



MYSTIC MEKONG – A PHOTOGRAPHY JOURNEY by Secret Retreats

Day 1 *Sun 05 October*

Luang Prabang

Meals : (D)

Individual Airport pick up
Check in at Satri House
Visit some nearby temples and end the day at the Mekong River capturing the sunset.
Back to the hotel to relax or walk around the main street night market
Get together dinner served at Satri Restaurant at 7:30pm
Overnight at Satri House

Day 2 *Mon 06 October*

Luang Prabang

Meals : (B,L,D)

Early wake up for alms giving ceremony (Tat Bak) at 6am on site (by bicycle)
After Tat Bak, we visit nearby temples (Wat Xieng Thong) and monasteries to capture the architecture and monks' daily lives
Back to hotel for late breakfast at 10am
Relax by the pool
Then Andrew will take you for a late lunch at a Lao eatery serving buffalo and other local specialties
After lunch, drive to Kuang Si Waterfalls for the rest of the afternoon
Back to the hotel to relax
Dinner at Tangor Restaurant with Chef Thibault in the old town
Night at Satri House

Day 3 *Tue 07 October*

Luang Prabang – Pakhou – Pakbeng – Muang La

Meals : (B, D)

Morning Breakfast at the hotel
Check out
Transfer to the pier where your private boat is waiting to take you on your cruise up the Mekong. Shortly after departing, you stop to visit the famous Pakhou Caves; these sacred caves contain hundreds of statues of Buddha, in all shapes & sizes, that have been put their by the local people for centuries.
You take your lunch in Pakbeng.
Afternoon: drive from Pakbeng to Muang La Resort
Dinner & overnight in Muang La Resort.



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Day 4 *Wed 08 October*

Muang La

Meals : (B,L,D)

Morning Breakfast at the hotel

You leave the Resort in a 4x4 to meet two typical Lao communities; the Ikhos people and the Hmong people. Your route offers stunning views as you climb to 1,000m above sea level. The first village is an isolated Ikhos community and you take lunch in the village which offers more magnificent views. The Ikhos people originate from Yunnan Province in China and also from Tibet and their way of life is largely unchanged by modern ways.

After lunch, you continue on to the Hmong village of Ban Tauser (a short trek of around 45 minutes). In the village, you see a different way of life – the Hmong people originate from the high steppes of Tibet. Livestock (pigs, buffaloes etc.) plays an important part in village life and consequently the villagers give a great deal of care and attention to their animals. The path leading to the isolated village gives you another chance to enjoy stunning views of the surrounding countryside and a few minutes from the village is a viewpoint with a unique 360 degree panorama of the region.

You return to the Resort at the end of the day.

In the evening you take part in a Baci or Welcome Ceremony. In Laos animist beliefs still persist and one part of these beliefs is that people have 32 souls, one in each of the 32 body parts. These souls (or Khouanes) tend to escape and risk being eaten by evil spirits, creating diseases and bad luck. The Baci ceremony recalls these souls to the body.

In a room family and friends gather and an altar of flowers is made. From this altar radiate strands of cotton symbolizing ties with the world of souls; cakes, fruits, alcohol, incense sticks, candles, silver are also there to encourage souls to return home. A wise old man who specializes in this ceremony officiates and surrounded by the family and friends he first lights the 4 candles placed at the top of the altar and prays to the gods. In meditation and using ritual formulas, the wise man urges the 32 souls to return to their home and benefit from the offerings.

The ceremony ends with wishes being made and the cotton strands are fixed on the wrists of the people present to retain the returned souls. The attendees then celebrate the return of their souls. The ceremony will be followed by a typical meal in a local house with the local people. This traditional meal is accompanied with local cider: Lao Hay.

Overnight stay at Muang La Resort.

Day 5 *Thu 09 October*

Muang La

Meals : (B,L,D)

The route may be changed so as not to disturb village life

Morning Breakfast at the hotel

After breakfast, you walk for around 30 minutes along the banks of the River Nam Pak to the Khamu village of Wang Wanh where the villagers make sacks from the fibres of local plants. You will be welcomed by a local family in their rice fields surrounded by hills and you immerse yourself in discovering the different stages of cultivating rice and their traditional way of life. Accompanied by your local guide, you learn all about the villagers' life in their fields with their faithful friend – a buffalo. From choosing the right seeds, planting the seeds, transplanting cuttings to the crucial stage of harvesting the crops, you learn all about the life of the local farmers.

After a morning of fun, it's time to relax and enjoy your lunch which is taken in the farm "sala" giving a



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360° panorama of the wonderful countryside in the valley. You will have time to relax and watch the daily life of the village go by. After lunch, you cross the River Nam Pak on a bamboo raft to go to the Khamu village of Vieng Kham. The villagers are well-known for their weaving skills creating wonderful silks and sarongs. You continue on to the village of Muang La to visit the local school and the temple of Chiao Pha Kham Sing which houses a sacred buddha and is now a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists. You return to The Resort in the middle of the afternoon with a light heart and a head full of wonderful memories.

Overnight stay at Muang La Resort.

Day 6 *Fri 10 October*

Muang La – Nong Khiaw – Luang Prabang

Meals : (B,L)

You set off by road for Muang Khua, the start point of your cruise on the magnificent Nam Ou. On the way, you stop to visit a village of the Tai Dam people and learn how they produce the rice alcohol "Lao Lao" using traditional methods. After around 2½ hours (including stops), you arrive in Muang Khua and embark on your private river cruise boat. The descent of the Nam Ou to Nong Khiaw is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful river journeys in the region. From the comfort of your boat, you discover numerous villages on the banks of the river and magnificent limestone cliffs rising majestically from the water's edge. During the Vietnam War, the caves in the cliffs served as a refuge for the local people during the American bombardments of the region. You take a barbecue picnic lunch on one of the beaches of the river and arrive in Nong Khiaw at the end of the afternoon. On your arrival, you transfer to a private minibus to Luang Prabang. You arrive in the evening and check-in at Satri House.

We will arrange cocktails and canapés while all participants share with everyone what they have shot on their journey. Each participant to show only the best 20 shots.

Overnight at Satri House

Day 7 *Sat 11 October*

Luang Prabang

Meals : (B)

Morning Breakfast at the hotel
Relax by the pool
Check out by 12 noon and transfer to airport

End of Program