

TRANSPORTATION

AIR

Laos has a very small air travel industry, but things are rapidly growing as more flights service an increasing number of towns across this country. The largest airport is outside of Vientiane, where a number of international flights arrive and depart to regional destinations around Indochina every day.

Laos has three international airports: **Wattay International Airport in Vientiane, Pakse Airport in Champasak** and the **Luang Prabang International Airport**. Wattay welcomes regular service to/from Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Siem Reap, Phnom Penh, Kunming, and Taipei. Direct flights are available to Luang Prabang from Bangkok and Chiang Mai.

Laos Airlines is the country's national carrier and it handles nearly all of domestic flights, as well as a few international flights. There are no direct flights into Laos from Europe or North America, so most Western travellers fly into Bangkok before making a connection to Laos. Major international carriers with flights to Laos are **Bangkok Airways, Thai International, Vietnam Airlines** and **China Southern Airlines**. There is also service direct from Taipei several times weekly on **Eva Air**.

RIVERS

Laos is a mountainous country with no railway. With the Mekong River being such a prominent topographical feature it is not surprising that it plays a significant role in communication and life. There are variety of options open to those who wish to travel by water, from the **slow ferries** to **speedboats**. Both services run from Vientiane to Luang Prabang to Huay Xai. Ferries often depart early in the morning and can take several days. Speedboat depart more regularly, taking about eight hours from each leg of the journey. Timetables and prices vary depending on season and demand.

BUS

Laos is not the easiest country to travel around, in part due to its mountainous terrain and lack of decent public transportation. Flying is by far the most convenient yet most expensive way to move between regions, but many travellers choose use the bus system which is incredibly cheap. Vientiane is the only city with a network of local buses. The type of bus may vary between a converted pickup truck, a flat bed truck with benches or a more modern traditional bus.

There are several classes of bus, but don't try and save a couple of dollars by taking a second class seat; you will regret it. **The most common long distance bus runs between Vientiane and Luang Prabang and it takes around 10 hours.** Many tourists nowadays **stop at Vang Vieng** and spend a night there before continuing the last stretch of their journey.

Since Laos is mountainous and some roads conditions are poor, journeys can be long, although the scenery is beautiful. During the rainy season, between June and September, some roads are frequently impassable.

TUK TUK

The most popular means of transport within cities is the tuk tuk. These **three-wheeled vehicles** with two benches placed sideways in the back can be found everywhere. Always negotiate before setting off.

TAXI

Taxi are **not normally metered**, so your **fare is negotiable**. Always negotiate before setting off.

CAR HIRE

Cars may be hired with a driver through hotels or tourist agencies. It is not advisable to hire a car on one's own, since driving standard are low.