

## **Year 12 CAS Week 2011**

### **Service & Cultural activities in Luang Prabang, Laos**

#### **Location:**

Luang Prabang is a small town located on the banks of the Mekong River, 425 km north of Vientiane. UNESCO accorded Luang Prabang World Heritage Site status in 1995 and cited it the best-preserved traditional town in Southeast Asia; as a tourist destination alone, Luang Prabang is a fascinating place. It has a fusion of Lao urban, French colonial and Buddhist architecture with 33 temples and monasteries in the Old Quarter which is located on a peninsula between the Mekong and Nam Khan rivers.

#### **Education in Laos:**

The educational system in Laos is rudimentary. Rural villages (where more than 80% of the population lives) may have a school (but some do not) only for levels 1-2, or 1-3, and operating only a few months of the year. Poverty means attendance is often sporadic. To advance to higher levels, village children often must walk long distances to other villages, which may be impossible during certain months due to heavy rains and resultant flooding.

#### **Community Learning International:** ([www.communitylearninginternational.org](http://www.communitylearninginternational.org))

is a small NGO with 1 expatriate and about 30 Lao staff and has worked in Laos for more than a decade. As the name suggests, they have a particular focus on education including the following:

- Library boats which take Lao language books to Mekong river villages
- Building permanent dormitories for secondary schools instead of the bamboo shacks that students have to build for themselves.
- Establishing libraries in secondary schools
- Providing scholarships for poor children to attend secondary school.

#### **Service activities:**

During CAS Week, RCHK students will travel to Luang Prabang where they will participate in a variety of activities in support of CLi including:

- A day on the Library boat
- English teaching and other activities with Chomphet High School students. (a short boat ride across the Mekong from LP)
- Expand Lao students' experience by sharing information about HK.
- Support of Library boat project with book covering/poster making etc.
- Other activities as suggested by CLi staff.

#### **Cultural activities:**

A wide variety of cultural activities are available within easy walking distance or just outside the town:

- Visit temples, museums etc within UNESCO World Heritage site of LP – all within easy walking distance of hotel.
- Share cultural activities with Lao students from Chomphet HS including Lao food, dances etc.
- See the daily alms giving to the many Buddhist monks who live in the LP monasteries.
- Visit an elephant rescue sanctuary for elephant riding and hiking.

#### **Travel:**

Flights from Hong Kong to Luang Prabang via Bangkok. The airport is only 4kms outside the town and, once there, all activities/sights can be reached on foot as they are all on the peninsula. The school is a short public ferry ride away across the Mekong. The only travel proposed outside LP is a trip to the Elephant Sanctuary and waterfall about 15kms distant.

### **CAS Week Laos Trip 2011**

#### **Kit list**

#### **Luggage:**

You will need a backpack or suitcase for the plane. We will leave these larger bags in Luang Prabang while we take the 2 day trip to Nong Kiow. You should pack everything you need for NK in a small bag/day pack. There will not be enough room in the vans for large suitcases. Our accommodation in NK is in bungalows for 2 people.

#### **Clothing:**

You will probably be in some places where you can't keep very clean: you may have to sit on the ground and it might be very dusty. So, bear this in mind when you are packing and *don't* bring your most expensive designer

clothes! Furthermore, Lao people are quite conservative and we do not want to offend. We want to fit in, not emphasize our differences by our clothes and behaviour! Remember, the days will be warm/hot and evenings/mornings will be chilly (cold in Nong Kiow).

- NO short shorts/miniskirts/strappy tops: long shorts/long pants/longer skirts or dresses are suitable when we are meeting school students. Dress *more* formally than beach wear.
- Warm clothes for evening/morning, especially in Nong Kiow:  
Long pants/socks/fleece/light jacket.
- Comfortable shoes
- Light shirt with sleeves/scarf to cover your shoulders when visiting temples (girls only)

**Other items:**

- Small torch
- A game (not electronic!!).
- Large wallet that will hold your passport, money etc. rather than a small purse.
- Mozzie patches/spray
- Handwipes & antibacterial gel
- Suncream
- Sunglasses
- Camera (optional)
- Hat
- Daypack for out and about in LP and on the library boat. A bag with secure, zipped pockets is better than an open bag.
- Your own personal medical kit – we will carry a first aid kit at all times but it will contain no medication.
- Mobile phone with roaming facility *or* buy a SIM card in Laos (optional). Our group policy is that you should *not* be using your phones to call home but you will need a phone for when you are out and about in LP in the evenings. You must be able to contact supervisors at all times when we are not actually together. We will communicate with HK via school.
- *One* mp3 player or similar *only*. The fewer electronic items we have with us, the better. NO computers.
- Your own water bottle if you wish but to be sure our drinking water is safe we will be buying bottled water.

