

IN THE REALM OF

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ADVENTURE

IN THE REALM OF THE MEKONG RIVER

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RIDING DAY 1 : KHON KAEN - VIENTIANE

Standard Route (236 km / 147 miles)

Our first riding day! Today our destination is Vientiane, Laos, which means we have to cross an international border.

To get there, we head north on Highway 2, through Udon Thani and the Nongkhai provinces. The land is fertile here and very flat, so don't expect any switchbacks. Once we arrive at the border, we will process departure from Thailand first, then cross the mighty Mekong on the International Thai Laos Friendship Bridge No. 1. On the other side, Laos awaits. The entire border crossing procedure will take us about 2-3 hours.

Vientiane, the capital and largest city of Laos, counts about 1 million people and is a very pleasant city with wide boulevards and full of Buddhas and temples.

Highlights:

#1: Wat Xieng Khuan (Buddha Park)



Located 25km southeast of central Vientiane, eccentric Xieng Khuan, aka Buddha Park, thrills with other-worldly Buddhist and Hindu sculptures, and was designed and built in 1958 by Luang Pu, a yogi-priest-shaman who merged Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, mythology and iconography into a cryptic whole. It's a bizarre, delightfully dilapidated compound that's great for a wander and a photo op. (Lonely Planet)

#2: Vientiane



Vientiane is the capital of Laos. It is situated on the Mekong river, right at the border with Thailand. The city has several Buddhist monuments and old temples. One of the most popular sight is Pha That Luang, an important national cultural monument for Laos.

RIDING DAY 2 : VIENTIANE - VANG VIENG

Standard Route (185 km / 115 miles)

After an early departure from The Capital City, we head north on the old R13 road. Along the way you will see the modern infrastructure developments with railroads tracks passing through small northern towns between Vientiane and Vang Vieng and further on to Luang Prabang, Oudom Xay, and Boten, then it connects to Kunming, China. Lunch will be Laotian style somewhere along the road, then we continue to Vang Vieng for our night at the Riverside Boutique Resort on the Nam Song River

Highlights:

#1: Nam Ngum Reservoir



The Nam Ngum is one of the most important side rivers of the Mekong. 1971, the Vietnam War was still going on, Laos started with the help from 10 other States (under supervision of the UNO) to build a dam and a power plant. 1975 and 1983 additional turbines were installed to raise the capacity up to 150 MW. This amount of electrical power is much too much for Laos, so they can export most of it (70 - 80% go to Thailand). The lake covers an area of about 370 km² and contains some smaller islands.

#2: Vang Vieng



Vang Vieng was first settled around 1353 as a staging post between Luang Prabang and Vientiane. Significant expansion of the town and its infrastructure occurred during the 1964-73 Vietnam War when the US built an Air Force base and runway.

In more recent times, the town has grown substantially due to the influence of backpackers, attracted by the opportunities for adventure in the picturesque limestone karst landscape. The main street features guesthouses, bars, restaurants, internet cafes and tour agencies. Attractions of the town include tubing and kayaking on the Nam Song River. Other activities are cycling, trekking and rock climbing in the limestone mountains. There are numerous caves, such as Tham Phu Kham cave or the Tham Jang cave, which are worth to visit.

RIDING DAY 3 : VANG VIENG - LUANG PRABANG

Standard Route (233 km / 145 miles)

We start the day with a beautiful morning breakfast on the Song River. Today we continue north on R13 to Kasi, enjoying spectacular scenic views along the way. From Kasi, the road becomes very twisty and technically challenging until we reach our lunch place at Phou Khoun town junction. The town itself is not very interesting, but the impressive views more than make up for that. Built around the intersection of Route 13 North and Route 7, the town is often used by locals as a place to transfer between buses. There is also a popular local market in the centre of town selling a wide selection of precooked Lao food for bus passengers. This is a great place to grab a cheap meal, but there are also some local restaurants around town as well. After lunch, we continue West on R7. If you like curves and technical riding, you're in for a treat: 100 km of twisties will take your breath away! Luang Prabang, our destination, is the most popular tourist spot in all of Laos. Tomorrow, on our rest day, you'll find out why.

Highlights:

#1: N13 Phou Khoun



The N13 between Phou Khoun and Xiang Ngeun winds its way through the spectacular Laotian mountains over a length of 100 km (60 miles) and at an altitude of over 1200 m (4,000 ft) in places. Google Maps estimates 3 1/2 hours for this stretch - you can't manage more than 30 km/h (20 mph) on average here. What a ride!

