



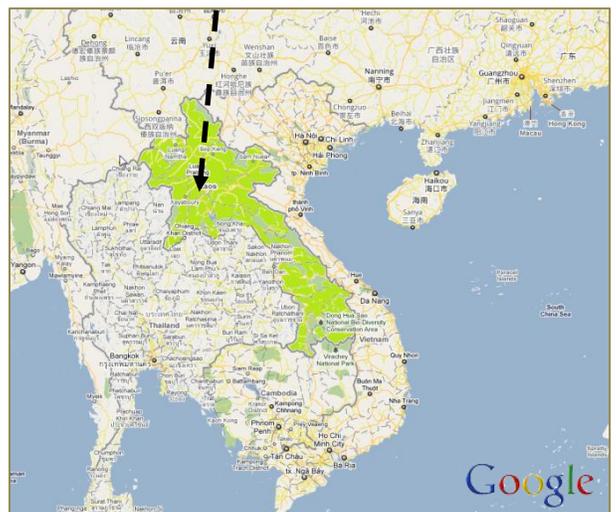
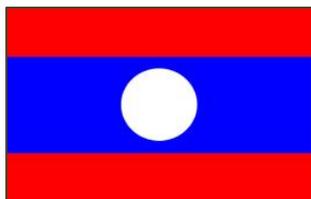
# Trekking the Planet

Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World



## Where are we now?

- Darren and Sandy are in Luang Prabang, Laos, located at 19° N and 102° E.
- We have traveled approximately 22,392 miles (36, 036 kilometers) from our starting point in California.



## People and Culture

- The earliest inhabitants of Laos came from China and it was a separate kingdom until the 18th century.
- After being under Thai and French control, Laos became an independent country in 1950.
- Struggles with Vietnam and the United States before and during the Vietnam War resulted in much bombing in Laos, equaling one bomb dropped every eight minutes for nine years straight.
- 60% of the country is Buddhist. There are many temples to visit in the country.
- There are approximately 6.8 million people living in Laos. Over 50% belong to an ethnic group and many live in isolated regions.
- Laos has one of the youngest populations of any country in Asia, with a median age of 19.



Luang Prabang temple (source: [Aquidetoasia.com](http://Aquidetoasia.com))



*The Plain of Jars is in the northeast of Laos. There are hundreds of these, some large enough to hold a person. Dating from 500 BC, there are different opinions as to purpose of the jars and their use.*

*(source: [PlainofJars.net](http://PlainofJars.net))*



*Lao girl*  
(source: [CulturalProfiles.net](http://CulturalProfiles.net))

### Did you know?

Lao is the official language. It is based on a Khmer writing script. For example, the name of the country is written:

ສາທາລະນະລັດ  
ປະຊາທິປະໄຕ  
ປະຊາຊົນລາວ

source: [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org)



Village along the Mekong River (source: [Vietnamtourism-jsc.com](http://Vietnamtourism-jsc.com))

## Asian Elephants

Elephants are the planet's largest land mammal. Asian elephants are smaller than their African counterparts. One way they can be told apart is by their ears: Asian elephants are small and rounded and African elephants are larger and resemble the continent of Africa.

Asian elephants can grow as high as 9.8 feet (3 meters) and weigh as much as 5.5 tons (4,990 kilograms). They are endangered, due to loss of land and hunting. Only 25,000 to 30,000 are left in the wild in a range from Vietnam to India.

sources: [WWF,panda.org](http://WWF,panda.org),  
[Animals.nationalgeographic.com](http://Animals.nationalgeographic.com)

## Nature and Environment

- The country of Laos is slightly larger than Utah and is only about 150 miles across.
- Laos is the only one of the 12 Southeast Asian countries that is landlocked, meaning that there are no oceans bordering it. Including Laos, there are 47 countries in the world that are landlocked.
- Rivers and mountains cover 70% of the country. Roads are not in good condition so rivers are also used for transportation.
- The Mekong River is the world's 10th longest river, starting in China, flowing through Laos and ending in the South China Sea off the coast of Vietnam.
- Laos has a tropical climate and three distinct seasons: Dry (November to March), Hot (March to May) and Wet (June to October).
- There are up to 500 wild elephants in Laos. Other animals include leopards, tigers and hundreds of different types of birds.



## Our Plans

- We have just finished trekking in the northern part of Laos, visiting villages with a guide.
- We then cruised down the Nam Ou and Mekong rivers for three days before ending up in the city of Luang Prabang. After spending a few days here, we will go to the capital city of Vientiane.
- After that we travel to Bangkok, Thailand, to get ready to fly to Nepal.
- Do you have questions for us before we finish our time in Laos? Send those to us and perhaps yours will be included in our next report from the road.

## Money

The currency of Laos is called the **Kip**. As of February 2012, 1 US dollar equaled about 8,000 kip.



1000 Kip bill equals about 12 cents  
(source: [Ask.com](#))

## More Information

- <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/479/>
- <http://www.globalsurance.com/resources/laos/general-information.php>
- <http://infoplease.com>
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mekong\\_river](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mekong_river)
- <http://www.culturalprofiles.net/laos>
- <http://www.visualgeography.com/categories/laos/nature.html>

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