

# Mekong Pearl Cruise Upstream 11 days: Vientiane - Chiang Rai

This Upstream 11-day Voyage with Mekong Pearl Cruise promises to be a perfect chance for you to walk through vibrant marketplaces, learn about the Laotian people's traditional way of life, and see Vientiane and the UNESCO World Heritage site of Luang Prabang. With its shifting water levels, narrow gorges, maze-like sandbanks, and churning rapids, the powerful upper Mekong is one of the world's most challenging rivers to navigate. Soak up the untouched beauty there as you unwind onboard your luxurious river barge.

- **Durations:** 11 days
- **Trip outline:** Vientiane - Kuang Si Waterfalls - Luang Prabang - Pak Ou Caves - Chiang Rai - Vietnam
- **Price from:** US \$3268/person
- **Tour inquiry:** <https://besttratetours.com/mekong-river-cruises/mekong-pearl-cruise-12-days-upstream-vientiane-chiang-rai>

## Trip outline

day	Activities	Accommodations	Meals
Day 1	Welcome Aboard in Vientiane	Mekong Pearl Cruise	Dinner
Day 2	Cruising into Wild Nature	Mekong Pearl Cruise	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Day 3	Powerful Rapids - Salakham Town	Mekong Pearl Cruise	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Day 4	Ban Don Saingam - The Hidden Cave	Mekong Pearl Cruise	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Day 5	Xayabouri Dam - Hill Tribe Encounters	Mekong Pearl Cruise	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Day 6	Kuang Si Falls - Luang Prabang	Mekong Pearl Cruise	Breakfast, Lunch
Day 7	Spiritual Traditions - Cultural Crafts	Mekong Pearl Cruise	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Day 8	Pak Ou Caves - Rice Whiskey Traditions	Mekong Pearl Cruise	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Day 9	Relaxation and Village Life	Mekong Pearl Cruise	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Day 10	Hill Tribes - Borderlands	Mekong Pearl Cruise	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Day 11	Golden Triangle - Departure	NA	Breakfast

## Itinerary

### Day 1: Welcome Aboard in Vientiane

#### Afternoon

Between 1:00 and 2:00 PM, our driver will collect you from your hotel and bring you to the cruise pier, where the elegant Mekong Pearl is waiting. Once aboard, the friendly crew will guide you to your cabin and help you

settle in.

Later in the day, you'll join a guided tour to explore [Pha That Luang](#), the most sacred monument in Laos, known for its golden stupa.

You'll also visit the peaceful **Ho Phra Keo Temple**, once home to the Emerald Buddha, and the grand [Patuxai Monument](#), which offers sweeping views over the city.

### Evening

Back on the ship, you can relax as the sun sets over the Mekong. A welcome reception will introduce the crew and your fellow travelers. This is followed by a delicious dinner that blends Asian and Western flavors.

After dinner, enjoy some free time on board as the boat gently rocks you into your first night on the river.

**Meals:** Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Pearl Cruise

## Day 2: Cruising into Wild Nature

### Morning

As the day begins, enjoy a peaceful breakfast while watching the Mekong's scenery unfold. You'll see rural villages, distant mountains, and river life slowly passing by. The onboard spa is available if you want to ease into the day with a massage or wellness treatment.

### Afternoon & Evening

After a satisfying lunch, you can read a book, nap in a deck chair, or simply gaze out at the ever-changing upstream route.

As the ship anchors in a tranquil spot along the river, enjoy cocktails and conversation before dinner is served.

Throughout the day, a presentation from the Cruise Director will share interesting facts about the Mekong's historical and cultural significance.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Pearl Cruise

## Day 3: Powerful Rapids - Salakham Town

### Morning

Today, you'll witness the more dramatic side of the river. The terrain changes, and the Mekong narrows, creating powerful rapids and unusual rock formations. Watching the skilled crew navigate these waters is both thrilling and impressive.

After breakfast, you'll disembark to visit **Salakham**, a vibrant riverside market town known for its wood and spice trade. Wandering through the market offers a glimpse into everyday life, with its rich mix of colors, smells, and local flavors.

### Afternoon & Evening

Back on board, you'll enjoy lunch while passing a **golden Buddha statue** on a hill, marking the edge of the Laotian–Thai border region. The afternoon is yours to relax as the ship continues northward.