RIDING DAY 4 : LUANG PRABANG

Standard Route (109 km / 68 miles)

Today is the first Rest day of this program. After breakfast, we take you around Luang Prabang City for a couple of hours. Scheduled are the Morning market, Royal Palace, Phousi Hill and Wat Xiengthong. After lunch, you are free to relax or take your bike out for a little ride, maybe to a stunning waterfall or just along the Mekong River.

Luang Prabang is a very cool place in incredibly beautiful surroundings. One day here may not be enough. Sorry...

Highlights:

#1: Luang Prabang



Luang Prabang was formerly the capital of a kingdom of the same name. Until the communist takeover in 1975, it was the royal capital and seat of government of the Kingdom of Laos.

The main part of the city is located on a peninsula between the Nam Khan and Mekong Rivers. The city is well known for its numerous Buddhist temples and monasteries. Every morning hundreds of monks from the various monasteries walk through the streets collecting alms.

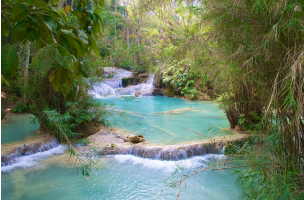
One of the major landmarks in the city is the steep hill, Phou Si, on which sits Wat Chom Si.

Luang Prabang has both natural and historical sites. Among the natural sites are the beautiful Kuang Si Falls and the Pak Ou Caves. The Haw Kham Royal Palace Museum and the Wat Xieng Thong temple are among the most well-known historical sites.

In addition to the magnificent temples, the French colonial style houses contribute to the appeal of this old town. And there is a well-known night market worth to be visited.

Luang Prabang is part of the UNESCO World Heritage.

#2: Kuang Si waterfalls



The Kuang Si Waterfalls are located approx. 28 km southwest of Luang Prabang. The falls begin in pools on a steep hillside which descend to the main fall with a height of 60 meters.

The falls are connected by small trails and swimming is allowed, so don't forget your swimsuit.

RIDING DAY 5 : LUANG PRABANG - NONG KHIAW

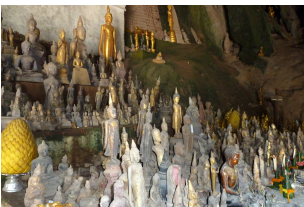
Standard Route (154 km / 96 miles)

An early start from Luang Prabang Peninsula. Today we are heading North on R13 and soon leave the Mekong in favor of one of its tributaries, Nam Ou. There is only little sightseeing today, we ride through the northern part of Laos, a very remote region with few inhabitants. The twisty road, surrounded by over 2000 m high mountains, is very scenic and we have to share the road only with some trucks and buses. The few small villages along the road seem to be very poor but people are never short of smiles. Beside the fantastic riding, there is one more thing to mention: the outstanding views over the mountains.

Our destination is a small town called Nong Khiew, the jewel of northern Laos. The town is tiny, you can easily explore it in a half day, there are no big hotels or entertainment centers here, just the complete peace of an Asian mountain town. Here you'll find children playing in the dust, locals selling fruits and weaving baskets, Nam Ou river shining like an emerald and hills covered with a dense carpet of greenery.

Highlights:

#1: Pak Ou Caves



Near Pak Ou (mouth of the Ou river) the Tham Ting (lower cave) and the Tham Theung (upper cave) are caves overlooking the Mekong River 25 km from Luang Prabang. They are a group of caves on the left side of the Mekong river, and have become well known for their miniature Buddha sculptures. Hundreds of very small and mostly damaged wooden Buddhist figures are laid out over the wall shelves. They take many different positions including meditation, teaching, peace, rain, and reclining (nirvana).

#2: Nong Khiaw



Nong Khiaw is a beautiful rustic little town on the bank of the Ou River in Laos, squeezed in between some of the most fantastic limestone mountains north of Vang Vieng and Luang Prabang. Many travellers pass through on the way up river to the even more isolated Muang Ngoi, but Nong Khiaw has a plenty of charm plus conveniences such as 24 hour electricity and a connection to the road network.

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RIDING DAY 6 : NONG KHIAW - OUDOMXAY (MUANG XAY)

Standard Route (130 km / 81 miles)

A short, relaxing day, almost a rest day. The road through the mountains is breathtakingly curvy, a feast for motorcyclists. Beware, however, of slippery spots!

Tranquil, beautiful and sometimes hidden in the clouds, Oudomxay is located in the heart of northern Laos and is one of the most accessible of the far northern provinces. It is also known as “The Northern city – sea of clouds with different hill tribes”.

The rugged mountainous landscape has peaks up to 1,850 meters covered in varying forest types and wider fields. The province’s main rivers are Mekong, Nam Park, Nam Beng and Nam Kor. Oudomxay is mainly populated by the Khmu, Hmong and lowland Lao, with a total of 12 ethnic minorities, each with their own languages, cultural heritage and lifestyles.

