



Laos

Golden temples, a slow brown Mekong, misty green mountains and baskets of sticky rice, in the only landlocked country of Southeast Asia.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Vientiane

POPULATION

About 7.8 million (2025 estimate)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Lao

CURRENCY

Lao kip

AREA

About 236,800 km²

GOVERNMENT

Socialist republic, a one-party state led by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Phou Bia, about 2,800 m

LONGEST RIVER

The Mekong, about 4,900 km in all, which runs through Laos and along its border with Thailand

NEIGHBOURS

China, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam (no coastline)

DRIVES ON THE

Right

CALLING CODE

+856

A 45-minute trip to Laos

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

0 to 5 min Welcome. Show the map page and find Laos together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there?

5 to 15 min Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: 1353: Fa Ngum founds Lan Xang; 1893: France takes the lands east of the Mekong; 2021: The Laos-China Railway opens.

15 to 25 min At the table: talk about Larb and Tam mak hoong (green papaya salad). Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help.

25 to 30 min Say it like a local: practise "Sabaidee" (Hello), "Sabaidee bo?" (How are you?), "Dee, khop jai" (Fine, thank you). Everyone says them together.

30 to 40 min Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at <https://preview.worldstroll.com/countries/laos/group>. No scores needed.

40 to 45 min Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page.

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Laos and its cities



- Vientiane (Vientiane Prefecture): The golden stupa of Pha That Luang, Patuxai, the Victory Gate, Sunset over the Mekong from the riverside
- Luang Prabang (Luang Prabang Province, north): Wat Xieng Thong, The morning alms round of the monks, The night market and Mount Phousi at sunset
- Savannakhet (Savannakhet Province, centre): Colonial old town and the Catholic church of St Therese, Wat Sainyaphum, The Second Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge
- Pakse (Champasak Province, south): Coffee from the Bolaven Plateau, Trips to Vat Phou, Markets and Mekong river views
- Thakhek (Khammouane Province, centre): Colonial buildings around the old square, The limestone caves of Khammouane, The Thakhek Loop, a road trip by motorbike
- Vang Vieng (Vientiane Province): Karst scenery along the Nam Song, Kayaking and river

tubing, Caves and blue lagoons

- Phonsavan (Xiangkhouang Province, northeast): The Plain of Jars, Cool mountain climate, Memories of the war years
- Luang Namtha (Luang Namtha Province, far north): Trekking in the surrounding hills, Villages of many ethnic groups, Road links to China and Thailand
- Houayxay (Bokeo Province, northwest): The slow boat to Luang Prabang, The Fourth Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge, Treehouses and ziplines of the Gibbon Experience
- Nong Khiaw (Luang Prabang Province, north): Limestone cliffs above the Nam Ou, Walking, cycling and climbing, Views from the bridge
- Champasak (Champasak Province, south): Vat Phou temple, Life along the Mekong, The old royal kingdom of Champasak
- Don Khong (Si Phan Don, Champasak Province, far south): The 4,000 Islands of the Mekong, Village life on the river, Trips to the Khone Phapheng Falls

A short history of Laos

People have lived in the mountains of Laos for tens of thousands of years: a human skull found in Tam Pa Ling cave is at least 46,000 years old, and the great stone jars of the Xiangkhoang Plateau were set in place well over two thousand years ago. Tai-speaking peoples, the ancestors of the Lao, moved south along the rivers from what is now southern China from about the 8th century. In 1353 their principalities were united as the kingdom of Lan Xang, the foundation of Lao identity to this day.

1353 Fa Ngum founds Lan Xang

Prince Fa Ngum, raised in exile at the Khmer court of Angkor, returned with an army, took the towns along the Mekong and was crowned at Xieng Dong Xieng Thong, today's Luang Prabang. He named his kingdom Lan Xang, 'a million elephants', and, by tradition, made Theravada Buddhism the state religion.

1560 The capital moves to Vientiane

King Setthathirath moved the royal capital from Luang Prabang to Vientiane, better placed for trade and farther from the Burmese armies that had already taken Chiang Mai. Before leaving, he built Wat Xieng Thong in Luang Prabang, and he brought with him the Emerald Buddha.

