



Laos Family Friendly Volunteer Adventure

Explore the stunning UNESCO World Heritage town of Luang Prabang

Travel by longboat to the remote weaving village of Sop Chem, where you will help to build a library for the local school

Learn about the plight of the endangered Asian elephant at the Elephant Conservation Centre in Sayaboury

Help volunteers from the Luang Prabang library to deliver education and health supplies to rural schools

Explore ancient cave temples, swim in jungle waterfalls and enjoy stunning Mekong River sunsets...

Join us in September 2024 for this unique family friendly adventure into northern Laos.

So, what makes it unique? No e3 Global Adventure can ever be called ordinary! Every single adventure is different and we specialise in offering experiences that you won't find on any other travel companies itineraries!

This trip will take you away from the usual tourist experience in Laos. You will help to build a library for a remote Khmu village. Situated on the Nam Ou river you will travel by bus and longboat to get there. Once at Sop Chem you will be immersed in village life - learning some weaving and fishing skills from the locals, enjoying local food and building connections with the local people. Of course, your project will also be very hands on as our teams take turns with building and also running English conversation lessons for the local children.

Move on to Luang Prabang, Laos. Here, aside from enjoying all this beautiful place has to offer, you will help to deliver educational and health supplies to rural schools in conjunction with staff from the National Library. Then it's time to venture well off the beaten track once again as you spend 2 days at the Elephant Conservation Centre in Sayaboury - recently voted one of the best places in the world to observe elephants in the wild.

Unique... inspiring... educational.....adventure..!





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Detailed Itinerary and Trip Notes

(Itinerary subject to change without notice)

Day 1 Arrive Luang Prabang, transfer to guest house

Sunday 29th September

Today is arrival day in Luang Prabang. Transfer to the Villa Somphong Guesthouse on the peninsula and enjoy a rest before joining the group for an orientation chat and walk around the Old Town with our local guide. This 14th century town has many interesting features. As we walk you will notice the French colonial influence in the streetscape - a reflection of their occupation of the town in the 1800's. This afternoon we will walk through the majestic (and stunningly beautiful) Wat Xieng Thong temple where we will learn some of the culture and folklore of the area. A little later we will enjoy our first Laos meal - perhaps overlooking the water while enjoying a stunning Mekong River sunset.

Day 2 Luang Prabang - Monk chat, UXO museum, Kuang Si waterfalls

Monday 30th Sept

If you are super keen this morning you could wake up early (5am) to quietly observe Tak Bat - the alms giving ceremony for which Luang Prabang is famous. Our guide will talk you through the process as you watch hundreds of saffron robed monks collect their food for the day from the local people. Learning about the Buddhist culture is going to be well and truly on the agenda today as we will have the opportunity to speak personally with a Buddhist monk. He will talk about his experience of becoming a monk, his beliefs and how he lives from day to day. He will also guide us in a meditation sequence - perfect to find your inner zen..!

From here we will take a tuk tuk to the UXO Museum. The museum is quite small but the impact for visitors is usually high. Laos is the highest bombed country per capita in history as a result of the Vietnam War. Even now only 1% of the bomb contaminated land in Laos has been cleared. The Museum will help you to learn more about this shocking situation and build your understanding of the work being done to fix the problem.

This afternoon we have a special treat as we once again board the tuk tuks and hit the road for the one hour journey to the stunning Kuang Si waterfalls. Ever pictured yourself swimming in jungle waterfalls? Well this is certainly the real deal! Multiple pools of varying depths with clear, turquoise blue waters all surrounded by tropical jungle..... it really is a stunning spot to spend a few hours relaxing and enjoying a refreshing swim. While we are there we will also visit the Free the Bears sanctuary which is situated on the same site. Learn about the work of Australian Mary Hutton and her role in rescuing hundreds of bears from the bile trade. Since 1995 the organisation has rescued over 950 bears - Asiatic black bears, moon, sun and sloth bears - and now works across not only Laos but Vietnam and Cambodia as well. Here you will see some of the rescued bears happy in their new, safe environment and perhaps observe some of their enrichment activities taking place.

