SPICEROADS

CYCLING





REMOTE VIETNAM AND LAOS BY BIKE

Tour Code
MCT-MVL

14 DAYS 13 NIGHTS

Destinations

Tour Meets
Tour Ends

Fly in to Fly out of

PRICING

Group Size
Minimum Age

Vietnam, Laos

Hanoi Luang Prabang

Noi Bai International Airport (HAN) Luang Phrabang Airport (LPQ)

2-16 riders

18 (on scheduled departures)

Price Bike Hire (Mountain Bike) Single Supplement

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- SpiceRoads jersey
- ✓ Water bottle
- ✓ Support vehicle
- ✓ Guide(s)
- Meals (as indicated)
- ✓ Accommodation
- Snacks and drinks

US\$ 3,750 US\$ 280

US\$ 455

× International flights

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- ✗ Domestic flights
- × Airport pick up
- × Airport drop off
- × Visa fees
- × Alcohol
- × Tips

ACTIVITY PROFILE



12 Cycling days

63_{km} Avg distance / day **761** km Total cycling distance

959_m Avg climbing / day

DEPARTURES



14 July - 27 July 2024

13 October - 26 October 2024

08 December - 21 December 2024

05 January - 18 January 2025

16 February - 01 March 2025

13 July - 26 July 2025

12 October - 25 October 2025

07 December - 20 December 2025

TRIP PROFILE

You can cycle a total of up to 761 km on paved roads along rivers, through lush paddy fields, karst landscapes, and peaceful villages before taking on some climbs to truly appreciate the natural splendours. When the climbs are tough, we lowered the distances to make it manageable. The journey takes us on a route less frequented; therefore, some overnight stays will be basic at guesthouses, and there will be one night with shared facilities.

Suitability: You can expect a full day of riding each day with some challenging ascents for you to overcome, but they mean nothing compared to your flying down the long descents we have purposely included in this program. The tour can be enjoyed by anyone with reasonably good physical condition. As is always the case, the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy the riding. However, an air-conditioned bus travels behind the group for support.

Biking Conditions: We ride between 30 and 70 km per day, with the option of cycling 100 km one day. We also have 1 rest day along with 2 half-day rides. The roads are predominantly tarmac and in relatively good condition, but occasionally you will experience sections of deteriorated road surfaces and small sections of dirt roads, which makes it all the more exciting and adventurous!



Day 1 Meet in Hanoi

We meet in Vietnam's capital of Hanoi. You have time to explore the city on your own before we gather for dinner and a trip briefing.



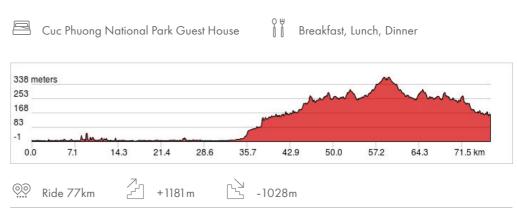
Day 2 Hanoi - Tam Coc

A day exploring the countryside and local artisans. We have a short transfer out of the city to avoid traffic and start with a lovely ride on a dyke along the Red River, a perfect quiet place to get used to cycling in Vietnam. Our first stop will be Bat Trang, known for its handmade ceramics. The pottery is quite varied and interesting. We then cycle south into the heart of the delta, passing through many traditional villages and rice fields. We have a two-hour transfer to lunch in Tam Coc. In the afternoon, we board a boat for a leisurely cruise on the Ngo Dong River and float through three natural caves, the largest of which is 125 m long. Sit back, relax, and see rural Vietnam from a different perspective, taking in the dramatic limestone karsts jutting out from the green rice fields. After our scenic boat ride, we disembark and transfer back to our hotel.



