



## TOUR PROSPECTUS

This prospectus sets out the contents of the tour and together with the Booking Conditions and Booking Form is the basis of our contract with you.

# **Indo China – Vietnam and Laos**

## **21 November - 13 December 2009**

### **Tour 0957**

This is an adventurous, moving on tour through the mountainous north-west provinces of Vietnam and Laos. Luggage transfer and vehicle support will be provided, but the tour is best suited to fit, experienced cycling enthusiasts. Vietnam's far north-west is undoubtedly the best place to cycle in the country, as the roads see virtually no tourists and avoid Vietnam's notorious highways. It wasn't until the late 1990's that travel restrictions were lifted. Starting in vibrant Hanoi, the tour passes through stunning landscapes with amazing karsts rock formations, stilted houses with thatched roofs nestled between limestone outcrops and the highest concentration of hill-tribe people in the country. You cross into a remote area of Laos where the newly opened border crossing at Tay Trang enables access to some of the best cycling in these two countries. From the small market town of Muang Khua, you take a slow boat down the beautiful Nam Ou River before cycling on to World Heritage Luang Prabang, with its beautiful temples and colorful night market. The route south to Vientiane, the sleepy capital of Laos, is on virtually traffic-free roads. Great cycling and some of the friendliest people in Asia.

#### **Itinerary**

- Sat 21 Nov Fly from London Heathrow on Thai Air flight TG911 to Bangkok, departing at 1150.
- Sun 22 Nov Arrive in Bangkok at 0610. Onward flight TG682 to Hanoi, departing at 0750. Arrive at 0935. Transfer to guesthouse. Assemble bikes. Evening at leisure. Stay 2 nights.
- Mon 23 Nov A day to explore Vietnam's beautiful and vibrant capital, Hanoi.
- Tues 24 Nov After an early breakfast, transfer by vehicle to Yen Bai. Arrive late afternoon. Stay 1 night.
- Wed 25 Nov Cycle on a spectacular road through undulating terrain of tea plantations, lush forests, rice fields and gum trees to Nghai Lo, home to the Thai, Nung, H'mong, La Ha and Ma peoples. Stay 1 night.
- Thurs 26 Nov Cycling through the 'real Vietnam' the route undulates past large limestone mountains before reaching Tu Le. 85kms. Stay 1 night in village home stay.
- Fri 27 Nov Cycle through rugged terrain of dense vegetation, home of the Black Hmong and the mysterious White Tay people, famed for their folk music, poems and songs, before descending for 20kms to Than Uyen. 85kms. Stay 1 night.
- Sat 28 Nov A demanding, hilly day along the Hoang Lien Son mountain range, culminating with the ascent of the spectacular Tram Ton pass to Sa Pa, visiting the silver waterfalls on route, time permitting. Stay 2 nights.
- Sun 29 Nov A day off the bikes to explore Sa Pa, an old French hill-station, in a spectacular location close to the Chinese border.
- Mon 30 Dec Retrace the route back over the Tram Ton pass to Binh Lu junction and follow road 4D north west to Tam Duong. Stay 1 night
- Tues 1 Dec Cycle to Lai Chau via the Hang Tom suspension bridge, following the Nam Na through spectacular gorges and Black Dao villages. A long day with some climbs. Stay 1 night.
- Wed 2 Dec Last full day in Vietnam. Cycle to Dien Bien Phu, scene of the historic French defeat in 1954. 104 kms. Stay 1 night.
- Thurs 3 Dec A very long demanding day – 134kms. After an early start, cross the newly opened border post into Laos at Tay Trang and continue for a further 100kms to the small Laotian market town of Muang Khoua. Stay 1 night.
- Fri 4 Dec A spectacular river trip down the peaceful Nam Ou river. Disembarking at Nong Khiao, cycle the remaining 28 kms to basic guesthouse accommodation at Pak Mong. Stay 1 night.
- Sat 5 Dec Cycle to Luang Prabang. Another long day - 112 kms - but fairly easy terrain. Stay 2 nights.
- Sun 6 Dec Day at leisure in Luang Prabang to explore the beautiful temples and markets in this UNESCO World Heritage town.
- Mon 7 Dec Cycle to Kiu Kachan. A tough ride passing through spectacular limestone peaks, with two demanding climbs. 72kms. Stay 1 night at a family run basic guesthouse.
- Tues 8 Dec An undulating 50kms followed by a 38kms descent off the mountains to Kasi. Stay 1 night.
- Wed 9 Dec Cycle to Vang Vieng, a popular and quite spectacular stopover location for back-packers, surrounded by mountains and limestone peaks. 60kms. Stay 1 night