Tonight we will have our first experience of the famous Luang Prabang night markets. This colourful and vibrant handicraft market may well become your 'go to' shopping destination throughout the trip with its offerings of silk products, lanterns, paintings and so much more..! (B)





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Day 3 Travel to Sop Chem - volunteer project

Tuesday 1st Oct

And here we go....today we head off on our very much 'off the beaten track' adventure! After breakfast we will travel 3 hours by mini-bus to the riverside haven of Nong Khiaw. We will follow the Nam Ou River for much of the way before hitting the town in time for lunch. Then it's on to our long tail boats for the 1.5 hour journey upstream to the site of our volunteer project - Sop Chem village. This charming little village is host to around 60 families belonging to the Khmu ethnic minority. The village relies on subsistence agriculture, fishing and many of the women are also skilled weavers. As with most SE Asian countries, the ethnic minority people seem to suffer the most from poverty, poor living conditions, malnutrition, poor health and lack of education. The people of Sop Chem are no exception. However, they are working towards a better future as the village leaders are willing to collaborate with groups such as ours to build better education facilities and teach their children English.

Once we settle in to comfortable guest house accommodation we will meet the local chiefs and familiarise ourselves with the project we will undertake over the next couple of days. Building a library space will be an asset for the village school. This will encourage the children to sit and read, have a quiet space for learning as well as keep the resources safely away from monsoonal rains. Our group will also be bringing some games and creative play activities to the school and these will also be housed in the library.

We will have time to relax this evening, take stock of our surroundings and contemplate the project ahead before enjoying the hospitality of the local people as we enjoy dinner. (B, L, D)

Day 4 Sop Chem - volunteer project

Wednesday 2nd Oct

This morning it will be an early start so you will be up with the roosters..! Enjoy breakfast before heading to our project site. The group will be allocated tasks to assist with the library building project. These could include digging foundations, mixing mortar, moving/laying bricks etc. The key is to work steadily and to take regular drink breaks. Enjoy the hands on approach as you work alongside the locals to get the job done.

In the afternoon, we will take time to plan and deliver some English conversation lessons with the local children. Indeed, depending on the school timetable we may have 2 separate teams - a 'building' team and a 'teaching' team, swapping roles regularly so everyone has the opportunity to take part in each activity. The enthusiasm of the kids will surprise you. For them, learning English is a way out of poverty as they can be employed in hospitality and tourism which offers potential to earn a much better income.

This evening we will take part in a weaving lesson with some of the local women. We will have the chance to try using the basic but very effective looms and perhaps gain a real appreciation of the level of skill of the local women.

After your busy but productive day it's time to kick back and relax... or if you have the energy try and beat the local kids at soccer. Good luck! (B, L, D)





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Day 5 Sop Chem - Volunteer Project

Thursday 3rd Oct

Today is the second day of your volunteer project. As with day 1 we will split into teams to work on both the building and education projects. It will be quite hot so rests will be taken often. However, you will be amazed how quickly progress is made! Aside from the locals helping us out on the build, there will be many more dropping by for a quick look and some good natured banter about our building skills. With the locals assisting us there is no need to worry about the quality of our work - they teach us along the way and make sure that everything is done to their satisfaction.

The education team will work with groups of the local children to teach them some basic conversational English. Interaction while playing games, using resources such as flash cards and so forth are really valuable for them. Listening to native English speakers is a valuable opportunity for them and they will make the most of it! It will be great fun for everyone, especially as you get to know the individual children.

This evening we will be experiencing a different type of cultural immersion activity as we head out on to the Nam Ou for a local fishing experience. Learn some of the techniques from the locals and see if you can catch tomorrow night's dinner! (B, L D)

Day 6 Sop Chem - Adventure Day

Friday 4th Oct

Today we are having a break from our volunteer activities as we hit the trails and tracks around Sop Chem to discover some of the lesser known features of the area.