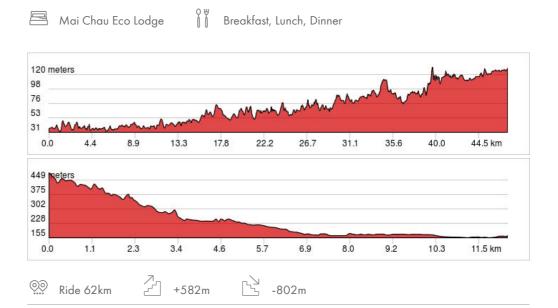
Day 3 Tam Coc - Cuc Phuong

We start cycling from our hotel in Tam Coc for a flat ride to the town of Hoa Lu, the ancient capital of the Dinh and Ly dynasties. The route is stunning as you pass green rice fields amongst karst mountains. After a stop to visit Dinh Le Temple, built in the shape of a Chinese character in the 17th century, we continue pedalling along the Hoang Long River through some impressive landscape. The first 35 km are flat and then we'll have some small climbs up to the park, but they are all short. Upon arrival at Cuc Phuong, Vietnam's largest national park, we visit the Endangered Primate Rescue Centre, where a wide variety of native monkeys and gibbons, including critically endangered langurs, were saved from wildlife smugglers and are being rehabilitated to return to the wild. After the visit, we continue cycling to the centre of the park and have the option to transfer or cycle the 20 km back to our overnight accommodation in the park.



Day 4 Cuc Phuong National Park - Mai Chau

After breakfast, we take a short transfer to Lanh An, where we start our cycling on a small tarmac road with dramatic mountain scenery and along the Buoi River. We cycle past local villages of Muong people and their fields of rice, corn, cassava, and sugarcane. After a lunch of Pho at a local restaurant, we have a short transfer uphill to start our afternoon ride with a descent to Mai Chau, as there is no better way to enter this paddy-filled valley than by bicycle. We arrive with plenty of time to enjoy a dip in the pool or the sunset view from your balcony at our luxurious lodge.



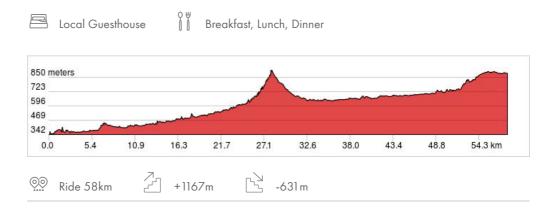
Day 5 Mai Chau - Quan Son

After breakfast, take a guided stroll around Mai Chau Valley, where we can admire the superb panorama of Mai Chau surrounded by a green valley and stilt houses. Be sure to bring your camera! Back at the hotel, we check out, hop on the bikes, and cycle from Mai Chau to deep inside Pu Luong National Reserve. After 20 km of flat terrain, be ready to start pushing the pedals as we conquer the biggest hill of the day with a 550-m climb over 17 km. But the effort is well worth it for the exhilarating downhill cruise to Dong Tam. We have a picnic lunch en route at a stilt house of ethnic Thai people. Once we reach Dong Tam, we load up the bikes to avoid construction and transfer 35 km to our hotel in Quan Son.



Day 6 Quan Son- Na Meo Border - Vieng Xai

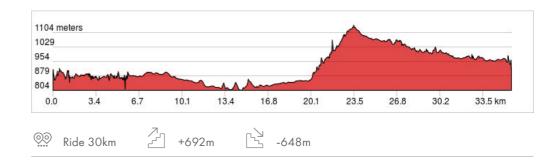
This morning, we transfer 53 km to the border, where we'll be met by our Laos guides to prepare for the portion of our bicycle tour in Laos. We acquaint ourselves with our new bikes and start our ride to Vieng Xay. Our ride will be along streams and through karst landscapes interspersed with rice paddies. Our destination today is historic Vieng Xai, once the war-time headquarters of Laos' communists, famous for its remarkable landscape of karst limestones honeycombed with caves that were used as shelter during the relentless bombing raids. Along the way, we'll see a number of historic caves, including the Lao-Cuban Hospital Cave.



Day 7 Vieng Xai - Xam Neua

After breakfast, we head to the Vieng Xai Caves Visitor Centre to get our bearings and get ready to go on the audio tour. The Vieng Xai Caves are an extensive network of caves in limestone mountains. Four hundred and eighty of these caves were used by the Communist Party army to shelter from American air raids during the Second Indochina War, also known as the Vietnam War. We use our bikes to get from cave to cave and walk through the caves listing to the commentary and audio effects. After lunch, we get back on the saddle and cycle to Xam Neua, Houaphanh's provincial capital, through a number of traditional ethnic villages.