There are many tourist destinations in the province, including Chom Ong Cave “the land of caves”, Tadnamkat waterfall – Namkat Yolapa Resort, the Sacred Phachaosingkham temple, Nam Hin Lake, the 600 hundred year old Phouthat stupa in the center of the town, “the symbol of Oudomxay” and many more.

Due to Oudomxay’s location, it is the most important traffic junction in Northern Laos and considered the Heart of Northern Laos.

Highlights:

#1: Oudomxay (Muang Xay)



The province of Oudomxay has recently opened to tourism and offers the unique opportunity to experience the original culture, the tradition and nature in Northern Laos. Especially trekking to ethnic villages is quite popular among travelers.

The landscape of Oudomxay is dominated by hills and mountains up to 1800 meters.

The province capital Muang Xay with about 20.000 inhabitants is the biggest city in Northern Laos and a meeting point for travellers, market women, Chinese business people and adventurers.

RIDING DAY 7 : OUDOMXAY (MUANG XAY) - PAK BENG

Standard Route (161 km / 100 miles)

Today we are continuing to Pakbeng on the R2W where we join the mighty Mekong again. Pakbeng is a small village in Laos, on the Mekong River about halfway between the Thai border at Huay Xai and Luang Prabang, Laos. Pakbeng is connected by a sealed road with Oudomxai along the Nam Beng River. The town is the overnight stop for boats running between Luang Prabang and Huay Xai. The slow boats which run between Huay Xai and Luang Prabang over a period of two days spend the night moored in Pakbeng.

Highlights:

#1: Mekong River



The Mekong is the world's 10th-longest river and the 7th-longest in Asia.

Its length is estimated at 4,909 km (3,050 mi) and it drains an area of 795,000 sq km (307,000 sq mi).

The river runs from the Tibetan Plateau through China's Yunnan province, Burma, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam established the Mekong River Commission (MRC) in 1995 to assist in the management and coordinated use of the Mekong's resources. In 1996, China and Burma became "dialogue partners" of the MRC and the six countries now work together within a cooperative framework.

The river is a lifeline for all the people living close to it and a major international trading route.

RIDING DAY 8 : PAK BENG - BO KLUA

Standard Route (140 km / 87 miles)

Today we are heading back into Thailand. A short 50km ride brings us to Namngeun Border crossing, a small international border crossing connecting Laos and Thailand. Huay Kon is a Thai border village, the centre of the subdistrict (tambon) of the same name, 132 km (82 mi) north of Nan, in Chaloe Phra Kiat District. Leaving Laos and re-entering Thailand should take less than 2 hours. Once completed, we continue south on the R1081, a beautiful mountain road, to our destination. Along the way, we can visit Phu Payak Memorial.

Bo Kluea means “salt well” in Thai and the tiny village of the same name lays claim to two of these geologically unusual features—it has both salt and wells, so it has two salt wells. The salt has been mined for centuries and once exported to China, but today they form the village’s main tourist attraction.

Highlights:

#1: Bo Kluea Salt Wells



For at least 800 years, salt has been extracted from the underground salines here at Bo Kluea. Around the world, salt has always been a very valuable commodity and wars were fought over it repeatedly, with Bo Kluea being no exception. It is very interesting to watch the locals extract the salt. It's also a great souvenir!

RIDING DAY 9 : BO KLUA - NAN

Standard Route (233 km / 145 miles)

On our way today we have the pleasure of riding an outstandingly beautiful mountain road that was designed especially for motorcycle riders with magnificent S curves and viewpoints that will give you a memorable memory. You will have a chance to stop at roadside coffee shops in many curves, each offering amazing views.

Road no. 3, aka Sky Road, leads through the jungle-covered mountains Nan province. The road connects Santi Suk and Bo Kluea districts of the northern province. The road has been nicknamed Road No 3 because its turns make it look like the number three. Nearly every weekend, Nan's Road No 3 is full of tourists enjoying the beautiful vista of lush hills, blue skies and white clouds.

We will be staying at a beautiful northern style wooden hotel in the center of Nan, one of Thailand's most beautiful and interesting cities.

Highlights:

#1: Road Nr. 3 (Sky Road)



Words can't do it justice, you have to experience the Sky Road yourself. This is one of the best rides not only in Thailand but in the whole wide world. Enjoy!

#2: Nan



Little-known Nan goes back to the depths of the history of Thailand. For centuries it was a separate, autonomous kingdom with few relationships with the outside world. By the end of the 14th century Nan was one of the nine northern Thai-Lao principalities that comprised Lan Na Thai. The Burmese took control of the kingdom in 1558 and deported many of the inhabitants to Burma as slaves; the

city was completely deserted until northern Thailand was retaken from the Burmese in 1786.