1566 Pha That Luang is built

Setthathirath ordered the building of Pha That Luang, the great golden stupa of Vientiane, on a site where, by tradition, a relic of the Buddha had long been kept. Rebuilt several times since, it is now the national symbol of Laos.

1641 A Dutch envoy visits Vientiane

Gerrit van Wuysthoff of the Dutch East India Company reached Vientiane and was received by King Sourigna Vongsa, whose long reign was a golden age for Lan Xang. He wrote with wonder about the gold-covered stupa of That Luang.

1707 Lan Xang breaks apart

After Sourigna Vongsa died in 1694 with no grown son to succeed him, a struggle over the throne split Lan Xang. Rival kingdoms formed at Luang Prabang and Vientiane, and by 1713 a third at Champasak in the south. Divided, they were soon drawn into the wars between Burma and

Siam.

1779 Siam takes Vientiane

A Siamese army led by General Chao Phraya Chakri, later King Rama I, captured Vientiane. The Emerald Buddha and the Phra Bang were carried off to Siam, and the Lao kingdoms became Siamese vassals. The Phra Bang was later returned; the Emerald Buddha is still in Bangkok.

1827 Anouvong's revolt fails

King Anouvong of Vientiane rose against Siam and marched towards Bangkok, but his armies were driven back. Siamese forces took Vientiane and in 1828 burned much of it; Wat Si Saket was one of the few temples left standing. Anouvong died a captive in Bangkok and is honoured in Laos as a national hero.

1893 France takes the lands east of the Mekong

After a crisis in which French gunboats blockaded Bangkok, Siam gave up the lands east of the Mekong to France. They became part of French Indochina, and a few years later Vientiane became the administrative capital, with the king of Luang Prabang kept as a local ruler. Laos remained a quiet corner of the empire.

1945 Free Laos declares independence

After Japan's surrender at the end of the Second World War, Lao nationalists led by Prince Phetsarath formed the Lao Issara, 'Free Laos', government in October 1945 and declared the country independent. French troops returned in 1946 and the Lao Issara leaders went into exile in Thailand.

1953 Full independence

On 22 October 1953 a treaty with France made the Kingdom of Laos fully independent, as a constitutional monarchy under King Sisavang Vong. Soon, royalists, neutralists and the communist Pathet Lao were struggling for control of the country.

1964 The American bombing begins

As the war in Vietnam widened, North Vietnamese supply routes, the Ho Chi Minh Trail, ran through eastern Laos. From 1964 to 1973 the United States carried out a long, officially secret air campaign over Laos, dropping more than 2 million tons of bombs, while a ground war was fought in the north.

1975

The Lao PDR is proclaimed

After the Pathet Lao took control of the country, King Sisavang Vattthana abdicated, and on 2 December 1975 the monarchy of six centuries ended. The country was renamed the Lao People's Democratic Republic, a one-party state, and in the years that followed some 300,000 people, many of them Hmong, left for Thailand and beyond.

1994

The first Friendship Bridge opens

The First Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge, built with aid from Australia, opened across the Mekong between Nong Khai in Thailand and the outskirts of Vientiane. It was the first bridge across the lower Mekong.

1997

Laos joins ASEAN

On 23 July 1997 Laos joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, together with Myanmar. Membership opened the country further to trade and tourism with its neighbours.

2021

The Laos-China Railway opens

On 3 December 2021 a new electric railway, about 422 km long, opened between Vientiane and Boten on the Chinese border, through Vang Vieng and Luang Prabang. A trip from the capital to Luang Prabang that took most of a day by road now takes a few hours.

What people eat in Laos

A Lao meal is shared and has no courses. Everyone takes sticky rice, khao niao, from a small woven basket, rolls a little ball of it with the fingers and uses it to scoop up the other dishes: usually a soup that is sipped all through the meal, something grilled, a chilli dip called jeow, a meat or fish salad such as larb, and a big plate of fresh raw herbs and greens. Lao food is often spicy, sour or pleasantly bitter, and savoury dishes are rarely sweet. Fish sauce and padaek, a thick fermented fish sauce, give it its deep flavour. The French left behind baguettes and coffee, and noodle soups are the favourite breakfast.