Day 8 Transfer to Bankhoua & Nam Nern Night Safari

We have a rest and go on a different type of adventure, a safari within the Nam Et-Phou Louey National Protected Area. The area is known for its forest, high level of biodiversity, and endangered species, including tiger, gaur, Sambar deer, and white-cheeked gibbon. We transfer from Xam Neua to the starting point of this adventure in Ban Sonkhoua. Along the way, we stop to see the 100-m long cascade over rock slabs of Saleuy Waterfall. When dusk comes, we head out for wildlife-spotlighting down the Nam Nern River on long-tail boats that drift downriver for the best chances of spotting wild animals. We overnight at simple but well-appointed bamboo huts with the sounds of the jungle surrounding us.



Day 9 Ban Sonkhoua - Meuang Kham

After breakfast, boats will float us back to Ban Sonkhoua, where we get on our bikes to start riding again. Today is all about magnificent downhills! Our first spectacular descent will bring us to lunch on the Nam Nern riverbank in Ban Sop Lao. After lunch, we transfer to Ban Souanmon, from which we'll cycle through the mountains towards our second outstanding descent onto the Xieng Khouang Plateau. The day ends at Ban Xang Hot Springs, where we'll be staying the night in a community lodge.



Day 10 Meuang Kham - Phonsavanh

After a hot spring bath and breakfast, we start our traverse of the plateau, which is home to the mysterious Plain of Jars, a World Heritage site. We ride through numerous villages and have an overall gradual climb for the first part of the day as we end up at 1100 m from our start point of 500 m. Once we are up on the plateau, the landscape changes to grassy plains. This area was one of the most heavily bombed in Laos and evidence of unexploded ordinances (UXO) are everywhere. Resourceful locals use bomb casings and other remnants, putting them to use as fences, tools, vegetable planters, decorations, and barbecues.





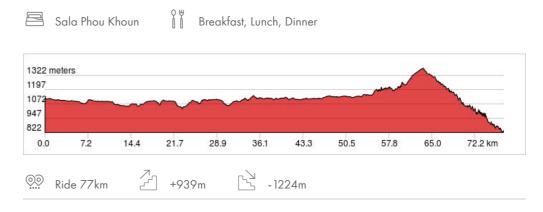
Day 11 Plain of Jars

We cycle to visit the mysterious prehistoric Plain of Jars and learn the many theories of their existence. We start with a visit to Site 1, where there are also many visible bomb craters, and continue to Site 2, where the jars are set up on a hillside. We have lunch at Site 2 and then you have the option of cycling the 20 km back to town or taking the bus. You have the afternoon free to visit the MAG Office-UXO Visitor Information Centre to watch their movie for a fascinating insight into the legacy of the Second Indochina War, aka the Vietnam War. There are numerous restaurants in town, and you can choose which you prefer as dinner is on your own tonight.



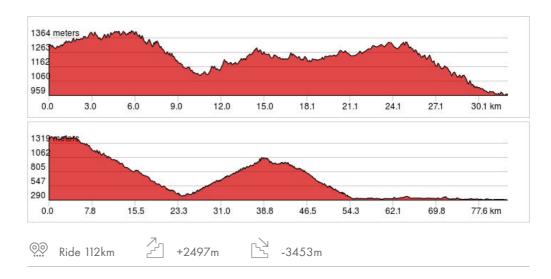
Day 12 Phonsavanh - Phou Khoun

We head east to Phou Khoun with the first 50 km to Nongtang, a large natural lake surrounded by high limestone cliffs, a relatively flat ride compared to our previous hills. Stop for a photo of the lake, and then it's a quick 27 km, as the last 14 km are all downhill, on to our lunch spot on the Nam Chat River. We transfer the final 60 km uphill to Phou Khoun. We arrive in time for you to enjoy the sunset and stunning view from your guesthouse.



Day 13 Phou Khoun - Luang Prabang

We have an overall descent to Luang Prabang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site located on the banks of the Mekong River. For those that want to cycle more, they can leave early from guesthouse and be picked up 32 km along the route. We then all transfer up 20 km to our starting point. From here, we have a glorious 18-km descent to Ban Khoua Nam Ming. Here we have lunch and prepare for a 14-km post-lunch ascent. We have one more swooping downhill before we are down on the rolling flats. We ride into charming Luang Prabang and to our riverside guesthouse. We head out to the temple-filled town to have our last dinner together.

