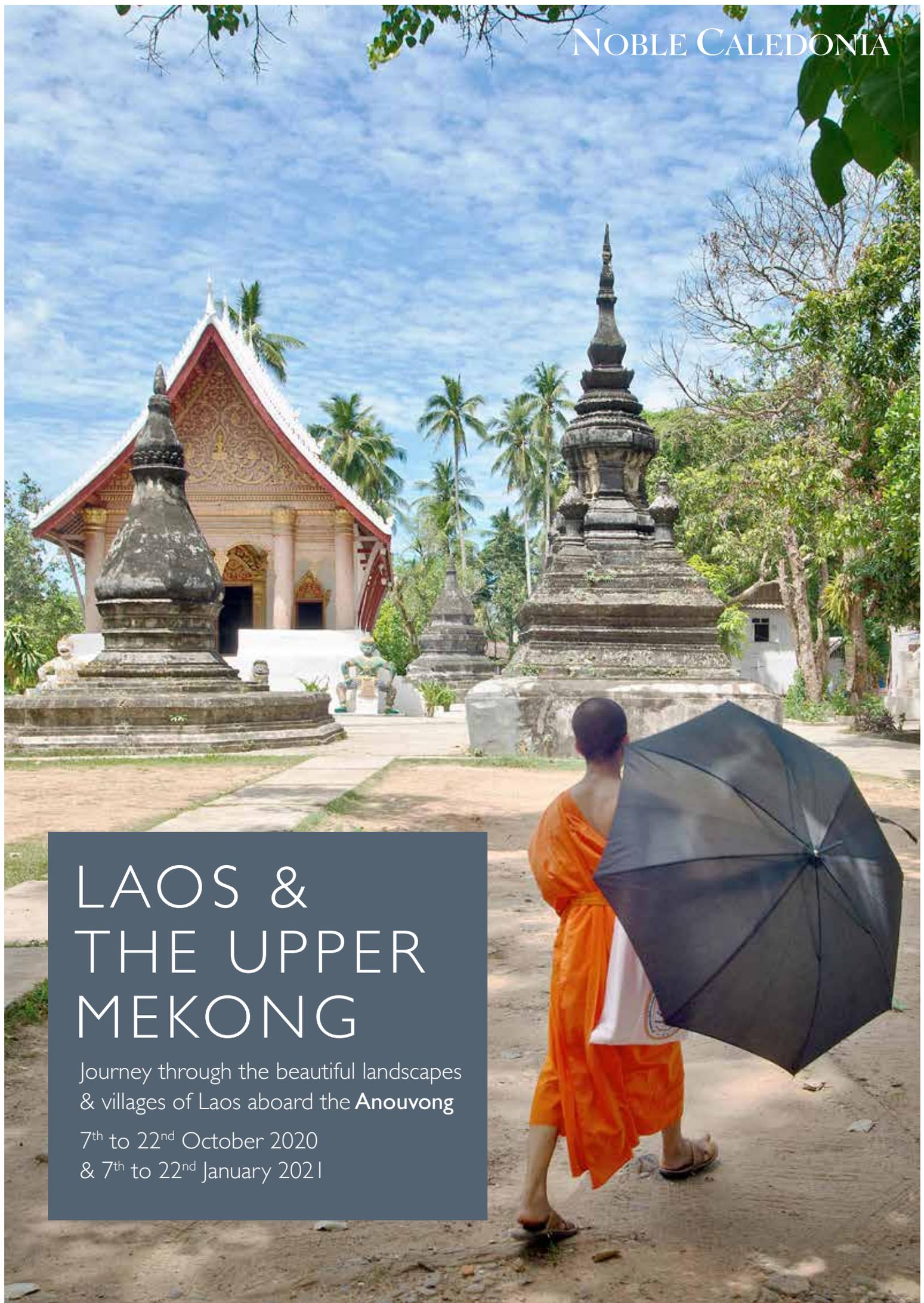


# LAOS & THE UPPER MEKONG

Journey through the beautiful landscapes  
& villages of Laos aboard the **Anouvong**