- Thurs 10 Dec Cycle all the way to Na Nam (84kms) or cycle 24kms then complete the rest of the journey by boat (cost not included for optional boat journey). Stay 1 night.
- Fri 11 Dec Cycle to Vientiane, Laos's sleepy capital. 100kms. Stay 1 night.
- Sat 12 Dec Time to explore Vientiane before evening transfer to Vientiane airport for Thai Air flight TG693 to Bangkok, departing at 2205. Arrive Bangkok at 2310.
- Sun 13 Dec Connecting flight from Bangkok on flight TG910, departing at 0300. Arrive London Heathrow at 0620.

### Luggage carrying

A support vehicle for the transfer of luggage will accompany the group on all moving on days. There will be space for a couple of passengers and bikes should the need arise.

### Accommodation and meals

Accommodation will be in 2 or 3 star guesthouses/hotels, usually with en-suite facilities except at Tu Le, Pak Mong and Kiu Kachan where it will be more basic. Rooms are based on two people sharing. All meals are provided apart from lunches on non-cycling days. Most evening meals will be taken at local restaurants. Vegetarian food is available.

### Price - £2180

The price is based on a minimum number of 14 participants taking part in the tour and is calculated at a rate of 1.57 US Dollars to £1 sterling (based on exchange rates published on [www.x-rates.com](http://www.x-rates.com) on 10 November 2008; please note Booking Conditions, clause 4). If there are insufficient bookings by the closing date of 29 August 2009 we will contact you and return all monies paid, though in certain circumstances the tour may still run at below minimum numbers but at the same price.

Price includes:

- Flights London-Bangkok and Bangkok-Hanoi, Vientiane-Bangkok and Bangkok-London
- 19 nights hotel/guesthouse accommodation, half board basis, sharing rooms
- 1 night village home stay
- Lunches and light refreshments on route on all cycling days
- Coach transfers between Hanoi airport and guesthouse and between guesthouse in Vientiane to airport.
- Vehicle transfer from Hanoi to Yen Bai
- Support vehicle for luggage transfer
- The services of local English-speaking guides
- CTC Cycling Holidays & Tours costs

Price does not include:

- Meals in transit
- Drinks with evening meals
- Lunches and daytime refreshments on non-cycling days
- Entry fees to any attractions – budget £20
- Vietnam and Laos visa costs – budget £55
- International departure tax – approx £18
- Gratuities for support crews
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance

### Payment schedule

A deposit of £200 per person must accompany the Booking Form, and an interim payment of £300 per person is due by 30 June 2009. The final balance of £1680 per person is to be paid ten weeks prior to departure, by 12 September 2009. Cheques should be made payable to **CTC Tours** or complete the credit/debit card slip in the booking pack.

### Cancellations

Should you be forced to cancel your booking for any reason you must notify us in writing. Cancellation charges are as follows:

Written notice received:	Cancellation charge:
Before 30 June 2009	Deposit (£ 200)
30 June 2009 to 11 September 2009	23% (£ 500)
12 September 2009 through to departure	100% (£2180)

### To make a booking

Complete, sign and return the Booking Form together with your deposit and the relevant part of the Travel Insurance Declaration Form **directly to the leader** (address on Booking Form).

### Passports, Visas and Health

EU citizens must hold a passport that is still valid for at least six months at the end of the tour. A visa is required for EU passport holders. Holders of non-EU passports are advised to check whether they require a visa.

There are no compulsory vaccinations for EU residents although it is strongly recommended that you are vaccinated against: Typhoid; Hepatitis A and B. Tetanus and polio vaccinations should also be up to date at the time of travel. You should also take adequate supplies of a suitable malarial prophylactic. You should contact your doctor at least 3 months prior to travel to obtain these vaccinations and the latest advice to travellers.

### Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you are adequately insured for this tour.

Whether you already hold a policy or will be taking out a new one, the cover it offers must be comparable to that stated in clause 8 of the Booking Conditions, and you must complete the enclosed Insurance Declaration Form and return it with your Booking Form.

CTC Cycling Holidays & Tours Ltd can accept no responsibility for any costs you may incur due to insufficient insurance cover.

## LEADER'S INFORMATION SHEET

The information below is given by the tour leader to help enquirers decide if the tour is suitable for them.

