

Mekong Pearl Cruise - 6 days

Itinerary Overview

Upstream: Luang Prabang – Golden Triangle

| Day | Destination | Meals |
|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Day 1 | LUANG PRABANG - EMBARKATION | D |
| Day 2 | PAK OU CAVES | B/L/D |
| Day 3 | THE MIGHTY MEKONG | B/L/D |
| Day 4 | RELAXATION AND VILLAGE LIFE | B/L/D |
| Day 5 | PAK THA AND HUAY XAY | B/L/D |
| Day 6 | FAREWELL - DISEMBARKATION | B/L |

Downstream: Golden Triangle - Luang Prabang

| Day | Destination | Meals |
|-------|---|-------|
| Day 1 | THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE - EMBARKATION | D |
| Day 2 | THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE – HUAY XAY AND PAK THA | B/L/D |
| Day 3 | ASTONISHING LANDSCAPES AND REMOTE VILLAGES | B/L/D |
| Day 4 | PAK OU CAVES | B/L/D |
| Day 5 | THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE CITY OF LUANG PRABANG | B/L/D |
| Day 6 | LUANG PRABANG - DISEMBARKATION | B |

Note*: B: Breakfast / L: Lunch / D: Dinner

Detailed Itinerary

Upstream: Luang Prabang – Golden Triangle

Day 1 LUANG PRABANG - EMBARKATION

Before lunch, from 11 am, you will embark on your comfortable Laotian Mekong Pearl Cruise ship. These unique vessels are the first German-Laotian owned river ships with cabins on the upper Mekong. Settle into your accommodating cabin and unpack for a six-day cruise. After having lunch onboard, you explore the charming town of Luang Prabang. Back on board you are celebrating this evening with a local dancing performance and a traditional Lao Baci-friendship ceremony.

Meals: Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Mekong Pearl Cruise

Day 2 PAK OU CAVES

During breakfast, your cruise takes you upstream until your boutique ship stops at the famous Pak Ou Caves, within which thousands of small Buddha statues dwell. From there, you can go on a short jungle trek through the forest to a small riverside village and visit their distillery. Alternatively, you can reach the village comfortably by boat. Nearby you can see work elephants in action, unless they are employed elsewhere at the time of your visit. That afternoon, your ship continues cruising upstream towards Oudomxay Province. Overnight on board Mekong Pearl Cruise.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Mekong Pearl Cruise

Day 3 THE MIGHTY MEKONG

The river traffic thins out as you proceed upstream, and you can enjoy the fantastic landscapes surrounding you. You can relax on deck, in your comfortable cabin or in the lounge and soak up the sun as the gorgeous landscape becomes more and more spectacular: hills covered with tropical vegetation, awe-inspiring rock formations along the riverbanks, and a diverse array of rapid currents and slow rivulets. The power of the mighty Mekong gives your cruise the feeling of a real expedition. Overnight on board.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Mekong Pearl Cruise

Day 4 RELAXATION AND VILLAGE LIFE

Today you relax on deck, enjoying astonishingly diverse landscapes and the tranquility of northern Laos—a real retreat from the hustle and bustle of daily life back home. As you cruise along the green hills, you start heading toward Pak Tha. That evening, you enjoy our famous Mekong River Cruises barbecue dinner in a beautiful riverside location. Overnight on board.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Mekong Pearl Cruise

Day 5 PAK THA AND HUAY XAY

In the small village of Pak Tha, you join a long-tail boat excursion on the Namtha River, which takes you to a nearby Khmu village, whose school has been supported by donations from Mekong River Cruises guests for many years. The purely natural landscape is only broken by the seldom sights of small villages and local herds of cattle. In the afternoon, you proceed to the Thailand–Laos border at Chiang Khong, Thailand, and Ban Huay Xay, Laos. In the evening, you enjoy your last dinner on the Mekong. Overnight on board.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Mekong Pearl Cruise

Day 6 FAREWELL - DISEMBARKATION

After breakfast you say goodbye to your Laotian crew. You check out and disembark your boutique ship before transferring to the airport or your local hotel. It's a bittersweet goodbye to an adventure you won't soon forget!

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: n/a

Downstream: Luang Prabang – Vientiane

Day 1 THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE - EMBARKATION

Between 8 and 9 am you transfer from Chiang Rai Airport or a local hotel to the famous Golden Triangle region. You enjoy a sightseeing city tour, which includes the Golden Buddha of Sop Ruak and the Hall of Opium Museum. The Hall of Opium, sponsored by the royal family of Thailand, provides an in-depth look at the history and politics of the opium trade and health impact of opium use. Later you board the Mekong Pearl, a boutique German–Laotian river ship, and settle into your comfortable cabin and unpack for an 11-day cruise. In the evening, you enjoy the ship’s spacious decks and lounge before attending a welcome dinner and reception. Overnight on board.

