

Cultural Considerations & Resources

Laos Excursion



Growth International Volunteer Excursions

The Roots of Change

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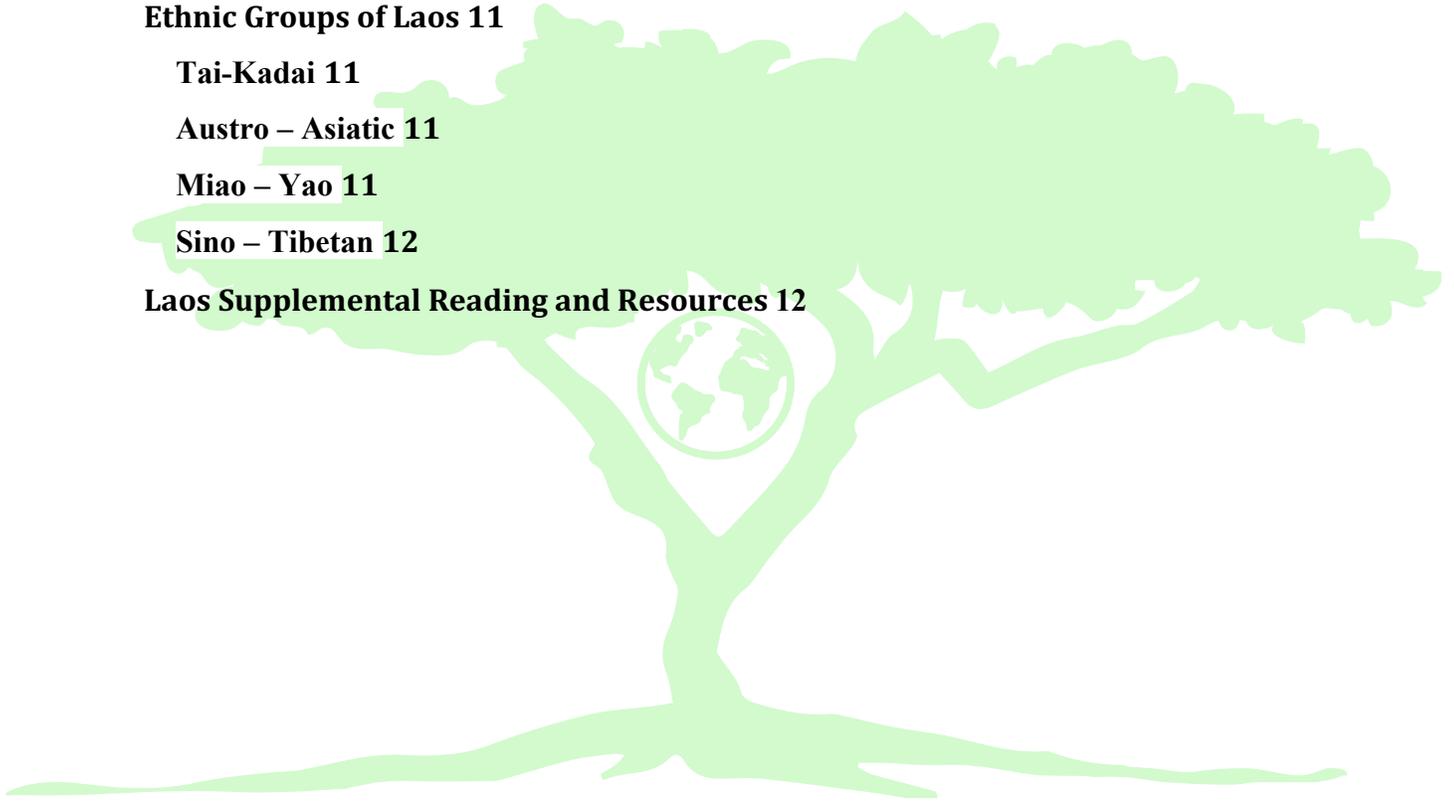
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Lao people traditionally greet each other by pressing their palms together to "Nop", although it is acceptable for men to shake hands.

