatures are warm all year-round. However, it can be very cold in mountainous areas from November to February.

The dry season is ideal for hiking, river cruises, and sightseeing. During the wet season, waterfalls are at their most spectacular, and rice fields come alive in brilliant green hues.

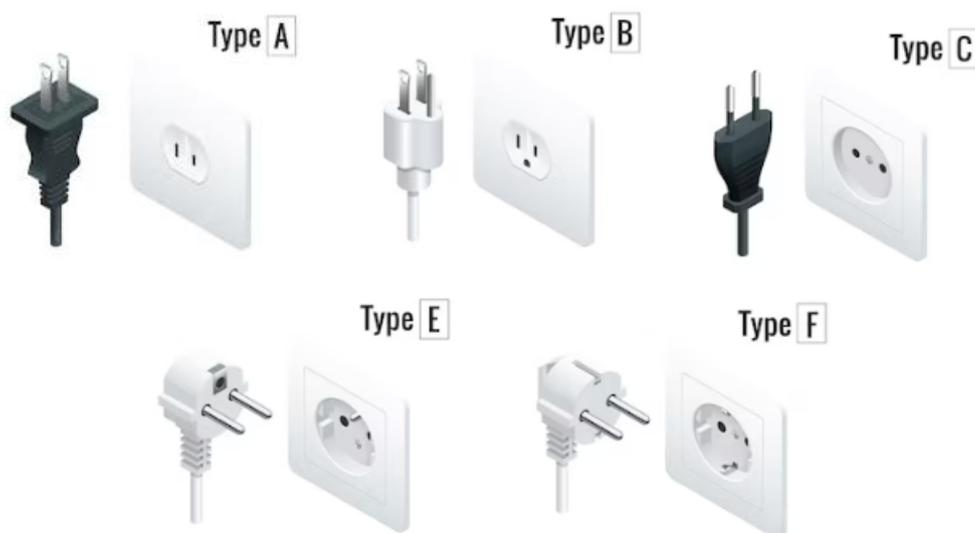
**LOCAL TIME**

Laos is 7 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.

**ELECTRICITY**

In Laos electricity is **230V**.

Laos uses plug types A, B, C, E, and F. Therefore, a universal travel adapter is recommended to fit these outlets. Travelers are advised to bring a universal adapter and a voltage converter if needed.



**TAP WATER**

It is very advisable not to drink water from the tap unless it is boiled properly.

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

The telephone country code for Laos is **+856**.

Local SIM cards are affordable and widely available at airports, shops, and kiosks. It is required to have a passport for registration.

4G is available in urban areas, but coverage may be limited in rural regions.

Free Wi-Fi is common in hotels, cafés, and restaurants in cities like Vientiane and Luang Prabang, while internet access may be slower or unavailable in rural areas.

---

### HEALTH & MEDICAL FACILITIES

No vaccination is required, but visitors are advised to receive inoculations against hepatitis A and B, typhoid, rabies and tetanus, and to make sure whether anti malaria treatment is necessary depending on the region they travel to. Inoculation for yellow fever is not necessary although doctors still usually recommend it.

Healthcare facilities in Laos, especially in rural areas, may not meet international standards. Urban centers like Vientiane and Luang Prabang have better-equipped private clinics and hospitals with **English-speaking staff services**.

For life threatening injury, it is advisable to be evacuated to Bangkok or Singapore, and we therefore strongly recommend taking out medical travel insurance with medical evacuation coverage.

---

### TRANSPORTATION

There are **3 international airports** in Laos: Wattay in Vientiane located 15 minutes from the town centre, Luang Prabang in the North, 10 minutes from the heart of the historic quarter, and Pakse in the South located 10 minutes from the town center. These airports provide essential links to countries like Thailand, Vietnam, China, and Cambodia.

**Laos - China high-speed train**, including the service for domestics from Vientiane to other provinces such as: Vientiane, Muangkasi, Vangvieng district, Luangprabang, Oudomxay, Luangnamtha province.

**Travel by car or bus**, it takes about 7-8 hours from Vientiane to reach Pakse and 8-9 hours from Vientiane to Luang Prabang. **Boat** is ideal for traveling along the Mekong River.

---

### DRIVING

In Laos, we drive on the right side.

Owners of an International Driving license are allowed to drive a car.

Renting a motorbike is possible but can be, for security reason from time to time, temporarily forbidden in some areas by the local police.