Meals: Dinner

Accommodation: Mekong Pearl Cruise

Day 2 THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE – HUAY XAY AND PAK THA

This morning your exciting voyage on the mighty Mekong River really gets underway, with your departure from the Golden Triangle region, where Myanmar, Laos and Thailand meet. Today’s destination is the nearby Laotian town of Huay Xay on the Laos–Thailand border. Your ship then takes you through the stunning scenery of northern Laos to the small village of Pak Tha. From there you take a long-tail boat excursion on the Namtha River to visit a Khmu village. You then continue downstream until your cruise ship anchors at a sandbank for the night. Overnight on board.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Mekong Pearl Cruise

Day 3 ASTONISHING LANDSCAPES AND REMOTE VILLAGES

The river traffic increases as you pass through a densely populated region accessible only by water. Here you discover some of the wild Mekong’s most beautiful landscapes: hills covered with tropical vegetation, dramatic rock formations, and a fascinating mixture of rapid currents and slow rivulets. The power of the mighty Mekong gives your cruise the feeling of a real expedition. Relax on deck, in your cabin, or in the lounge as you enjoy the otherworldly atmosphere of these spectacular surroundings. A short while later you arrive in Oudomxay Province. Overnight on boardnMekong Pearl Cruise.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Mekong Pearl Cruise

Day 4 PAK OU CAVES

After a relaxing morning on board, your boutique ship stops at a small riverside village to visit the famous Pak Ou Caves, where thousands of small Buddha statues dwell within. From there, you can go on a short jungle trek through the forest to a local village to see their traditional distillery. Alternatively, you can reach the village comfortably by boat. Nearby you can see elephants working, unless they are employed elsewhere at the time of your visit. You enjoy your dinner on board surrounded by impressive limestone mountains. Overnight on board.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Mekong Pearl Cruise

Day 5 THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE CITY OF LUANG PRABANG

Today you reach Luang Prabang, the former royal capital of Laos, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Your day begins with a city walk to the famous Wat Xieng Thong temple with its gold-trimmed tile roofs, which leave you in awe. Later you explore other highlights during this full-day excursion through Luang Prabang. In the evening, you walk up Mount Phou Si, which offers a spectacular view of the Mekong and Khan Rivers and the surrounding mountains. You enjoy a stroll along the Mekong promenade or visit the colorful Hmong night market. Luang Prabang offers many opportunities for fine dining, and tonight you are free to choose from the numerous offerings in town or along the Mekong River. Overnight on board.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Mekong Pearl Cruise

Day 6 LUANG PRABANG - DISEMBARKATION

In the early morning you can visit the traditional giving of alms in the streets of Luang Prabang and explore the traditional morning market. After breakfast you will say goodbye to your Laotian crew. Check-out and disembark. Your memorable river journey ends with your transfer to the airport or to your hotel (within city limits).

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: n/a

Important note*

- PROGRAMS & SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE DUE TO THE WATER LEVEL. WE WILL KEEP YOU UPDATED 2 WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE
- For overnight registration, we will need passport information (Full name, sex, Nationality, passport number, date of birth) of passengers at least four weeks prior to cruise date.

Inclusions & Exclusion

Inclusions:

- All meals included in selected program by Mekong Pearl Cruise
- Accommodation on board based on twin share
- English speaking guide during the cruise
- Sight-seeing of Mekong Delta
- Coffee, tea and water during meal times on board
- All excursions and necessary entry fees according to itinerary
- Presentations and lectures by your cruise director

Exclusions:

- Alcoholic and soft drinks other than mentioned
- Meals and services other than those noted in the itinerary
- Visas for Thailand and Laos
- Laundry, telephone calls and personal expenditures
- Gratuities for guides, drivers, porters, boat crew, and personal, non-itinerary services
- Video or photography fees (if requested during excursions)

Important Information

River Conditions Warning

The rivers you will sail on are subject to seasonal rises and falls of water level, in some places as much as 30 metres. Water levels can change dramatically overnight and a sudden rise can impede our progress upstream considerably and even prevent us from passing under certain bridges. A sudden fall can result in our being unable to get into certain places or go as far upstream as we would hope. Groundings on sandbars are not infrequent and are part of the excitement of any expedition. Published itineraries are indicational only and subject to sudden change. In such events alternative itineraries will be provided and we do our best to ensure that if a stop is missed we make up for it with another stop.

Passengers are thus forewarned and expected to be flexible and patient. River cruising in Asia can be a dramatic and adventurous experience – not like cruising the controlled waterways of Europe or America. Note also that we operate in areas with little or no developed infrastructure and subject to the strictures of local officialdom. Be prepared for this and it is all more the fun!