**Laos Trip REMINDERS**

- **Our programme**
  - You need to realize that in developing countries, things do not always work out as you expect so there may still be changes. We have to stay flexible and positive!
- **Bring spending money**
  - Since we are a small group we have agreed to pay for our own meals out of pocket. 15 US dollars per day per person should be enough. There will be the opportunity to buy textiles at the evening market. Plan to bring funds if you intend to shop.
- **Your personal preparations:**
  - **Medical – malaria/vaccination**
    - Have you made your own arrangements for vaccinations/malaria prophylaxis as recommended by your own doctor? Talk to him/her about what medication you might need to carry with you (perhaps panadol/anti-diarrhoea)
  - **Visa**
    - We will get visas upon arrival. Do you have two up-to-date- photographs?
- **Our group preparations:**
  - **Activities with children in Nong Kiow (primary)**
  - **Activities with children (Library Boat) (primary)**
  - **Activities with Chomphet High School (secondary)**
    - Please have your lessons prepared!

**CAS Week Laos Trip 2011**  
Itinerary

Flight	Depart	Arrive	Departure Date	Time	Arrival Date	Time
TG603	Hong Kong	Bangkok	13 Nov	0750	13 Nov	0935
PG945	Bangkok	Luang Prabang	13 Nov	1330	13 Nov	1530
PG942	Luang Prabang	Bangkok	19 Nov	1155	19 Nov	1355
TG602	Bangkok	Hong Kong	19 Nov	1840	19 Nov	2225

**Contact details:**

**Trip Leaders:**

Mr Don McMahan  
Ms Sandra Bushnell

**Guesthouses in Luang Prabang:**

**Guesthouse Manichan**

Tel. (00856) (0)30/ 51 41 273  
Mobile Peter : (00856) (0)20/56 92 01 37  
Mobile Manichan : 020 /56 83 07 56  
Address : Guesthouse Manichan  
Ban Pakham, Unit 4  
Luang Prabang  
Lao P.D.R.

E-mail : [peter\\_vandeveld@yaho.co.uk](mailto:peter_vandeveld@yaho.co.uk)

**NB:** we may be using another guesthouse directly across the very narrow walking street from Manichan. We have no contact details but in an emergency we can easily be reached via Guesthouse Manichan.

**Laos**

**SUN. 13th** -- Arrive LP 1523 -- We will be met by Chantha and she will have arranged transit to guesthouse, go there herself to see all goes ok with check in, loan the group some Lao kip. Dinner on our own.

**MON. 14th** -- Assemble at the Library at 0900. Chantha will escort us via tuk-tuk to CLI house/office/World HQ. Briefing by Bob Anderson and Chantha re: Laos, Luang Prabang, what we might see and do on our trip, how it all relates to the Deeper Meaning of Life. Return transportation by tuk-tuk to Library. Lunch on our own, free time.

1530 -- Assemble at the Library for excursion to the National Stadium to observe young Luang Prabang track and field athletes training for December National Games, coached by two CLI volunteers from the US. Chance to interact a bit with coaches, hear their impressions of Laos and Lao people, maybe with athletes as well. Back to Library, dinner on your own.

**TUES. 15th** -- Depart from Library at 0830 by van for Nong Kiaw. Probable brief stops enroute at Namtuam and Nambac High Schools. Check into Nong Kiaw bungalows and have lunch overlooking the Ou River. Rest.

Assemble at 1500 to go to CLI Learning Center. Orientation by local staff followed by after school activities with local kids at the LC 1600-1700.

1900 -- Dinner at home of one of CLI's local staff. Authentic Lao food.

**Wed. 16th** -- 0830 departure via local boat for 20 min. trip up Ou River to Hatsao. At new Hatsao primary school balance of the morning allocated to presentation by RCHK students to local students. Hatsao students leave for lunch at home 1130 - 1330. RCHK/CLI group will eat sandwich lunch packed along. Afternoon, more RCHK-Hatsao student interaction.

1500 -- A baci (traditional ceremony) will be conducted by Hatsao to welcome RCHK group and thank us for providing the funds for the new school. Return by boat to Nongkiaw and dinner on our own.

**Thurs. 17th** -- 0830 departure by van for Luang Prabang (2.5 hour trip.) Balance of the day for sight seeing,

with or without CLI guides.

1700 -- Tuk-tuk to Chantha's house for participatory cooking class, preparing Lao food for dinner. Followed by, yes, Lao food dinner at Chantha's, Hong Kong style maybe. Tuk-tuk back to guesthouse.

**Fri. 18th** -- Early a.m. alms giving to monks (on our own.)

0900 -- Assemble at guesthouse for stroll to riverside, board boat for 5 min. trip across Mekong River to Chomphet. Hike to Chomphet High School to see new girls' dormitory built by CLI, partially funded by RCHK contribution. Return to Library for short debrief, reflection on your Laos adventure. Lunch on our own.

Afternoon -- On our own. Options include a long nap, more LP sightseeing, an excursion to a waterfall, or (recommended) elephant riding/swimming trip. Dinner on your own.

**Sat. 19th** -- Tuk-tuk at 1030 to airport for 1155 flight. At 30,000 feet re-enter modern world. Lunch in Bangkok. Depart Bangkok 1840, arrive Hong Kong 2225, re-entering the very modern world.