First we will jump back on board our longboats for a short ride before we trek to a jungle cave that was used by locals to shelter from bombing during the Indochina (Vietnam) War. Returning to our boat we will continue upstream a little before landing at the staging point of a short trek to Tad Mok waterfall. Here there will be plenty of time to relax, swim and enjoy a picnic lunch before heading back to Sop Chem.

This evening a very special treat awaits as the villagers invite us to join in a traditional Baci or Lao thanksgiving ceremony - their way of thanking you for your support of their community. It is a rare treat to be able to participate in one of these ceremonies so it will be an experience that will stay with you forever.

For the younger members of the team, once again there will be plenty of time to interact with the local children - playing games, soccer, or just talking and learning about each others way of life.

For the adults this evening, there will be an opportunity to top the evening off with a local nightcap as we learn about the process of making rice-wine. Of course, a 'guided tasting' will be part of the experience! (B, L, D)





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Day 7 Sop Chem - Nong Khiaw

Saturday 5th Oct

Today could well be a little sad as we wave goodbye to the friendly villagers of Sop Chem. Packing up and moving our gear back on to the longboats we head back down the river towards Nong Khaiw. This quiet back packer favourite is the perfect place to enjoy a little comfort - good showers, comfortable bed, massage, herbal bath or just generally relaxing in a local café.

In the afternoon, if you are still up for adventure, we will have the opportunity to hike up to the Nong Khiaw Viewpoint or Pha Daeng Peak as it is known locally. Starting from the temple of Ban Sop Houn the 1.5 hour trek will take us through fields and jungle-like forest up to the top of the peak which offers spectacular views of the mountains, valleys and river around Nong Khiaw. It is a peaceful spot at the top and we will have the chance to rest in the shade of the hut, refuel and reflect on our surroundings before heading back down to the town. (B,L,D)

Day 8 Nong Khiaw - Luang Prabang

Sunday 6th Oct

After a slower start this morning we will begin our journey back to Luang Prabang by mini-bus. Arriving around lunch time we will check back in to the Villa Somphong guesthouse. From here the afternoon is yours to enjoy. Explore more of Luang Prabang - it is very safe and easy to walk around the Old Town so presents the perfect opportunity for some independent exploration. Check out some of the French bakeries, local cafes or restaurants or wander the main street admiring the vibrant textiles and handicrafts on offer. The choice is yours! (B)

Day 9 Sayaboury - Elephant Conservation Centre

Monday 7th Oct

Today we are up early to catch our mini-bus connection to Sayaboury province - around 3 hours drive from LPB. The Elephant Conservation Centre has been established to rescue elephants from the logging industry and give them a safe place to rest and, hopefully, breed. The Centre also conducts detailed research into elephant natality, re-trains elephant mahouts and promotes education about elephants both locally and internationally.

When we arrive at Nam Tien Lake pier we transfer to the Centre by boat. You will have time to settle into your private bungalow before our guide takes us into the forest. Along the way we walk past the different enclosures where the main activities take place. After enjoying a Laotian style picnic we can watch the mothers and babies at the nursery. After they have drunk enough and returned to the forest we will take the boat back to the Centre for a visit to the hospital. Here the Lao vet assistant or biologist will introduce us to their work and talk about the types of ailments and veterinary issues faced by the elephants. After bath time, which helps to socialise and strengthen ties in the herd, you will have the opportunity for some soft interaction with the mahouts by your side. During the short walk back to the forest the guide will tell us a little about the background of each of the elephants, including the hard work they have done. Before dinner there will be time for a swim, a canoe on the lake or a stroll around the Centre. Or, perhaps you would prefer to relax and enjoy a traditional Lao style cocktail! (B, L, D)





