



FLY and BiKE
internationaal gezelschap

7 Days/6 Nights
Departure Dates:

2009

1 - 7 November

27 December - 02 January

2010

7 - 13 February

14- 20 March

20 -26 June

31 October - 6 November

26 December - 1 January

If these dates don't suit your travel schedule, please **contact us** to talk about operating a private tour or customizing a tour for you or your group.

Prices

USD 975 Tour

USD 125 Fiets

€ 175 Single Supplement

De prijzen in Euro vindt u
op de website
www.flyandbike.be

Southern Laos

The Land of a Million Elephants, as Laos was once known, is opening up to tourists after years of war and isolation. Consequently, a visit to Laos is like stepping back in time and the citizens have retained innocence and charm that is as rare as it is valuable. The mountains and rivers are pristine in this land-locked country, squeezed between China, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Its Buddhist population of less than 5 million are deeply religious and, despite years of foreign domination, outside interference and misrule, Laos has managed to maintain a way of life that is arguably the most purely Southeast Asian of all the counties in the region.

The peaceful and tolerant nature of the Lao people is legendary in the region, where they are regarded as humble, hospitable and easy going. As part of Indochina, Laos was colonized by the French and the cities of Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Pakse have inherited the classical, elegant, if little faded, character only French architects can inspire.



Although Laos has some genuinely interesting attractions to offer - the Plain of Jars in Xieng Khuang Province, the forested mountains of Northern Laos, the gothic limestone karsts around Vang Vieng and Si Phan Don (Four Thousand Islands) where the mighty Mekong spreads in the Southern Laos - it is the warmth and sincere friendliness of its people that will live forever in the hearts of anyone fortunate enough to visit.

Trip Profile

Our biking sojourn takes us through the Southern Lowlands from Pakse down to the Cambodian border before heading north and then east to the fertile lands of the coffee rich Bolaven Plateau. We cover more than 400 kilometres in 7 cycling days and much, if not most, of the terrain is quite flat except for the days up on the plateau. There are some great natural attractions and a chance to spot the rare Irrawaddy dolphins makes this one tour that has absolutely something for everyone.

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Biking Difficulty



(out of five)

Good quality tarmac roads with some long days and hills. No technical experience required.

Along the way the scenery is constantly changing: we go from arid scrubland to jungle and lush green valleys. The views at some of the places we stay are absolutely amazing and this combined with the changing scenery make this tour a feast for the eyes. Apart from cycling, we take time out to see 5th Century temples of Wat Phu, some wonderful waterfalls, visit one of the best coffee growing areas in the world and hopefully are lucky enough to sight the elusive Irrawaddy dolphins from one of the Mekong's 4000 islands.

Biking Conditions: The road surfaces are mixed: most days we ride on reasonably good quality asphalt roads, but there are enough rides on very badly broken or dirt tracks to mean you will need a mountain bike, and preferably one with front shocks. However, there is nothing technical involved on this tour and anyone, assuming they are fit enough, will be able to join no matter how little cycling experience they have. A support truck is always available to help when required.

Suitability: This ride is a great ride for novices and experts alike. The majority of this ride is flat apart from the end of day 4 and the start of day 5 (after that it is down hill all the way) and it undulates on day 7. The road surfaces are generally very good and so make for easier riding. Anyone who has moderate fitness will enjoy this tour. If you are in doubt please contact us for advice or a list of references.

South Laos Updated itinerary (10/03/10)

We have updated the itinerary from the original based on client feedback. Please note that no sites have been dropped, but we have decreased some of the riding distances to make some of the days less hectic. On Day 3 we have replaced riding on the highway with dirt tracks across four islands, making it a very special ride. If you are unhappy with any of the changes, please discuss them with the guides and your concerns will be addressed.



Cycling Distance

Up to 298 kilometres

Cycling Days

6 full

Day to Day

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

Day 1 – Ubon Ratchatani to Champasak

Start point of the tour is Ubon Ratchatani, you will be met by our team either at your hotel, the airport or train station and then at 9 am we will transfer to the Laos border at Chongmek. Once visa formalities have been completed we drive about 1 hour more to the start of our ride. We'll start cycling on a flat tarmac road, passing through the town of Champasak which stretches along the Mekong River. We ride 8 km to Wat Phu, a Khmer Hindu temple complex dating back to the 5th Century. Here we'll have a picnic lunch and have time to explore this fascinating place before we ride back to Champasak and transfer to the ferry that will take us to our eco-friendly hotel on Don Daeng Island. You'll have time to enjoy the pool, go for a walk on the beach or just relax. In the late afternoon you can join in an optional 14 km ride around the island and be back in time for sundowners.