7<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020  
& 7<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021





Luang Prabang



Big Buddha, Chiang Rai

Join us aboard the newly-built Anouvong and discover the lesser-travelled stretch of the Mekong River in Laos, all the way from Huay Xai to Vientiane as it flows past remote villages, quiet riverbanks with grazing buffalo and through lush forests and gently rolling verdant hills. Each day of this fascinating tour offers incredible experiences as we take in the stunning unspoiled countryside and learn of the diverse local tribes living along the river.

One of the greatest experiences of our journey will be encountering the great charm and natural warmth of the local people for whom the Mekong plays such an important role and we will stop at many of the villages along the way as well as the famous Pak Ou Caves. Here we will witness two of the caves in the limestone cliff that have been filled with a myriad of Buddha images over the centuries before continuing to 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 gold wats with their hundreds of resident monks and its river activity and markets. We have combined our cruise with hotel stays in Chiang Rai in northern Thailand, allowing the opportunity to visit the magnificent temples, and Hanoi, Vietnam's small and alluring capital renowned for its architecture, rich culture and wealth of sights.

There will also be ample time to relax on board our beautiful vessel admiring the passing scenery and, with no more than 20 guests on board, we can offer an intimate experience and close-up perspective of the river including some ports of call which are virtually untouched by tourism. This truly is a journey of a lifetime full of contrasting sites and relaxing interludes spent on board a unique vessel in a very special corner of Asia.



## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Chiang Rai, Thailand.** Fly by scheduled indirect flight to Chiang Rai.

**Day 2 Chiang Rai.** Arrive this morning and transfer to our hotel for a three night stay. Enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure.

**Day 3 Chiang Rai.** Founded in 1262 AD, Thailand's most northern city boasts a fascinating architectural history in a mix of Thai and Burmese styles. After breakfast we begin our morning tour with

a visit to the ancient temple of Wat Phra Kae, original home of the Emerald Buddha which is now housed in Bangkok. A replica was made and placed in the same spot where it was found. We continue to Wat Phra That Doi Chom Thong with its large gold stupa. Our final stop brings us to Wat Rong Khun, which is different from any other temple in Thailand. In contrast to the ancient temples, this temple was built in 1997 and was designed using white glass. While travelling through the city, observe the

influence of the city's Chinese ethnic minorities. Return to the hotel for an afternoon at leisure and this evening join your fellow travellers for dinner at the hotel. (B, D)

**Day 4 Chiang Rai & Doi Tung.** After breakfast we depart on a morning tour to Doi Tung (The Flag Mountain) where new villages have been constructed under the auspices of the Princess Mother's Foundation. Our tour includes a visit to the Doi Tung Royal Villa

and the beautiful Mae Fah Luang Park. The Mae Fah Luang Botanical Garden features hundreds of different tropical flowers and covers ten acres of hillside that was originally home to the Akha village, Pa Kluay. This community was once a major production and transportation hub of opium within the infamous Golden Triangle. Her Royal Highness Princess Srinagarindra, the late Princess Mother (the late King's mother) was responsible for setting up this garden and to this day it provides



Mae Fah Luang Botanical Garden



Mekong River, Fisherman



Wat Rong Khun, Chiang Rai



Royal Palace, Luang Prabang

ethical working opportunities for the local villagers who were trained to grow and tend to the organic plants and flowers instead of harvesting opium. After lunch in a local restaurant we return to the hotel with the remainder of the day at leisure. (B, L)

**Day 5 Chiang Rai, Chiang Khong & Huay Xai, Laos.** After breakfast transfer to the Anouvong in Huay Xai (approximately 2.5 hours drive) and embark. Settle in to your cabin as we start our downstream journey. Our first stop during our voyage is Huay Palang village, home of the Khmu minority. The locals' lifestyle here depends fully on the Mekong as a means of transportation and a primary food source. The village consists of approximately 85 families. We learn about the local art of weaving Bamboo mats and watch the production process of Lao whisky making. Local households produce their own alcohol by distilling rice to make the famous Lao whisky. As the sun sets over the Mekong River, we will experience a Baci Ceremony, held by the village elders in our honour and a traditional Laotian welcome. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner this evening. (B, L, D)

**Please note:** There will be a brief stop (approximately 1 hour) at the Chiang Khong Border for immigration purposes before crossing the border to Laos.

