

ENGLISH CLUB LAOS VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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English Club Laos

Welcome to English Club Laos. This booklet is designed to give you some more information about us and the work that we do.

English Club Laos is a community focused school housed in Wat Siphoutthabat Temple. Founded in 2013, ECL provides structured English language classes to the youth of Laos. Our qualified teachers and inspired international volunteers deliver structured classroom learning combined with drop in conversation sessions to provide a comprehensive learning experience.

With the training and support we provide, we do our best to ensure that young Laotians are better equipped to make the most of opportunities, whether it is to get a better job in the local tourist industry or to pursue further studies within Laos or neighboring countries.

Our approach combines structured classroom education, delivered by qualified Lao teachers along with exposure to English-speaking volunteers who assist with pronunciation and practicing conversations.

With your help, we believe in making dreams and aspirations possible for our students!

Our Team

Somsouk Chittakeo Founder and Director

After graduating from Luang Prabang Teacher Training College in 2005 Somsouk then went on to work at the local library for 14 years and ‘Travel to Teach’ for a further 5 years. This combined with more than 10 years’ experience working in the travel industry, gives him valuable knowledge interacting with people from all over the globe.

During his youth, he was able to get support from sponsors to go to school. Which has inspired him to dedicate himself to establishing this organization to support local students who have very little chance at getting a quality education.

Classes

ECL operates Monday through Friday with more than 20 classes running each day of the week. We currently have more than 350 students for who we have eight classrooms available as well as additional facilities to support and encourage our ever growing student population.

Classes are conducted all day, beginning at 8:30am and our last class commencing at 6pm in order to provide an appropriate class time for everyone’s schedule. These classes are divided by skill levels in the hope of having relevant and beneficial material for each individual student’s capabilities. In addition to structured classes, we also run conversation sessions led by volunteers during the day.

Each class is taught by a trained Lao teacher who is responsible for planning and delivering the English curriculum to our students. Our English-speaking volunteers work hand-in-hand with our Lao teachers to ensure our students receive the maximum benefits from this powerful combination.

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:30 - 10:00	CLASS				
10:00 - 11:00	CONVERSATION SESSION				

12:00 - 1:00	CLASS
1:30 - 3:00	CLASS
4:30 - 6:00	CLASS
5:00 - 6:00	CONVERSATION SESSION
6:00 - 7:30	CLASS

Volunteering

Volunteers directly contribute to improving the English skills of our students. While our Lao teachers are very talented and well prepared, volunteers bring the pronunciation skills and world experiences which are invaluable to both, our teachers and students.

There are two avenues of volunteering through English club Laos.

Walk in volunteering is a flexible approach which allows participants to sign up to scheduled classes that suit them. This option is designed for travelers who may only be in Laos for a short period of time. Volunteers will need to schedule a short meet and greet session with English Club Laos prior to being assigned to any classes.

Volunteers wishing to stay in Laos for an extended period of time can apply to ECL directly or through one of our partner programs. These volunteers receive assistance with accommodation in private room with air-condition, food and mentoring and will work with us five days a week teaching four to five classroom sessions. Programs and cost may vary depending on your elected arrangement.

Classroom Preparation

When you join ECL you will be working with students who are all at different levels, none are fluent and a lot are still new to English. We understand that many of our volunteers are new to the teaching experience as well so we have a few helpful tips to help you prepare for the classroom.

You will begin class by introducing yourself with the basics such as name, age and the country you're visiting from. Thinking of ways to make your introductions interesting but also easy to understand is a great first step to building a relationship with your students.

During class time be prepared to respond to the student's questions with questions for them. Talk slow, enunciate, and be kind and encouraging. You're in class to provide a broad range of English pronunciation for our students, so be aware of any bad habits you may have with your own English but maintain authentic pronunciation as much as you can.

Lastly, a simple learning tool for everyone and a great tool to have up your sleeve is a couple of classroom games. Games that focus on spelling, understanding and

remembering work best such as hangman and charades as well as using some games that can create excitement in the classroom through teamwork and competition. If you're unsure there are a lot of resources online for teaching English as a second language and your fellow volunteers have invaluable amounts of knowledge.

