

Anouvong Cruise - 4 days

Itinerary Overview

Upstream: Luang Prabang – Huay Xai

Day	Destination	Meals
Day 1	LUANG PRABANG – BAN KHOK KHAM	L/D
Day 2	BAN KHOK KHAM – BAN KOK AEK	B/L/D
Day 3	KOK AEK – PAKBENG – PAK NGUI	B/L/D
Day 4	PAK NGUI – HUAY XAI	B

Downstream: Huay Xai - Luang Prabang

Day	Destination	Meals
Day 1	HUAY XAI – PAK NGUI	L/D
Day 2	PAK NGUI – BAN GAENG HANG NGAI	B/L/D
Day 3	BAN GAENG HANG NGAI – BAN KHOK KHAM	B/L/D
Day 4	BAN KHOK KHAM – LUANG PRABANG	B

Note*: B: Breakfast / L: Lunch / D: Dinner

Detailed Itinerary

Upstream: Luang Prabang – Huay Xai

Day 1 LUANG PRABANG – BAN KHOK KHAM

This morning, embark Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise. You meet Mr Francis Engelmann, who used to work for UNESCO on heritage preservation projects and sails with us some hours upstream towards our next halt. Born in Paris in 1947, he has lived in Laos for over 20 years and knows Luang Prabang like the back of his hand. Join his fantastic presentation, in which he shares some of his expertise of the country's and Luang Prabang's rich cultural heritage and fascinating history.

After arriving at the confluence of the Mekong and one of its larger tributaries, we offer optional for guests who are in the mood for a bit of an adventurous activity a kayak tour on the Nam Ou River. Hop in a kayak and paddle along on your own in total symbioses with the peaceful flowing stream. Feel the waters of the river carrying you downstream with almost no effort while enjoying the passing natural beauty.

We then explore the famous Pak Ou Caves, located directly on the Mekong's rocky shore and opposite the mouth of the Ou River. There are two limestone grottoes which house approximately 4,000 sacred Buddhist statues and images ranging from mere centimetres up to 2m (7ft) in height. We arrive first at the lower, impressive cave and then head up the stairs (approx. 200 steps) to the smaller chamber.

At the cave, we meet a local "medicine man" of the nearby local village. We take a small trek leading into the jungle while our local expert explains various kinds of interesting and astonishing things about the flora and the nature in this area. Arriving in the village we are able to see households with traditional weaving and the 'the art of local whisky distillery'. (Kindly note a basic fitness level is required for the approx. 45 min trek, relatively easy walking downhill (though should be sure-footed) with some short uphill terrain. Guests can also skip the hike and return to the ship moored in front of the Pak Ou caves.)

The journey takes us further up the river into the golden evening sun. If we arrive at daylight we have time to stroll through another gem of a local village. A mixture of Lao Loum and Lao Theun (lowland and midland Laotians) reside in this idyllic riverside settlement. The locals earn parts of their living with basket weaving – also a old traditional local handicraft. The village does have a Buddhist temple – though many of these tribes and ethnics in the Golden Triangle are not religious and follow beliefs in ancestorship and nature.

Meanwhile our culinary team is in full preparation of a very special happening for tonight. On a nearby, very beautiful peaceful sandbank our chefs invite to a BBQ dinner. Some villagers join to entertain us with some classic traditional dance and music performance. Have a grand time together with newly made friends and soak in this truly unique atmosphere of dining on a remote little sandbank in the

midst of Laos.

Meals: Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise

Day 2 BAN KHOK KHAM – BAN KOK AEK

Early birds are welcome to join the daily morning exercise class (Yoga or Tai Chi) on the terrace deck. We think there is no better backdrop than the stunning Mekong scenery to do some revitalizing morning exercises to start the day. As we cruise along in the morning, our local expert hosts a lecture with interesting insights and facts about Laotian culture of the diverse tribes living along the upper Mekong.