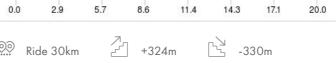


Day 14 Luang Prabang - Pak Ou Loop

Breakfast, Lunch

The final day of the tour in Laos consists of a bike ride to Pak Ou for a visit to the striking limestone Tham Ting and Tham Teung Caves, set in a cliff at the confluence of the Ou and Mekong rivers. The caves are packed with thousands of Buddha images. On the cycle there, we stop at Ban Xang Hai, where you get to watch Lao rice wine production and do some sampling too! After lunch at Ban Pak Ou, we'll be returning to Luang Prabang by boat. We return to the hotel around 3 pm, so you can freshen up before your onward journey. Those looking to extend their trip can explore northern Laos, or head back to Vietnam to spend some time beachside at Nha Trang or riverside at Vang Vieng!





Disclaimer: The adventure cycling tours we operate often go beyond the beaten track, and the countries where we ride are not always predictable. Due to these reasons, it is occasionally necessary to reroute or update itineraries. Our guarantee is that we will not change a trip unless for safety or to improve it. Our listed hotels are always accurate at the time of writing, but should we have to change any hotel, it will always be for a similar or better one.

NUTS & BOLTS

Bikes

Because some people can't imagine going on a trip without their own beloved bicycle, we do not provide them as part of this tour. However, you can hire bikes locally for the price listed in the tour pricing section.

If you bring your own bike, please make sure it is a mountain bike, preferably with front suspension in good mechanical order.

Bike Repairs

Basic spares and tools are carried by the guide and on the support vehicle, though we cannot guarantee having spares for every conceivable problem. Carrying a basic tool kit, a spare tube and a pump while riding is recommended.

Safety

Wearing a helmet is required on all our biking adventures and is non negotiable. If you do not wear a helmet you will not be allowed to cycle. Your tour leader is trained in first aid and emergency rescue, but to a large degree you must be responsible for your own safety while riding. It is therefore compulsory that you take out travel insurance that will cover you for a mountain biking tour.

Guides

You will be led by a local English-speaking guide and if the group is 9 people or more we will add another guide to the tour. All our guides are well informed in the history, culture and religions of the area where you are biking and are skilled at passing that knowledge on to you. Your guide is also medically trained and an experienced cyclist, able to handle most minor repairs en route.

THE NITTY GRITTY

VIETNAM

Passports and Visas

Vietnam e-Visa is available to 80 nationalities. Please check this link to determine if your country is on the list. To apply for an e-visa please visit the official government website here and follow the required steps and make payment. You can apply for a single entry visa up to 30 days. Multiple entry e-visas are not currently available. For peace of mind, we suggest applying for your e-visa as early as possible, and no later than 2 weeks before your expected arrival in Vietnam. While processing time is generally no more than 1-3 working days (not including weekends and Vietnamese holidays), it is wise to give yourself some buffer time in case there are any issues.

If your nationality is not on the list for e-visa eligibility, or you need options for longer stays or multiple entries, then you may consider Visa on Arrival. The process for this is more complicated than e-visa and requires the acquisition of a visa letter prior to arrival. Please see here for a detailed overview.

If you are joining our "Saigon to Bangkok" or "Saigon to Siem Reap" tour, when you are applying for your e-visa, please select Song Tien Landport as the exit point. This refers to the river crossing at Chao Doc.

Health

Recommended vaccinations are typhoid, polio, tetanus and hepatitis A. A certificate for Yellow Fever is required when arriving from an infected area within six days. Vietnam is a malarial area and you will need to take anti-malarial tablets. Please speak to your doctor for the most up to date information.

Weather

Weather in Vietnam is divided into 4 main regions - the far north, north, central and south.

The far north can get very cold in December and January while the dry season runs from October to late March and the wet season between April to September.

In Hanoi & the north, it is hot, wet and humid from May to October while November to April is cooler and dry.

Central Vietnam experiences hot, dry weather between January & August with temperatures ranging in the mid 30°C. High levels of rainfall are during September - November.

