

Laos

The never-ending story of tourism

Cairo – Islamic Tourism

Laos is located in South East Asia. It has no coast, and is surrounded by Cambodia to the south, Thailand to the west, Vietnam in the East and China to the north. Its population is about 6.1 million, composed of several ethnic groups. Its official language is Lao, besides the wide spread use of French and English.



Laos was dominated by Siam (Thailand) from the end of the 18th century until the end of the 19th century. It was part of French Indochina, until the drawing of its border with Thailand by the French- Siamese treaty of 1907.

The Communists took power in 1975, putting an end to six centuries of monarchic rule. They formed close relations with their Vietnamese socialist neighbors. This was followed by a progressive return to the encouragement of the private sector and the liberalization of investment codes. Laos achieved this economic watershed by joining the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1997.

Nature Tourism

Laos is blessed with splendid natural tourist

assets. Tourism has also been encouraged by the development of the infrastructure and the encouragement of foreign investment. It may be a small country, but it has 46 airports.

November-February is the ideal time to visit. The climate has the tendency to cool down after the heat wave between March and July, and the rainy seasons that spreads from July to October, when the down pours cut the main roads between numerous cities.

A trip to Laos usually starts with the capital Vientiane, as well as a boat trip up the Mekong, which crosses the capital as well as the territories of neighboring countries.

The best of the country's culture is on display at the Kaisone Phomvihane Museum famous for its rare articles retracing the history of Laos. Ban Nong Bua Thong village is the

place for shopping, especially for traditional hand-sewn dresses. There is also the central market situated in the center of the capital Vientiane, which is always crowded with foreign tourists, locals and people from other cities in Laos.

Local travel agencies insist on a visit to Luang Prabang because of its splendid sunrise that lights up an extraordinary landscape in this city surrounded by a chain of mountains and skirted by the Mekong and Nan Khan rivers, forming a bewitching Asian panorama, characterized by the calmness of the East. There are also waterfalls and caves to visit and mountain climbing is another possibility.

It is easy to begin to speak about tourism in Laos: it is a never-ending story which will continue in our next issue. ■