We arrive at a very rural and utmost charming village inhabited by Khmu people. The village also has a small primary school for the few kids residing here remotely with their families. We take a leisurely walk into the surrounding neighborhood of the village. In the simple bamboo huts built on stilts and scattered across rice fields the local people today still perform all work manually which basically consists of processing agricultural products.

Once back onboard the Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise continues its slow meandering upriver. After lunch and in the afternoon we arrive at a secluded sandbank spot. The local ethnic Lao, Khmu and Hmong live in the tiny village of Kok Aek. These residents have committed themselves to the organic growth of vegetables, fruits, and herbs. At the riverside they have set up a little parcel of land as an organic garden, carefully maintained and enclosed by bamboo fences. Though these plots are unusable at certain times of the year due to flooding, the nutrient-rich Mekong irrigation promises bountiful annual harvests. As we get to know the villagers proudly displaying their gardening achievements, be sure to sample a local specialty, kai paen, which is made of dried freshwater "seaweed" topped with sesame and vegetables – so wholesomely unique and yummy!

We stay overnight at this pleasant place. The village also has a little temple in which we can arrange an optional meditation session (limited availability). After taking in a bit of 'Zen', dinner is served in Anouvong's elegant De-Lagree Dining Hall. Afterwards you may like to while some time away in the lounge or join the cinema under the stars on the open terrace deck. The movie named "Chang" (Laotian for "elephant"), was shot in this region in 1927 and was made by the same producer as the first King Kong movie. Enjoy your night's sleep mid-river in the middle of nowhere.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise

Day 3 KOK AEK – PAKBANG – PAK NGUI

Wake up early to catch the sun's first rays on the river which is always a magical moment. Early birds are welcome to join the daily morning exercise on the terrace deck (Tai Chi or Yoga).

After breakfast and during our way to Pakbeng, our local expert guide hosts a lecture about the Laotian elephants and their cultural importance in the past and their current situation which have brought them to the brink of extinction. A good and interesting preparation as tomorrow we will meet these fascinating animals in real. Enjoy the rest of the morning and your lunchtime while we sail along over mid-day.

In the early afternoon, we arrive in the small town of Pakbeng. This riverside settlement is halfway between our embarkation at Huay Xai and Luang Prabang. Many locals also stop here when they travel or transport goods between these two "hubs" on the river. Opposite of the town – so to say on the port side of cruising direction – is the country's most sustainably managed elephant sanctuary. If we arrive early enough, we may still see elephants freely walking along the shoreline and taking a morning bath. To expand your knowledge from our morning lecture about these majestic animals, we then visit the conservation sanctuary. All the elephants here used to work as logging elephants, and since they have 'checked-in' here, they have lived in peace and safety. One may ask why not let them live in the wild and enjoy the freedom of mother nature? After their time as working animals, they lack the ability to live and survive in the wild (there still exists very few wild elephants). The sanctuary is fully committed to the tenets of ecotourism and sustainability.

We cross the river and have a look at the town of Pakbeng and drive up to a lovely hill-top temple. The locations allows for fantastic river views to the left and right of the zig-zagging Mekong river.

Back on board Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise, we cruise for some more hours. Lay back and take in the this absolutely amazing scenery or enjoy some downtime in our tucked away spa. We drop anchor at a protected area mid-river. Kick back with an aperitif on the open deck and get prepared for your last dinner on board. Our culinary team is pleased to spoil you with a gala and farewell dinner in al-fresco style on the terrace deck. Have a grand time together with newly made friends and soak in this truly unique atmosphere of sights and soothing sounds of nature.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise

Day 4 PAK NGUI – HUAY XAI

Enjoy your last sunrise aboard with a morning exercise again. This morning you can take all the time for a long and relaxed brunch (which we can serve to you also on the terrace deck) as we voyage along and towards the Thai-Lao border.

Pre-lunch, the ship passes at the junction with the Nam Tha River, one of the Mekong's major tributaries. The Nam Tha, which translates to "Green River", begins near the Chinese border, 325 km to

the northeast, and ends at this crossing with the Mekong.