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Day 10 Elephant Conservation Centre - Luang Prabang

Tuesday 8th Oct

Today our guide and biologist will explain about the elephant enrichment activities. Enrichment is a dynamic process for enhancing animal environments within the context of the animal's behavioural biology. To provide mental stimulation and alleviate boredom the elephants are provided with cognitive enrichment in the form of hidden food, toys, a mud bath etc. and, in short, they love it! Today you get to take part in this amazing experience by helping the team to prepare the enclosure by cutting and hiding the food - giving the elephants a challenge. Once they arrive, you will have the opportunity to observe how the elephants try to find what you have hidden! This is a novel and unique way to interact with the elephants, contributing directly to their wellbeing. After lunch at the restaurant you will have some time to relax before the minibus journey back to Luang Prabang. On arrival we will once again check in to our guesthouse and enjoy being back in this beautiful town. (B, L)

Day 11 Luang Prabang - Free Day

Wednesday 9th Oct

You can never have too much time in this rich and diverse cultural hub. Enjoy shopping, café visits, handicraft workshops, treks to ethnic minority villages or waterfalls, Mekong river cruises, motorbike or bike rides out of town. Relax at La Pistoche - the LPB equivalent of a swimming pool and spa centre. Visit the National Museum or the Ethnology Museum or volunteer a few hours of your time assisting at the LPB library or the Big Brother Mouse program. There is even the chance to visit Green Jungle Park with its trail of zip lines and ropes courses. This is your time to explore and create your own adventure! (B)

Day 12 Remote School Visit with Luang Prabang Library

Thursday 10th Oct

The Luang Prabang National Library staff work hard to promote education and reading amongst local schools and the 'Book Bag' program is one of their initiatives to achieve this. Today we will travel by tuk tuk with the Library staff to a rural school where we will deliver an 'instant library' of reading and picture books to the students. For some children, these are the first picture books they have ever seen! We will also assist the Library staff in leading some health care activities, distribute hygiene supplies as well as enjoy some fun games with the local children. It will be an inspiring day which will allow us to see some of the real Laos as well as learn about the difficulties faced by the local people in terms of access to education and health care.

To celebrate our last evening together, we will head to dinner at Khaiphaen - just a couple of blocks from our guesthouse. Khaiphaen is a charity restaurant which offers disadvantaged youth the opportunity to learn hospitality skills which will lead to future employment. It also has some of the most delicious food in LPB! Here we will enjoy our final meal together, reflecting on our experiences and the friends we have made over the last few weeks. (B)

Day 13 Luang Prabang - departure day

Friday 11th Oct

Today is departure day from Luang Prabang. Transfer to the airport for your departure. (B)





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Our Philosophy

Our aim is to link travellers with ethical and socially responsible travel experiences and opportunities. Wherever we can we stay in local guesthouses run by local people. We will guide you to fair trade shops, to cafes run with a social justice focus as well as link you with opportunities to give back to the local community you are visiting. At e3 Global Adventures every itinerary we create incorporates a social justice or community service project. That's because we believe that great travel experiences are created by our (and your) connection with local people. Indeed, that's what you will remember most about your trip!!

Our Family Friendly Tour Group Policy

This trip is open to all travellers aged 12 years and above. All travellers under 18 must be accompanied, and actively supervised, by a parent or guardian at all times. As with all our trips, mutual respect of fellow travellers is paramount so that everyone is able to enjoy a fantastic travel experience. This adventure offers a great combination of activities, for both families and adults generally, including volunteering and opportunities for independent exploration.

Your Guides

Nic and Pam from e3 Global Adventures will be your guides for this volunteer project trip. Both are experienced travellers and tour leaders who use their personal connections with local people and communities across South East Asia to make your travel experience unique. They are also current educators who are experienced in establishing Asian studies and social justice programs in the Tasmanian school setting. Local guides will also join us for the Luang Prabang, Sop Chem and Sayaboury sections of our tour.