ອາໄສມີລູບກັນແມ່ນສະແດງຄວາມເຄາະລັບວຽງກັນ ແລະ ກັນຍາມ
ປະເມີນລາວ - ການຈັບມືກັນອາດເປັນໄດ້ກັບສາລັບເພດຊາຍ.



In Laos your head is "high", your feet 'Low'. Using your feet for anything other than walking or playing sport is generally considered rude.

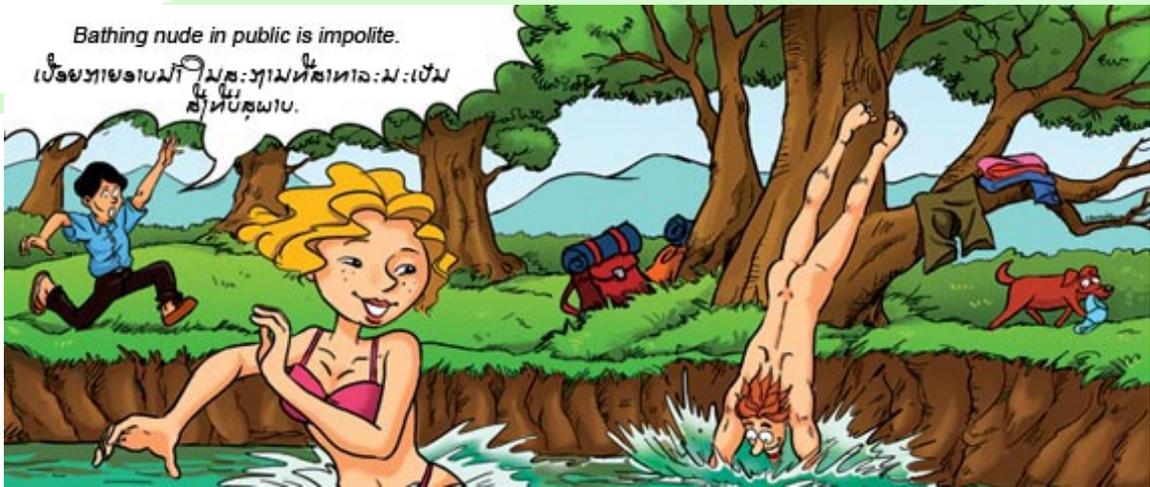
ຄົນລາວຈະຫຼີ້ຫວ່າງສາມເປັນສິ່ງທີ່ສູງ ແລະ ຫຼີ້ສິ່ງເປັນສິ່ງທີ່ຕໍ່າສຸດ.
ການື່ວຸ້ນເພື່ອຊື່ນ ເພື່ອຊື່ນ ເພື່ອ ເອົາສິ່ງຂອງ ເພື່ອສະແດງທ່າທີ່ຕໍ່າຫຼາຍ
ຈະເປັນສິ່ງທີ່ຮັບບໍ່ໄດ້



Touching someone's head is very, very impolite

ການຈັບຫົວຄົນອື່ນຄືການຫມັ້ງແມ່ນຫຼີ້ວ່າຄວາມລາວຍາດທີ່ສຸດ.





Remember, your head is 'high', your feet 'low'. It is polite to gently crouch down when passing someone who is seated. Never, ever step over someone in your path.

