

SPECIAL
OFFER – SAVE
£200
PER PERSON

LAOS & THE ANCIENT KINGDOMS OF SOUTHWEST CHINA

An escorted journey from Vientiane, Laos to Chengdu, China
including a five night river cruise aboard the Mekong Star
2nd to 19th November 2027 & 12th to 29th February 2028



NOBLE CALEDONIA

This unique escorted tour, which has been devised for just 24 participants, begins in Laos where we embark the newly built Mekong Star and discover the lesser-travelled stretch of the Mekong River between Vientiane and Luang Prabang as it flows past remote villages, quiet riverbanks with grazing buffalo, and through lush forests and gently rolling verdant hills. Following our time in Laos we will travel by train to southwest China for a weeklong exploration of the Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, with their dramatic landscapes, rich biodiversity, charming old towns and diverse ethnic cultures. Our itinerary offers a perfect balance of exploration and comfort, allowing ample time to appreciate each of the destinations in the company of a small group of like-minded travellers.

Laos remains one of Southeast Asia's most enchanting places and we will cruise along a quieter stretch of the Mekong, where forested hills, limestone cliffs, and traditional riverside communities unfold at an unhurried pace. One of the most memorable experiences of the journey will be encountering the charm and natural warmth of the local people for whom the Mekong plays such an important role. Along the way we will take in the stunning unspoiled countryside and the symbolic Xayabourri Dam which, completed in 2019, is the first hydropower dam in this region. After our cruise we will enjoy a three night hotel stay in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Luang Prabang. This mystical city is sure to captivate even the most jaded of travellers with its crumbling French colonial architecture, splendid golden wats with their hundreds of resident monks, and bustling markets.

Our journey continues by high speed rail into southern China, where the landscapes shift to dramatic stone forests, terraced fields and elegant lakeside cities. We arrive in Kunming, capital of China's Yunnan Province where highlights of our time will include Kunming's Stone Forest, an otherworldly subtropical plateau karst and UNESCO World Heritage Site, beautiful Lijiang, nestled beneath the snowy peaks of the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain and stronghold of the Naxi people, known for their ancient Dongba religion. We then fly to Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, and spend our final days wandering the lively streets of Old Chengdu with its traditional tea houses, hutongs and spicy cuisine, and we will see Sichuan's most famous residents, the giant panda, as well as the small red panda.



Mekong Star along the shores of the Mekong River



MandaLao Elephant Conservation



Pak Ou Caves

TOUR OVERVIEW

- Cruise along the Upper Mekong River aboard the boutique Mekong Star
- Enjoy three nights exploring wonderful Luang Prabang
- Spend time with the elephants at the MandaLao Elephant Conservation & visit the famous Pak Ou Caves
- Witness spectacular scenery during a train journey from Luang Prabang, Laos to Kunming, China
- Enjoy luxury hotels in Southwest China: Kunming (two nights), Lijiang (three nights) & Chengdu (two nights)
- Experience China's high-speed train travelling from Kunming to Lijiang
- Discover China's Yunnan & Sichuan provinces
- Visit Chengdu Panda Research Base and see giant pandas

THE ITINERARY

Day 1 London to Vientiane, Laos. Fly by scheduled indirect flight.

Day 2 Vientiane. Arrive and transfer to the Souphattra Heritage for an overnight stay. This luxurious hotel is located in the heart of the city and seamlessly blends colonial architecture with modern elegance. The remainder of the day and evening is free to relax.

Day 3 Vientiane. After breakfast check out and enjoy a morning city tour of Vientiane. Explore the vibrant streets and landmarks of Vientiane, marvel at the golden splendour of Pha That Luang, a national treasure of Laotian architecture, and step into the serene grounds of the historic Ho Phra Keo temple. Enjoy lunch in a local restaurant before we transfer to the Mekong Star and embark. Join your fellow travellers this evening for the welcome dinner on board. (B, L, D)

Day 4 Sailing the Mekong River. Spend the day cruising up the Mekong River which creates a natural border between Laos and Thailand, gliding through some of the region's most breathtaking landscapes. Take a moment to soak in the scenery from the open deck or indulge in a relaxing treatment at the onboard spa. This afternoon, continue enjoying the lovely views as the riverbanks reveal their natural wonders. Throughout the day the Cruise Director will share fascinating insights into the region's rich history, geography, and diverse cultures. In the evening we will find a peaceful location to moor overnight. (B, L, D)

