

Anouvong Cruise - 8 days

Itinerary Overview

Day	Destination	Meals
Day 1	HUAY XAI – PAK NGUI	L/D
Day 2	PAK NGUI – BAN GAENG HANG NGAI	B/L/D
Day 3	BAN GAENG HANG NGAI – LUANG PRABANG	B/L/D
Day 4	LUANG PRABANG	B/L/D
Day 5	LUANG PRABANG - KHOK AKHA	B/L/D
Day 6	KHOK AKHA – PAK LAY	B/L/D
Day 7	PAK LAY – MID RIVER	B/L/D
Day 8	MID RIVER - VIENTIANE	B

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

Travel Map



Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 HUAY XAI – PAK NGUI

Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise welcomes our guests at the Thai immigration office in the morning hours (please see details in our embarkation guide). Our team assists you with all immigration procedures on both the Thai and Laos sides and we take care of your luggage, which you may find later in your room on board. After all formalities, we transfer you to the ship, which is moored at Huay Xai pier on the Laos riverside. Upon check-in, get acquainted with the ship and settle in your room as we start our journey.

Enjoy your first hours onboard as we sail from the Thai-Lao border southbound. The river in this area is mostly wide, however our captain always has to watch out for rocks and stones or sandbanks in order to navigate safely – making the sailing an interesting one to observe from the open deck. After some hours the landscape and the river starts to change, becoming more mountainous and the river increasingly narrow.

Our first stop in the afternoon is Khon Teun, a relatively modern Laotian village showcasing various

wooden sculptures and home to roughly 800 residents belonging to the Tai Lu ethnic minority. For a traditional Laotian greeting and to wish us a safe journey, the village elders welcome us with a time-honoured "Baci ceremony". The villagers here practice long-held traditions and techniques of weaving handmade garments with distinguishing patterns. Making their living from it, the families here have passed down their weaving knowledge from generation to generation.

The village also has a lovely temple nearby in which we can arrange an optional meditation session (limited availability). Resident monks and novices (boys who typically pledge to adopt a monk's lifestyle for at least a few months, but often much longer), are always eager to interact and socialize with visitors. After taking in a bit of 'Zen' the ship continues cruising to the overnight mooring spot. Our local expert guide hosts a lecture about Laotian elephants and their cultural importance in the past and the current situation which have brought them to the brink of extinction. A nice and interesting preparation, as tomorrow we will meet these fascinating creatures close up in an elephant sanctuary. Dinner is served in Anouvong's elegant De-Lagree Dining Hall. Afterwards you may like to while away some time in the bar or join our cinema under the stars on the open terrace deck. The movie named "Chang" (Laos and Thai, for "elephant"), was shot in this region in 1927, by the same producer as the first King Kong movie. Enjoy your first night's sleep mid-river at a seclude sandbank in the middle of nowhere.

Meals: Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise

Day 2 PAK NGUI – BAN GAENG HANG NGAI

Wake up early to catch your first sunrise in Laos on the Mekong River. Early birds are welcome to join our daily morning exercise on the terrace deck (Tai Chi or Yoga). We think there is no better backdrop than the stunning river scenery to do some revitalizing morning exercise to start the day.

After breakfast, we arrive in the small town of Pakbeng. This riverside settlement is halfway between our embarkation at Huay Xai and Luang Prabang. Many locals also stop here when they travel or transport goods between these two "hubs" on the river.

Opposite of the town – so to say on the starboard side of cruising direction– is the country's most sustainably managed elephant sanctuary. If we arrive early enough, we may still see elephants freely walking along the shoreline and taking a morning bath. To expand your knowledge from our lecture the day before about these majestic animals, we then visit the conservation sanctuary. All the elephants here used to work as logging elephants, after their time as working animals, they lack the ability to live and survive in the wild (there still exists very few wild elephants). The sanctuary is fully committed to the tenets of ecotourism and sustainability.

During lunchtime we continue our journey with stunning views of the shores from the comfort of the

dining room. At a sandbank further down the river, the local ethnic Lao, Khmu and Hmong live in the tiny village of Kok Aek. At the riverside they have set up a little parcel of land as an organic garden, carefully maintained and enclosed by bamboo fences and growing organic vegetables, fruits, and herbs. Though these plots are unusable at certain times of the year due to flooding, the nutrient-rich Mekong irrigation promises bountiful annual harvests. As we get to know the villagers, be sure to sample a local specialty, kai paen, which is made of dried freshwater "seaweed" topped with sesame and vegetables. Back on board Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise, as we cruise for some more hours, lay back and take in the absolutely amazing scenery or enjoy some pampering time in our tucked away spa. We drop anchor to overnight near another small and secluded village. Subject to our arrival time and daylight availability, we may explore this tiny village of just around 300 inhabitants which is bereft of electricity or any semblance of modernity, but for sure not of abounding charm and warm-heartedness of the villagers.

