

Activities (included)

Choice of activities:

2 nights package = 1 x full day or 2 x half day

3 nights package = 2 x full day or 4 x half day

4 nights package = 2 x full day with 2 x half day or 6 x half day

All activities included in our packages can be changed as you wish.

❖ **MLR 1: Discover the village** (1/2 day) 2-3 hours walk

You leave The lodge on foot to discover the rural life of Pak La village which sits outside The Lodge, strolling through the village to admire the panoramic views of the Nam Pak River, the beautiful terraced rice fields and extraordinary salt mines. You will see how the Khamu people benefit from their natural surroundings. After visiting the Khamu village you cross the River Nam Pak on a bamboo raft. You continue on to the village of Muang La to visit the temple of Vat Pha Chao Sing Kham which houses a sacred Buddha and is now a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists. You return to The Lodge at the end of the morning or afternoon.

Level of difficulty: 1/5 - Walking shoes or sandals recommended.

❖ **MLR 2: Exploring the rice fields** (1/2 day) 2 to 3 hours walk

Enjoy a wonderful stroll through the countryside around our Lodge. From lush, green rice fields to the rich forest, this is a great opportunity to discover the natural surroundings of Muang La.

Level of difficulty: 2.5/5 - Walking shoes recommended. There is a risk of leeches being present in the foliage.

❖ **MLR 3 - A: Visit the reclining Buddha** (1/2 day) 2+ hours walk + 75 min of transfers

You leave The Lodge and your journey of around 25 mins. follows the River Nam Pak before you turn off on a small mountain road along the side of a hidden valley, overlooking the River Nam Ko. You arrive in the Lao Loum village – Phonsavang; the starting point of your walk through the lush vegetation of northern Laos. You follow a mountain trail for around 30 minutes which takes you from the banks of the river to the top of the hills and continue on following a mountain stream and climb to the heart of the rice fields. Your path overlooks the mountain scenery and local farms and your guide will explain the daily life of the local villagers; how they use the plants, herbs and trees of the forest to feed themselves and in some cases, heal themselves using the medicinal properties of the different flora.

You continue on crossing small bamboo bridges and reach the Tai Yang village of Long Ya. Another 2 kilometres brings you to the hidden monastery – Wat Hoytinphabath, which houses a 35m long reclining Buddha. Numerous effigies and symbols glorifying Buddha can be found in the central temple which also contains footprints of Buddha embedded in stone. The temple is completely in harmony with its surroundings and exudes an inspiring serenity. You leave the village by car following a dirt road along the River Huay Ya and enjoy the stunning mountain scenery before you arrive back at The Lodge, for a well-deserved rest.

Level of difficulty: 3/5 - Walking shoes and sun-hat recommended. From July to November, the trail to the village of Long Ya can be muddy as it is used by buffaloes. There is a risk of leeches being present in the foliage.

❖ **MLR 3B: Visit the reclining Buddha** (1/2 day) No Walking 2 hours of transfers

You leave The Lodge and your journey of around 25 mins. follows the River Nam Pak before you turn off on a small mountain road along the side of a hidden valley, overlooking the River Nam Ko. You arrive in the Lao Loum village – Phonsavang and continue on for a further 60 mins by car. Which brings you to the monastery - Wat Hoytinthabath, which really is “in the middle of nowhere”. The monastery houses a 35m long reclining Buddha. Numerous effigies and symbols glorifying Buddha can be found in the central temple which also contains footprints of Buddha embedded in stone. The temple is completely in harmony with its surroundings and exudes an inspiring serenity. You leave the village by car following a dirt road along the River Huay Ya and enjoy the stunning mountain scenery before you arrive back at The Lodge, for a well-deserved rest.

