

LAOS

Location

South-East Asia.

Area

236,800 sq km (91,400 sq miles).

Population

6 million (2008).

Population Density

25.3 per sq km.

Capital

Vientiane.

Population: 702,000 (2007 estimate).

Government

People's Republic since 1975. Gained independence from France in 1953.

Language

The official language is Lao; however, many tribal languages are also spoken. French, Vietnamese and some English are spoken.

Religion

The majority of the Lao people are Buddhists. The Laos-Lum (Valley Laos) people follow the *Hinayana* (Theravada) form of Buddhism. The religions of the Laos-Theung (Laos of the mountain tops) range from traditional Confucianism to animism and Christianity.

Time

GMT + 7.

Electricity

220 volts AC, 50Hz. Two-pin flat or round plugs are in use.

Head of Government

Prime Minister Bouasone Bouphavanh since June 2006.

Head of State

Choummaly Sayasone since June 2006.

Telephone

Country code: 856. The General Post Office (GPO) offers public telephones for national and international calls. There are also card phone booths available.

Mobile Telephone

Roaming agreements exist with a few international mobile phone companies. Check with your service provider. Coverage is sporadic and mainly, though not exclusively, situated around Vientiane.

Internet

Internet cafes are located in the major towns and are becoming increasingly common in places frequented by backpackers. High-speed connection is only available in places such as Vientiane and Luang Prabang.

Media

The Lao media is basically a tool of the government, which owns all of the country's newspapers and broadcast media. Newspapers are not widely read.

Post

The General Post Office (GPO) is beside the Morning Market in Vientiane. Normal postal service is inexpensive and generally reliable although it can take around two weeks to and from Western countries. A courier service is recommended for urgent or valuable mail.

Press

- English-language newspapers include the *Vientiane Times*.
- *Le Rénovateur* is a French-language newspaper.
- The Lao-language daily is the *Vientiane Mai*.
- All are state run.

Radio

- *Lao National Radio* is the national radio station.

Note

*Variations may occur.

** Dates to be confirmed.

Below are listed Public Holidays for the January 2011 - December 2011 period.

1 Jan *New Year's Day.*

6 Jan *Pathet Lao Day.*

20 Jan *Army Day.*

2 Mar *Chinese New Year.*

8 Mar *International Women's Day.*

22 Mar *Day of the People's Party.*

15 Apr **Lao New Year (Pi Mai).*

1 May *Labor Day.*

9 May *Buddha Day (Vesak).*

1 Jun *Children's Day.*

30 Jul ***Khao Pansa (Buddhist Fast begins).*

13 Aug *Lao Issara (Day of the Free Laos).*

31 Oct ***Bouk Ok Pansa (Buddhist Fast ends).*

12 Oct *Day of Liberation.*

2 Dec *National Day.*