



FLY and BIKE
internationaal gezelschap

Northern Thailand and Laos Adventure

This tour joins the two magical cities of Chiang Mai and Luang Prabang. The journey starts in the northern part of Thailand, a mountainous region bordering Burma and Laos, punctuated by the mighty Mekong River. A region made infamous by warlords and drug smugglers it has been baptised the "Golden Triangle" with a

history as colourful as the people that inhabit it. High in the hills is a multitude of villages, linked by old opium trails. Squeezed between Thailand and Vietnam, Laos has a population of less than five million people yet covers

an area roughly the size of the United Kingdom. Once known as Lan Xang – the Kingdom of a Million Elephants – Laos was once, and in many ways still is, one of Asia's Shangri Las. The Buddhist population is 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.



In many aspects Laos is emerging out of a time capsule, having been secluded by a paranoid old-style communist regime, tourists are now discovering a unique destination. Consequently, Laotians seem to have retained an innocence and charm that is as rare as it is valuable, making for an interesting contrast as you leave modern and developed Thailand.

The peaceful and tolerant nature of the Thai and Lao people is legendary in Southeast Asia, where they are regarded as humble, hospitable and easy going.

The mountain scenery on this tour is nothing short of awesome and the warmth and sincere friendliness of the local people you will meet on this ride will live forever in the hearts of anyone fortunate enough to take this tour.



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11 Days/10 Nights

Departure Dates:

2009

13 Dec - 23 Dec

2010

24 January - 3 February

7 March - 17 March

6 June - 16 June

17 October - 27 October

12 Dec - 22 Dec

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 1550 Tour

USD 135 Fiets

€ 295 Single Supplement

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

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Trip Profile

Our biking adventure takes us from the bustling and energetic city of Chiang Mai to one of the prettiest and most magical cities in Southeast Asia, Luang Prabang, and a great place to hang out and soak up the atmosphere.

The road surfaces are mixed: most days we ride on reasonably good quality asphalt roads, but there are enough rides on broken roads or dirt tracks to mean you will need a mountain bike not a road bike and preferably one with front shocks. Having said that, there is nothing technical involved on this tour and anyone, assuming they are fit enough, will be able to join. We cover up to 720-kilometres in 9 cycling days and much, if not most, of the terrain is mountainous with very few flat sections. As we have some shorter days we will get to our destination in the mid afternoon and so will allow you time to explore the area. Day 7 is the toughest day with several long climbs and a long distance – but the support van is never far behind. Traffic will be very light and some days we will see virtually no cars at all.

Along the way the scenery is constantly changing: we go from narrow roads shaded by jungle vines to shimmering rice paddies. The mountain views are second to none and on several mornings you will look down into cloud-filled valleys as you ride.

Apart from cycling, we take boat journeys on the Mekong and Nam Ou rivers (day 6 & 10), a chance to take in the jungle scenery straight out of Apocalypse Now. We end our odyssey in Luang Prabang which is arguably the most beautiful city in Southeast Asia.

Biking Conditions A mixture of good quality tarmac roads and pot-holed, broken roads and also some off road sections in Thailand. Some hills on day 2 in Thailand and day 7 in Laos as we cross the mountains towards Luang Prabang, but a support truck is always available to help when required.

Suitability: This trip has two days in excess of 100 km, however most days are around 70-80 kms and not too hilly except for day 2 and 7 which have several climbs. Anyone who is reasonably fit will find the tour to be a good cycling holiday, not too tiring and not too easy. Fitness, of course, will be helpful but the tour is fully supported and the bus is always close at hand. If you are in doubt please contact us for advice or a list of references.

Day to Day

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

Day 1 - Arrive/meet in Chiang Mai

We meet at 13:00 at the hotel where the guide will brief everyone thoroughly and make sure the bikes fit. In the afternoon we head out on our adventure. We take a short transfer out of town and then start a nice easy ride along the Ping River to get accustomed to riding in Thailand. The ride takes us to the handicraft centre at Ban Tawai where you will have to time to enjoy some shopping before transferring back to Chiang Mai.

Imperial Mae Ping. Ride 40 km. D

Biking Difficulty



(out of five)

Good quality tarmac roads mixed with some broken and dirt roads. Some long days and hills. No technical experience required.



Cycling Distance

Up to 700 kilometers

Cycling Days

6 full, 3 half

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Day 2 - Chiang Dao Tribal Trails

We take a transfer from Chiang Mai to Chiang Dao caves to the start of our ride. This ride is a real treat for mountain bikers. We ride through rice fields and among soaring limestone cliffs before hitting the dirt. We ride truck paths cut by local hill tribes and we will meet Akha, Lisu, Lau and Palaung people. The colourful Palaung are recent migrants and you will see their women adorned with heavy brass waist-bands working the fields. We stop for lunch at a Forestry Camp before a memorable afternoon riding some quite outstanding mountain trails. Our support vehicle will be waiting at the trail-head to transport us to our comfortable Thai style inn.

Saimoonburi Hotel. Ride 75 km. B L D

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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.

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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.

Day 3 – Back Roads to Mae Salak

After an early breakfast we ride to Tub Tao Caves and temple retreat. We ride the back roads through many small villages before arriving in Fang and our stop for lunch. In contrast to the previous day, much of the ride is flat and we will make the distance quite quickly. The ride to Mae Salak is one of the most scenic on the trip and a real pleasure to ride. We end at Mae Salak a small town that has an excellent resort complete with pool. The rooms have a splendid view over the river and is situated next to a Lahu village and the local children will come to the resort and perform traditional music and dance.