Level of difficulty: 1/5 Walking shoes or sandals recommended

❖ **MLR 4: Trek to Ban Phavie** (Full day) 5 hours walking in total + 60 minutes of transfers

You set off in the morning by car in the direction of Pak Huay Khai; this pleasant journey gives you wonderful views across the River Nam Ma, terraced rice fields and the small villages along the banks of the river. On your arrival, you start your trek along a trail which follows a mountain stream meandering through the lush vegetation. You have the chance to meet the local farmers working in their rice fields and learn how they cultivate their lands, hunt for small game and fish in the mountain stream, before you enter into the tropical rainforest. After around 1.5 hours, you leave the forest and arrive in the village of Ban Phavie; a beautiful Khamu village which sits on the top of a hill. After taking your lunch in the village, you continue on to some nearby waterfalls. You can relax in the cooling clear waters, lulled by the gentle breeze and tranquility of the falls (weather permitting). At around 13:00, you walk back down to the starting point of your hike and arrive back at the lodge in the late afternoon.

Level of difficulty: 3/5 – Walking shoes and sun-hat are recommended. There is a risk of leeches being present in the foliage. During the rainy season, the route may be changed subject to weather conditions.

❖ **MLR 4A: Phonsavang** (Full day) 4+ hours walking in total + 70 minutes of transfers

After breakfast, you leave The Lodge by car and your journey of around 30 mins. follows the River Nam Pak before you turn off on a small mountain road along the side of a hidden valley, overlooking the River Nam Ko. It seems as if you are in the middle of nowhere as you start your trek of around 45 minutes along a narrow mountain trail, through the lush forest. You arrive in the Khamu village of Huay Ho where life flows at a relaxed pace. Your guide will answer any questions you may have and will explain about the life of the villagers; their animist beliefs and ceremonies and the different tools they use in the fields around the village. You set off from the village and a trek of 45 mins. or so brings you to the Lao Loum village of Ban Phonsavang which sits at the heart of a beautiful little valley. You set off from the village following a narrow trail which takes from the river to the mountain tops and continue on following the course of a mountain stream through rice fields to the top of the mountain. It will then be time for a well-deserved lunch break in the lush countryside of northern Laos. After lunch, you follow a mountain trail overlooking the magnificent scenery and pass through farms in the heart of the local countryside with some breathtaking panoramic views. Your guide will take the time to explain how the local people use the plants and herbs of the forest to feed themselves and sometimes heal themselves using the medicinal properties of the local flora. You continue your trek crossing small bamboo bridges as you descend to the Tai Yang village of Long Ya. You will learn how the peaceful life of the villagers is interspersed with different communal activities: drying herbs & vegetables, preparing animal traps and preparing their meals using the local produce. The village is also well known for the production of rice alcohol – Lao Lao and also houses a small Buddhist temple. A further 2 kilometres takes you to the hidden temple of Wat Hoytinthabath which houses a 35m long reclining statue of Buddha. Numerous effigies and symbols glorifying Buddha can be found in the central temple which also contains footprints of Buddha embedded in stone. The temple

is completely in harmony with its surroundings and exudes an inspiring serenity. You leave the village by car following a dirt road along the River Huay Ya and enjoy the stunning mountain scenery before you arrive back at The Lodge, in the late afternoon, for a well-deserved rest.

Level of difficulty: 4/5 – Walking shoes and sun-hat are recommended. From July to November, the trail to the village of Long Ya can be muddy as it is used by buffaloes. There is a risk of leeches being present in the foliage.

❖ **MLR 5: Khamu Communities Trek**

(Full day) 6+ hours of walking in total + 60 minutes of transfers **Experienced Hikers only**

A short transfer of 30 minutes brings you to the start of this trek through a beautiful forest. During the first part of your trek, around 2 hours, you pass through lush vegetation which is typical of this part of northern Laos. You arrive in a particularly isolated village where the houses are built on stilts and where the Khamu people follow their traditional way of life which dates back over hundreds of years. You learn about the daily life of the village and the concepts that govern the life of the villagers such as respect for the wisdom of elders, the innocence of youth and the solidarity of the people of the village. Then, you continue your trek up to a series of impressive caves; immense and deep, the caves reveal themselves to you as your eyes become accustomed to the darkness. Here you can enjoy your picnic lunch before making your way back to the starting point of your hike.