ຜູ້ເຮົາຕ້ອງຮູ້ວ່າ (ຫມາ ຫຼື ຫຼ້ງ) ຕ້ອງຢູ່ມີມື່ນຕໍ່ມື່ນ ຢ່າລິ້ນກິນ/ຕັດຮຸກຮາມສິນຄ້າ



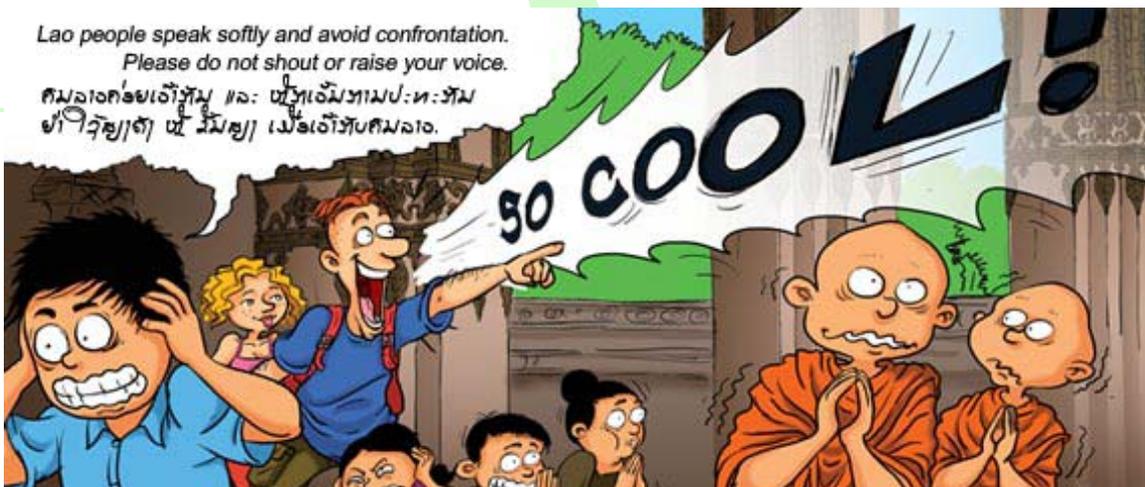
Kissing and hugging in public is impolite. Please be Discrete.

ຊຸບກັນ ແລະ ກອດກັນ ມີມສະຫງາມທີ່ສາທາລະນະເປັນສິ່ງທີ່ບໍ່ສພາບ. ກະລຸນາມາອັບຍັງອາຣົມ ຂອງພວກທ່ານຄວ້ຍ.



Lao people speak softly and avoid confrontation. Please do not shout or raise your voice.

ສົມລາວຄວ້ຍເວົ້າກັນ ແລະ ຫຼ້ງເວົ້າກັນປະທັບກັນ ຢ່າໃຊ້ຄູງຄູ ຫຼື ມີມຄູງ ເມື່ອເວົ້າກັບສົມລາວ.



Before you take a photo of someone ask if it is ok.

ກ່ອນຈະຫຼ່າຍຮູບຜູ້ອື່ນຕ້ອງຖາມວ່າມາຍາດມາເພີ້ນກ່ອນ.



Please do not distribute gifts to children as it encourages begging, but give to an established organization or village elders instead

ຫຼືຈຳນວນຜູ້ຮັບສິ່ງຂອງ ຫຼື ຂະຫນົມ ທີ່ໄດ້ຮັບກຳລັງສະໜັບສະໜູນ ທີ່ໄດ້ຮັບການອະນຸຍາດຈາກຜູ້ອື່ນ ຫຼື ທີ່ໄດ້ຮັບການອະນຸຍາດຈາກຜູ້ອື່ນ ຫຼື ທີ່ໄດ້ຮັບການອະນຸຍາດຈາກຜູ້ອື່ນ ຫຼື ທີ່ໄດ້ຮັບການອະນຸຍາດຈາກຜູ້ອື່ນ



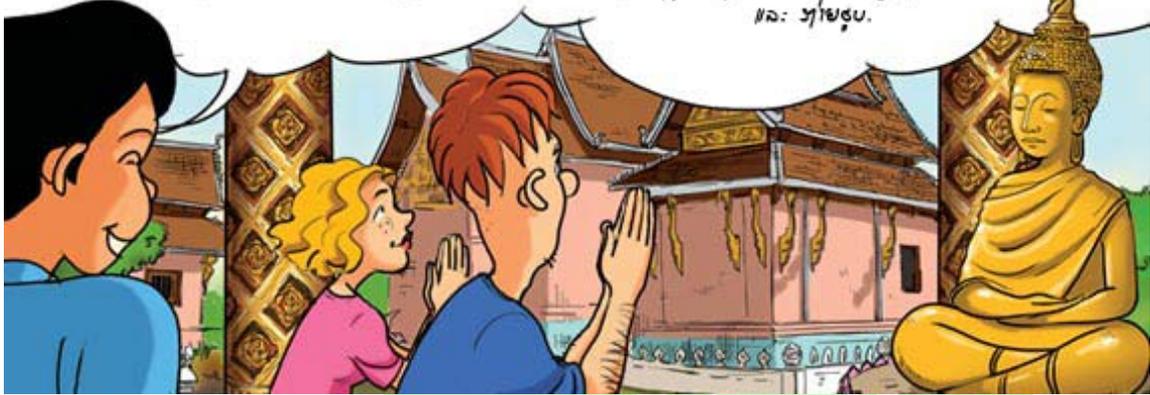
Try eating delicious Lao food whenever you can it helps local business and Lao farmers.