**Day 6 Huay Palang, Pakbeng & Kop Aek.** We cruise along the Mekong this morning as our local expert hosts a lecture about Asian elephants, particularly the Laotian species, their cultural importance in the past and the current threats

which have brought them to the brink of extinction. After lunch we arrive in the small town of Pakbeng and take a walk through the local market and visit a beautiful hilltop temple with amazing views of the gently flowing Mekong below. We will also have the chance to visit a professionally managed elephant sanctuary; the elephants here used to work as logging elephants but can now live in peace and safety. Back on board our journey continues towards our next destination. At a secluded sandbank, the local ethnic Lao, Khmu and Hmong residents welcome us to the tiny village of Kop Aek where we will learn of their centuries-old traditions and practices. Enjoy a classical dance performance by the local people and after the show a barbecue dinner will be served on the Terrace Deck. (B, L, D)

**Day 7 Kop Aek & Pak Ou Caves.** After breakfast our morning lecture provides us with interesting insights and facts about the diverse tribes living along the upper Mekong. Afterwards, you may wish to join an authentic Laotian cooking class to learn how to prepare some of the local foods. The rest of the morning is at leisure as we sail through lush vegetation and gently rolling verdant hills. In the afternoon we arrive at another little village named Muang Keo where we observe local weavers honouring their timeworn traditional crafts. From Muang Keo we take a short trek to the famous Pak Ou Caves, located directly on the Mekong's rocky shore and opposite the mouth of the Ou River. There are two spacious limestone grottoes which house approximately 4,000 sacred Buddhist statues

and images ranging from mere centimetres up to two metres in height. Return to the ship for lunch and this afternoon there is an opportunity to kayak along the peaceful flowing river. This evening we meet Mr Francis Engelmann, a writer and retired consultant to UNESCO on heritage preservation projects since 1994 who has lived in Laos for over 20 years. During his presentation he will share some of his expertise on the country's rich cultural heritage, the turbulent history and the day-to-day life of Lao people. Continue sailing towards Luang Prabang, arriving in the early evening. Dinner is served on board upon our arrival. After dinner explore this picturesque city, which is in walking distance from the pier. (B, L, D)

**Day 8 Luang Prabang.** After breakfast join a walking tour to discover ancient Luang Prabang, one of Southeast Asia's most unique cities and a World Heritage Site. We set out on foot for an "off the beaten track" guided walking tour to explore the old town with its peninsula where the Mekong and Nam Khan rivers meet. See Luang Prabang's distinct architecture and hear interesting stories about the houses and the places we pass. We stroll along the main road and stop at a wonderful antique place lined with mango trees where one of the houses, the Lamache, was once home to noble families and later the appointed ice cream supplier to the royal family. There is no better place to have a "Lao Tea Break" with Lao coffee or herbal tea, traditional snacks or artisan ice cream. We return to the vessel for lunch before a visit to the Royal Palace which is now the National Museum. The museum displays interesting local

art and other exhibits which used to belong to the Lao royal family. After our visit to the museum, enjoy some free time to explore the city centre further before returning to the ship. In the early evening there will be a classical local dance performance. We depart from the ship for dinner ashore to enjoy delicious food in a wonderful Lao-styled ambiance. After dinner explore the night market of Luang Prabang or return to the ship and relax on board. (B, L, D)

