

Earthbound Expeditions

Myanmar, Cambodia And Laos Tour

12 days, from US$1,237 per person

Duration	Group size	Country
12 days	**15 people**	**Laos**

Myanmar, Cambodia And Laos Tour Overview

A tour of three countries in South East Asia: Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos.

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This 12-day sightseeing tour takes you to Myanmar, known as the Golden Land, the historical sites of Cambodia and the natural beauty of Laos. You visit historical and cultural sites, ancient temples and pagodas, fine landscapes, and see the daily life of local people.
This combination makes for a varied and memorable journey.

The tour begins in Myanmar, visiting Yangon, Bagan, Mandalay, Ava, Amarapura, Sagaing, Heho, Kalaw and Inle Lake. You then fly to
Cambodia to explore Siem Reap and the ruins of Angkor, considered the finest historical site in South East Asia, and to walk through dense tropical jungle along tree-lined paths. The tour continues by air to Laos, a country still largely unspoilt. There, you take a boat trip along the Mekong River to the Pak Ou Caves near Luang Prabang, followed by a visit to the three-tier Kuang Si waterfall, about 29 km south of Luang Prabang.

The 12-day Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos tour ends with your departure from Laos.

Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive in Yangon

On arrival in Yangon, your local tour guide meets you and takes you to your hotel to leave your luggage. You then start exploring Yangon's colonial city centre, including Maha Bandula Park and the Town Hall near the Sule Pagoda, which dates back over 2,000 years. Next, visit the Bogyoke Aung San Market (Scott Market) for souvenir shopping (it is closed on Mondays) and Chaukhtatgyi, a large reclining Buddha image. In the afternoon, visit the Shwedagon Pagoda, made famous by Rudyard Kipling and one of Myanmar's most sacred places. The large bell-shaped stupa is plated with gold, and its tip is set with diamonds, rubies and sapphires. After a photo stop at Karaweik Hall, a floating barge shaped like a hamsa bird on Kandawgyi Lake, you see the reflection of the Shwedagon Pagoda across the lake. We drive back to the hotel at sunset. Overnight at the hotel.

Altitude: 30 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Yangon Meals: None

Day 2

Fly from Yangon to Bagan

After an early breakfast at the hotel, transfer to the airport for your flight to Bagan (flight not included). On arrival, begin your Bagan tour with a visit to the busy Nyaung U Market. You then visit some of Bagan's important archaeological sites, including the Shwezigon Pagoda with its bell-shaped stupa and the Htilominlo Temple with its delicate plaster carvings and glazed sandstone decoration. Continue to a lacquerware workshop to see a demonstration of this traditional craft by a skilled artisan. See the mural paintings, protected by UNESCO, at the Myinkaba Gubyaukgyi Temple, and watch the sunset from the Shwesandaw Pagoda. Overnight in Bagan.

Altitude: 50 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Bagan Meals: Breakfast

Day 3

Bagan sightseeing

Breakfast at the hotel. We visit the Nanpaya Temple, which is known for its fine masonry and interior design. It shows the strong Brahman influence on the Theravada Mon kings. Look out for the relief of the god Brahma: three of its faces can be seen, each with typical Mon features. These are said to represent King Manuha. The temple is sometimes called the Ganesh or Mahapeine Temple, after the elephant-headed Hindu god whose image once stood at the corners of its five diminishing rectangular terraces. In the afternoon, sightseeing continues at temples where many old murals and friezes can still be seen, as well as several old horoscopes painted to protect the building from damage. We then visit the Ananda Temple, built in 1091 and considered the masterpiece of Mon architecture. We board a local boat for a slow sunset cruise on the Irrawaddy River. From the boat you see the daily life of fishermen and riverside villagers and a different view of Bagan's temples. Overnight in Bagan.

Altitude: 50 m On foot: Easy walking, 3–4 hrs Night: Hotel, Bagan Meals: Breakfast

Day 4

Fly from Bagan to Mandalay (flight not included)

Breakfast at the hotel, then transfer to the airport for the flight to Mandalay. Mandalay was the last capital of the Myanmar kingdom before the British annexation in 1885. The kingdom lasted only a short time, but the name Mandalay became widely known through Rudyard Kipling. The royal palace walls, surrounded by a moat, are one of the main sights; the palace was rebuilt after 1945, following the Second World War. From Mandalay Airport, we drive for an hour straight to the city through countryside with varied vegetation. The first stop is the Mahamuni Buddha, which is covered in a thick layer of gold leaf. We continue to a craft workshop to see puppets, tapestries and gold leaf being made, then drive to the hotel to check in. After a short break in the afternoon, the sightseeing tour of Mandalay includes Shwenandaw Kyaung (Golden Palace Monastery), a wooden building built by the royal family, and the Kuthodaw Pagoda (known as the world's largest book), a golden stupa surrounded by 729 marble slabs engraved with Buddhist scriptures. Overnight in Mandalay.