Rules and requirements

- All Participants involved in English Club Laos will be required to sign the English Club Laos 'Child Protection Policy'.
- We require all volunteers to abide to our school dress code. Our school is housed on temple grounds, therefore all volunteers are required to dress respectfully and follow our simple dress guidelines, as follows:
Men: Long pants & an appropriate shirt (collared shirts preferred)
Women: An appropriate T-shirt or blouse & a traditional Laos skirt.
- Volunteers must always maintain appropriate teacher/student relationships
- Volunteers should avoid expressing opinions about religion, politics, sexual behavior, or forms of government to students.
- Volunteers are not permitted to smoke or drink alcohol on school grounds.
- Volunteers may not use illegal drugs.

Volunteers should be focused on personal safety throughout their stay in Laos. This includes:

- Wearing a helmet on motorbikes and bicycles
- Being cautious of holes, uneven sidewalks and roads when walking
- Safeguarding your valuables
- Being aware of Lao laws
- Being aware of local cultural and social expectations and following such expectations at all times

- Never do anything that could endanger yourself and students

As in any new environment, be aware of your surroundings and understand them. Always use common sense as ask the staff if you have any questions regarding personal safety.

Throughout your time as a volunteer at our school it is your responsibility to always be focused on our students, the best way to keep this focus is through being **caring, kind, supportive, flexible and on time.**

Helpful Information about Laos

Cultural Information

It is important that all volunteers have a sound understanding of Lao culture and relevant traditional practices before beginning the course of their volunteering through English Club Laos. This will ensure a happy and respectful relationship is maintained between volunteers, teachers and students alike.

Teachers are regarded highly and are greatly respected in Laos. It is important that volunteers maintain the formalities of student-teacher relationships. On introduction to your class, please refer to yourself as “Teacher” (*For example, if your name is Joe – your name would be “Teacher Joe”*).

Lao people do not normally shake hands when they greet one another, but instead of this they make the “wai”. They press their palms together in a prayer like gesture with their thumbs being at the level of their mouth. Generally, the younger person gestures a “wai” to an elder, who then returns it.

Pointing is considered rude in Lao culture. We ask our volunteers to please avoid pointing at students in class.

Financial Information

The official currency in Laos is the kip. The approximate exchange rate is 8000 kip for 1 U.S. dollar and 10,000 kip for 1 Euro. These rates tend to fluctuate as the currency is not tied to the world currency markets.

Kip is available in notes of 500, 1000, 2000, 5000, 10000, 20000, 50000, 100000. There are no coins in Laos.

Credit cards are not widely accepted but there are ATMs to withdraw cash in most main cities. Ask your coordinator for ATM locations.

Most ATMs will only allow you to withdraw a maximum of 1,500,000 kip in kip notes and you will be charged 20,000 to 40,000 kip as a service fee.

Please note: You can only buy the kip in the country and you can't sell it outside the country.

Climate

May to October is the rainy season. It does not rain constantly but an umbrella is always useful (bought cheaply from the markets). It rains a lot more during the month of June - September than in any other month.

October to May is the dry season. Bring a hat and sunscreen.

In the mornings and evenings of December, January, February the temperature drops as low as 10 degrees C, so you will need something warm to wear.

What to eat

Laos is a food lover's haven. Lao people love to eat and there is a wide range of fruits and vegetables available and all kinds of barbequed meat, especially pork, chicken, and fish. Fresh meat and produce is readily available in the local morning market.

You can also obtain a variety of pre-made dishes that you buy off the street.

If you want to eat in a restaurant, there is the common noodle soup loved by the Lao people for as little as 10,000 kip in many different restaurants. There are also many very high quality "tourist" restaurants with cuisine ranging from authentic Lao to exclusive French.

There is great food for just about everybody's tastes and price range.

Bottled water is sold everywhere and is 1000-10000 kip depending on the quality and size.