Kick back and enjoy these last quiet sailing hours as slowly the river scenery begins to open up bit. The river in this area is now wider, however our captain always has to watch out for rocks and stones or sandbanks in order to navigate safely – making the sailing an interesting one to observe from the open deck. After some hours the landscape and the river starts to change, becoming more mountainous and the river increasingly narrow. We also offer a Lao cooking class to learn how to prepare some of the tasty and easy-to-make snacks and local dishes.

The rest of the cruising time until we reach Huay Xai (approximately 15:00 o'clock) is at your own liking. Upon arrival and check-out, we assist you with your luggage and we transfer you to the Lao-Thao boarder. We also help you with the border crossing before bidding you farewell on the Thai side in front of the immigration building. We thank you very much for cruising with Heritage Line Anouvong on the upper Mekong in Laos and wish you a pleasant onward journey.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: n/a

Downstream: Huay Xai - Luang Prabang

Day 1 HUAY XAI – PAK NGUI

Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise welcomes our guests at the Thai immigration office in the morning hours (please see details in our embarkation guide). Our team assists you with all immigration procedures on both the Thai and Laos sides and we take care of your luggage, which you may find later in your room on board. After all formalities, we transfer you to the ship, which is moored at Huay Xai pier on the Laos riverside. Upon check-in, get acquainted with the ship and settle in your room as we start our journey.

Enjoy your first hours onboard as we sail from the Thai-Lao border southbound. The river in this area is mostly wide, however our captain always has to watch out for rocks and stones or sandbanks in order to navigate safely – making the sailing an interesting one to observe from the open deck. After some hours the landscape and the river starts to change, becoming more mountainous and the river increasingly narrow.

Our first stop in the afternoon is Khon Teun, a relatively modern Laotian village showcasing various wooden sculptures and home to roughly 800 residents belonging to the Tai Lu ethnic minority. For a traditional Laotian greeting and to wish us a safe journey, the village elders welcome us with a time-honoured "Baci ceremony". The villagers here practice long-held traditions and techniques of weaving handmade garments with distinguishing patterns. Making their living from it, the families here have

passed down their weaving knowledge from generation to generation.

The village also has a lovely temple nearby in which we can arrange an optional meditation session (limited availability). Resident monks and novices (boys who typically pledge to adopt a monk's lifestyle for at least a few months, but often much longer), are always eager to interact and socialize with visitors. After taking in a bit of 'Zen' the ship continues cruising to the overnight mooring spot. Our local expert guide hosts a lecture about Laotian elephants and their cultural importance in the past and the current situation which have brought them to the brink of extinction. A nice and interesting preparation, as tomorrow we will meet these fascinating creatures close up in an elephant sanctuary. Dinner is served in Anouvong's elegant De-Lagree Dining Hall. Afterwards you may like to while away some time in the bar or join our cinema under the stars on the open terrace deck. The movie named "Chang" (Laos and Thai, for "elephant"), was shot in this region in 1927, by the same producer as the first King Kong movie. Enjoy your first night's sleep mid-river at a seclude sandbank in the middle of nowhere.

Meals: Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise

Day 2 PAK NGUI – BAN GAENG HANG NGAI

Wake up early to catch your first sunrise in Laos on the Mekong River. Early birds are welcome to join our daily morning exercise on the terrace deck (Tai Chi or Yoga). We think there is no better backdrop than the stunning river scenery to do some revitalizing morning exercise to start the day.

After breakfast, we arrive in the small town of Pakbeng. This riverside settlement is halfway between our embarkation at Huay Xai and Luang Prabang. Many locals also stop here when they travel or transport goods between these two "hubs" on the river.

Opposite of the town – so to say on the starboard side of cruising direction– is the country's most sustainably managed elephant sanctuary. If we arrive early enough, we may still see elephants freely walking along the shoreline and taking a morning bath. To expand your knowledge from our lecture the day before about these majestic animals, we then visit the conservation sanctuary. All the elephants here used to work as logging elephants, after their time as working animals, they lack the ability to live and survive in the wild (there still exists very few wild elephants). The sanctuary is fully committed to the tenets of ecotourism and sustainability.