Day 5 Mekong River & Salakham. As we continue upstream, the landscape changes and becomes more mountainous as the Mekong River narrows. This stretch offers a perfect chance to witness our captain expertly navigate the wild waters of the mighty Mekong. This morning we reach the bustling market

town of Salakham, renowned for its vibrant wood and spice trade. A stroll through the lively market immerses you in the sights, sounds and aromas of local commerce, offering a glimpse into the region's trading traditions. A little further along, we pass a golden Buddha statue on a hill, where the Mekong curves gently through the landscape. (B, L, D)

Day 6 Ban Don Saingam. Today, our journey brings us to the charming village of Ban Don Saingam, nestled between lush hills along the Mekong River. Upon arrival, we will embark on a walk and local tractor ride toward a nearly forgotten cave. Equipped with torches, we explore its hidden depths, uncovering its secrets before returning to the ship. As the afternoon progresses, we continue our journey, enjoying the stunning views. Later, we make an early stop to prepare for our evening barbecue, set in a picturesque riverside location. (B, L, D)

Day 7 Xayabouri Dam. During breakfast on board take in the breathtaking views of the river and watch local fishermen skilfully casting their nets along the shore. Mid-morning, we approach the monumental Xayabouri Dam, the largest hydroelectric power station in Laos. Crossing the dam, which takes about 45 minutes, offers a fascinating and up-close look at this technical marvel. This afternoon we will visit a remote hill tribe village providing you with a closer look at their unique and rich way of life. As the sun sets, we will gather by the riverbank for a memorable evening celebration, enjoying our last night aboard. (B, L, D)

Day 8 Kuang Si Falls & Luang Prabang. Over breakfast we arrive at Ban Muang Kai from where we will visit the famous Kuang Si Falls, some of the most beautiful waterfalls in Laos. Right next to the waterfalls is the heartwarming "Free the Bears" rescue centre, dedicated to the protection and conservation of the endangered sun and moon bears throughout Southeast Asia. We will learn more about the incredible efforts to rehabilitate these gentle creatures. This afternoon we will arrive in Luang Prabang, the former royal capital of Laos and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Disembark and transfer to the Avani+ Luang Prabang in the heart of the ancient city; this beautiful five-star hotel is set in a collection of historic buildings dating from 1914 and will be our base for the next three nights. Enjoy some free time to settle in before meeting for dinner tonight. (B, L, D)

Day 9 Luang Prabang. After breakfast in the hotel we will start our day with a visit to the National Museum, formerly the Royal Palace. Displayed inside is a collection of personal artefacts of the former Laotian Royal Family. Later we follow the quiet back lanes to the beautiful Heuan Chan Heritage House. Explore the house and its historical items and architectural charms while learning about the connection it has with the Royal Palace. Continue our walk to the country's most historic and enchanting temple, Wat Xieng Thong. With its roof that sweeps low towards the ground, this temple's architecture best represents the classical Luang Prabang style. After lunch the remainder of the day and evening is at leisure to explore at your own pace or relax in the hotel. (B, L)

Day 10 MandaLao Elephant Conservation & Pak Ou Caves. This morning we visit MandaLao Elephant Conservation. On arrival one of the Directors will



Jinli Ancient Street



Royal Palace, Luang Prabang



Kuang Si Falls



Heming Teahouse

provide information on the role of the sanctuary in the conservation and protection of the elephants and the challenges faced. Afterwards we will have a chance to spend some time with the elephants, many of which have been rescued from logging camps and low welfare environments and follow them on a walk through rice paddies and meandering creeks. Here, we will witness the unique bond between them and their mahouts, while the guide explains more about the incredible history of the animals within Laotian culture. After lunch we visit the famous Pak Ou Caves, located directly on the Mekong's rocky shore and opposite the mouth of the Ou River. We will have the opportunity to explore the two spacious limestone grottoes which house approximately 4000 sacred Buddhist statues and images ranging from mere centimetres up to two metres in height. (B, L)

