

# LAOS

CYCLE CHALLENGE



7 - 16  
February  
2014





# Itinerary

Laos is often considered the quiet, underdeveloped neighbour of China, Thailand and Vietnam. Our challenge allows us to explore this hidden gem as we discover more about its history following years of conflict and isolation. We experience the historical royal city of Luang Prabang, the rural life of the Hmong and Khmu communities, the scenic Mekong River and the pristine forests of Kamu as we challenge ourselves to 5 days cycling through this beautiful country.

## Day 1 Friday 7th February 2014: Departure

We depart on an overnight flight to Laos.

## Day 2 Saturday 8th February 2014: Vientiane

On arrival into Wattay International airport we are transferred to our comfortable hotel where we can relax before we have a bike fitting in the afternoon and a city tour of the That Luang Stupa, Patouxay and National museum. We then meet our guides and enjoy a welcome dinner against the backdrop of a great sunset.

## Day 3 Sunday 9th February 2014: Nam Ngum Lake

**87km Cycling (54 miles)**

After breakfast at our hotel we start cycling through the bustling roads of the capital, to the city outskirts. Once in the countryside we spend most of the day cycling through fascinating, varied landscape on mostly flat and tarmacked roads. We end the day continuing to our destination at the Nam Ngum Lake which is the biggest reservoir in Laos. Tonight we stay in a quaint local guesthouse by the lake.

## Day 4 Monday 10th February 2014: Vang Vieng

**92km Cycling (57 miles)**

This is one of our hardest cycling days with some challenging hills to climb. In the morning, the road is largely along a valley floor but by the end of the day we will be high in the mountains following a ridge with stunning peaks all around. We arrive into Vang Vieng, known as the gate to Northern Laos, a busy town loved by backpackers and surrounded by great scenery.

## Day 5 Tuesday 11th February 2014: Phonsavan

**90km Cycling (56 miles)**

This morning we start early for another full cycling day making our way through town whilst all the tourists sleep, we head north, leaving the limestone peaks of Vang Vieng behind us. We have a good descent to the town of Kasi, past the lush green terraced paddy fields and continue on to Phou Khoun. On arrival we meet our team that will transfer us 133km (4hrs) to Phonsavan, the site of one of the MAG visitor centres, where we finally relax in our hotel after a long challenging day.

## Day 6 Wednesday 12th February 2014: MAG Visitor Centre

**59km Cycling (37 miles)**

After breakfast we meet the local MAG team that will take us to the centre where we see first hand the incredible work that the MAG team do in country. Later this morning we leave Phonsavan and pass by the Plain of Jars before making our way back to Phou Khoun. This afternoon we have a tough riding stage to Kiu Kacham as there are plenty of hills that will really push us. Tonight is our only camping night but the beer at the end of the day will taste all the better after our day's achievement.

## Day 7 Thursday 13th February 2014: Luang Prabang

**78km Cycling (48 miles)**

For our last cycling day we depart along mountain roads, passing through lush forests and small Hmong villages. The route through the amazing limestone mountains takes us to the door of the city of Luang Prabang. We have a great lunch on route and arrive at our hotel by the late afternoon. Tonight there is a short walk to the famous night market by the foot of Mt. Phousi before sitting down to supper at a local restaurant. Later we return to the luxuries of a good hotel where we can finally relax.

## Day 8 Friday 14th February 2014: Free Day

This morning for those that wish there is an optional city tour to visit the world heritage site of Luang Prabang, the former capital city of Laos, visiting the Royal Palace and the famous Buddhist temples; the Wat Xieng thong, Wat Visoun and Wat Mai. We have the rest of the day free and this evening we have a celebratory meal to mark the end of this incredible challenge.

## Day 9 Saturday 15th February 2014: Departure

Today we fly back to Vientiane and take our onwards flight to the UK.

## Day 10 Sunday 16th February 2014: Arrive Home

*This itinerary is complicated and may be subject to change*



# Frequently Asked Questions

**Registration fee** £299 (£249 before 31 May 2013)  
**Minimum sponsorship target** £3300

## Who is organising the event?

MAG's specialist event partners Action Challenge (Atol No 6296) will be running the event on our behalf.

## Who can take part?

Anyone over 18 years old is welcome as long as you are fit and healthy enough to do the challenge. Those aged 65 and over will need to ask a doctor to sign the medical form to confirm they are fit to take part.

## 406km over five days seems a long way! Am I fit enough?

This ride is challenging and aimed at people of average and good fitness who are prepared to put in plenty of training to enable them to meet the challenge. We will provide you with a set of training guidelines upon registration. The fitter you are the more you will enjoy the adventure.

## What will the weather be like?

Throughout most of the country the climate is hot and tropical. Our challenge takes place during the dry season and there is a lower chance of rainfall. The mountain areas can be cooler at this time but mostly the temperatures will remain around 26 - 28°C.

## What type of accommodation will we be staying in?

We will be staying in basic guest houses and hotels likely to be on a twin/triple sharing basis. We will endeavour to honour sharing requests though couples should note that it is not always possible to share. One night will also be spent under canvas.

## What do I need to take with me?

We will supply you with a comprehensive kit list, advising you on the kit required. You will need a cycling helmet and must wear it at all times when cycling. You will have the use of 24 speed mountain bikes.