As we remain here at the sandbank overnight, kick back with an aperitif while being serenaded by some local villagers who have come onboard to perform on their 'Khene' – a handheld, ancient instrument made of bamboo and originating here in Laos. We end the day with a culinary highlight, as we dine tonight on the terrace deck, with the sights and soothing sounds of nature all around us.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise

Day 3 **BAN GAENG HANG NGAI – LUANG PRABANG**

After breakfast, a morning lecture provides us with interesting insights and facts about Laotian culture relating to the diverse tribes living along the upper Mekong.

The rest of the morning is at your disposal as we sail through lush vegetation and past gently rolling verdant hills. After lunch prepare yourself for a quite unique activity to experience the calmly flowing lower Mekong from a different perspective. Hop in a kayak and paddle along on your own in total symbiosis with the peacefully flowing stream. Feel the waters of the Mekong carrying you downstream with almost no effort, relax and enjoy the passing natural beauty and immerse yourself in this very special trip. You may like to paddle all the way to the famous caves of Pak Ou, which is our next stop and highlight to come (or return back on board).

We stop close to Pak Ou, and go ashore where we will meet the local "medicine man" who takes us on a jungle trek explaining various interesting facts and astonishing features about the flora and the nature in this area. In the village we may one more time be able to observe local weaving, and find here as well 'the art of local whisky distilling'. (Kindly note a basic fitness level is required for the approx. 45-minute trek, which is relatively easy walking but does involve some uphill terrain; guests may opt to stay on the ship to reach our next stop, the Pak Ou caves).

The trekking group reaches the caves via the “backdoor”. The famous Pak Ou Caves are located directly on the Mekong’s rocky shore and opposite the mouth of the Ou River. There are two limestone grottoes which house approximately 4,000 sacred Buddhist statues and images ranging in size from mere centimeters up to 2m (7ft) in height. We arrive first at the upper cave and then take steps down (approx. 200 steps) to the lower, most impressive grotto.

Once back on board Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise, you can refresh yourself and lunch is served afterwards. From Pak Ou we have about three more hours to sail. During this time, we meet Mr Francis Engelmann, who used to work for UNESCO on heritage preservation projects. Born in Paris in 1947, he has lived in Laos for over 20 years and knows Luang Prabang like the back of his hand. Join his fantastic presentation, in which he shares some of his expertise on the country’s and Luang Prabang’s rich cultural heritage and fascinating history.

We arrive at the enchanting town of Luang Prabang in the early evening (approx. 18:00 o’clock). Dinner is served on board after our arrival. Afterwards, you may like to have a first taste of the mesmerizing charms of this old town on a stroll through the small streets on your own.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise

Day 4 LUANG PRABANG

This morning after breakfast we explore one of Southeast Asia’s most unique and charming cities. We head out for a walking tour to discover ancient Luang Prabang (almost flat terrain, easy walking, tour duration about 3.5 hours including refreshment stops).

In celebration of the 20th UNESCO Anniversary in 2015, a book was published which highlights numberless aspects of this unique World Heritage Site. Our “off the beaten track” guided walking tour explores the old town and its peninsula where the Mekong and Nam Khan Rivers meet. See Luang Prabang’s distinct architecture and hear interesting stories about the houses and the places we pass. We stroll leisurely along the crisscross of small roads and streets lined with antique structures and mango trees. Some of the 100-year-old Lao-style buildings brim with a by-gone era atmosphere. One of the houses, the Lamache, was once home to noble families and later was the appointed ice cream supplier to the royal family. There is no better place to have a “Lao Tea Break” with Lao coffee or herbal tea, traditional snacks and artisan ice cream.

We return to the Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise for lunch and refreshments before we continue in the afternoon on our discovery of Luang Prabang. The afternoon is dedicated to a visit to the former [Royal Palace](#) – which is now the National Museum. The museum displays interesting local art and other exhibits which used to belong to the Lao royal family. After the museum tour, you have some time on your own to walk around the small city center further – or just pick one of the inviting street cafés and enjoy the laid back, or “sabai-sabai”, atmosphere before we return to the ship.

In the early evening, you are warmly invited for a sunset aperitif on the terrace deck which is accompanied by a classical local dance or music performance. Afterwards, we leave the vessel for an evening out, dining in one of the city's fine venues for a distinctively Lao-style ambiance. After dinner, the rest of the evening can be spent exploring the night market or back on board.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise

Day 5 LUANG PRABANG – KHOK AKHA

For the very early risers, we have a special treat today. Before the daylight basks the town in warm golden tones, the morning alms round, referred to as "Tak Bat" in Lao, is a spiritual Buddhist tradition for Lao people and dates back generations. It is lovingly and faithfully adhered to here in Luang Prabang especially. Wake up before dawn to witness a procession of hundreds of saffron-robed monks in the early morning light. After the alms giving, walk through the morning market and watch as the town comes to life before returning to the ship in time for breakfast. We say good-bye to Luang Prabang and continue our journey further downstream on the Mekong river.