Day 11 Luang Prabang to Kunming, China. Those interested in an early start can witness and partake in the daily morning ritual of 'Tak Bat' or giving alms to the monks before returning to our hotel for breakfast. Check out and transfer to the railway station for our scheduled train to Kunming (approximately 8 hours by train). Spend the day travelling through the Laos countryside before we cross the border into China. On arrival in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province, known as the 'Spring City' thanks to its temperate climate, we transfer to the five-star Sofitel Kunming hotel for our two night stay. (B, L*, D)

Day 12 Kunming. After breakfast in the hotel we visit the famous Stone Forest, a UNESCO World Heritage Site featuring 270-million-year-old limestone karst pinnacles, creating a maze-like "forest" of stone. Here we learn about the formation of karst landforms and Yi ethnic legends. Following lunch, there will be free time to explore independently before we meet for dinner this evening. (B, L, D)

Day 13 Kunming to Lijiang. This morning we transfer to the railway station to join the high-speed train to Lijiang which blends Naxi ethnic culture with breathtaking natural scenery. Lijiang features stone-paved alleys, traditional wooden houses, and clear streams in the old town. On arrival enjoy lunch in a local restaurant before we check in to the Intercontinental Lijiang Ancient Town Resort, a charming hotel set amongst beautiful gardens and ponds and our base for the next three nights. There will be some free time at leisure to explore Dayan Ancient Town before we meet for dinner this evening. (B, L, D)

Day 14 Lijiang. After breakfast, we visit the Black Dragon Pool where we see the mirror-like reflection of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain at Suocui Bridge, then visit Ming and Qing-era ancient buildings like Wufeng Tower and Deyue Tower. We continue on to visit Shuhe Ancient Town, the earliest habitation of the Naxi ancestors. It is also an important and well-preserved post of the Ancient Tea Horse Route, an international trade route in Southwest China that uses the horse as its main vehicle. After lunch, enjoy the rest of the afternoon at leisure. Meet for dinner this evening. (B, L, D)

Day 15 Lijiang. Today we visit Baisha Village, wandering through this ancient Naxi settlement, exploring century-old courtyards and handcraft shops. Later, we continue to the Baisha Mural Paintings to admire the exquisite Ming-dynasty religious fresco art. After lunch we will visit Jade Dragon Snow

Mountain. Ride the cable car up to Spruce Meadow to enjoy the snow-covered alpine scenery and then head to Blue Moon Valley to capture photos of its turquoise-hued waters. Enjoy the live performance 'Impression Lijiang', immersing yourself in the stunning cultural charm of local folklore. Meet for dinner this evening. (B, L, D)

Day 16 Lijiang to Chengdu. This morning we transfer to the airport for a flight to Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province and a vibrant blend of ancient history and modernity. On arrival enjoy lunch and check in to the luxurious Kempinski Hotel Chengdu for our two night stay. This afternoon we visit People's Park and head straight to Heming Teahouse. Order a cup of jasmine tea paired with salted peanuts to experience authentic gaiwan tea culture, and you can also try the unique ear-cleaning service to soak up the laid-back vibe of old Chengdu. We continue on with a visit to Jinli Ancient Street. Wander through the Three Kingdoms-themed lanes adorned with red lanterns, sample local snacks like sandapao (three cannon rice cakes), tangyou guozi (sugared fried dough balls) and danhong gao (egg cakes), and browse the cultural heritage handcraft shops. Meet for dinner this evening. (B, L, D)

Day 17 Chengdu. This morning we visit the Chengdu Giant Panda Breeding Centre, which is beautifully landscaped with lush plants and lakes. Meet with the pandas and their caregivers. The highlight comes at the kindergarten where panda cubs play with each other, climbing up and down trees, rolling and pushing and kicking like kung fu masters. Also, visit the Small Red Panda Centre with 40 red pandas in residence who roam freely. After lunch, we visit the Sanxingdui Museum, the ruins of the Bronze Age in the southwest part of China. It is located in Nanxing Town, about four kilometres away from Guanghan City. The name "Sanxingdui" (Three Star Hills) comes from three loessial hills that abruptly sit on the plain. Enjoy a farewell Sichuan hot pot dinner with a face-changing performance, a 300-year old highly skilled dramatic form of art from Sichuan opera. (B, L, D)