## Do I need any inoculations?

Consult a medical profession about current inoculations needed for Laos in plenty of time. MAG and Action Challenge are not qualified to advise on this sort of information. A discount is available through Action Challenge on vaccinations and medical supplies from MASTA Travel Health.

## What kind of support is provided?

Experienced staff (tour manager, local guides, doctor, mechanic) will be there to provide help and encouragement whenever you need it. A representative from MAG will also travel with you. Support vehicles will carry all luggage and day packs (small bum bags are useful for carrying small items with you, such as sunscreen, camera etc.). The vehicles will be available for you to ride in if necessary.

## What do I need to provide?

When you register to take part in the Laos cycle challenge we request a registration fee of £299 and that you raise a further £3300 in sponsorship. You will also need to pay airport tax (in the region of £100 - £180), purchase a visa, (approx \$30) and personal travel insurance and you must provide your own cycle helmet.

## I want to extend my trip in Laos, is this possible?

A percentage of the group will be able to extend their stay on a first come first served basis. Please note that all extensions incur an admin fee of £50.00 plus potential fare increase. Places are limited and all arrangements are subject to availability.

## What is included?

All international flights and transfers in Laos, all hotel accommodation while on the event and tents for the night camping are included. All meals, water and snacks (except lunch on days 8 and 9), medical and mechanical support, support vehicles, experienced guides and translators and bikes are all included.

## What is not included?

Airport tax (in the region of £100 - £180), personal travel insurance, visa costs, lunch on days 8 and 9, alcoholic drinks and items of a personal nature are not included. Your own cycling helmet is not included and must be provided.

## How do I raise £3300?

There are many different ways of raising money, through your friends and family, organising a fundraising event or asking companies and businesses to support you, and don't forget that we are here to help. We will provide you with tips, advice and resources to make reaching your target as painless as possible and will help you in any way we can. Once you set your mind to it, it's amazing what you can achieve. If you are unsure about anything or need MAG's help please give us a call on 0161 238 5447 or email [events@maginternational.org](mailto:events@maginternational.org)

## What if I don't raise the sponsorship money?

We request that £2,000 of your sponsorship money is received by MAG ten weeks before departure – Friday 29 November 2013 and ask for a further £1300 four weeks before departure – Friday 10 January 2014. If you do not raise this amount by this deadline you are liable to forfeit your place on the ride. If you do experience any unexpected difficulties, please contact us as soon as possible and we will try to help you out in any way that we can.

## How much of my sponsorship will go to MAG?

We are asking each participant to raise £3,300 in sponsorship. Of this, approximately half will cover the cost of running the event but the more you raise above this target, the more MAG will receive for our life saving work, so please raise as much as you can! The registration fee is not included in this total and is non-refundable.



# Why take part?

Every day 11 people are killed or injured by a landmine explosion. By taking part in the Laos Cycle Challenge you will be helping MAG to continue lifesaving work in conflict affected countries around the world, whilst challenging yourself both physically and mentally and experiencing a relatively unknown destination in South East Asia. MAG (Mines Advisory Group) is a registered UK charity and an international humanitarian organisation that has operated in more than 40 countries since 1989. MAG is co-laureate of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, awarded for its work with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. MAG's work lays the critical foundations for development and stability in the world's most vulnerable regions.

## MAG Laos

### The problem

Laos is the most bombed country in the world per capita. More than two million tons of ordnance was dropped on the country during the Second Indochina War. Up to 30 per cent of some types of ordnance did not detonate.

The Laos Government has shown that unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination still affects more than 25 per cent of Laos villiages. Between 1999 and 2008, there were 2,184 casualties (including 834 deaths) from UXO incidents and more than 50,000 people have been killed or injured as a result of UXO accidents since 1964. UXO contamination also remains a key cause of poverty and is one of the prime factors limiting the country's long term development, preventing people from using land and denying access to basic services.

As in other South East Asian countries such as Cambodia and Vietnam, collecting scrap metal is a major cause of UXO accidents. Forced into the trade by poverty, people risk their lives using primitive detectors to hunt for scrap: normally what they find is harmless, but there's always the risk it could be a deadly bomb.

### How MAG is helping

From 2004 to June 2012, MAG cleared more than 38.7 million square metres of suspect land in Laos, destroying 161,802 items of UXO. MAG undertakes all UXO clearance in line with the development priorities outlined in the Government of Laos' National Growth and Poverty Eradication Scheme.

We often conduct UXO clearance on land in remote and vulnerable communities in partnership with key development agencies such as CARE and World Vision. MAG Laos is also assisting the government and other NGOs in targeting UXO clearance for those most in need. The new "District Focused Approach" aims to identify where land can be cleared for the maximum benefit of these communities, by surveying households and villages about UXO contamination and their planned use of land.

### Beneficiaries

As a result of MAG's work from 2004 to June 2012, 450,894 people in Laos gained more safe land for farming, clean drinking water, latrines, irrigation for rice cropping, safe school compounds and tertiary roads.

Additionally, MAG gives jobs to those who need them the most, investing in, training and employing staff from the local population in order to build a robust and sustainable national workforce.



**This paddy field supports nine people including our two children, two orphans we look after and our parents. The land is safe to farm, it is safe for my children and we get two rice crops of rice a year. This means we get more rice and it is fresher, so it tastes much nicer. We are in a much better situation and we are very grateful.**

Air, Laos



Registered charity 1083008  
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