Level of difficulty: 4.5/5 – Walking shoes recommended. Activity is only suitable for experienced hikers. The trail to the Khamu village is difficult and the caves are slippery. During wet weather, there is a risk of leeches being present in the foliage.

❖ **MLR 6: Timeless moments with the Ikhos** (1/2 day) 90+ minutes of transfers

A 4x4 takes you from The Lodge following a picturesque route along the banks of the River Nam Pak. After 10 minutes, you leave the road and follow a trail up the mountain. The trail can be difficult during the rainy season (even in a 4x4). The drive along the trail takes around 45 minutes and passes through some breathtaking scenery as you rise to 1,200m above sea level. You visit the Khamu village of Phou Ten Khamu and the Ikho village of Phou Ten Akha. The Ikho are one of the most isolated communities in Laos and originate from Tibet and Yunnan Province in China. In their mountain village with houses built from bamboo and wood, you will learn about their way of life, their belief in the spirit world which affects everything they do and their unique method of dyeing their clothes using extracts from the plants of the forest.

A truly unforgettable experience!

During the rainy season, there is a risk of the mountain trail being impassable.

❖ **MLR 7: Meet the ethnic groups of northern Laos** (Full day) 2 hours of transfers

You set off to visit villages of the Ikho, Hmong & Khamu people; three of the many ethnic groups in Laos. Your route climbs to 1,300m above sea level and offers some magnificent views of the stunning mountain scenery. Your first visit is a Khamu village; After your visit of the Khamu people the car will drive you further into the mountains to an isolated Hmong village. This ethnic group originates from the high steppes of Tibet and you will learn about their way of life; the importance of their livestock (pigs, buffaloes.....) and the care that they give to their animals. From the Hmong village you can choose to do an optional short walk of 30 minutes which will bring you to the first Ikho village. This ethnic group originates from Tibet and Yunnan Province in China. You learn about the daily life of the village and how the villagers still follow customs passed down through the centuries. You take your picnic lunch enjoying the amazing surroundings and continue to visit more Ikho villages along the way, before heading back down to the lodge. You will return to the Lodge at the end of the afternoon.

During the rainy season, there is a risk of the mountain trail being impassable.

❖ **MLR 7A: Meet the Hmong and Khamu people** (Full day) 3+ hours of walking in total + 4 hours of transfers, **Experienced hikers only**

You set off after breakfast and your first stop of the day is at a small Khamu market, not far from The Lodge. You continue on following a picturesque route to the first village – a Khamu village – Ban Pong Hieng. A further 10 minutes takes you to Ban Houay Chang which is the entry point to the National Park at Phouhiphi. Your route continues to other Khamu & Hmong villages which sit in the heart of the mountainous countryside of northern Laos. These isolated villages rarely see “outsiders” and you will see the villagers working in their fields. There are numerous places where you can take some amazing photographs before you reach the last Khamu-Hmong village of Ban Houa Nam Bak. This large village of around 1,600 inhabitants is close to the waterfall at Nam Pong where you can also enjoy some stunning views across the mountainous countryside. The falls are only accessible on foot and your trek of around 1.5 hours starts by crossing the fields around the village before you climb the path to reach the waterfall. As you climb, you will see some amazing rock formations and the villagers have put a strong rope in place to help you climb to the top of one of the formations to enjoy the breathtaking view (climbing the rock is not mandatory). After your visit of the water fall you trek another 90 minutes on a different route, back to Ban Houa Nam Bak You arrive back in The Lodge at the end of the day. The day is long but will leave you with some truly unforgettable memories.

During the rainy season, there is a risk of the mountain trail being impassable. Level of difficulty: 3/5 – Walking shoes and sun-hat recommended. The trail to the waterfall is steep and can be slippery. The climb to the top of the rocks is very difficult and can be slippery in the rainy season. Recommended only for experienced walkers. There is a risk of leeches being present in the foliage.