La Folie Hotel. Ride 30 km. L D

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Day 2 – Don Daeng – Don Khong

We start the day with a ferry ride to the other side of the river and ride to the village of Ban Niet Ngong. Once we reach the village we can opt to ride or walk up to see Phu Asa, a curious site of stone towers. We have lunch here and then ride back down to the main junction before we load up the vans for a transfer to Ban Nakasan where we cross back over to the Mekong to one of the biggest of the islands in this mighty river, Don Khong. Arriving in the late afternoon will give you time to walk along the river and watch as the locals make full use of the river. Feel the calmness and serenity of your surroundings and absorb the atmosphere.

Senesothxeune Hotel. Ride 34 km. B L D

Day 3 – Don Khong – Don Khone

Today we island hop! We'll have an early start and ride around Don Khong and along the banks of the river to the ferry, stopping along the way to see locals making palm sugar. When we reach the ferry it's only 200m to the island of Don Som, one of the longest islands in the Mekong and stretches about 12 km to where it meets the tip of Don Det. It's another quick ferry ride to Don Det and we cycle along a dirt path the old French Railway bridge and cross over to Don Khone where we'll ride to then we'll head to boats for a leisurely cruise by boat in search of the nearly extinct Irrawaddy dolphins. We then ride the 4 km to our riverside hotel. A varied ride over four islands on narrow dirt tracks means there'll be no vehicle support, but we will still stop for water and snack breaks.

Seng Arun. Ride 50 km. B L D

Day 4 – Don Khone – Bolaven Plateau

After breakfast we can relax as we transfer for about 2 hours to begin our journey into the coffee growing area of Laos: the Bolaven Plateau. Just past Pakse we start to climb up into the temperate coffee growing area renowned for its Arabica and Robusta beans. These beans fetch some of the highest coffee prices in the world. The road undulates, but overall we are climbing and though it is gentle the heat can make it challenging. We will take a break at a tea plantation bucking the trend of all the surrounding coffee plantations. We'll finish riding early afternoon at the wonderful Tad Fane resort which overlooks the very impressive 200 m Tad Fane Falls. If you are still feeling energetic you can take the short, but steep, walk down to the top of the falls for a dip. Alternatively, you can relax in the restaurant and take in the wonderful view.

Tad Fane Resort. 37 km. B L D

Day 5 – Bolaven Plateau – Tad Lo

Today we cycle more than 70 km of varied riding. We start with a short 5 km cycle to Tad Huang waterfalls and take a short walk down to see them. Then it's back on the road for a stop with Mr. Coffee. Enjoy a taste of freshly brewed coffee and learn how an entrepreneur is exporting Laos beans worldwide. We'll ride on to Tha Teng on a quiet road, passing villages and lots of cheering children. After lunch we'll hit a dirt road, watch out here for piglets crossing, and stop at Kuti village to see how they roast coffee and why there are empty coffins under the houses. Then it's an easy, though it might get dusty, downhill. When we again hit tarmac it's only 5 km to Tad Lo waterfalls and our riverside overnight. Take a dip in the waterfalls before we have an alfresco dining experience overlooking the falls to round off a great day.

Tad Lo Lodge. Ride 75 km. B L D

- **We have carefully chosen accommodation that is the best available for the location and offer a good mix, from home stays to luxurious lodges, on our tours.**

- **We love Asian cuisine, well-known for being hot and spicy and for its use of fresh ingredients, and will make sure you get to sample lots of it.**

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Laos grows both Robusta and Arabica coffee beans on the Bolaven Plateau. In 2007 Laos produced 20,000 tons of java, but exported all but 500 tons of it. To drink coffee Laos-style you'll be given a glass with sweet condensed milk in the bottom. Stir and enjoy!

Day 6 – Rest Day

Today we are free to enjoy this wonderful area and hotel. Wake up early to watch elephants making their way into the waterfalls for their morning bath, go on a short walk to visit a tribal village or sunbathe and swim at the falls. For those who want to cycle we'll go on a late afternoon off road ride.