Southern Vietnam is dry and hot from November to April, and warm and wet between May & October, with the highest rainfall in June, July & August.

Food

Meals are included as per the itinerary where B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner. Most meals are Vietnamese food and features noodles, rice curries and soups. Vietnamese cuisine is world

famous and we make sure you sample as much variety as possible. Any special dietary requirements can also be catered for as well. Please let us know at the time of booking.

Drink

Keeping you completely hydrated is a job we take very seriously. Cold water, some energy-restoring local fruit, and soft drinks are included in the tour price while riding. Soft drinks and other beverages during meals are not included. Beer is freely available everywhere in Vietnam but is NOT included in the price.

Solo Travelers

SpiceRoads does not require you to pay a surcharge for traveling alone. We will arrange for you to share accommodation with another traveler of the same gender and if we can not match you up we will provide a single room at no extra charge. If you prefer not to share a single supplement is payable to guarantee your own room. The cost of the single supplement is listed above.

Extra Expenses

We recommend that you tuck away a few extra dollars, perhaps US\$10, for incidentals. It is customary to tip local tour guides and drivers, however, the amount you give should be dependent on the level of service you receive. As a general guide, we suggest US\$ 3-4 per person per day is appropriate.

Money

The official national currency is the Vietnam dong (d), but the US dollar is widely accepted in tourist centers. However, in smaller towns and villages the dong is preferred. ATMs are available in all major tourist destinations and big cities. Vietcombank has the best network with a single withdrawal limit of 2,000,000d (about US\$ 125). Most major currencies can be exchanged at leading banks in Vietnam, but the US dollar is preferred away from the tourist centers. Changing US\$ 100 will make you an instant millionaire! You cannot legally take the dong out of Vietnam but you can reconvert reasonable amounts of it into US dollars on departure.

LAOS

Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a visa for Laos. You have two options to get a single-entry tourist visa (max 30 days): 1) E-Visa or 2) Visa on Arrival. Both are very straightforward processes, though we suggest procuring an E-Visa in advance as it will save you time on arrival in Laos. **Apply via this website**. If you prefer to do a Visa On Arrival, make sure you have the required documents prepared (including 2 passport-sized photographs and the exact amount for the visa fee in USD). See here for more information.

Please Note: While E-Visa and Visa on Arrival are available for all international airports and major land borders, some border posts do not yet accept them. Therefore, if your tour crosses into Laos from Vietnam through a more remote border post, obtaining your visa through a Laotian Embassy or Consulate in advance may be required. If that is the case, we will let you know at the time of booking.

Health

We recommend that you visit a travel medical doctor and ask about the following vaccinations: typhoid, polio, tetanus and hepatitis A. A certificate for Yellow Fever is required when arriving from an infected area within six days.

Weather

Laos has a tropical climate with fairly high humidity. There are three seasons: from March to June it is hot and dry, with temperatures between 27C and 40C (80-104F), with night temperatures in the 20C/75F). The rainy season is from June to October. The cooler season, is from November to February, with average temperatures between 20C and 30C (70-86F). It can get a little cold at night at higher elevations year round so bring a light fleece for the evenings.

Food

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Money

The official national currency in Laos is the kip, however, Thai baht and US dollars are also used, especially in larger cities and towns. In smaller towns and villages, kip is usually preferred. There are now a few ATMs in Laos, but they are not widespread and are operational only sporadically. The best overall exchange rates are those offered at the BCEL (Banque pour le Commerce Extérieur Lao). Licensed moneychangers rates are similar to banks Spend all your kip before you leave as no one will exchange it for you once you leave the country!

GENERAL BOOKING INFO

If this is the tour for you here's what you need to do to confirm your place:

FLEXIBLE BOOKING CONDITIONS

Booking a SpiceRoads cycling adventure is easy and we try to do everything possible to make sure you have full flexibility and peace of mind. We do not require a deposit to hold your place on a tour and once full payment has been made your money is protected in our client account and you have the flexibility to cancel or change your booking if needed.

CONFIRMING YOUR BOOKING

Just complete our online booking form or send your booking details offline (email or post), and we will confirm your participation. No deposit is needed to confirm your place on a SpiceRoads tour.