Tonight, the ship will anchor in a quiet, scenic location. Dinner is served on board, and you'll have time afterward to share stories or enjoy the peaceful evening atmosphere.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Pearl Cruise

## Day 4: Ban Don Saingam - The Hidden Cave

### Morning

After breakfast, you'll arrive at the peaceful village of **Ban Don Saingam**, tucked between forested hills. From here, you'll set out on a short walk in 30 minutes or a tractor ride (depending on the season) toward a **secret cave**. Equipped with flashlights, you'll explore the natural formations inside this little-known site, which has long remained untouched by mainstream tourism.

### Afternoon & Evening

You'll return to the ship to continue the journey upstream. The river reveals more untouched beauty as the hills grow steeper and the jungle becomes denser.

As the ship comes to rest at another peaceful anchorage, you'll enjoy a quiet dinner onboard.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Pearl Cruise

## Day 5: Xayabouri Dam - Hill Tribe Encounters

### Morning

Enjoy breakfast on board as the Mekong Pearl approaches the massive **Xayabouri Dam**, the largest hydroelectric project in Laos. The 45-minute passage through the lock system offers a rare up-close view of this impressive structure and insight into Laos's energy future.

### Afternoon

Later in the day, you'll visit a **local hill tribe village**, where a longstanding relationship between the community and the cruise team allows for a respectful and enriching visit. This is a chance to learn about traditional customs, see village life up close, and perhaps exchange a smile or a few words with your hosts.

### Evening

You'll return to the ship in time for dinner. The rest of the evening is free for you to relax, reflect, or enjoy a nightcap under the starlit sky.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Pearl Cruise

## Day 6: Kuang Si Falls - Luang Prabang

### Morning

After breakfast, a tuk-tuk will take you through the countryside to the stunning [Kuang Si Waterfalls](#), famous for their turquoise pools and natural terraces. You'll also visit the **Free the Bears Sanctuary**, where rescued sun and moon bears are cared for and protected from illegal wildlife trade.

### Afternoon

The ship arrives in Luang Prabang, a UNESCO-listed town filled with golden temples and French colonial charm. You'll visit [Wat Xiengthong](#), one of Laos's most iconic temples, known for its sloping roof and intricate mosaics.

### Evening

You'll have time to climb [Mount Phou Si](#), a peaceful hilltop with panoramic views of the city and surrounding rivers.

Later, you can explore the **Mekong promenade** or visit the **Hmong Night Market** for handmade textiles and souvenirs. Dinner is at your leisure tonight, with plenty of riverside cafés and restaurants to choose from.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodation:** Mekong Pearl Cruise

## Day 7: Spiritual Traditions - Cultural Crafts

### Morning

Early risers can take part in **Tak Bat**, a moving alms-giving ceremony where monks in saffron robes receive offerings of sticky rice and fruit from locals. Afterwards, you'll walk through the lively **morning market**, alive with fresh produce, steaming food, and handmade goods. Breakfast will be served once you return to the ship.

### Afternoon

The day continues with a visit to the **National Museum of Luang Prabang**, formerly the Royal Palace, where you can explore royal artifacts, photographs, and stories from Laos's past. You'll also visit a **traditional handicraft village**, where locals demonstrate weaving, dyeing, and other artisanal crafts passed down through generations.

### Evening

Back on board, enjoy a **traditional Lao dance** performance, followed by a **Baci ceremony**, where local elders offer blessings for health, happiness, and safe travels. Dinner is served after the ceremony as the ship sets off once again.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Pearl Cruise

## Day 8: Pak Ou Caves - Rice Whiskey Traditions

### Morning

After breakfast, you'll arrive at the sacred [Pak Ou Caves](#), filled with thousands of Buddha statues left by pilgrims over centuries. You can either hike through the jungle to reach **Ban Muang Keo** or take a short boat ride instead. In the village, you'll meet Miss Somechan Khonpachith, a master in the art of **distilling Lao-Lao**, the traditional rice whiskey. She'll show you how it's made and invite you for a tasting.

### Afternoon

Return to the ship for lunch and continue upriver. You'll pass the construction site of the Pak Ou Dam, a significant new development on the Mekong. The rest of the afternoon is yours to relax at your leisure, whether you choose to unwind on deck, join our Cruise Director for an engaging infotainment program, or simply take in the scenery.