ເວັ້ນທີ່ມີອາຫານລາວ ຈຶ່ງມາຮັບຮອງທີ່ທ່ານຜ່ານໄປ ມັນຈະເປັນການສົ່ງເສີມທຸລະກິດທ້ອງຖິ່ນ ແລະ ຊ່າວໄດ້ມາຜູ້ຮັບການຜະລິດ.



Please show respect and dress neatly while in temples and when taking photos.

ພະພຸດທະຮູບແມ່ນສິ່ງສັກກາລະບູຊາ, ຫາລຸນມາສະແຈງຄວາມເຄາະລົບ ດ້ວຍຫາມມຸງຫັນລຸນາບ ມີເວລາທຸ່ງວຽນຈັດອາໄສເຮມ ແລະ ຫຼ້າຍຮູບ.



There are many other sacred items and sites in Laos. Please don't touch or enter these places without permission.

ປະເທດລາວມີສິ່ງສັກກາລະບູຊາ ມາສະຫຼາມທີ່ສຳຄັນ ເປັນຫລາຍ ມວນຫລວງຫລາຍ ຫາລຸນມາສະແຈງ ຫຼື ເວົ້າປີ້ມາສະ ຫຼາມທີ່ກ່ອມໄດ້ຮັບອາຍາຍາດ.



ພະສົງສາມະເມັມເປັນບຸກຄົນທີ່ປະຊາຊົນເຄາະລົບມັບຖ້າ ຫ້າມເພດຍິງ ແສ:ສ້ອງພະສົງ ແລະ ສາມະເມັມ.

Monks are revered and respected in Laos, however women should not touch a monk or a monk's robes.



Please help to keep Laos clean and beautiful by not leaving litter. Picking up rubbish sets a good example for Lao youth.

ກະລຸນາຊ່ວຍຮັກສາຄວາມສະອາດ ແລະ ຄວາມສວຍງາມ
 ມາດປະເທດລາວ, ບໍ່ຖິ້ມສິ່ງຂອງຮຸ້ນຮຸ້ນ ແລະ ເກັບສິ່ງຂອງ
 ທີ່ບໍ່ງານຄ້າເພື່ອເປັນບ່ອນຢ່າງໃຫ້ເຂົາເຈົ້າລາວ.



The illegal sale of wildlife and wildlife products endangers many species native to Laos. Help protect Lao wildlife by refusing to buy wildlife products.

ຫ້າມບໍ່ຖິ້ມ, ບໍ່ຖືສິດບໍາ ແລະ
 ຜະລິດສະພັນສາມາດຈາກສິດບໍາ
 ເພື່ອຊ່ວຍປະເທດລາວຮັກສາສິດບໍາ.



Laos Loses a little of its heritage every time an antique is taken out of the country. Please do not buy antique buddhas or other sacred items. Instead. Support Local craftsmen by purchasing new, quality handicrafts.

ຫ້າມບໍ່ຖືຊື້ວັດຖຸບູຮານອັນເກົ່າແກ່ ແລະ ສິ່ງຂອງທີ່ເປັນມໍລະ
 ຕຸກຮັກສາທີ່ກົງຂອງລາວ ແລະ ຂອງປະຊາຊົນລາວ. ກະລຸນາ
 ຖືຊື້ເທັດສະຫຼະທີ່ຮັກສາສວຍງາມ ແລະ ມີຄຸນຄ່າ
 ຈະຊ່ວຍສົ່ງເສີມ ແລະ ອະນຸລັກສິລະປະເທັດສະຫຼະລາວ.