In the morning, we set out for our today's sightseeing and pay a visit to an innovative and socially responsible Laos Buffalo Dairy Farm. Having almost no dairy products some decades ago, these milk based products have become more and more popular in recent years in Asia and also in Laos. It is interesting to see how various dairy products, such as cheeses, ice cream and yoghurt are made locally and distributed to local markets. We continue with a visit to a breath-taking sight in the area, the cascading Kuang Si waterfall with its rushing turquoise waters. It is a pleasure to hike leisurely through the surrounding natural park, and if you like you can also refresh yourself with a swim in the natural pools of water at the waterfall's base. So refreshing!

Back on the Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise, the cruise carries on towards the nation's famous dam and hydroelectric power plant. Before we arrive at the dam, we offer an interesting lecture about the role of energy production in Laos' economy and how the country is set to become the 'battery' of Southeast Asia. Eventually, we arrive at the Xayaburi Hydroelectric Dam. The ship slowly passes through two ship locks, bringing the vessel down by about 30 meters. We also have the chance to discover this enormous structure during a short guided tour.

After some additional sailing time into the evening, we moor near the southern side of the dam midstream at a sandbank. Enjoy some cocktails with the sand under your bare feet before heading to a lovely dinner on the terrace deck.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise

Day 6 KHOK AKHA – PAK LAY

After the morning exercise (Tai Chi or yoga on the terrace) and breakfast, we offer this morning two different excursion or activities to choose from:

Set out in a long-tail boat and go on an exploratory and adventurous joyride upstream through the lush jungle along the remote, beautiful Nam Fuang River. We stop over at the shore to explain some facts about the interesting jungle life of the local tribes residing in this area. Alternatively, you may stroll through the small village of Khok Akha sitting right on the riverside plateau. The village's population is mainly comprised of "Lao Loum" (which translates to "lowland Laotian") whose main income is from planting rice, fishing and selling wood. The elevated location of the village allows for some great views on the meandering Mekong to take home some great photos.

Setting sail, the shorelines have now become a bit rockier with some very narrow channels to navigate through. In the afternoon we stop at Don Saynhan village, from where we take a short local "Tuk Tuk" ride to visit the so-called Khao Cave. The cave has been home to a large bat population for many generations and supplies the village with very potent fertilizer. You can venture inside and discover the stalagmites and stalactites.

Back on board, we keep cruising until we reach Pak Lay village, where we stop for the night. This evening after dinner our daily cinema is held open-air under the stars on the terrace deck with another classic movie on display.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise

Day 7 PAK LAY – MID RIVER

Fortify yourself with a hardy breakfast for this morning's exciting kayaking excursion. In this area, the Mekong is very calm and shallow with many small sandy islands along its shoreline, making it ideal to explore on your own for some time.

The Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise then travels along the Thai-Lao border, something you are reminded of by the large Buddha greeting us from the opposite shore. After lunch we stop at Phalat village, a small hamlet which looks over the Mekong, in sight of Thailand. By local means of transportation again, "Tuk Tuk", we trundle to a nearby chopstick factory. Have you ever wondered how chopsticks become perfectly round and all have the same dimensions? Here you will learn the answers to these questions, and besides, it is always interesting to get a look behind the scenes of a local factory.

After Phalat, we make our way to one of the deserted sandbanks, where we moor for your final night. To end your journey with us on a high note, our kitchen team has prepared a culinary treat. Step off Anouvong onto the sandbank and savour a barbecue dinner in a wonderfully remote and romantic setting.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise

Day 8 MID RIVER - VIENTIANE

Enjoy your last sunrise aboard with a morning Thai Chi or Yoga. Today you can take a long leisurely breakfast as we voyage towards Vientiane. During the morning time our local guide presents a lecture on the history of Lao royalty with a focus on King Anouvong – this vessel's namesake.

Around midday we arrive in the Laos' capital, Vientiane. Our team assists with your check-out and helps with your luggage. We thank you very much for cruising with Heritage Line on the upper Mekong in Laos and bid you farewell wishing you a pleasant onward journey.

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:

Accommodation; daily (group) shore-excursions & entrance fees; sightseeing and transfers during the cruise; transfers from/to Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise meeting point to/from the ship (please read details in the embarkation guide); English speaking tour guiding on-and offshore; entertainment/activities during the cruise as mentioned in the program; meals as mentioned in the program; welcome drink, brewed coffee, tea and mineral water; passenger liability insurance; internet on the ship (subject to cellular network signal); complimentary usage of ship facilities (exclusive of spa treatments); port or anchorage fees; river pilots; fuel

Exclusions:

Crew and guide gratuities; visa fees; private transfers; personal expenses; beverages other than those stated under inclusions; medical services; spa treatments; port and anchorage fees; all other services or items not listed under inclusions.

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 acupressure 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.