

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

Routine vaccinations are essential due to a persistent rise of vaccine-preventable diseases (especially markedly high rates of diphtheria, pertussis, and measles) globally. Prior to travel, travelers should be up-to-date with the age-appropriate routine vaccinations recommended by their home country, which may include: COVID-19; *H. influenzae* type B (Hib); hepatitis A; hepatitis B; influenza; measles, mumps, rubella; meningococcal; pneumococcal; polio; rotavirus; tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap preferred; consider an early pertussis booster for high-risk travelers); varicella.

Depending on your itinerary, your personal risk factors, and the length of your visit, your health care provider may offer you vaccination against chikungunya, Japanese encephalitis, rabies, or typhoid fever.

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.

Safety and Security

Key Safety Risks

- Road conditions
- Maritime safety
- Petty crime
- Heightened crime risk for women
- Food and beverage spiking
- Theft of vehicles
- Scams
- Natural disasters

Key Security Threats

- Risk of violent civil unrest
- Risk of violent protests
- Potential spillover of armed conflict
- Cross-border threats in areas bordering Burma (Myanmar) and Thailand
- Explosions in public places
- Landmines/unexploded ordnance
- Occasional violent crime
- Random acts of armed violence

Emergency Phone Number

The police emergency number is 191. The English-speaking tourist police number in Vientiane is [+856] 021-251-128.