# ***Indo China – Vietnam & Laos*** ***21 November - 12 December 2009*** ***Tour 0957***

### **The area covered by the Tour**

The tour goes through the mountainous north-west provinces of Vietnam and Laos before heading south to Vientiane, the sleepy capital of Laos. We take a vehicle transfer from Hanoi to Yen Bai to the start of the cycling. Going west from here we go close to the Chinese border at Sa Pa, an interesting old French hill-station, home to many ethnic groups. From Sa Pa we'll pass through historic Dien Bien Phu before crossing the newly opened border post at Tay Trang and entering a remote area of Laos. We'll overnight at the interesting market town of Muang Khua and next day enjoy a day off the bikes by taking a slow boat down the beautiful Nam Ou river. Continuing west and south, we'll spend two nights in World Heritage Luang Prabang, with its glorious temples and colorful night market, before cycling on to Vientiane, the sleepy capital of Laos.

### **Rides and rest days**

This is hilly terrain with several tough ascents. The cycling will be from village to village on small roads with very light traffic. Most roads are surfaced, but there may be occasional stretches of unsurfaced roads and a long stretch on the road to Muang Khua after crossing the border into Laos. We will start early to avoid the heat of the day and cycle in groups of similar ability, regrouping occasionally. It is not practical to ride as one group. A support vehicle will never be far away, available in an emergency should anyone require assistance or need a day off the bike. There will be three rest days as well as a day for sightseeing in Hanoi at the beginning of the tour and a day for sightseeing in Vientiane at the end of the tour.



As this is an adventure tour in a third world country, almost untouched by western values, where the majority of the population live a comparatively primitive life style, you should be prepared to rough it at times. Whilst passing through small villages you will be exposed to the reality of village life. We offer it as a tour most suitable for the fit enthusiast rider.

### **Accommodation / Meals**

The guesthouses/hotels we use are reasonable, generally with private facilities, flush toilets and showers. There will be three nights in primitive accommodation with shared showers/toilet facilities as there are no other accommodation options in these locations. Breakfast will be taken at our chosen accommodation, and we will eat in the evenings at local restaurants. Mineral water is readily available throughout the tour.

### **Group information**

The maximum group size will be 18 including the leaders.

### **Weather and Clothing**

In Vietnam, daytime temperatures should be warm with the risk of some rain. Evenings will be cool and night-time temperatures may be cold. It should be warmer in Laos with only a small possibility of rain. Bring appropriate warm clothing, wet-weather cycling gear and sun cream.

### **Cycles / Equipment**

Touring, ATB or hybrid cycles will be suitable if well maintained and fitted with good wheels and fairly wide road tyres. You will not need to carry luggage, but a bar bag or rack-top pack will be useful for spare clothing, camera, sun cream, snacks etc. You should be able to carry 2 water bottles. It is advisable to fit a calibrated cycle computer, as this will aid navigation. Lights will not be necessary. Each participant will be expected to carry sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs. Once we leave Hanoi, cycle spares will not be available on route. Helmets are not mandatory but if you do not intend to wear one, please check that your travel insurance will cover you in the event of a claim.

## **Money**

There will be very few opportunities to spend money other than in Hanoi, Luang Prabang and Vientiane. Mineral water, beer and snacks should cost no more than £10 per day. Currency exchange (US dollars and UK sterling) is available at Hanoi airport. US Dollars and Thai Bhat can be exchanged for Laos Kip.

## **Maps**

As the roads are few, navigation is simple so detailed route descriptions will not be necessary, but you should carry a map in case you become separated from the group. Recommended maps – Reise Know-How Verlag Northern Vietnam, ISBN 3-8317-7151-0, available from Stanfords ([www.stanfords.co.uk](http://www.stanfords.co.uk)), & The Laos Guide Map, ISBN 974-90015-3-2. We will be supplying a photocopy of maps for Vietnam and Laos showing an outline of the route.

## **Travel Insurance and Advice**

Information on CTC Cyclecover Travel Insurance is available from CTC (0870 873 0068) or can be found at [www.cyclecover.co.uk](http://www.cyclecover.co.uk).

Before booking you should check the Foreign Office 'Travel Advice by Country' at [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk) or on 0845 850 2829.

## **About the leaders**

We are both enthusiastic cyclists and have been CTC members for 17 years. We have led tours to many worldwide destinations, and each year we look forward to the reunion with regular travelling companions but also get great satisfaction from introducing new members to the unique camaraderie of CTC holidays. We do not have a set style of leadership but adapt to suit the needs of the group. We encourage all prospective participants to contact us to talk through the tour prior to booking.

**John and Pat Ashwell**

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