Larb

Laos and the Lao-speaking northeast of Thailand

Finely chopped meat or fish, cooked or sometimes raw, mixed with lime juice, fish sauce, chilli, shallots, a lot of fresh mint and coriander, and toasted ground sticky rice, khao khua, which gives it a nutty crunch. It is served at room temperature with sticky rice and raw vegetables, and is often called the national dish of Laos.

Tam mak hoong (green papaya salad)

Laos and northeastern Thailand

Shredded unripe green papaya pounded in a deep clay or wooden mortar with garlic, chillies, lime, tomatoes and fish sauce. The Lao version is usually sour, salty and very hot, and is often made with padaek, a pungent fermented fish sauce, and sometimes with small salted crabs.

Sticky rice)

Laos, where it has been grown for thousands of years

Glutinous rice, soaked for hours and then steamed in a cone-shaped bamboo basket over a pot of boiling water. It is kept warm in a small lidded basket, the tip khao, and eaten with the fingers: you pinch off a little, roll it into a ball and dip it into sauces and dishes.

Khao piak sen

Laos, a favourite breakfast all over the country

A thick, comforting noodle soup. Chewy handmade noodles of rice flour and tapioca are cooked straight in a chicken or pork broth flavoured with galangal, lemongrass and lime leaves, so the starch makes the soup silky. It is topped with shredded chicken, fried garlic, spring onions and coriander.

Khao poon

Laos, served at family celebrations and in markets

Thin fresh rice noodles in a spicy red broth of pounded chicken, fish or pork, often made rich with coconut milk and flavoured with galangal, lime leaves and chillies. Each bowl is topped with shredded cabbage, banana flower, bean sprouts and fresh herbs.

Lao khao soi

Northern Laos, especially Luang Prabang and Luang Namtha

Wide, flat rice noodles in a clear pork or chicken broth, topped with a rich, spicy sauce of minced pork, tomatoes, garlic and fermented bean paste, and served with a plate of fresh herbs and greens.

Or lam

Luang Prabang

A thick, peppery stew of meat, often buffalo, beef or chicken, with eggplant, wood ear mushrooms, long beans, dill and lemongrass. A little sticky rice thickens the broth, and slices of sakhaan, a local 'chilli wood', make the tongue tingle pleasantly.

Sai oua

Northern Laos and northern Thailand

A coarse, juicy pork sausage packed with lemongrass, galangal, lime leaves, garlic, shallots and chilli, then grilled slowly over charcoal. It is eaten in slices with sticky rice and a chilli dip, or as a snack with a cold beer.

Jeow bong

Luang Prabang

A sweet, smoky and spicy chilli paste made from roasted dried chillies, garlic, shallots, galangal and fish sauce, with thin strips of dried buffalo or pork skin for a chewy texture. It is eaten with sticky rice, raw vegetables and crispy river weed.

Kaipen

Luang Prabang and the rivers of northern Laos

Thin green sheets of river algae, collected from rivers in northern Laos in the dry season, pressed with garlic, tomato and sesame seeds and dried in the sun. They are quickly fried until crisp and eaten like crisps, often dipped in jeow bong.

Nam khao (crispy rice salad)

Vientiane, said to come from the river village of Tha Deua

Balls of rice seasoned with red curry paste and coconut are deep-fried until crisp, then broken up and tossed with sour fermented pork sausage, peanuts, shallots, lime juice, fish sauce and herbs. It is eaten wrapped in lettuce leaves with extra herbs and dried chillies.

Khao jee pâté

Vientiane and the Mekong towns, from French colonial times

A crusty baguette filled with pork pâté, cold meats, pickled vegetables, cucumber, fresh herbs and a little chilli sauce, sold from street stalls for breakfast and lunch. The same baguettes are also eaten with a morning coffee.

Khao lam

Laos and its neighbours, sold along roadsides

Sticky rice mixed with coconut cream, a little sugar and beans, packed into a length of bamboo and roasted slowly over a fire. You peel back the bamboo to eat the soft, sweet rice inside. It is often sold together with grilled chicken, ping kai.

Khao tom

Laos, made for festivals and ceremonies

Small parcels of sticky rice cooked with coconut milk, wrapped around a piece of banana, sometimes with black beans, then folded into banana leaves and steamed. There are also savoury versions filled with pork and mung beans.

