

LAOS



Country Dialling Code (Tel/Fax): ++856

Lao National Tourism Authority: Ministry of Commerce and Tourism, Avenue Lanexang Vientiane Tel: (21)212248 Fax: (21)212769 Website: www.visit-laos.com

Capital: Vientiane **Time:** + 7

Background: In 1975 the communist Pathet Lao took control of the government, ending a six-century-old monarchy. Initial closer ties to Vietnam and socialization were replaced with a gradual return to private enterprise, an easing of foreign investment laws, and the admission into ASEAN in 1997.

Location: Southeastern Asia, northeast of Thailand, west of Vietnam

Map References: Southeast Asia

Area: total: 236,800 sq km land: 230,800 sq km water: 6,000 sq km

Climate: tropical monsoon; rainy season (May to November); dry season (December to April)

Terrain: mostly rugged mountains; some plains and plateaus

Natural Resources: timber, hydropower, gypsum, tin, gold, gemstones

Population: 5,497,459 (July 2000 est.)

Nationality: noun: Lao(s) or Laotian(s) adjective: Lao or Laotian

Ethnic Groups: Lao Loum (lowland) 68%, Lao Theung (upland) 22%, Lao Soung (highland) including the Hmong ("Meo") and the Yao (Mien) 9%, ethnic Vietnamese/Chinese 1%

Religions: Buddhist 60% (in October 1999, the regime proposed a constitutional amendment making Buddhism the state religion; the National Assembly is expected to vote on the amendment sometime in 2000), animist and other 40%

Languages: Lao (official), French, English, and various ethnic languages

Economy: The government of Laos - one of the few remaining official communist states - began decentralizing control and encouraging private enterprise in 1986. The results, starting from an extremely low base, were striking - growth averaged 7% in 1988-96. Since mid-1996, however, reform efforts have slowed, and the economy has suffered as a result. Because Laos depends heavily on its trade with Thailand, it was further damaged by the regional financial crisis beginning in 1997. From June 1997 to June 1999 the Lao kip lost 87%, and reached a crisis point in September 1999 when it fluctuated wildly, falling from 3,500 kip to the dollar to 9,000 kip to the dollar in a matter of weeks. Now that the currency has stabilized, however, the government seems content to let the current situation persist, despite 140% inflation in 1999 and limited foreign exchange reserves. A landlocked country with a primitive infrastructure, Laos has no railroads, a rudimentary road system, and limited external and internal telecommunications. Electricity is available in only a few urban areas. Subsistence agriculture accounts for half of GDP and provides 80% of total employment. For the foreseeable future the economy will continue to depend on aid from the IMF and other international sources; Japan is currently the largest bilateral aid donor; aid from the former USSR/Eastern Europe has been cut sharply. As in many developing countries, deforestation and soil erosion will hamper efforts to attain a high rate of GDP growth.

Industries: tin and gypsum mining, timber, electric power, agricultural processing, construction, garments

Currency: 1 new kip (NK) = 100 at

Railways: 0 km

Highways: total: 21,716 km paved: 9,673.5 km unpaved: 12,042.5 km (1998 est.)

Waterways: about 4,587 km, primarily Mekong and tributaries; 2,897 additional km are sectionally navigable by craft drawing less than 0.5 m

Ports and Harbors: none

Airports: 52 (1999 est.) Airports - with paved runways: total: 9 2,438 to 3,047 m: 1 1,524 to 2,437 m: 4 914 to 1,523 m: 4 (1999 est.) Airports - with unpaved runways: total: 43 1,524 to 2,437 m: 1 914 to 1,523 m: 17 under 914 m: 25 (1999 est.)

Visa: required by all

Duty Free: goods permitted: 500 cigarettes or 100 cigars or 500g of tobacco, 1 bottle of spirits, 2 bottles of wine, perfume for personal use, personal jewelry up to 500g

Health: a yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travelers coming from infected areas. All water should be regarded as potentially contaminated. Malaria risk exists throughout the year.

HOTELS•MOTELS•INNS

VIENTIANE

GREEN PARK BOUTIQUE HOTEL Vientiane, Laos (Lao P.D.R), 248 Khouvieng Road, Ban. Nongchanch P.O.Box 9698, Phone : +856 21 264097-8 , 263063 Fax : +856 21 263064 Email : info@greenparkvientiane.com

HOTEL DAY INN , 059/3 B Sisakhet Unit 1, Chanthaboury District, Vientiane, Lao, PDR, Tel: (856-21) 223847/8, Fax: (856-21) 222984, www.visit-laos.com/

LAO PLAZA HOTEL, 63 Samsenethai Road, PO Box 6708, Vientiane, Lao PDR, Telephone: +(856 21) 218800 - 1, Facsimile: +(856 21) 218808 - 9, Email: lph@laoplazahotel.com, Website: <http://www.laoplazahotel.com>

MUANG LAO-CHINA HOTEL , Thadeua Road, PO Box 5720, Vientiane, Tel: 856 21 313325/8 Fax: 313380, www.visit-laos.com

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SETTHA PALACE HOTEL, 6 Pang Kham Street, P.O. Box: 1618, Vientiane, Lao PDR. (Laos), Tel: (856-21) 217581-2. Fax: (856-21) 217583. Email: reservations@setthapalace.com, www.setthapalace.com

TAI-PAN HOTEL, Address 22/3 Francois Nginn Rd, Location Ban Mixay, Muong Chanthabury, Around Town, Phone 021/216-906, Fax 021/216-223 Web site www.travelao.com

VILLA MANOLY, 29 Ban Phiawat, Beside Wat Phiawat, Vientiane, Phone: +856 21 21 8907, Fax: +856 21 21 8907, manoly20@hotmail.com

THE ROYAL DOKMAIDENG HOTEL, Lane Xang Avenue (PO Box 3925), Vientiane, Lao PDR, Tel: (856) 21 214477, Fax: (856) 21 214454, Email: dok@laonet.net



AIRLINES/HELICOPTERS/AIRPORTS

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