Road conditions have improved in cities but still need to be upgraded in some rural areas.

---

### CUISINE

Laos cuisine shares similarities with Thai cuisine, both emphasize fresh ingredients, bold flavors, and the use of herbs and spices.

Traditional Laotian cuisine boasts over 350 specialties from different provinces. The most famous one is the **Lap (Larb)**, a salad with thin slices of chicken, fish or pork. Meals are generally moderately spicy and often feature a wide variety of flavorful sauces.

Main cities now offer an increasing selection of international restaurants.

---

### CUSTOMS AND HABITS

Freedom of religion and freedom to believe or not to believe are enshrined in Laotian law.

Most Laotians are Buddhists. It is therefore advisable to adopt an attitude that respects local customs.

- Greetings: The traditional Lao greeting is the **nop** (palms pressed together with a slight bow). It's a polite way to show respect, especially to elders and monks.
- Dress code: Dress modestly, especially when visiting temples or attending traditional ceremonies (Baci). Cover shoulders and knees to show respect for local customs.
- Religious objects displayed in pagodas must not be touched. It is essential to show deference to the bhikkhu. A woman must not offer her hand or speak to them. Do not touch monks or their belongings and avoid sitting higher than them. Remove the shoes before entering homes or sacred sites.

### SHOPPING

Although Laos is still under development, you can find all kinds of products often imported from Thailand. There is however a strong tradition of cotton and silk weaving. Beautiful fabrics and manufactured products can be found. Prices displayed are usually fixed, but in other cases do not hesitate to bargain.

### TIPPING

Tipping is not mandatory although it is appreciated. Note that prices in hotels and restaurants usually include 10% for VAT.

### ACCESS

Laos does not have direct flights from Europe or the United States.

Travelers typically connect through major hubs in Asia, such as Bangkok (Thailand), Hanoi (Vietnam), or Seoul (South Korea), before flying to Laos.

Please find below a list of carriers offering services in Laos:

- |                          |                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| ✓ Bangkok Airways        | ✓ Vietnam Airlines |
| ✓ China Eastern Airlines | ✓ Air Asia         |
| ✓ Lao Airlines           |                    |
| ✓ Thai Airways           |                    |

Aside from access via the airport, Laos offers convenient land access to Thailand through its four Friendship Bridges (connecting Vientiane – Nong Khai; Savannakhet – Mukdahan; Kham Muan – Nakhon Phanom; Bo Kaeo – Chiang Rai). Opening in May 2025, the upcoming fifth bridge will further enhance connectivity by linking Borikhamxay (Laos) with Bueng Kan (Thailand). These bridges are vital for trade, travel, and regional connections.

### VISA AND PASSPORT

Most travelers will need a visa to enter Laos.

**Citizens of Luxembourg and Switzerland can visit Laos without a visa for up to 15 days.**

To obtain a visa, ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months after your return date; and should have at least **two blank pages** for the visa stamp.

- **E-Visa:** Apply online before travel. Submitted 7-10 days before arrival at the Official site: [www.laoevisa.gov.la](http://www.laoevisa.gov.la). e-Visa valid for 30 days and is accepted at major entry points, including major airports (Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Pakse), Lao-Thai Friendship Bridges (I, II, IV), and specific railway and land checkpoints (Boten, Khamsavath).
  - **Visa on Arrival:** Available at certain airports and land borders, also valid for 30 days (to contact us for more details).
  - **Embassy Visa:** Obtain in advance from a Lao embassy or consulate.
- For USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, E.U and Switzerland citizen's visas can be acquired either directly or through your travel agency at Laotian Embassies and Consulates abroad.

### BEFORE GOING

Pack appropriate clothing for the season and region — warm clothes for northern areas (Samnua, Phongsaly, Luang Nam Tha, Oudomxay, Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang) and light clothing for the south, except in Paksong (Salavan Province).

We also recommend you bring along mosquito repellent and high-factor sunblock, a cap or a hat, sunglasses, a raincoat, and a small bag to carry a few things in case you have to leave your big suitcases at the hotel for a few days.

Laos is a predominantly Buddhist country. So, you should pay attention to what you are wearing (avoid shorts and clothing that exposes your shoulders) when you visit temples or pagodas and choose easy-to-walk-in shoes or sandals (without laces).

For safety reasons, we advise travelers not to leave valuables in vehicles during their journey.



***PHOENIX VOYAGES WISHES YOU A PLEASANT TRIP***