Beerlao

Vientiane, brewed by the Lao Brewery Company

A light, crisp lager brewed with locally grown jasmine rice, sold in big 640 ml bottles with a yellow label and a tiger's head. It is found in almost every restaurant in the country and is now sold in many other countries too.

GOOD MANNERS

At the table

- Sticky rice is eaten with the fingers of the right hand: pinch off a small piece, roll it into a ball and use it to pick up food or dip into sauces.
- Dishes are placed in the middle for everyone to share, and the soup is sipped all through the meal rather than served first.
- When you have finished eating, close the lid of your sticky rice basket.
- A good host always cooks far more than the guests can eat. Running out of food would be embarrassing, so do not worry about leaving some.
- Raw herbs and vegetables come with most meals. They cool the mouth when a dish is very hot.

Larb

Finely chopped meat or fish, cooked or sometimes raw, mixed with lime juice, fish sauce, chilli, shallots, a lot of fresh mint and coriander, and toasted ground sticky rice, khao khua, which gives it a nutty crunch. It is served at room temperature with sticky rice and raw vegetables, and is often called the national dish of Laos.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons uncooked sticky (glutinous) rice, for the toasted rice powder
- 500 g minced chicken
- 3 tablespoons water or chicken stock
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- Juice of 2 limes
- 1 teaspoon dried chilli flakes, or to taste
- 2 shallots, thinly sliced, and 3 spring onions, chopped
- A large handful of mint leaves and a handful of coriander, roughly chopped
- To serve: sticky rice, lettuce leaves, cucumber and green beans

Method

1. Toast the uncooked sticky rice in a dry frying pan over medium heat, shaking often, for 5 to 8 minutes until deep golden. Let it cool, then grind it to a coarse powder in a mortar or spice grinder.
2. Put the minced chicken and water in a pan over medium heat. Stir and break up the meat for about 6 to 8 minutes, until it is cooked right through with no pink left. Take the pan off the heat.
3. Stir in the fish sauce, lime juice and chilli flakes, then the shallots and spring onions. Taste: it should be sour, salty and spicy. Add more lime or fish sauce if needed.
4. Just before serving, mix in the mint, coriander and 1 to 2 tablespoons of the toasted rice powder, and sprinkle a little more on top.
5. Serve warm or at room temperature with sticky rice and crisp raw vegetables to eat alongside.

Tam mak hoong (green papaya salad)

Shredded unripe green papaya pounded in a deep clay or wooden mortar with garlic, chillies, lime, tomatoes and fish sauce. The Lao version is usually sour, salty and very hot, and is often made with padaek, a pungent fermented fish sauce, and sometimes with small salted crabs.

Ingredients

- 1 small green (unripe) papaya, about 400 g
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 to 3 small red chillies, to taste
- 1 teaspoon palm or brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce, or 1 tablespoon fish sauce and 1 tablespoon bottled padaek (boil home-made padaek for a few minutes first and let it cool)
- Juice of 1 lime
- 6 cherry tomatoes, halved
- A few yard-long beans or green beans, cut into 3 cm pieces

Method

1. Peel the papaya, cut it in half and scoop out the seeds. Shred the flesh into long thin strips with a coarse grater or a julienne peeler.
2. In a large mortar, pound the garlic and chillies to a rough paste. Add the sugar and the beans and bruise them lightly.
3. Add the fish sauce (and padaek, if using), lime juice and tomatoes, and press gently so the tomatoes release their juice.
4. Add the papaya and pound lightly while turning everything with a spoon, for 1 to 2 minutes, just until the papaya softens a little and soaks up the dressing.
5. Taste and adjust: it should be sour, salty, a little sweet and hot. Serve straight away with sticky rice and grilled chicken or sausage.

Sticky rice

Glutinous rice, soaked for hours and then steamed in a cone-shaped bamboo basket over a pot of boiling water. It is kept warm in a small lidded basket, the tip khao, and eaten with the fingers: you pinch off a little, roll it into a ball and dip it into sauces and dishes.