❖ **MLR 8: Cycling discovery** (1/2 day) Level: Easy 20+ km of biking total

Along the banks of the Rivers Nam Pak and Nam Ma, there are many Khamu villages dotted along the course of the river. As you explore the area on your mountain bike, you pass through some beautiful scenery and meet the villagers at work, harvesting vegetables on the banks of the river. You will stop in one of the villages and as you pass through, you have the opportunity to learn about the daily life of the village and its inhabitants. You will learn about their traditional beliefs such as respect of the wisdom of the village elders, the innocence of youth and the communal spirit of the village. After around 11km, you reach the village of Tad Muan where you can learn how the traditional houses are built and the different ways of hunting used by the villagers. You leave the village and cycle back to The Lodge.

Level of difficulty: 2/5 – Sun-hat recommended.

❖ **MLR 9: Cycling discovery day** (Full day) Level: Medium 35+ km of biking total

A magnificent day exploring the region by mountain bike. You have the time to enjoy the numerous small villages, beautiful mountain roads, terraced rice fields and wonderful countryside.

Level of difficulty: 3/5 – Sun-hat recommended.

❖ **MLR 12: Extreme Mountain Biking** (Full day) Level: Hard 35+ km of biking total, **Experienced mountain bikers only**

You leave The Lodge by 4X4 to follow a mountain road which rises to 1,400m above sea level. You then have a great day cycling back to Muang La. Along the way you pass through some beautiful villages of the Ikhos & Hmong ethnic groups. A day full of excitement and adrenaline.

Level of difficulty: 4.5/5 – Sun-hat recommended.

❖ MLR 14: Cooking Class

(Maximum 4 people with the services of an English-speaking guide and one of our chefs)

The market is only open between 5am & 7 am.

An early start (6 am), as you leave our Lodge for the local market, accompanied by our chef. It is a 5 minutes ride to the market where our chef will explain how to buy the best ingredients and also how the market itself works. After the market, you return to The Lodge for breakfast and a rest after your early start. Around 10:30 am, you go to our vegetable garden with our chef, to pick some of the last ingredients needed. With all the ingredients selected, you start to prepare 4/5 different local dishes under the guidance of our chef. (Dishes are discussed prior to the cooking class). The class itself is very casual. Once all the dishes are ready, you enjoy the different meals that you have prepared for lunch.

❖ MLR 15: Baci ceremony in a village home

(18h00-18h45)

In Laos, where animist beliefs still persist, people believe that we all have 32 spirits, one for each of the 32 parts of the body. These spirits or “khouanes” have the tendency to escape and risk being eaten by evil spirits which can cause bad luck and even illness. So it is important to recall the spirits to our bodies using a Baci Ceremony or “ceremony to welcome the spirits”. Friends & family gather in a room where an altar has been put. Strands of cotton radiate from the altar symbolising the ties with the spirit world. The altar is decorated with fruits, cakes alcohol, incense sticks, candles, gold and silver to encourage the spirits to return home. A wise old man leads the ceremony and lights 4 candles that have been placed at the top of the altar. Using meditation and traditional rituals the village elder encourages any of the 32 spirits to return home and benefit from the offerings. People make a wish and have a cotton bracelet tied around their wrists in an attempt to stop the lost spirits leaving the body again.

❖ MLR 16: Traditional music & dance

A superb display of traditional Khamu music and dance (around 45 mins) performed by a group of 10 -15 artists.

❖ MLR 20: “Of Rice & Men” (Full day) 3 hours of walking in total

After breakfast, you walk for around 30 mins 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 360° panorama of the wonderful countryside in the valley. You will have the 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 Chao Pha Kham Sing which houses a sacred Buddha and is now a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists. You return to our Lodge in the middle of the afternoon with a light heart and a head full of wonderful memories.