**Day 9 Luang Prabang & Khok Akha.** The morning alms round, referred to as "Tak Bat" in Lao, is a living Buddhist tradition for the people of Luang Prabang and dates back generations. Today, those wishing to rise early can wake up before dawn to witness a procession of hundreds of saffron-robed monks in the early morning light, a truly spiritual experience. After the almsgiving, walk along the morning market and watch as the town comes to life before returning to the ship in time for breakfast. Depart Luang Prabang and sail further downstream to Ban Muang Kai village to set out for today's sightseeing. First, we visit the innovative Laos Buffalo Dairy Farm. Dairy is a non-existent industry in Laos and most locals have never seen a buffalo being milked. Seizing on an under-utilised opportunity, the owners of the dairy farm rent pregnant female buffalo from villagers, where they milk, care, feed and vaccinate both the mother and her calf before returning them to their owners. The milk is then used for a plethora of dairy products including an assortment of cheeses, ice cream, and yoghurt. Back aboard the vessel, our cruise continues towards



Hanoi



Novice monks receiving alms



Pak Ou caves

the nation's famous hydroelectric power plant and there will be a lecture about the role of energy in Laos' economy. Eventually, we arrive at the Xayaburi Hydroelectric Dam and we pass through two ship locks, lowering the vessel by approximately 30 metres. Here we have the chance to discover this enormous structure during a guided tour. Tonight, we moor at a sandbank near the Khok Akha village on the southern side of the dam. **(B, L, D)**

#### Day 10 Khok Akha & Pak Lay.

After breakfast, there is a choice of morning tours. Set out in a small long-tail boat for an exploratory ride upstream through the lush jungle along the remote, beautiful Nam Fuang River. We stop ashore along the way to learn more about the jungle life of the local tribes residing in this area. Alternatively, join a walking tour through Khok Akha village with its very local charm. The village's population of 350 is mainly comprised of an ethnic tribe known as the "Loum", whose main income is from planting rice, fishing and selling wood. The village sits elevated (uphill) on a riverside plateau with nice views. Return to the ship and sail to Don Saynhan village where we take a short local "Tuk Tuk" ride to visit the so-called Khao Cave. The cave, located in a natural and pristine environment, has been home to a large bat population for many generations and supplies the village with very potent fertiliser. Venture inside and discover the remarkable stalagmites and stalactites. Return to the ship and continue cruising until we reach Pak Lay village, where we moor overnight. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 11 Pak Lay.** After breakfast join a kayaking excursion. In this area the Mekong is very calm and shallow with many small sandy islands along its shoreline, making it ideal to explore on your own. Later, when we set sail we will travel along the Thai-Lao border, something you are reminded of by the large Buddha greeting us from the opposite shore. After lunch we stop at Phalat village, a small hamlet which looks over the Mekong at the Laos-Thai border. Using the local means of transportation, "Tuk Tuk", we drive to a nearby Chopstick Factory. After Phalat, we make our way to one of the deserted sandbanks where we moor and enjoy a farewell dinner. **(B, L, D)**

#### Day 12 Vientiane & Hanoi, Vietnam.

After breakfast we cruise towards Vientiane. As we sail past beautiful landscapes and remote villages, our local expert presents a lecture on the history of Lao royalty with a focus on King Anouvong – our vessel's namesake. Disembark and transfer to the airport for our flight to Hanoi. Upon arrival, transfer to our hotel and check in for a three night stay. Enjoy dinner this evening at a local restaurant. **(B, D)**

#### Day 13 Hanoi & Duong Lam.

After breakfast depart Hanoi for a visit to Duong Lam (approximately 1.5 hours drive), a typical agricultural village in the northern Red River Delta. Duong Lam has the honour of being the birthplace of two Vietnamese kings and is the first village in Vietnam to be recognised by UNESCO for its Cultural Heritage Conservation. Home to approximately 300 houses

built nearly 400 years ago, Duong Lam's narrow alleyways showcase rural life and ancient Vietnamese architecture. The cultural and historical vestiges of Duong Lam include the Mong Phu Communal House and the Old Catholic Church. Return to the hotel with the remainder of the day at leisure. **(B)**

