

EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCES: LAOS



*Clockwise from top: little girls in Northern Laos; reclining Buddha in Luang Prabang; carrying vegetables to the market; skewered fish on the grill.*



# Laotian Mystique

## Golden Buddhas, Water Buffalos

**Living Land:** Enjoy some especially fresh air in a half-day tour of the **Living Land Community Farm** in the Luang Prabang countryside. This locally run, entirely organic enterprise was formed to support impoverished rural children, and has become a fun, interactive venue where guests can get a feel for agricultural life in Laos. Tour the fields, then try your hand at thatched roof making, fresh noodle production, or sugarcane juice extraction. You can even plow the rice fields with Susan, the resident water buffalo, and learn about the extensive cultivation process behind Asia's most essential crop.

**Laotian Flavors and Fusion:** Embark on an evening foodie adventure in the capital city of **Vientiane**. The nation's cuisine shares much with Thai food, but with additional influence from more than 150 different ethnic groups. Delve into the melting pot at the Lam Pai-Bay Tong cookery school, near the Mekong River, where you'll prepare seven different dishes, then share them at dinner. Wrap up your night in a lively karaoke club or trendy wine bar.

**Holy Luang Prabang:** Immerse yourself in the spiritual capital of Laos on a three-day tour of Luang Prabang. A UNESCO World Heritage site since 1995, the city dazzles at every turn with golden temples and a rich Buddhist culture. A tranquil Mekong cruise brings you to the otherworldly Pak Ou caves, which are packed with thousands of gold-lacquered Buddha statues. Catch a performance of folk and tribal dances from the Lao-Ramayana, by the Royal Ballet; bathe in the cool Kuang Si waterfalls, and rise with the sun to see orange-robed monks make their daily alms rounds.

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