During lunchtime we continue our journey with stunning views of the shores from the comfort of the dining room. At a sandbank further down the river, the local ethnic Lao, Khmu and Hmong live in the tiny village of Kok Aek. At the riverside they have set up a little parcel of land as an organic garden, caringly maintained and enclosed by bamboo fences and growing organic vegetables, fruits, and herbs. Though these plots are unusable at certain times of the year due to flooding, the nutrient-rich Mekong irrigation promises bountiful annual harvests. As we get to know the villagers, be sure to sample a local

specialty, kai paen, which is made of dried freshwater “seaweed” topped with sesame and vegetables. Back on board Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise, as we cruise for some more hours, lay back and take in the absolutely amazing scenery or enjoy some pampering time in our tucked away spa. We drop anchor to overnight near another small and secluded village. Subject to our arrival time and daylight availability, we may explore this tiny village of just around 300 inhabitants which is bereft of electricity or any semblance of modernity, but for sure not of abounding charm and warm-heartedness of the villagers.

As we remain here at the sandbank overnight, kick back with an aperitif while being serenaded by some local villagers who have come onboard to perform on their ‘Khene’ – a handheld, ancient instrument made of bamboo and originating here in Laos. We end the day with a culinary highlight, as we dine tonight on the terrace deck, with the sights and soothing sounds of nature all around us.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise

Day 3 **BAN GAENG HANG NGAI – BAN KHOK KHAM**

After breakfast, our morning lecture provides you with interesting insights and facts relating to the Laotian culture of the diverse tribes living along the upper Mekong. We arrive at a very rural and utmost charming village inhabited by Khmu people. The village also has a small primary school for the few kids residing here remotely with their families. We take a leisurely walk into the surrounding neighborhood of the village. In the simple bamboo huts built on stilts and scattered across rice fields the local people today still perform all work manually which basically consists of processing agricultural products.

We walk further through the fields to a nearby waterfall. The sheer serenity and beauty of this place does not need many words. Some locals may accompany us explaining their daily life, crops and harvest methods to make us understand better their life and living.

The journey continues further down the river into the golden evening sun. If we arrive on time before the sun sets, we will have time to stroll through another local gem of a village. A mixture of Lao Loum and Lao Theun (lowland and midland Laotians) reside in this idyllic riverside settlement. The locals earn some of their livelihood with basket weaving – also an old traditional local handicraft. The village does have a Buddhist temple – though many of these tribes and ethnicities in the Golden Triangle are not religious and follow beliefs in ancestorship and nature.

Meanwhile our culinary team is in full preparation of a very special event for the evening. On a nearby, very beautiful peaceful sandbank our chefs invite to a farewell BBQ dinner. Some villagers join to entertain us with some classic traditional dance performance. Have a grand time together with newly made friends and soak in this truly unique atmosphere of dining on a remote little sandbank in the midst of Laos.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Accommodation: Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise

Day 4 **BAN KHOK KHAM – LUANG PRABANG**

Today – on your last day of your cruise through the Golden Triangle of Laos – some final highlights await. After enjoying a sumptuous breakfast, we offer a unique activity to experience the calmly flowing lower Mekong from a different perspective.

Hop in a kayak and paddle along on your own in total symbioses with the peacefully flowing stream. Feel the waters of Mekong carrying you downstream with almost no effort, relax and enjoy the passing natural beauty and immerse yourself in this very special trip. You may like to paddle all the way to the famous caves of Pak Ou, which is our next stop and highlight to come (or return back on board). We stop close to Pak Ou, and go ashore where we will meet the local “medicine man” who takes us on a jungle trek explaining various interesting facts and astonishing things about the flora and the nature in this area. In the village we may one more time be able to observe local weaving, and find here as well ‘the art of local whisky distilling’. (Kindly note a basic fitness level is required for the approx. 45-minute trek which is relatively easy walking but does involve some uphill terrain; guests may opt to stay on the ship to reach our next stop, the Pak Ou caves).