Day 18 Chengdu to London. Check out this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled indirect flight to London. (B)



Stone Forest, Kunming

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

SPECIAL OFFER – SAVE £200 PER PERSON FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY

Cat	Cabin Description	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
E	Deluxe Main Deck Cabin	£8695	£8495
D	Deluxe Upper Deck Cabin	£8995	£8795
C	Executive Main Deck Cabin	£9495	£9295
B	Executive Upper Deck Cabin	£9795	£9595
A	Signature Suite	£10795	£10595
E	Deluxe Main Deck Cabin for sole use	£10995	£10795

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Overnight hotel accommodation in Vientiane • Five nights accommodation aboard the Mekong Star • Three nights hotel accommodation in Luang Prabang • Two nights hotel accommodation in Kunming • Three nights hotel accommodation in Lijiang • Two nights hotel accommodation in Chengdu • Meals as indicated (B - Breakfast, L - Lunch, L* - Light Lunch, D - Dinner) • House wine, beer and soft drinks with all included lunches and dinners • Shore excursions • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers • Port taxes • Airport taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance, Laos visa, China visa.

NB. The itinerary is subject to changing river conditions. Changes to the itinerary may be necessary, depending on the weather, river conditions, or orders by local authorities. In such cases, transportation will be provided by slow boat and an overnight hotel provided if needed. Hotels are subject to change.



Mekong Star



Executive Cabin



Bar



On Deck

MEKONG STAR

For our journey along the Mekong, we are delighted to have chartered the Mekong Star, a newly launched, boutique river vessel with just 12 elegant cabins. This river vessel provides an ideal base from which to traverse Laos' enchanting landscapes of lush jungles, dramatic limestone karsts, and historic riverside towns, and the warm and attentive onboard staff of 17 will provide you with excellent service throughout.

Your Cabin/Suite

There are six Deluxe Cabins measuring 21 square metres and four Executive Cabins measuring 29 square metres. These cabins are located on both the Upper and Main Decks. The two Signature Suites are located on the Upper Deck and measure 39 square metres. All cabins/suites feature a private balcony and floor-to-ceiling windows, minibar, safe, and air-conditioning. The en-suite bathrooms are equipped with rain shower, WC, hairdryer, and toiletries.

Your Dining

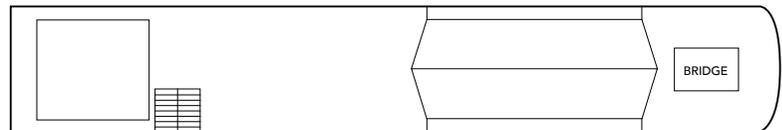
The restaurant is located on the Upper Deck and has indoor and covered outdoor seating. The menu is a combination of international cuisine and local dishes, all freshly prepared. Breakfast and lunch are buffet style whilst dinners are a four-course set menu with a vegetarian option. House wine, beer and soft drinks are included during lunch and dinner.

Your Space

The Mekong Star features beautifully designed public spaces for all guests to enjoy. Relax on the sun deck's loungers while taking in the breathtaking views of Laos's impressive mountain ranges. Treat yourself to soothing spa treatments or browse the cosy library's collection of books. There are two bars which offer a variety of cocktails and spirits as well as beer and a selection of wines.