Your Volunteer Experience

Without doubt your volunteer experience will truly be the highlight of your trip! Unlike most volunteer tour organisers we believe that the local communities are in the best position to identify projects which are of real value to them. We work closely with organisations in-country to work out how we can best assist. We do not believe in 'hand outs' and we certainly don't promote orphanage tourism with any of our project trips. However, we do believe that every one of our travellers can help to improve the education, health care or quality of life of people in the communities that we visit.

Our major project on this trip is to build a library for a small school in Sop Chem village. The village chief has spoken with his community and together they have decided that this project is of most benefit to their village. The work will be physical but no special skills are required so if you are a novice at bricklaying you won't be alone! In Sop Chem you will also be assisting with English conversation teaching with local children, including planning of lessons and activities.

In Luang Prabang there will be the chance to assist Chantha and her staff at the National Library to deliver educational supplies and programs to schools through the 'book bag' program. Your stay at the Elephant Conservation Centre also helps the plight of the Asian elephant through funding the ElefantAsia program - a world leader in elephant research and conservation management. Of course, during your stay you will be assisting with some of the tasks relating to elephant care. Finally, while in Luang Prabang you may also opt to visit the Big Brother Mouse program and support young people in the town with their English conversation practice.



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Your Project Contribution

We ask each adult participant to contribute \$400AUD and \$200 for each person under 18 towards our volunteer projects. Every dollar of this amount goes towards the projects that you will be supporting. Registered charity partner Community Against Poverty Assoc Inc collects these funds and passes on 100% to the in-country trusted partners to organise the projects on our behalf.

Accommodation

All guesthouse accommodation on this trip is booked on a double or twin share basis with private facilities. Please ask about single supplements or triple share rooms. With all our accommodation our emphasis is on supporting local people as much as we can. In Luang Prabang we stay at Villa Somphong - a small, quiet guesthouse conveniently located on the Nam Khan River side.. Wake up in the morning to the sound of bells summoning monks to alms, explore the Old Town a short walk away or just relax by the river and watch the activities of local fishermen and traders! Our host here is the fabulous (and very capable) Mrs Noy. In Sop Chem we will stay in gorgeous double/twin bungalows with shower and toilet facilities.. In Nong Khiaw we will be staying overnight in one of the newer river view guesthouses which has rooms with private facilities. At the Elephant Conservation Centre accommodation is in simple but elegant bamboo twin share/double huts with shared facilities.

A Culinary Adventure

Without doubt the food in Laos always proves to be a highlight! Enjoy traditional noodle soups, eggs and beautiful tropical fruits for breakfast. There are plenty of options for fresh salads and baguettes for lunch, along with stir fried noodles and rice . We always recommend trying the local Lao meals such as laap, grilled meats, locally made sausage, Mekong riverweed and jaew bong (chilli dip) which are traditionally served with khao niew or sticky rice. The food of Laos is generally simpler and not as elaborate as Thai but shares many common ingredients including lots of herbs. There are many cafes on the banks of the Mekong River in Luang Prabang so eating is always an enjoyable past time!

Tour Cost & Inclusions

Cost: \$2 440 AUD (single supplement add \$330)

Includes: Tour leaders from Luang Prabang
Local guides
Transfers (if travelling with the group)
All accommodation
All breakfasts, other meals as per itinerary
LPB Old Town tour, entrance fees to Wat Xieng Thong, monk chat, Kuang Si tour, UXO museum entrance
Bus, tuk tuk and boat transport as described
2 day program at the Elephant Conservation Centre, Sayaboury
Project organisation

Tour Exclusions

Excludes: Flights to & from Luang Prabang
Visas
Travel insurance
Some meals
Activities not mentioned in the itinerary
Drinks and tips
Project donation \$400AUD per adult, \$200 per child payable prior to departure

The Next Step..!

Need more info....or ready for your adventure...? Contact us today!

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