The old heart of Nan, where Wat Phumin, the national museum and other tourist attractions like the King of Nan's Teak House are located, is being restored.

Nan is also famous for its longboat races in September/October, where up to 60 men sit in one boat, made from a dugout tree trunk.

RIDING DAY 10 : NAN

Standard Route (105 km / 65 miles)

Today is our rest day! But it is hard to decide what to do. You could spend the whole day in Nan and explore all the cultural highlights of this ancient capital, visit the famous temples, the national museum, or the historic Royal Teak House. Other options are to go for an exciting elephant ride or a rafting tour on the Nan River.

For those who can't get enough riding, we offer a leisurely morning ride on twisty mountain roads with stunning views.

Highlights:

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#2: Sao Din Earth Pillars



Sao Din Na Noi or locally called "Hom Jom" was created by erosion of wind and rain about 10,000-30,000 years ago and used to be under the sea. Enormous holes, walls, and pillars of earth and rock can be seen here. It is orange-red in many different shapes and surrounded by pine forest.

Stone bracelets and ancient axes have been discovered here which are now preserved at the National Museum of Nan province. This shows, that Sao Din Na Noi was already

inhabited during the Stone Age.

RIDING DAY 11 : NAN - DAN SAI

Standard Route (319 km / 198 miles)

Today it's another beautiful scenic riding day - albeit a very long one. Heading South on R101, we stop and visit the Bicycle Museum in Wieng Sa, then continue to Paknai Fishing Village which is located on the shore of the huge Sirikit Reservoir. For lunch, we head to one of the local raft restaurants. After lunch we cross the man-made lake on a metal barge to Uttaradit Province. Small secondary roads bring us to Phu Soi Dao Waterfall in Phu Soi Dao national Park along the border between Thailand and Laos. Shorty after, we end our day in Dan Sai.

Highlights:

#1: Phu Soi Dao National Park



This 340 km² national park has only been in existence since 2008. It is located east of the Laotian border at the southern end of the Luang Prabang Mountains and comprises jungle-covered mountainous terrain culminating in the 2120 m high Phu Sai Dao. This distinctive mountain gave the park its name. The park is accessible via many hiking trails and the very winding regional road R1268.

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RIDING DAY 12 : DAN SAI - CHIANG KHAN

Standard Route (155 km / 96 miles)

We start this riding day by heading back to the Hueang River in order to ride the magnificent road that follows it up to where it joins the Mekong. At the confluence, there is a huge golden Buddha and a glass skywalk, the latest addition to northern Thailand's list of tourist highlights. Needless to say that it offers stunning views of the two rivers which form the border to Laos.

Our destination today isw Chiang Khan, a small trading town on the Mekong River. This town is listed as one of the World Sustainable Destinations 2020 by Green Destinations – a non-profit foundation for sustainable Destination development and recognition. The city is packed with calm and casual charms. Don't worry, we'll be there in time.

Highlights:

#1: Skywalk Chiang Khan



Since 2020, there has been a new tourist attraction in northern Thailand: the Loei Skywalk. The 100 m long glass platform is 80 m high, which is the height of a 30-storey building. You enter it at the foot of the golden "Big Buddha", which is an attraction in itself. From here, the Buddha's view, and that of the visitor, sweeps far across the wide basin of the Mekong and the point where the much narrower Huehang flows towards it.

#2: Chiang Khan



What was once a quiet, little-known Mekong-side town full of traditional timber shophouses became a trendy destination for Thais and is now full of gift shops, cute cafes and places for taking selfies. That said, Chiang Khan is far from spoiled and is still a charming place to visit. The photogenic views of the river and the Lao mountains beyond are still there, as are the old buildings, and things remain peaceful in the daytime before the evening shopping stampede begins. Every evening Th Chai Khong turns into a busy Walking Street market with buskers, artists and street-food vendors. (Lonely Planet)

RIDING DAY 13 : CHIANG KHAN - KHON KAEN

Standard Route (274 km / 170 miles)

Today is our last riding day and we say goodbye to the Mekong, which is more than half a mile wide at this point. Small side roads lead us south-east to the Ubol Ratana reservoir, which was named after King Bhumibol's eldest daughter in 1966. On its eastern shore lies the Nam Phong National Park, which is famous for its rock formations.


Our destination, Khon Kaen, is only about 50 km away, so our extraordinary tour through the Mekong region will soon come to an end.

Highlights:

#1: Nam Phong National Park



This national park, which covers just under 200 km², is known for its rock formations and diverse flora and fauna. The magnificent view over the reservoir, which can be enjoyed from the higher points, is particularly impressive.



We wish you a wonderful tour.

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