For itineraries that include flights in the price of the ticket it should be noted that regional airlines can change departure times or cancel flights at very short notice. In such an event we endeavour to arrange alternative flights but note that this can result in delays often resulting in embarking or disembarking on a different day to that indicated in the itinerary. In such an event the company will cover the cost of hotel accommodation and main meals only, but will not be liable for any claims for compensation for missed days on board a ship, drinks or curtailment of the said itinerary.

Clothes

We recommend wearing loose and comfortable clothing made of cotton or modern material that can readily cool off sweat and body heat. The type of shoes will depend on the excursion types so best to have both light, open toed shoes as well as good walking/hiking shoes with you. A sun hat is always a good idea to bring along.

Southern Vietnam and Cambodia are warm all year-round, but our other cruise destinations can get chilly during the winter months (Laos, Myanmar or northern Vietnam). Therefore, it is always recommended to bring a pullover or a warm jacket with you during this period.

Many of our cruises include visits to local temples or pagodas. When visiting these holy sites, make sure to wear appropriate clothing which covers your shoulders and knees.

Sea sickness

Generally speaking, the rivers we are cruising on in Southeast Asia are very calm and there is hardly any motion on any of our ships. A bit of motion can occur during monsoon rains with stormy winds, but the amount of motion is much less than one would feel during bad weather on the open ocean.

Sea cruises as we offer in Halong Bay or Lan Ha Bay can sometimes encounter heavier waters and ship motion, although this happens very rarely and port authorities will most likely not allow sailing under any such circumstances anyway.

If you are new to cruising or prone to motion sickness, it does not hurt to bring along some motion sickness medication. Drinking a nice hot fresh ginger tea is a natural remedy and tasty alternative our staff is always happy to make for you.

Food and Beverage

All food and beverage on board is completely safe to eat and enjoy, including the ice cubes you enjoy in your chilled drinks. We do not recommend drinking water straight from the tap anywhere, including onboard. We provide you with complimentary clean drinking water throughout your cruise.

You may want to be bit careful with local dishes as they can be spicier than you are used to from home. Approach new dishes slowly and carefully. If you have a sensitive stomach, then you may like to double check with our chef or onboard managers about specific dishes or meals.

On excursions, it may be a good idea to avoid local foods and snacks unless offered by our tour guides. Besides the above, in general we recommend the following motto for your pre- and post-cruise travelling in the Southeast Asian tropics: boil it, peel it, cook it, wash it or forget it!

Health risks

The most effective protection from personal contamination is ensuring strict attention to personal hygiene and in particular, frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water and refraining from hand-to-mouth contact. Colds and other viruses can spread quickly in an enclosed area such as a ship. Continue to practice common-sense hygiene and respiratory courtesy. Wash your hands often and cover your coughs and sneeze. It is recommended that passengers carry anti-bacterial hand sanitizer, which does not require rinsing with water. Use sanitizer frequently and throughout the day, particularly after shore excursions and prior to meals. If you have any questions regarding your health or safety, please do not hesitate to ask your cruise director.

Motion sickness can be a problem for some people when cruising, flying or travelling on coaches and trains and it is a good idea to take precautionary measures. Over-the-counter drugs for treating motion sickness can be purchased at pharmacies in most countries, though a side effect can be drowsiness. Alternatives such as ginger tablets and acupuncture wristbands are also available and work well for some people.

Visa requirements for Cambodia

Cambodia visas are easily obtained for most travelers on arrival. Note that passports must have a validity of at least 6 months after your last date of travel in Cambodia.

Because travel restrictions across Southeast Asia are constantly changing, we recommend checking with the Cambodia embassy/consulate in your home country for the latest information.

Visa requirements for Vietnam

With the exception of visa exemptions, all travelers must arrange their visa prior to arrival in Vietnam. Passports must also have a validity of at least 6 months after your last date of travel in Vietnam.

Because travel restrictions across Southeast Asia are constantly changing, we recommend checking with the Vietnam embassy/consulate in your home country for the latest information.

Insurance

We recommend at least purchasing travel health insurance which covers both in- & outpatient visits and medical repatriation. Buying additional trip cancellation and interruption coverage may also be beneficial in case you have to cancel your travel plans due to unforeseen circumstances.

Electrical adapters

We always recommend bringing a travel adapter as a standard item in your travel kit. You can borrow an adapter on board, but these may be limited.

Electricity

Indochina Countries use 220V, and a mixture of flat 2-pin, round 2-pin or 3 pin plugs. It is recommended to bring a universal plug adapter.

Tipping

It is customary in Asia to tip service providers such as waiters, at approximately 10%, depending on the service. Tipping is expected - though not compulsory - and shows an expression of satisfaction with the people who have assisted you on your tour. Although it may not be customary to you, it is of considerable significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels. There are several times during the trip where there is opportunity to tip the local guides or drivers we use. Recommendations for tipping drivers and local guides would range from \$3-\$5 USD per person per day depending on the quality and length of the service.