Laos Language – Key Phrases

Hello / Goodbye - *Sa-bai-Dee.*

How are you? - *Sa-bai-Dee Baw?*

I'm fine, thanks - *Dee, Kup-Jai.*

Thank you - *Kup-Jai.*

What is your name? - *Jão Suu Nyung?*

My name is ____ - *Khoy Suu* ____.

Where are you from? – *Jao maa tae sai?*

I'm from ____ - *Khuay ma tae* ____.

It's nice to meet you - *dee jai thii huu kap jao.*

Very Delicious! – *Saeb lai lai!*

Yes – *Maen Leo*

No – *Baw*

Excuse me / Sorry - *Khǎw Thôht*

How much is this? - *Anee tor dai?*

No worries / You're welcome - *Baw Pen Nyung.*

Do you understand? - *Khào Jai baw?*

I don't understand – *Baw Khào Jai*

Goodbye and good luck - *Sôhk Dee Deuh!*

I love you! – *Khoy hak Jâo!*

Ethnic Groups of Laos

A true mosaic of ethnic groups, Laos has 130 different ethnic tribes divided into four language groups. Some of the tribes may only have a few hundred members and are only found in Laos. These smaller tribes are considered to be in danger of being engulfed by more dominant larger groups. If this happens, then their language and customs will disappear. For those who don't have any written records, this disappearance can happen very quickly.

Today, there are around six million people spread across 16 provinces. Here is an overview of the distribution of linguistic groups:

Tai-Kadai – about 55% of the population

The largest group in Laos consists of people from these tribes - Lao, Phutai, Phouane, Tai Nyo, Tai Deng, Lue, Thai Khao and Thai Dams. Their origins go back several centuries to the conflicts with the Mongols, the Hans and other Chinese groups. They come from the North (Yunnan Province of China) and characteristics include:

- *Permanent villages that tend to be larger than those of the other groups*
- *Traditional housing is made of wood & bamboo on stilts*
- *Food is based on sticky rice*
- *Agriculture is based around rice paddy-fields*
- *Buddhist with a belief in spirits* ^[L]_[SEP]

Austro – Asiatic – about 30% of the population

Made up of 47 tribes. Their language is taken from Mon & Khmer. Consists of people from these main tribes - Khamu (Ou, Lu, Rok & Me), Lawen, Taoy, Katang. They came to Laos from the south over 10 centuries ago, characteristics include:

- *Houses built on stilts that are shorter than those used by the Tai-Kadai*
- *No written language*
- *Religion is animist and shamanist*
- *Strong community spirit*

- *Slash & burn agriculture*
- *Drink rice beer from small earthenware jars*

Miao – Yao – about 10% of the population.

This linguistic group came from China to the north of Laos between 1815 and 1900. It consists of people from these tribes – Hmong, Yao Mien, Lao Huay (Lenten), Pana Hmong. These largely independent people originate from the high steppes of Tibet, characteristics include:

- *Houses built from wooden and bamboo on the ground*
- *Adoption of the Chinese writing*
- *Animist religion with worship of ancestors*
- *Clan unity is very important*
- *Slash and burn agriculture to cultivate rice, corn and the poppy.*

Sino – Tibetan – about 5% of the population.

This linguistic group is essentially formed from the Tibeto-Burman language and is the least developed ethnic group, living only in certain parts of the country. It consists of people from these tribes - Ikhos (Akha), Lahu, Pounoys. The Ikhos came from Yunnan & Tibet at the beginning of the 19th century. The Pounoys were the first tribe to move into Laos, coming from Burma in the 16th century. The Ho people, originally from China were the last to arrive in Laos. Characteristics include:

- *Houses built from wood and bamboo on the ground*
- *No written language*
- *Complex animist religion based on spirits & souls*
- *Slash and burn agriculture to cultivate rice & poppies*
- *Hunter-gatherers*

Laos Supplemental Reading and Resources

The more knowledge and understanding you have of international development and Laos' history, culture, economy, social strata, environment, and beyond, the more authentic and meaningful experience you will have in country. Utilize the resources found here to establish a solid base of knowledge about the country you're visiting and the people you will work with. **Note that these readings are not required.** They are just provided as supplemental knowledge prior to your arrival to Laos, where most of your learning will come through your experiences on the ground! Although, the long flight and layovers are excellent times to dig into some of these reads!