Health

Health is, of course, an important consideration when travelling to another country. Be certain you have checked and are satisfied that you have appropriate health insurance for your individual needs. Your health is a very personal issue, and

while we can provide support and recommendations, the choices are, of course, yours. Be certain to immediately bring any health issues to the attention of Somsouk.

There is a main hospital in Luang Prabang about 5 kilometers out of town. The nearest one is collaboration with the Chinese and is fairly new. It is cheap by western standards and will cover many of the problems you may encounter here. If you need more specialized treatment, then Thailand has some very good hospitals about an hour's flight away.

There are a number of pharmacies in the local area which can provide some medical supplies and drugs although you should prepare and anticipate any medical needs prior to arrival.

Visa

You can easily get Laos visa on arrival at most border crossings and all Lao International airports. You need between US\$ 20 and US\$ 42 cash, one passport-size photo, the name of a hotel or guesthouse and phone number. Those without a photo will have to pay an additional fee of about US\$ 2. The visa fee varies depending on the passport of origin, with Canadians having to fork out the most (US\$ 42) and most other nationalities paying between US\$ 30 and US\$ 35. It is recommended to pay in US\$. No other foreign currencies are accepted at Airports. Overland you can use Thai Baht but the Visa fee becomes about 1,500 Thb which is approx. \$48.. Don't forget to take enough cash (US dollars) for the visa fee. Normal entry tourist visa is valid for 30 days. General visa fee upon arrival is US\$ 25-45 depending on nationality. Prepare one Passport size photos for visa application form and another for a back up. Extension of stay is possible for another 30 days, and can be done 2 times, for a maximum stay of 90 days, but you should apply for extension before expiry at the Immigration Office. If you stay longer than 90 days in total, you must exit the country through one of the borders or airports, and return again to start a new visa (you can even return in the same day). Your Passport must be valid for at least 6 months with at least 1 empty page for visa stamp. Refusal of entry to travelers who had less than 6 months validity or no empty page in Passport for visa stamp had happened before, so this should not be a surprise.

Some tourists may prefer to have visa stamp before the arrival, so visa is all set and no worry upon arrival. This could help to save time from long queue, especially during holidays when some group tours arrive Laos without visas. Even if you already have a visa in your passport before you arrive, you still need to fill

out the arrival application form to the Immigration office, but it is a very short procedure. To get Lao visa before arrival, contact the nearest Embassy/Consulate from your country. Visa stamp fee at Embassy/Consulate ranges from US\$ 8-40 depending upon the country.

Once again, Laos is allowing visitors to apply for a visa online prior to arriving in the country. The official website for the e-visa application process is <https://laoevisa.gov.la>

Visa Extensions

You can extend your tourist visa for a minimum of 3 days to a maximum of 30 days. The current cost is 20,000 Kip per day plus a 3 USD processing fee. You drop your passport at the local Immigration Office in the morning and pick it up the next day in the afternoon. Be aware of your visa expiration date and do not leave this to the last day.

Your tourist visa can be extended for 30 days, two times, to the maximum stay of 90 days without leaving the country

Please note that Laos does not issue 2 month tourist visas or multi-entry tourist visas.

Somsouk will help you by explaining the process and providing local transportation to accomplish this.

Requirements for tourist visa extension:

Your passport

One passport type photo

Service fee of 3 USD/3,000 kip

Visa extension fee: 2.5 USD/20,000 kip per day

Overstaying a visa is not a major crime, but it is expensive. It costs 10 USD for each day overstayed, paid at the immigration checkpoint on departure or upon visa extension.

Note: All information on visas is current as this is written. Be sure to verify fees and time frames prior to your visit to Laos.

All embassies are located in Vientiane. There is Vietnamese Consulate and a Chinese Consulate in Luang Prabang.

Important phone numbers

Tourism police: (071)252903

Immigration office: (071)212453

Police: (071)212158

Laos airlines: (071)2121723

Thai airways: (071)253984

Airport: (071)252337

Northern bus station: (071)252729

Southern bus station: (071)252066