#### Day 14 Hanoi.

After breakfast enjoy a city tour of Hanoi, often referred to as the 'Paris of the East' with its yellow ochre colonial buildings, tree-lined boulevards and scenic lakes. During our tour we visit the historic Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, an imposing monument of marble and granite built to house the preserved body of beloved revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh. Later we continue to the One Pillar Pagoda, a Buddhist temple built in 1049 of wood in the shape of a lotus blossom and set on a single stone pillar. Continue to the Temple of Literature, Vietnam's first national university built in the late 11th century. The picturesque temple is an example

of well-preserved traditional Vietnamese architecture and is featured on the back of the 100,000 Vietnamese dong banknote. Enjoy lunch independently before we set out for our afternoon tour which starts with a visit to the Museum of Ethnology which houses an extensive collection of traditional costumes and artefacts from Vietnam's 54 ethnic minority groups. We end our day with a walking tour of Hanoi, passing through the famed Old Quarter known for its '36 streets of 36 wares' named after the original 36 artisan guilds that date as far back as the 13th century. Tonight, join your fellow travellers for a farewell dinner at the hotel. **(B, D)**

**Day 15 Hanoi to London.** Enjoy breakfast at the hotel. Depending on flight schedules we will secure day rooms if necessary for a late check out before transferring to the airport for the return scheduled indirect flight to London. **(B)**

**Day 16 London.** Arrive today.

## PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Cabin Description	2020	2021
Deluxe Stateroom	£6795	£7295
Deluxe Executive Stateroom	£7295	£7795
Signature Suite	£8095	£8595
Deluxe Stateroom for sole use	£8795	£9295

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Three nights accommodation in Chiang Rai • Seven nights aboard the Anouvong on a full board basis • House wine, local beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner on board • Three nights accommodation in Hanoi • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Shore excursions with local English speaking guides • Gratuities • Transfers • Port taxes.  
**Not Included:** Travel insurance, visa.



# THE ANOUVONG

For our scenic cruises along the Upper Mekong River we are delighted to have chartered the Anouvong from our associates at Heritage Line which is due to be launched in September 2020. This luxurious vessel is named after the last ruler of the Kingdom of Vientiane and accommodates just 20 passengers across eight spacious staterooms and two luxurious suites. The atmosphere on board is intimate and the public areas include a spa, restaurant, and a lounge with an expansive terrace deck where there is ample opportunity to watch the world gently pass by as you relax on board your floating hotel.

## Your Cabin/Suite

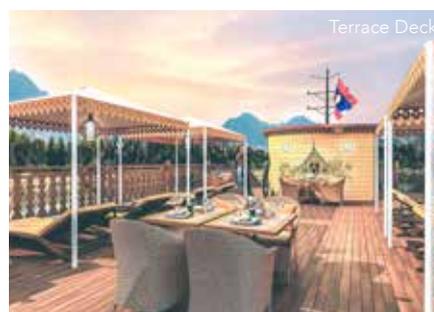
The eight staterooms and two suites are attractively furnished with a décor that combines the elegance of French-colonial style with gentle tones, Laotian patterns and handpicked local artwork. All feature a panoramic sliding door with either a private balcony area or a French balcony overlooking the shores of the Mekong River. The facilities include individual climate control, generous storage, bathrobe, luxurious bathroom amenities, hairdryer, mini-bar, tea and coffee making facilities and movie and music system.

The staterooms offer a generous 20 square metres of space and have a panoramic sliding door with a French balcony allowing for unobstructed, breathtaking views of the passing riverscape. The en-suite bathroom features a walk-in shower and an art-deco vanity unit. The elegant furniture includes two lovely wooden chairs with a small table from which to enjoy a cup of tea whilst taking in the passing scenery. The four Deluxe Staterooms are located on the

Main Deck whereas the four Deluxe Executive Staterooms are located on the Terrace Deck and so benefit from superior views.