DECK PLAN

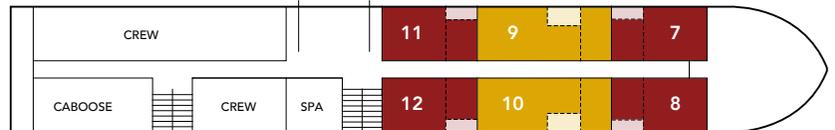
SUN DECK



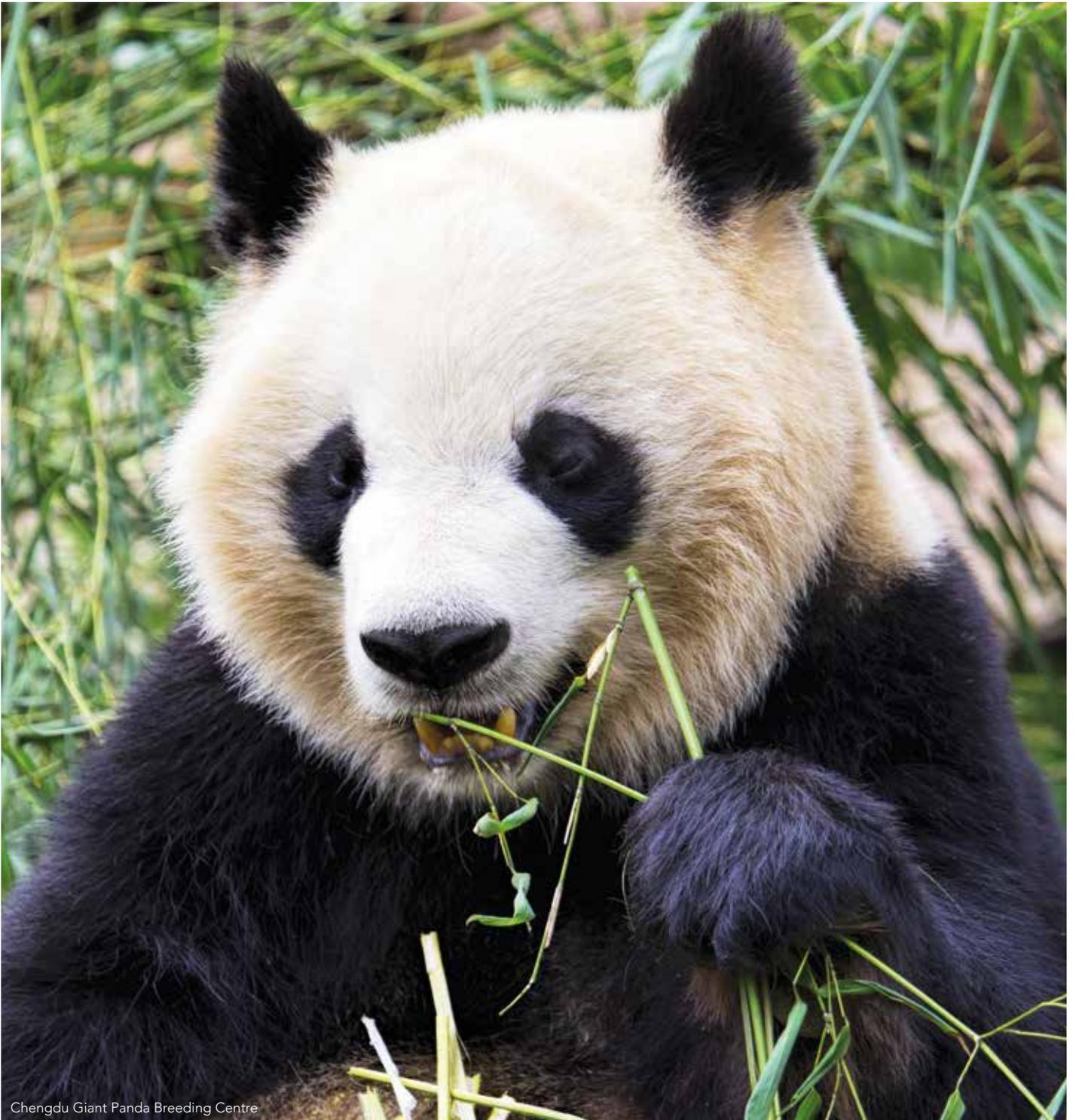
UPPER DECK



MAIN DECK



- Cat A - Signature Suite
- Cat B - Executive Upper Deck Cabin
- Cat C - Executive Main Deck Cabin
- Cat D - Deluxe Upper Deck Cabin
- Cat E - Deluxe Main Deck Cabin



Chengdu Giant Panda Breeding Centre



NOBLE CALEDONIA

2 Chester Close, Belgravia, London, SW1X 7BE
+44 (0)20 7752 0000 | info@noble-caledonia.co.uk
www.noble-caledonia.co.uk



All special offers are subject to availability. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request. Itinerary and accommodation subject to change.
Cover image: Jade Dragon Snow Mountain and Black Dragon Pool, Lijiang.