Ingredients

- 400 g Thai or Lao glutinous (sticky) rice
- Plenty of cold water for soaking
- A bamboo sticky rice steamer, or an ordinary steamer lined with a damp clean cloth or muslin

Method

1. Rinse the rice in cold water until the water runs almost clear. Cover it with plenty of fresh water and leave it to soak for at least 4 hours, or overnight.
2. Drain the rice well and spread it in the bamboo basket or in the cloth-lined steamer.
3. Steam over boiling water, covered, for about 20 to 25 minutes. Halfway through, flip the whole mass of rice over so it cooks evenly. It is ready when the grains are soft, shiny and chewy.
4. Tip the rice onto a clean tray and spread it out with a wooden spoon for a minute to let the steam escape, then gather it back into a ball.
5. Keep it in a covered basket or wrapped in a cloth so it stays warm and soft. Eat with your fingers, pinching off small pieces.

Khao tom

Small parcels of sticky rice cooked with coconut milk, wrapped around a piece of banana, sometimes with black beans, then folded into banana leaves and steamed. There are also savoury versions filled with pork and mung beans.

Ingredients

- 300 g sticky (glutinous) rice, soaked in water for 4 hours and drained
- 250 ml coconut milk
- 2 tablespoons sugar and ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 small ripe bananas, each cut in half lengthways and across (12 pieces)
- 12 pieces of banana leaf, about 20 by 20 cm, wiped clean (or baking paper and foil)
- Kitchen string

Method

1. Put the coconut milk, sugar and salt in a wide pan and warm gently until the sugar dissolves. Add the drained rice and stir over low heat for about 5 minutes, until the rice has soaked up most of the liquid. Let it cool a little.
2. Soften the banana leaves by passing them briefly over a flame or dipping them in hot water, so they fold without tearing.
3. Place a spoonful of rice in the middle of a leaf, lay a piece of banana on top and cover it with another spoonful of rice.
4. Fold the leaf over into a neat parcel, fold in the ends, and tie it with string. Make the rest the same way.
5. Steam the parcels over boiling water for about 45 to 50 minutes, until the rice is soft and see-through. Top up the water if needed. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Useful phrases

Sabaidee

sa-bai-DEE · Hello

Sabaidee bo?

sa-bai-DEE BAW · How are you?

Dee, khop jai

DEE, kawp JAI · Fine, thank you

Khop jai

kawp JAI · Thank you

Khop jai lai lai

kawp JAI lai LAI · Thank you very much

Bo pen nyang

baw pen NYANG · It's nothing, no problem, you're welcome

Khaw thot

kaw TOHT · Excuse me, sorry

Kaluna

ka-lu-NAH · Please

Chao seu nyang?

jao SUE nyang · What is your name?

Khoy seu ...

koy SUE ... · My name is ...

Tao dai?

tao DAI · How much?

Bo pet

baw PET · Not spicy

Sep lai

sep LAI · Very delicious

Hong nam yu sai?

hong NAHM yoo SAI · Where is the toilet?

Chao vao phasa angkit dai bo?

jao WOW pah-SAH ang-KIT dai BAW · Do you speak English?

Khoy bo khao jai

koy baw kow JAI · I don't understand

Jot yu nee

jawt yoo NEE · Stop here

Sok dee

sok DEE · Good luck, take care

Things you might not know

1. Laos is the only country in Southeast Asia with no coastline.
2. The old kingdom's name, Lan Xang, means 'a million elephants'. Its full name added 'and the white parasol', a symbol of royal power.
3. The white disc on the Lao flag is said to stand for a full moon over the Mekong, and the blue stripe for the river itself. The flag was designed in 1945.
4. Since 1991 the national emblem of Laos has shown the golden stupa of Pha That Luang, which replaced the hammer and sickle.
5. As of September 2026, Laos has four UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Town of Luang Prabang, Vat Phou, the Plain of Jars, and Hin Nam No National Park, which is listed together with Vietnam's Phong Nha-Ke Bang.
6. Between 1964 and 1973 more than 2 million tons of bombs were dropped on Laos, making it the most heavily bombed country per person in history. About 80 million small cluster bomblets did not explode, and teams are still clearing them today.
7. Because of this, Laos became a strong supporter of the treaty banning cluster munitions, and in 2010 it hosted the first meeting of the countries that signed it.
8. A human skull found in Tam Pa Ling cave in northern Laos is at least 46,000 years old, one of the oldest modern human fossils ever found in mainland Southeast Asia.
9. The khaen, a mouth organ made of bamboo pipes, is the national instrument of Laos. Khaen music was added to UNESCO's list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2017.
10. Khone Phapheng Falls on the Mekong is often called the widest waterfall in the world: its many channels stretch more than 10 km from edge to edge.
11. According to a popular story, Patuxai in Vientiane was built with cement given by the United States for a new airport runway, which is why it is jokingly called the 'vertical runway'.
12. Lao and Thai are close relatives, and speakers of the two languages can largely understand each other. Many more ethnic Lao live in northeastern

Thailand than in Laos itself.