The trekking group reaches the caves via the “backdoor”. The famous Pak Ou Caves are located directly on the Mekong’s rocky shore and opposite the mouth of the Ou River. There are two limestone grottoes which house approximately 4,000 sacred Buddhist statues and images ranging in size from mere centimeters up to 2m (7ft) in height. We arrive first at the upper cave and then take steps down (approx. 200 steps) to the lower, most impressive grotto.

Once back on board Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise, you can refresh yourself and lunch is served afterwards. From Pak Ou we have about three more hours to sail. During this time, meet Mr Francis Engelmann, who used to work for UNESCO on heritage preservation projects. Born in Paris in 1947, he has lived in Laos for over 20 years and knows Luang Prabang like the back of his hand. Join his fantastic presentation, in which he shares some of his expertise of the country’s and Luang Prabang’s rich cultural heritage and fascinating history.

We finally arrive at the enchanting town of Luang Prabang in the afternoon (approx. 15:00 o’clock). Our team assists with your check-out and helps with your luggage. We thank you very much for cruising with Heritage Line on the upper Mekong in Laos and bid you farewell, wishing you a pleasant onward journey.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: n/

Important note*

- PROGRAMS & SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE DUE TO THE WATER LEVEL. WE WILL KEEP YOU UPDATED 2 WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE
- For overnight registration, we will need passport information (Full name, sex, Nationality, passport number, date of birth) of passengers at least four weeks prior to cruise date.

Inclusions & Exclusion

Inclusions:

Accommodation; daily (group) shore-excursions & entrance fees; sightseeing and transfers during the cruise; transfers from/to Heritage Line Anouvong Cruise meeting point to/from the ship (please read details in the embarkation guide); English speaking tour guiding on-and offshore; entertainment/activities during the cruise as mentioned in the program; meals as mentioned in the program; welcome drink, brewed coffee, tea and mineral water; passenger liability insurance; internet on the ship (subject to cellular network signal); complimentary usage of ship facilities (exclusive of spa treatments); port or anchorage fees; river pilots; fuel

Exclusions:

Crew and guide gratuities; visa fees; private transfers; personal expenses; beverages other than those stated under inclusions; medical services; spa treatments; port and anchorage fees; all other services or items not listed under inclusions.

Important Information

River Conditions Warning

The rivers you will sail on are subject to seasonal rises and falls of water level, in some places as much as 30 metres. Water levels can change dramatically overnight and a sudden rise can impede our progress upstream considerably and even prevent us from passing under certain bridges. A sudden fall can result in our being unable to get into certain places or go as far upstream as we would hope. Groundings on sandbars are not infrequent and are part of the excitement of any expedition. Published itineraries are indicational only and subject to sudden change. In such events alternative itineraries will be provided and we do our best to ensure that if a stop is missed we make up for it with another stop.

Passengers are thus forewarned and expected to be flexible and patient. River cruising in Asia can be a dramatic and adventurous experience – not like cruising the controlled waterways of Europe or

America. Note also that we operate in areas with little or no developed infrastructure and subject to the strictures of local officialdom. Be prepared for this and it is all more the fun!

For itineraries that include flights in the price of the ticket it should be noted that regional airlines can change departure times or cancel flights at very short notice. In such an event we endeavour to arrange alternative flights but note that this can result in delays often resulting in embarking or disembarking on a different day to that indicated in the itinerary. In such an event the company will cover the cost of hotel accommodation and main meals only, but will not be liable for any claims for compensation for missed days on board a ship, drinks or curtailment of the said itinerary.

Clothes

We recommend wearing loose and comfortable clothing made of cotton or modern material that can readily cool off sweat and body heat. The type of shoes will depend on the excursion types so best to have both light, open toed shoes as well as good walking/hiking shoes with you. A sun hat is always a good idea to bring along.

Southern Vietnam and Cambodia are warm all year-round, but our other cruise destinations can get chilly during the winter months (Laos, Myanmar or northern Vietnam). Therefore, it is always recommended to bring a pullover or a warm jacket with you during this period.