Articles and Short Reads

Nam Ou River - <https://www.internationalrivers.org/campaigns/nam-ou-river>

The Nam Ou is the river you will be traveling down to the beautiful village of Sop Chem. Laos is currently being developed to be the "battery of SE Asia" by damming several

portions of the rivers running throughout. This article will help provide background to this dam process, the pros and cons, and how it affects surrounding communities and the country as a whole.

Laos Hydroelectric Power Ambitions Under Scrutiny -

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44936378>

A more recent article about the effects and consequences of the development of the dams

Hydroelectric Dams in Laos - <https://www.bbc.com/news/11962210>

Additional reading regarding the dams in Laos

Videos and Documentaries

Why Lakes and Rivers Should Have the Same Rights as Humans – TED Talk – Kelsey Leonard

https://www.ted.com/talks/kelsey_leonard_why_lakes_and_rivers_should_have_the_same_rights_as_humans/transcript

Water is essential to life. Yet in the eyes of the law, it remains largely unprotected -- leaving many communities without access to safe drinking water, says legal scholar Kelsey Leonard. In this powerful talk, she shows why granting lakes and rivers legal "personhood" -- giving them the same legal rights as humans -- is the first step to protecting our bodies of water and fundamentally transforming how we value this vital resource.

Inspiring A Life of Immersion - TED Talk - Jacqueline Novogratz

https://www.ted.com/talks/jacqueline_novogratz_inspiring_a_life_of_immersion?language=en

We each want to live a life of purpose, but where to start? In this luminous, wide-ranging talk, Jacqueline Novogratz introduces us to people she's met in her work in "patient capital" -- people who have immersed themselves in a cause, a community, a passion for justice. These human stories carry powerful moments of inspiration.

Sustainable Community Development - From What's Wrong to What's Strong (ABCD)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5xR4QB1ADw&fbclid=IwAR3kUCmXIBN5rLaxLwHVCZV3I2YILpAiLrGYywKvBamx1FdMkB5_8c2G4-4

How can we help people to live a good life? Instead of trying to right what's wrong within a community Cormac argues we need to start with what's strong. We need to help people discover what gifts they have and to use those gifts to enrich those around them.

Indigenous Peoples and Food Security (short documentary) -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ao9OjRwFOHw>

The independent, sustainable lives in the mountains of Thailand's indigenous peoples' way of life are now under threat. Commercial farming, national boundaries and 'modern life' is compromising and taking away their last remaining link to the earth—the very source of their distinct indigenous identities, culture and dignity. Food security is becoming a serious problem as indigenous peoples are coerced into becoming employees

of the international food industry in addition to their other policies related to land use and management, as well as social and political pressure to leave their homelands in search of a 'better' life.

DamNation (documentary) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cr10nOm0xU>

An advocacy documentary about the changing attitudes in the United States concerning the large system of dams in the country. This helps provide context for the current dam development in Laos.

Books

A Great Place to Have a War: America in Laos and the Birth of a Military CIA by Joshua Kurlantzick

A Great Place to Have a War shines light on the untold story of how America's secret war in Laos in the 1960's transformed the CIA in the US. It will help you understand the history and political development of Laos and what was happening in America during it all. A lot of the development issues in Laos surround this event. You'll learn about this on your first days in Laos at the UXO museum.

The Blue Sweater: Bridging the Gap Between Rich and Poor in an Interconnected World by Jacqueline Novogratz

The Blue Sweater is the inspiring story of a woman who left a career in international banking to spend her life on a quest to understand global poverty and find powerful new ways of tackling it. She discusses the common failures of traditional charity and champions a new form of investing called 'patient capital', which encourages self-sufficiency in lifting people out of poverty. This book is a call to action that challenges us to grant dignity to the poor and rethink our engagement with the world.

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down by Anne Fadiman

A story of Laotian refugees and their daughter who suffers from epilepsy in the 1980s. The family is Hmong and the book discusses their interaction in the US healthcare system, Hmong culture, customs, their ethnic history, American involvement in the war in Laos, and the problems of immigration, especially assimilation and discrimination.

Great to get you to think about how two cultures interact and our interaction with communities in Laos.