13. At the baci ceremony, held for weddings, births, journeys and New Year, guests tie white cotton strings around each other's wrists to wish good luck.
14. Lao New Year, Pi Mai, falls in mid-April, the hottest time of the year, and is celebrated with water: people splash each other in the streets and gently pour scented water over Buddha images.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Laos, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Larb or Tam mak hoong (green papaya salad)? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- The first Friendship Bridge opens (1994). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Laos joins ASEAN (1997). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen Pha That Luang, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Laos, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Laos?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. Tam mak hoong, the Lao papaya salad, is made with ripe, sweet orange papaya.

- A) True
- B) False

2. What does 'bo pen nyang' mean?

- A) How much is it?
- B) Where is the toilet?
- C) Very delicious
- D) No problem, it's nothing

3. What is the national instrument of Laos, whose music is on UNESCO's intangible heritage list?

- A) The sitar, a long-necked lute
- B) The erhu, a two-stringed fiddle
- C) The khaen, a bamboo mouth organ
- D) The gamelan, a set of gongs

4. In 1560 King Setthathirath moved the royal capital from Luang Prabang to which city?

- A) Pakse
- B) Vientiane
- C) Champasak
- D) Savannakhet

5. The ruined temple of Vat Phou in southern Laos was built mainly by which people?

- A) The Burmese
- B) The Chinese
- C) The Khmer
- D) The French

6. Kuang Si Falls is in the far south of Laos, near the border with Cambodia.

- A) True
- B) False

7. Patuxai, the victory gate in Vientiane, looks like the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

- A) True
- B) False

8. On which river are the Khone Phapheng Falls?

- A) Nam Ou
- B) Xe Don
- C) Mekong
- D) Nam Song

9. Between 1964 and 1973 the United States dropped more than 2 million tons of bombs on Laos.

- A) True
- B) False

10. Khao jee pâté is a filled baguette, a legacy of French rule in Laos.

- A) True
- B) False

11. What does the name of the old Lao kingdom, Lan Xang, mean?

- A) City of the moon
- B) Land of rice
- C) Mother of rivers
- D) A million elephants

12. As of September 2026, how many UNESCO World Heritage Sites does Laos have?

- A) Five
- B) Two
- C) Three
- D) Four

Quiz answers

1. False

False. Tam mak hoong uses unripe green papaya, shredded and pounded in a mortar with garlic, chilli, lime and fish sauce.

2. D) No problem, it's nothing

Bo pen nyang means 'no problem, it's nothing'. It is the answer to a thank you or an apology.

3. C) The khaen, a bamboo mouth organ

The khaen, a bamboo mouth organ, is the national instrument. Khaen music was added to UNESCO's list in 2017.

4. B) Vientiane

Setthathirath moved the capital to Vientiane in 1560, and a few years later built Pha That Luang there.

5. C) The Khmer

The Khmer built Vat Phou, a Hindu temple on a sacred mountain above the Mekong, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2001.

6. False

False. Kuang Si Falls is in the north, about 29 km south of Luang Prabang.

7. True

True. Patuxai resembles the Arc de Triomphe, but it is decorated with Lao mythical creatures.

8. C) Mekong

The Khone Phapheng Falls are on the Mekong, near the Cambodian border. They are the main reason ships cannot sail up the river into China.

9. True

True. The air campaign over Laos was officially secret, and many unexploded bombs from it still lie in the ground.

10. True

True. The French brought the baguette, and today khao jee pâté is sold from street stalls, especially for breakfast.

11. D) A million elephants

Lan Xang means 'a million elephants', a boast about the power of the king and his war

elephants.

12. D) Four

Four: the Town of Luang Prabang, Vat Phou, the Plain of Jars, and Hin Nam No National Park, added in 2025.

Laos visa page

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