You are advised to read our <u>Booking Conditions</u> in full before you make your payment and should you require further clarifications of any of the conditions below, please <u>email us</u> or call our office.

TRIP STATUS

There is a minimum number of participants (usually 2) required to enable the trip to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to Depart'. Once a trip is guaranteed to depart you are free to book your flights and make other travel arrangements. If the trip status is 'Limited' will mean we have only a small number of spaces available for booking. If you are unsure about the trip status, please <a href="mailto:em

BOOKING ONLINE

From the tour page, click the 'Book Now' link. All departures for this tour will appear, just select the date you'd like to travel. For the next steps, you'll need to know the names of the people travelling. If you wish you can also provide extra details such as passport numbers, height (for bike hire), or you can add that later by logging into Manage My Trip (we'll set up an account for you automatically if you don't already have one). Our system will contact you from time to time to fill in the missing information, as it will be required before departure. However, if the trip that you are booking offers a child discount, you will have to fill out the date of birth of each rider (so we can calculate the appropriate discount).

If you are having any problems <u>please send us an email</u>, or give us a call (+66 026 3295) and one of our travel specialists will assist you with your booking.

BOOKING OFFLINE

Just call us or send an email indicating which trip you want to join and we will happily send you a list of questions and process your booking for you.

DEPOSITS AND PAYMENTS

We do not require a deposit or full payment to book a place for you on a tour.

The balance of the tour's cost (final invoice) will need to be paid 60 days before the departure date with fees for any bicycle rental(s), single supplement(s) and extra hotel nights.

In the case where a booking is made when there are less than 60 days until the tour departure date, the tour's cost should be paid in full within 72 hours of receiving an invoice from SpiceRoads. Payment can be made by credit card using our online payment gateway or by bank transfer. When making payment online you will need to confirm that you have read these booking conditions during the "checkout" process, which equates to agreeing to the terms of services and stipulations as indicated in this document.

In all cases, tour fees need to be paid "in full" before participation in a tour. No person(s) will be allowed to join a tour without fully settling their invoice and receiving a confirmation number from SpiceRoads.

The exception can be made for last-minute miscellaneous fees that can be paid locally (visas, additional local hotel bookings, etc.) can be settled on the day of arrival.

FULL FLEXIBILITY FOR TOUR CANCELATIONS

If the tour is cancelled or postponed by SpiceRoads because we didn't make the trip numbers and the tour can't run, we will make a full cash refund (by bank transfer or on your credit card).

If the tour is cancelled for any other reason, including due to Covid related travel restrictions, we will give you a full credit (with no deductions for admin or any other small-print item) to use on any SpiceRoads tour with no time limit. (Exceptions being flights, special permits and other non-refundable items and these will be advised when booking the trip).

Before paying for your tour, you can cancel your booking with no charge and up until 40 days before departure, you can change your booking to another travel date or move your booking onto another SpiceRoads tour with no charges.

If you need to cancel after you have made full payment, please see our cancellation policy.

Loyalty Riders Club

For those who have been on several long tours with us, we reward customer loyalty by offering repeat customers a special discount off the tour price (excludes single supplement and bike rental). If this is your fourth scheduled tour or more you will receive a 5% discount. If this is your eighth scheduled tour or more we will extend a 10% discount. The discount will be reflected in your online booking, but please contact us if any questions. Loyalty discounts cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Note: Only tours of 7 days or more will be applicable for a loyalty discount.

International Flights

International flights, to and from the start and finish points are not included in the tour price. Once your tour is Guaranteed to Depart you can book your flight. Please contact us for advice before arranging flights for the best arrival and departure times. We would only cancel a trip for an extreme circumstance, but in that case, where we cancel your trip, we cannot be liable for losses incurred relating to any flight booking you have made. Please claim any losses from your travel insurance that you acquired when you booked your holiday.

Newsletter

Our adventure travel <u>e-newsletter</u> is full of travel news, trip information, interesting stories and contests. To avoid missing out on special offers and updates from SpiceRoads, be sure to subscribe.

The information in this document is given in good faith, and covers the average range of conditions likely to be found on this trip. Please note that the itinerary is subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances, however, we will always do our best to adhere to this original itinerary

CONTACT US

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