

24 HOURS IN VIENTIANE

LET'S GO!



Start the day nice and early (and beat the heat) with a hearty breakfast at **Mosaic's** vast and excellent buffet. Then, head into downtown Vientiane for a stroll around the side streets, where you'll discover many shops selling unique fabric and handcraft. **CamaCrafts**, **Her Works** and **Saoban** are top picks for beautiful, well-made clothes, bags and souvenirs.



That's the touristy side of Vientiane covered, now for the daily life of the capital. For some traditional Lao fare, stop for lunch at one of the many noodle shops dotted around the city, or step it up with a traditional meal at **Kualao**, an institution in a restored French colonial villa by the quaint That Dam stupa in town. Or, for a more modern take on traditional Lao food, try **Lao Kitchen**, just behind the very obvious Culture Hall that dominates the downtown area.



Grab a top-notch coffee at the award-winning **Naked Espresso** before taking in Vientiane's two main attractions – the **Patuxay Monument** and the majestic **That Luang** temple.



Patuxay is a sight to behold – a smaller, slightly dishevelled replica of the Arc de Triomphe on the Champs Elysees in Paris. There are mixed narratives around the origin and meaning of the monument, which is built in the Lao style with mythological figures. It was built in the 1950s and 60s, using funds from the American government that were originally intended to build a new airport – hence the monument's nickname, the 'Vertical Runway'. Stroll around the newish fountains and gardens at its base – and grab an icecream if you're peckish - before taking the stairs in the central tower, which will take you right to the top, for a magnificent panoramic view of the city.

Up the road is the **That Luang** temple, literally glinting gold in the morning sun. Dating back to the 3rd century, but rebuilt in the 16th century, the 45-metre high stupa is considered the most important monument in Laos and a national symbol, covered in 500 kilos of gold leaf.



After lunch, wander through the grounds of **Wat Sisaket** and **Hor Pha Keo**, two of the city's largest temples that stand side-by-side on the main street running through downtown

Vientiane. Just opposite the Presidential Palace, **Wat Sisaket** is famous for its cloister wall that houses thousands of tiny Buddha images, amid hundreds of seated Buddhas – more than 6800 in total, made from wood, stone and bronze. Built in the Bangkok style, the temple dates back to the early 1800s, and is now the oldest Buddhist monastery in Laos. Just across the road is the elegant **Hor Pha Keo**, an ancient temple on a site dating back to the 1500s, but reconstructed in 1936. During the 1970s, the temple was transformed from a place of worship to a museum that now houses a large national collection of Buddhist statues and artefacts.



Then, step back into modern Laos with a visit to the **T'Shop-Lai Gallery**, behind Wat Inpheng up the road. Tucked into a quiet side street, the gallery is the best place to see modern art and pick up some choice souvenirs and cosmetics by local artisans. If you're lucky, you might also catch one of the gallery's many local art or photography exhibitions while you're there.

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After that, it is time to head back to **Crowne Plaza** to freshen up with a luxurious massage at **Senses**, the hotel's brand new spa, and lounge by the hotel pool. Located on the third floor – at roof level – you can relax with a cocktail in the swim-up bar while enjoying one of Vientiane's famously spectacular sunsets. Grab another drink during happy hour at the **Elephant Lounge** in the hotel lobby, before heading out for dinner at one of the many outdoor restaurants along the Mekong. Like most of these eateries, Spirit House has an extensive menu of Thai and western food, and a fabulous range of cocktails. It also has great ambiance if you're sitting inside.



ABOUT CROWNE PLAZA VIENTIANE

Conveniently located along Samsenthai Rd., in the heart of Vientiane Capital and just 15 minutes from Wattay International Airport, Crowne Plaza Vientiane is the ideal address for leisure travelers in Laos.

Crowne Plaza Vientiane offers 197 well-appointed rooms and suites that tastefully combine traditional Lao elements with modern-day conveniences to help you relax and rejuvenate.

Our Specialty and International restaurants will satisfy all your cravings while Elephant Lounge, our lobby bar, will quench the driest of thirst.

Crowne Plaza Club guests experience exceptional attention in Vientiane's finest Executive Club Lounge, complete with personalised services and amenities that guarantee to satisfy those who demand the finest experiences during their stay.

For the night owls, head over to Walking Street, a hip new night market at Vientiane New World, a riverside shopping precinct. Empty during the day, by night the laneways and courtyards are filled with pop-up bars serving craft beer and iridescent cocktails, as well as food stalls and markets selling clothes and jewellery. Then, for the party animals, head on to one of the city's many pulsing nightclubs. **Marina** is one of the largest, and most reliable for a good Saturday night out.



Ease into Sunday with breakfast at **Kung's Café**, a hidden gem tucked down a gritty alleyway, and serving a unique menu of authentic Lao food – the sticky rice pancake with mango and honey is a favourite, along with an extra-strong Lao coffee. While you're there, check out the nearby **Wat Simuang**, known as the city's Mother Temple, and containing some fascinating examples of animist and Buddhist architecture.



Then, take a public bus or tuk tuk out of the city to the famously strange **Buddha Park**, an open-air sculpture garden about 45 minutes out of the city, containing more than 200 religious statues, including a 40-metre high reclining Buddha. Built in 1958 by an eccentric Lao monk, the sculptures include not only Buddhist figures, but also Hindu gods, demons and animals – all huge, impressive and filled with strange details and motifs. The park has a restaurant selling typical Lao food and snacks, including papaya salad and cold Beerlao, the country's much-admired national beer. Then, head back into the city and take a tuk tuk tour of Vientiane, topping off your weekend with a leisurely ride through the slow-moving traffic, with perhaps a lounge in the park opposite the **Presidential Palace**.