### Evening

The ship anchors for the night, and dinner is served onboard. The calm atmosphere is perfect for stargazing or winding down with a quiet conversation.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Pearl Cruise

## Day 9: Relaxation and Village Life

### Morning

This is a slow day meant for reflection and relaxation. Enjoy breakfast as you sail through a more remote part of northern Laos. The views of green hills and river valleys are perfect for photography or just quiet contemplation.

### Afternoon

You'll cruise past the **Nam Tha estuary**, where one of the Mekong's major tributaries joins the main river. The day continues at a calm pace with lunch and free time to relax.

### Evening

Tonight, the crew will prepare a **riverside BBQ dinner**, one of the highlights of the journey. You'll dine outside with grilled meats, local sides, and fresh fruits, all while the stars shine brightly overhead.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Pearl Cruise

## Day 10: Hill Tribes - Borderlands

### Morning

After breakfast, you'll step ashore to visit a **hill tribe village** in Pak Tha, where you'll experience a way of life that has remained rooted in tradition for generations. You'll learn about their customs and see firsthand how they live off the land.

### Afternoon

The ship sails toward **Huay Xay**, the last town on the Laotian side of the Mekong. You'll have time to visit the local market or climb to a temple with views of the river and beyond. If time permits, we may cross the **Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge** into Thailand.

### Evening

As the journey nears its end, we'll come together for a **farewell dinner**. It's a chance to celebrate the memories you've made, the people you've met, and the magic of the Mekong itself.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Pearl Cruise

## Day 11: Golden Triangle - Departure

### Morning

After enjoying your final breakfast on board, it's time to bid farewell to the wonderful Laotian crew who have accompanied you on this unforgettable journey. Once you've completed the checkout process, you'll disembark from the Mekong Pearl in **Chiang Khong**, a quiet border town in northern Thailand. From there, a comfortable transfer takes you to the legendary [Golden Triangle](#) region, a place once known for its notorious past but now celebrated for its rich history and scenic landscapes.

During your guided tour, you'll stop by the iconic **Golden Buddha in Sop Ruak**, a gleaming statue overlooking the confluence of rivers. You'll also visit the **Hall of Opium**, a thoughtfully curated museum that offers a deep and compelling look into the history and consequences of the opium trade in Southeast Asia.

Following your visit, you'll be driven to your hotel or the airport in **Chiang Rai**, where your Mekong adventure officially comes to a close.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** NA

## Booking Policy

### Inclusion

- 10 overnights in selected cabin type aboard your boutique river cruise vessel

- Local English-speaking guides
- Entrance fees for sightseeing mentioned in the itinerary
- Excursions as mentioned in the itinerary
- Tours and transfers as mentioned
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, performers and porters
- Water in the vehicles and on the ship
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, and D=Dinner)
- Coffee, tea, and table water is complementary onboard your boutique river cruise vessel
- Presentations and lectures onboard by the cruise director
- Transfers from/to Chiang Rai and Vientiane airports or hotels within city limits (only guaranteed if information was correctly provided 4 weeks prior to embarkation, at the latest)

## Exclusion

- Flights
- Meals and services other than those noted in the itinerary
- Visas for Laos
- Laundry, telephone calls, and personal expenditures
- Gratuities for boat crew, and personal, non-itinerary services
- Alcoholic and soft drinks other than mentioned
- Personal Insurance

## Cancellation Policy

- Cancellation before 120 days prior to the start of the cruise: 30 % of the total rate
- Between 120 and 61 days prior to the start of the cruise: 50 % of the total rate
- Between 60 and 30 days prior to the start of the cruise: 70 % of the total rate
- Less than 30 days prior to the start of the cruise: 90 % of the total rate

## Children Policy

- Free of charge for children below 5 years old, in parents' room and using existing bedding.
- Baby cots are available.
- Children above 5 years must occupy a separate bed and pay full rate (Single or double occupancy).

## WHY BOOK WITH US?

### Best Rate Guaranteed

Offering the BEST RATE package which is worthy of your payment.

### Money Back Guaranteed

In case the service we provide is not qualified enough, except for out-of-control situations such as weather conditions. We will investigate your case and will offer the reimbursement once your complaint is rational.

### **Customizable by local experts**

Local consultants with rich of knowledge will give you the most suitable itineraries for you.

## **BEST RATE TOURS., JSC**

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