

Laos

Medical Summary

The health risk information presented here is summarized from Shoreland Travax[®], a decision-support tool used by health care providers to perform a detailed health risk analysis based on specific locations, individual travel styles, and traveler risk behaviors. Travax provides practitioners current, independently researched malaria risk and prevention recommendations in a map-based format that goes beyond the annual WHO and US CDC statements included here. Not included here are current reports from Travax of disease outbreaks or environmental events that may pose elevated risks to travelers' health and safety. The Providers section of this site offers a directory of health care providers who utilize Shoreland Travax for travel health counseling. Learn more about the detailed reports and maps available from these practitioners (includes links to samples).

General Information

Laos is a developing nation classified as lower middle income. Located in Southeast Asia (north of Thailand and south of Vietnam), the climate is classified as predominantly subtropical dry winter.

Vaccinations

Depending on your itinerary, your personal risk factors, and the length of your visit, your health care provider may offer you vaccination against chikungunya, COVID-19, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, influenza, Japanese encephalitis, measles, mumps, rubella, rabies, or typhoid fever. Routine immunizations, such as those that prevent tetanus/diphtheria or "childhood" diseases, should be reviewed and updated as needed.

Malaria

The following is current information as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

WHO—*International Travel and Health* (current online update, Country List)

(2020) Malaria risk due predominantly to *P. falciparum* exists throughout the year in the entire country except in Vientiane.

- Recommended prevention in risk areas: **C** – Risk of *P. falciparum* malaria, in combination with reported chloroquine and sulfadoxine–pyrimethamine resistance. Mosquito bite prevention plus atovaquone–proguanil or doxycycline or mefloquine chemoprophylaxis (select according to reported side effects and contraindications)^a

^aAlternatively, for travel to rural areas with low risk of malaria infection, mosquito bite prevention can be combined with stand-by emergency treatment (SBET).

WHO Country List footnote: When available, the date of the most recent update or confirmation is indicated in parentheses in the country list. If no date is indicated, the most recent update or confirmation was provided before 2013.

CDC—*Health Information for International Travel* (current online edition)

Areas with malaria: All, except none in the city of Vientiane.

- Drug resistance³: Chloroquine and mefloquine.
- Malaria species: *P. falciparum* 65%, *P. vivax* 34%, *P. malariae* and *P. ovale* 1% combined.
- Recommended chemoprophylaxis: Along the Laos-Burma (Myanmar) border in the provinces of Bokeo and Louang Namtha and along the Laos-Thailand border in the province of Champasak and Saravan, along the Laos-Cambodia border, and along the Laos-Vietnam border: Atovaquone-proguanil, doxycycline, or tafenoquine.⁴ All other Areas with malaria: Atovaquone-proguanil, doxycycline, mefloquine, or tafenoquine.⁴

³ Refers to *P. falciparum* malaria unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Primaquine and tafenoquine can cause hemolytic anemia in people with G6PD deficiency. Patients must be screened for G6PD deficiency before starting primaquine or tafenoquine. See *Tafenoquine Approved for Malaria Prophylaxis and Treatment* for more information.

Other Concerns

Travelers' Diarrhea

High risk exists throughout the country, with moderate risk in deluxe accommodations. Community sanitation and food safety measures are generally inadequate. Some itineraries (e.g., remote destinations, austere accommodations) and activities (e.g., ecotourism, eating street or local-market food) further increase risk.

Travelers should observe food and beverage precautions, which reduce the likelihood of illness.

Travelers should carry loperamide for self-treatment of diarrhea and, if risk is moderate to high, an antibiotic to add if diarrhea is severe. Consult a knowledgeable health care provider regarding which antibiotic is appropriate for you and most effective for your destination.

Other Food-Borne Illnesses

Precautions to prevent brucellosis may be needed.

Insect- and Arthropod-Borne Diseases

Dengue, murine typhus, scrub typhus, Zika may pose a risk. Personal protective measures are important.

Other Disease and Health Risks

Additional concerns include anthrax disease, avian influenza, helminths, leptospirosis, melioidosis, plague, schistosomiasis, sexually transmitted infections, snakebites, tuberculosis.

Consular Advice

The material below includes information from the US Department of State (DOS), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), as well as from additional open-source material. Standard safety precautions that apply to all international travel can be found in the Library article Safety and Security.

Consular Travel Advice

Due to ongoing security concerns, Canada (GAC) advises avoiding travel to Xaisomboun Province and advises reconsidering travel (or avoiding nonessential travel) to Bokeo Province along the borders with Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, and around the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone. US (DOS), UK (FCO), and Australia (DFAT) have more limited warnings.

Terrorism Risk

No intrinsic risk of attack by terrorist groups exists, but unforeseen attacks are possible.

Crime

Moderate risk of violent crime (armed robbery, home robbery, and sexual assault) and high risk of petty crime exist in Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Vang Vieng, and other cities; on hiking trails; in areas frequented by tourists, especially prior to and during local festivals and events.

Theft of valuables by criminals in passing vehicles is common.

Scams involving motor vehicle rentals have been reported.

Risk exists of robberies and/or assaults occurring after consuming intentionally drugged food or drink; tourists are frequently targeted.

Civil Unrest

Protests and demonstrations may infrequently occur and have the potential to turn violent without warning. Bystanders are at risk of harm from violence or from the response by authorities. Disruption to transportation, free movement, or the ability to carry out daily activities may occur.

Unsafe Areas

A dangerous security environment may exist in Xaisomboun Province. Landmines and other unexploded ordnance are present in Luang Prabang and Xiangkhouang provinces and in areas bordering Vietnam (including areas along the former Ho Chi Minh

trail). Armed groups may be present in areas bordering Burma (Myanmar).

Water Safety

Hazardous water conditions (including currents, tides, and undertows) may occur, especially in the Mekong River. Heed posted warnings, and avoid beaches that are not patrolled. Do not swim alone or after dark, and do not walk on any beach after dark.

Passenger boats may be unsafe, including speedboats on rivers, especially the Mekong River. Decline water transportation in vessels that appear overloaded or lack personal flotation devices or life jackets.

Basic safety standards for recreational water activities (including rafting, kayaking, and tubing) are often not in place. Rent water sports equipment from reputable operators.

Outdoor Safety

Basic safety standards for adventure activities (including recreational off-roading and ziplining) are often not in place. Travelers should only use reputable adventure-sport operators for activities and equipment rentals.

Transportation Safety

High risk of traffic-related injury or death exists. The road traffic death rate is 12 to 24 per 100,000 population. The rate is less than 10 in most high-income countries.

Speed laws are poorly enforced.

Seat belt laws are poorly enforced.

Drunk driving laws are poorly enforced.

Structural standards for vehicles may not meet international standards.

Natural Disasters

The monsoon season is from May through November, coinciding with the typhoon season. Floods, mudslides, and landslides may occur, especially along the Mekong River.

Consular Information

Selected Embassies or Consulates in Laos

- United States: [+856] 21-48-7000; la.usembassy.gov
- Canada: [+856] 0-21-35-38-34; travel.gc.ca/assistance/embassies-consulates/laos
- United Kingdom: [+856] 0-30-770-0000; www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-embassy-vientiane
- Australia: [+856] 21-353800; www.laos.embassy.gov.au

Laos' Embassies or Consulates in Selected Countries

- In the U.S.: www.laoembassy.com
- In Canada: Laos does not have an embassy or consulate in Canada.
- In the U.K.: [+44] 020-7402-3770
- In Australia: www.laoembassy.net

Visa/HIV Testing

HIV testing is not required to obtain a tourist, work, or residence visa.