Altitude: 80 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Mandalay Meals: Breakfast

Day 5

Mandalay, Ava, Amarapura and Sagaing

After breakfast at the hotel, we set off for Ava. We drive to the former capital of Amarapura and visit Mahagandayon Monastery, where more than a thousand monks live and study the Buddhist scriptures. If time allows, you can watch the monks take their last meal of the day in complete silence. We continue to Ava, the capital from the 14th to the 18th centuries, and visit by horse and carriage the old wooden Bagaya Monastery, the remains of the Royal Palace and fort, the Maha Aungmye Bonzan and the Htihlaing Shin Paya. Back in Mandalay, we end the day with a sunset boat trip around U Bein Bridge, the world's longest teak bridge. Overnight in Mandalay.

Altitude: 80 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Mandalay Meals: Breakfast

Day 6

Fly from Mandalay to Heho and drive to Kalaw

After an early breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight to Heho on the Shan plateau. On arrival, drive to Kalaw (39 km), which takes about an hour. Kalaw was a popular hill station during British rule and sits high on the western edge of the Shan Plateau. It is still a quiet place with an atmosphere of the colonial era. The small population is a mix of Shan, Indian Muslim, Bamar and Nepali people. We visit Thein Taung Paya, a temple on a hill overlooking the Thazi-Taunggyi Road; Aung Chan Tha Zedi, a stupa (Buddhist religious monument) covered in gold-coloured mosaics; and Nee Paya, west of the town, which has a gold-lacquered bamboo Buddha. Overnight at the hotel in Kalaw.

Altitude: 1,320 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Kalaw Meals: Breakfast

Day 7

Drive from Kalaw to Inle Lake and boat across the lake

After breakfast at the hotel, we drive to Inle Lake. We have a relaxed morning as we descend into the Inle basin and then take a long-tail boat across the lake to our hotel on the water. In the afternoon, we visit villages and see a wide range of traditional handicrafts. You see the distinctive way local people row their boats, the fishermen's own style of fishing, floating farms and gardens, and a handloom weaving workshop with its own showroom. You also visit the Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda, which houses the five most revered Buddha images in southern Shan State. Overnight at the hotel at Inle Lake.

Altitude: 880 m On foot: Easy walking, 1–2 hrs Night: Hotel, Inle Lake Meals: Breakfast

Day 8

Inle Lake floating market and Indein

After breakfast at the hotel, visit the floating market, which rotates between locations over a 5-day cycle and is a good place to see the daily life and activities of the local ethnic minorities. We continue by motorboat to the Indein pagoda complex in the south-west of the lake. The boat leaves the lake and follows a narrow canal through natural surroundings to a small Pa-O village. From the village, we follow an old covered walkway to a 13th-century monastery and the ruins of hundreds of ancient pagodas, some hidden in the vegetation. The main stupa area on the hilltop has views over the surrounding mountains and down to the valley and the lake in the distance. Overnight at the hotel at Inle Lake.

Altitude: 880 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Inle Lake Meals: Breakfast

Day 9

Fly from Inle Lake to Yangon

Breakfast at the hotel, then transfer to the airport for the domestic flight to Yangon. Visit the Botahtaung Pagoda on the bank of the Yangon River. It has a typical gilded dome that tapers to the top and is capped by a symbolic fan-shaped spire. Unlike many pagodas (known as zedi in Myanmar), Botahtaung is hollow inside, so visitors can walk through to see its most important feature: a glass case containing a sacred hair relic of the Buddha. Finish the day with a walk through Chinatown and a visit to Yangon's oldest Chinese temple, Kheng Hock Keong. Overnight at the hotel.