Tad Lo Lodge. Optional 20 km. B

Day 7 – Tad Lo – Ubon Ratchatani

As we leave the Bolaven Plateau behind we ride on an undulating road that has a few surprises – some lengthy but gradual climbs, one is 5 km, another 14km. We'll ride 52 km to Tad Pha Suam where we can see different styles of traditional Laotian homes and another amazing waterfall. We'll then transfer an hour to the Pakse Hotel for a shower and lunch. Then we drive back to the border and cross into Thailand for a 16:00 arrival in Ubon Ratchatani in time to catch early evening flights or trains.

Ride 52 km. B L

Nuts & Bolts

Bikes: Rental bikes included. The bikes are well-known makes of Hybrid or Mountain bikes (depending on the tour) with lightweight alloy frames, 24- to 27-speed gearing, v-brakes and Shimano components and front suspension.

Safety: Wearing a helmet is strongly recommended on all our biking adventures and if you choose not to wear one you will be asked to sign a liability waiver. Your tour leader is trained in first aid and emergency rescue, but to a large degree you must be responsible for your own safety while riding. It is therefore compulsory that you take out travel insurance that will cover you for a mountain biking tour.

Support: We will be supported by air-conditioned vehicles. The vehicles follow us when we are on roads and are always available for tired cyclists. It is very easy to get bikes on and off, so you can rest when you are tired and cycle whenever you feel like it. There are a few places on the islands where there will be no vehicle support, but these are for short distances.

Guides: You will be led by a local English-speaking guide and if the group is 8 people or more we will add another guide to the tour. All our guides are well informed in the history, culture and religions of the area where you are biking and are skilled at passing that knowledge on to you. Your guide is also medically trained and an experienced cyclist, able to handle most minor repairs en route.

The Nitty Gritty

Arriving and Departing: This tour starts at 9 am on Day 1 and ends at 4 pm on Day 7 in Ubon Ratchatani, Thailand. International and domestic flights to and from there are not included in the tour price. Please contact us for advice before arranging flights for the best arrival and departure times.

Passports and Visas: All nationalities require a visa for Laos. We can obtain this in advance in Thailand at a cost of US\$30, but we will need advance notice. Alternatively you can acquire a Visa on Arrival for 15 days at a cost of US\$30. Please bring 2 passport sized photographs.

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Subject to Change

In remote destinations abnormal conditions can prevail at any time, and all adventurous holidays can therefore be subject to unexpected change and we will do our best to adhere to the original itinerary and cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes; in order to enjoy them you should be prepared to be flexible when necessary.

Health: We recommend that you visit a travel medical doctor and ask about the following vaccinations: typhoid, polio, tetanus and hepatitis A. A certificate for Yellow Fever is required when arriving from an infected area within six days.

Weather: Northeastern Thailand and Laos share a tropical climate with fairly high humidity. There are three seasons: from March to June it is hot and dry, with temperatures between 27 and 40C, with night temperatures in the 20s. The rainy season is from June to October. The cooler season, is from November to February, with average temperatures between 20 and 30C. It can get a little cold at night on the Bolaven Plateau year round so bring a light fleece for the evenings.

Food: Meals are included as per the itinerary where B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner. Most meals are local Laos food and feature noodles, curries and soups. Lao cuisine is very similar to Thai food and we make sure you sample as much variety as possible. Any special dietary requirements can also be catered for as well. Please let us know at the time of booking.

Drink: Keeping you completely hydrated is a job we take very seriously. Cold water, some energy-restoring local fruit and soft drinks are included in the tour price. Beer is freely available everywhere in Laos, but is NOT included in the price.

Extra Expenses: We recommend that you tuck away a few extra dollars, perhaps US\$10, for incidentals. It is customary to tip local tour guides and drivers, however, the amount you give should be dependent on the level of service you receive. As a general guide we suggest US\$ 3-4 per person per day is appropriate.

Money: The official national currency in Laos is the kip, however, Thai baht and US dollars are also used, especially in larger cities and towns. In smaller towns and villages, kip is usually preferred. There are now a few ATMs in Laos, but they are not widespread and are operational only sporadically. The best overall exchange rates are those offered at the BCEL (Banque pour le Commerce Extérieur Lao). Licensed moneychangers rates are similar to banks Spend all your kip before you leave as no one will exchange it for you once you leave the country!

The information in this document is given in good faith, and covers the average range of conditions likely to be found on this trip. Where differences exist in the information between this and previous information, this document is the correct version and supersedes the brochure or website.