The two luxurious Signature Suites are located at the front of the Main Deck and offer 30 square metres of space as well as a three square metre private balcony at the front of the vessel with chairs and a coffee table. Each suite is uniquely designed and named after the two main

tributaries of the Mekong River. A large floor-to-ceiling window allows the sun to bathe the living areas in natural daylight and the luxurious French-colonial beds face the window for spectacular views. Both Signature Suites are flooded with natural light and decorated with hand-carved traditional Laotian patterns and designs. The suites brightly lit ceramic mosaic tiled bathrooms are complete with a double basin vanity unit, a large walk-in shower and a Jacuzzi.



## Your Space

The Anouvong is both elegantly furnished and spacious throughout the public areas. The indoor cafe-bar and lounge on the Terrace Deck with its floor-to-ceiling windows, sofas and cushioned rattan chairs is a relaxing air-conditioned environment from which to watch the passing scenery, read a book or enjoy a drink from the bar. The lounge is also used for onboard activities such as lectures, demonstrations and film screenings. The spacious Terrace Deck features comfortable sun



Deluxe Executive Stateroom



Dining Hall



Cafe-Bar & Lounge



Signature Suite

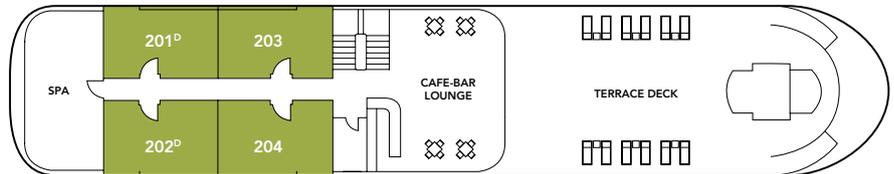
loungers as well as shaded seating areas and makes for the ideal place to relax and marvel at the breathtaking views. The Bodhi Spa is located on the Terrace Deck and occupies the ship's entire stern. Designed with a Laotian spiritual theme and grand tree of life mural, the spa offers a selection of treatments and is an oasis where you can relax, rejuvenate and truly pamper yourself.

#### Your Dining

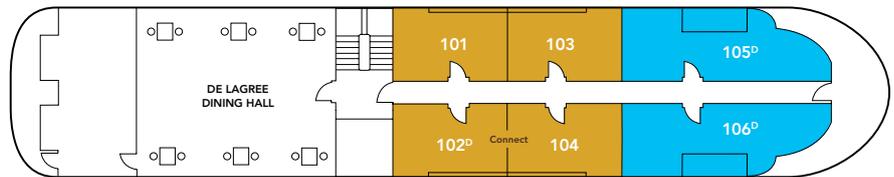
The De Lagree Dining Hall evokes the beauty of the temples of Luang Prabang and the dark brown colonial furniture together with the gold tones creates a timeless elegance, while the large full-sized windows on both sides of the vessel flood the dining hall with sunlight. The Chef and his culinary team will serve flavourful dishes from Laos and Southeast Asia as well as international cuisine, all using the freshest of ingredients. Both à la carte dining and buffets are served in the Dining Hall and guests can also enjoy open-air barbecues, al-fresco breakfasts, sandbank aperitifs and in-suite afternoon teas.

## DECK PLAN

### TERRACE DECK



### MAIN DECK



Please note: D = staterooms/suites with a fixed double bed

■ DELUXE STATEROOM ■ DELUXE EXECUTIVE STATEROOM ■ SIGNATURE SUITE

Please note that the images shown are artist illustrations and photos will be available once the ship has been launched. Whilst the decor may differ slightly, the overall look and design of the vessel will be very similar to the images shown.



# NOBLE CALEDONIA

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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.  
 Cover image: Buddhist Monk, Luang Prabang