Altitude: 30 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Yangon Meals: Breakfast

Day 10

Fly from Yangon to Siem Reap via Bangkok

You are transferred to Yangon International Airport for a 4-hour journey with Bangkok Airways to Siem Reap. Siem Reap is the gateway to the Angkor temple complex and the legacy of the Khmer Empire. On arrival, your local English-speaking Cambodian guide meets you and transfers you to your hotel to check in. On the way, your guide gives you a briefing on the history, culture, people and way of life of Cambodia. This afternoon you take a half-day quad bike tour through the countryside to Chreav Village, where you see local farmers growing vegetables and cows and water buffalo in the fields at sunset. You then drive along the bank of the Siem Reap River to the floating village on the Tonle Sap Lake, where you can see a floating school, shops, restaurants, a police station and more. Drive back to town, visiting Wat Athvea and the Phsar Kroum fresh market. Overnight in Siem Reap.

Altitude: 20 m On foot: None, flight day Night: Hotel, Siem Reap Meals: Breakfast

Day 11

Siem Reap: Ta Prohm, Angkor Thom and Angkor Wat

After breakfast at the hotel, we begin the day at Ta Prohm temple, where ancient stones and large tree roots have grown over the ruins. With the trees, the stonework and the sound of birds, it is a good place to start the temple tour. We spend about an hour walking through this jungle temple before continuing to the ancient city of Angkor Thom. After exploring this walled city, we visit the Bayon temple, which stands in the

middle of Angkor Thom and is known for the hundreds of smiling faces carved into its large sandstone blocks. It is one of the most popular and striking temples in the complex. We then visit the Baphuon, a hilltop pyramid temple dedicated to the god Shiva, which reopened to the public recently after restoration. We also visit the Terrace of the Elephants and the Terrace of the Leper King, the royal enclosure temple of Phimeanakas and the Preah Pithu group of smaller temples. We walk along the ancient city walls and stop for a hot Cambodian-style picnic lunch in a shaded area, or lunch at a local restaurant. After Angkor Thom, we visit Angkor Wat, the most important monument of the Khmer Empire. The temples of Angkor were built to show the wealth and power of the Khmer Empire at the time. Many stone inscriptions describing the founding of the temples have been found, but the Khmers left no record of how the empire collapsed. Our experienced guide explains the stories and legends behind the carved sandstone bas-reliefs, gables and lintels. You walk around this large monument to see its architecture and engineering,. Overnight in Siem Reap.

Altitude: 20 m On foot: Easy walking, 3–4 hrs Night: Hotel, Siem Reap Meals: Breakfast

Day 12

Siem Reap jungle walk and departure (B)

Optional: an early start to enter the Angkor Archaeological Park and watch the sunrise behind Angkor Wat, with soft light on the towers reflected in a large lily pond. This is one of the best views of the temple. We then return to the hotel for breakfast before visiting Preah Khan Temple. It lies 2 kilometres northeast of Angkor Thom on the Grand Circuit and was built in the second half of the 12th century, in AD 1191, by King Jayavarman VII, who dedicated it to his father Dharanindravarman. Inscriptions indicate that Preah Khan was built on the site of the battle in which King Jayavarman VII finally defeated the Chams. At that time it was known as Nagarajayacri, meaning the City of the Sacred Sword. Leaving by the rear exit of Preah Khan, we walk for approximately 3.5 km through dense tropical jungle along tree-lined paths, stopping for a rest and a drink of water at the French dam, which was built in 1960. We continue to Prasat Tanai, a 12th-century temple set deep in the jungle that receives very few visitors. It was built by King Jayavarman VII and dedicated to his ancestors. If time permits, we visit the pyramid temple of Ta Keo. In the afternoon, you transfer to the airport for your departure flight home or to your next destination.

Altitude: 20 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- 11 nights' accommodation in twin-share rooms with daily breakfast
- English-speaking local guides, with a different guide at each site
- Porter fees at the airport
- All transfers and excursions in private air-conditioned vehicles with drivers
- Sunset boat trip in Bagan
- Horse cart in Ava
- Private motorboat for excursions on Inle Lake
- Entrance fees for the visits mentioned in the programme

Not included

- International flights
- Meals not mentioned (L = lunch, D = dinner)
- Domestic and international flights on the itinerary: Yangon, Bagan, Mandalay, Heho, Yangon and Siem Reap
- Visa arrangements for Myanmar and Cambodia
- Visits not mentioned in the programme
- Drinks and personal expenses

- Tips and porters at hotels
- Any other items not mentioned
- International departure airport tax in Yangon

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/myanmar-cambodia-and-laos-tour-12-days