Many of our cruises include visits to local temples or pagodas. When visiting these holy sites, make sure to wear appropriate clothing which covers your shoulders and knees.

Sea sickness

Generally speaking, the rivers we are cruising on in Southeast Asia are very calm and there is hardly any motion on any of our ships. A bit of motion can occur during monsoon rains with stormy winds, but the amount of motion is much less than one would feel during bad weather on the open ocean.

Sea cruises as we offer in Halong Bay or Lan Ha Bay can sometimes encounter heavier waters and ship motion, although this happens very rarely and port authorities will most likely not allow sailing under any such circumstances anyway.

If you are new to cruising or prone to motion sickness, it does not hurt to bring along some motion sickness medication. Drinking a nice hot fresh ginger tea is a natural remedy and tasty alternative our staff is always happy to make for you.

Food and Beverage

All food and beverage on board is completely safe to eat and enjoy, including the ice cubes you enjoy in your chilled drinks. We do not recommend drinking water straight from the tap anywhere, including onboard. We provide you with complimentary clean drinking water throughout your cruise.

You may want to be bit careful with local dishes as they can be spicier than you are used to from home. Approach new dishes slowly and carefully. If you have a sensitive stomach, then you may like to double check with our chef or onboard managers about specific dishes or meals.

On excursions, it may be a good idea to avoid local foods and snacks unless offered by our tour guides. Besides the above, in general we recommend the following motto for your pre- and post-cruise travelling in the Southeast Asian tropics: boil it, peel it, cook it, wash it or forget it!

Health risks

The most effective protection from personal contamination is ensuring strict attention to personal hygiene and in particular, frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water and refraining from hand-to-mouth contact. Colds and other viruses can spread quickly in an enclosed area such as a ship. Continue to practice common-sense hygiene and respiratory courtesy. Wash your hands often and cover your coughs and sneeze. It is recommended that passengers carry anti-bacterial hand sanitizer, which does not require rinsing with water. Use sanitizer frequently and throughout the day, particularly after shore excursions and prior to meals. If you have any questions regarding your health or safety, please do not hesitate to ask your cruise director.

Motion sickness can be a problem for some people when cruising, flying or travelling on coaches and trains and it is a good idea to take precautionary measures. Over-the-counter drugs for treating motion sickness can be purchased at pharmacies in most countries, though a side effect can be drowsiness. Alternatives such as ginger tablets and acupuncture wristbands are also available and work well for some people.

Visa requirements for Cambodia

Cambodia visas are easily obtained for most travelers on arrival. Note that passports must have a validity of at least 6 months after your last date of travel in Cambodia.

Because travel restrictions across Southeast Asia are constantly changing, we recommend checking with the Cambodia embassy/consulate in your home country for the latest information.

Visa requirements for Vietnam

With the exception of visa exemptions, all travelers must arrange their visa prior to arrival in Vietnam. Passports must also have a validity of at least 6 months after your last date of travel in Vietnam.

Because travel restrictions across Southeast Asia are constantly changing, we recommend checking with the Vietnam embassy/consulate in your home country for the latest information.

Insurance

We recommend at least purchasing travel health insurance which covers both in- & outpatient visits and medical repatriation. Buying additional trip cancellation and interruption coverage may also be beneficial in case you have to cancel your travel plans due to unforeseen circumstances.

Electrical adapters

We always recommend bringing a travel adapter as a standard item in your travel kit. You can borrow an adapter on board, but these may be limited.

Electricity

Indochina Countries use 220V, and a mixture of flat 2-pin, round 2-pin or 3 pin plugs. It is recommended to bring a universal plug adapter.

Tipping

It is customary in Asia to tip service providers such as waiters, at approximately 10%, depending on the service. Tipping is expected - though not compulsory - and shows an expression of satisfaction with the people who have assisted you on your tour. Although it may not be customary to you, it is of considerable significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels. There are several times during the trip where there is opportunity to tip the local guides or drivers we use. Recommendations for tipping drivers and local guides would range from \$3-\$5 USD per person per day depending on the quality and length of the service.