Huai Khum Resort. 115 km. B L D

Day 4 – Mae Salak to Chiang Rai

We start from the resort and ride 8 km off road to a Jakhu village where we then hitch a ride on a long-tail boat (with our bikes) to a scenic riverside area. We have a brief stop at the forestry reserve before heading off for another 20 km off road ride to Ban Ruamit. We have lunch at a local restaurant by the river before continuing the ride on tarmac all the way into Chiang Rai. Overnight is a hotel/resort with a nice swimming pool centrally located.

Laluna Resort. Ride 45 km. B L D

Day 5 – Chiang Rai to Lanjia Lodge

After breakfast we ride east towards the mighty Mekong where we ride alongside the river to Chiang Khong. The morning ride is nice and easy: good road surface and flat. After lunch we encounter a few hills and get some great views across the river into Laos. We overnight at a lovely lodge right in the middle of a Hmong village and there are great views of the valley from your terrace. Those views of course means that it is an uphill to the lodge, but those looking for an easy end to their day can take the van the 5 km up. After you have settled in we'll have tea with the shaman and learn some Hmong customs. There'll also be the option to help villagers plant trees at the Herbal Plant Nursery Project for a small fee.

Lanjia Lodge. Ride 55 km. B L D

Day 6 – Chiang Khong to Pakbeng by boat

After breakfast we'll take a short transport to Chiang Khong and cross the border into Laos. After immigration formalities we load the bikes into our private riverboat (please note we do not use the public boat for safety reasons) and spend a relaxing day cruising downstream into the interior of this enigmatic country. We stop to visit some riverside villages before reaching the charming town of Pakbeng before dusk and spend the night in a great lodge.

Phetsoksai Hotel. B L D

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Day 7 – Pakbeng to Udom Xai

Today can be an epic day if you are up for the challenge! Our best overnight choice is a 144 km away, but we'll see how the group does and transfer as necessary to cover the distance. Setting off on our bikes from Pakbeng we follow a broken track along the Beng river, riding through pretty Lao villages and unforgettable mountain and jungle scenery. We'll have a picnic lunch before we head into the north of Udom Xai province where the broken road and dirt tracks double as thoroughfares for the local people (the population here is made up of an astonishing 23 ethnic groups), sharing the trail with all manner of colourful vehicles and livestock – a glimpse of real rural life in Asia. Towards the end of the day we have a long down hill into the town of Udom Xai (also known as Muang Xai), which has a large market where the various languages of the area mingle along with the smells of the produce.

Litthavixay Hotel. Ride up to 144 km. B L D



There are approximately 4,000 Buddha images in the two caves of Pau Ou just outside Luang Prabang.

Many of the sculptures were the work of artisans under royal commission, created between the 18th and 20th centuries, while others were placed there by worshippers.

Day 8 – Udom Xai to Nong Kiau

We are now in the central highlands, and there are some spectacular views across the rugged mountain landscape ahead in an area that suffered extraordinarily heavy bombing during the 'Secret War' against the Americans during the early 1970s. The morning sees us climb over 1,000 metres up into the mountains to Hmong villages few people will ever visit. In the afternoon we have a breathtaking descent through some of the region's last remaining rainforest. Although this is one of the hardest days it is also one of the most rewarding as the views and 'sense of nature' are nothing short of breathtaking. Some people skip the last 25 km along the river valley to Nong Kiau, our great little guesthouse is very comfortable in a great location overlooking the river and quite unexpected in such a small place.

Nong Kiau Riverside. Ride 95-115 km. B L D

Day 9 – Nong Kiau Rest Day

After two challenging cycling days it's time to take it easy. You can spend the day relaxing on the balcony of your riverside room or take a leisurely stroll around town. If you do feel like your legs are ready for more cycling we will be happy to lead you on a tour around the area where you can see some local villages, ride to caves or just admire the beauty of the lime stone mountains. Today is yours to enjoy as you wish!

Nong Kiau Riverside. Optional Ride 40-50 km. B D

Day 10 – Nong Kiau to Luang Prabang

After breakfast we load our bikes into a waiting boat that will take us on a river journey through the steaming jungle. Eventually the Nam Ou river spills into the Mekong, which is like a sea in comparison, at Pak Ou. We stop for lunch and to visit the famous caves, which are crammed with sacred Buddha images. We take the bikes out at Sanghai village, famous for its home made rice whisky and take a scenic ride to our destination, the town of Luang Prabang. This is one of Asia's most picturesque towns, and as we arrive at twilight and our ride through the streets is an unforgettable experience.

Ancient Luang Prabang. Ride 30 km. B L D

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Day 11 – Free day in Luang Prabang

A free day to explore Luang Prabang. Dawn watching the monks collecting alms, or early morning ride to Krungsri falls (33km). Optional extension stay in Luang Prabang.

Optional Ride to Krungsri falls 33 km. B

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 vehicle that have been specially modified for cycle tours. The vehicles follow us the whole time 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.

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 1 pm in Chiang Mai, Thailand on Day 1 and ends mid -morning on Day 11 in Luang Prabang, Laos. 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, but we will need advance notice. The cost varies depending on nationality, details are available [here](#). Alternatively, you can acquire a Visa on Arrival for 15 days. Please bring 2 passport sized photographs and USD cash to pay the visa fee.

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. This is not a malarial area.

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Weather: Northern 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 cool at night year round so bring a light fleece for the evenings, but riding conditions are perfect.

Accommodation: We use a variety of accommodation and we try to find places of charm and character that fit in well with the surrounding area. All hotels will have private facilities including hot water, private bathroom. Guesthouses will be more basic with a mixture of private and shared facilities. All accommodation will be clean and comfortable.

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 Thailand and Laos, but is NOT included in the price.

Extra Expenses: We recommend that you tuck away a few extra dollars, perhaps US\$10 a day, 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.

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.

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