

TEXTILE SOCIETY *of* AMERICA



Textiles of Laos & Cambodia: Traditions and Transitions

May 24-June 5, 2014

Tour leader:
Dr. Mary Littrell



In this small-group tour, limited to 10-14 participants, we will spend 10 days exploring the rich textile traditions of Laos and Cambodia in cultural context—past and present.

In Luang Prabang, Laos, a UNESCO World Heritage city, we visit workshops, museums, and retail venues where we examine Laos' exquisite weaving of the past and discover creative transitions for contemporary markets. In a hands-on workshop, participants learn from Lao's finest weavers and dyers. Discussions with Buddhist monks, visits to Luang Prabang's dazzling temples, and a two-day, river trip to artisan villages underscore the rich cultural heritage and vibrant textile life of Laos.

In Cambodia, the magnificent ruins of the Angkor Wat temple complex, a UNESCO World Heritage site, provide a backdrop to our exploration. Each day in Siem Reap begins with an early-morning visit to specially selected sites in Angkor Wat's vast complex. In the afternoons, we visit with textile experts and entrepreneurs who are working to revive historic weaving and dyeing techniques, and to market the textiles in innovative fashion.

Itinerary

Saturday, May 24: Departure from home city

Depart by individually arranged flights to Bangkok, Thailand

Sunday, May 25: Arrival in Bangkok, Thailand

Arrive in Bangkok (usually late evening) at the Suvarnabhumi airport. After clearing Immigration and Customs, transfer by hotel shuttle to the hotel, about 10 minutes from the airport.

Hotel: [Best Western Amaranth Hotel Suvarnabhumi](#),

TEXTILE SOCIETY *of* AMERICA

Monday, May 26: Luang Prabang, Laos



As a group, we take a morning international flight from Bangkok to Luang Prabang. Airfare is included in the trip price. You will purchase a visa upon arrival at the Luang Prabang airport. We meet our local host and guide, Khamsouk Phonesavanh from Meuang Lao Tours, who will be with us throughout our

time in Laos. After check-in at our hotel, we spend the afternoon at the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Center (TAEC) where we are hosted by co-directors, Tara Gujadhur and Thongkhoun Southvilay. After a “tasting menu” in the TAEC café of foods from Lao ethnic groups, Tara and Khoun escort the group on a “director’s tour” of the exhibitions, show us behind-the-scene collections, and discuss textile conservation in Laos. We walk back to the hotel through the night market (located near our hotel) as the vendors are setting up for the evening. The evening is free to begin enjoying the wonderful array of excellent small restaurants in Luang Prabang. Suggestions will be provided.

Hotel: Villa Meuang Lao, a small family-run hotel in a great location for walking everywhere in historic Luang Prabang. [See review on Trip Advisor.](#)

Meals: B, L

Tuesday, May 27: Luang Prabang



Early risers can observe hundreds of saffron-robed monks receiving alms and may walk through the early morning vegetable market near our hotel. After breakfast we begin a leisurely walking tour of Luang Prabang, with stops in neighborhoods and at iconic monasteries as our local guide shares insights into daily life and Buddhism from his seven years as a Buddhist monk. Lunch at Tamarind restaurant, along the Nam Khan River, includes delicious home style Lao cuisine.

In the afternoon, we visit the Mulberries shop of the Lao Sericulture Company, a certified fair trade enterprise focused on environmentally friendly Lao silk production. Our host Sompason Loc Chanthavong is the daughter of the founder and oversees sales and marketing of the organization’s beautifully designed silk clothing, accessories, and home furnishings. Loc will demonstrate silk spinning, and talk with us about the company’s founding, evolution, and product design process. Sampling of mulberry tea accompanies our discussion. In the early evening, we watch the sunset at a

TEXTILE SOCIETY *of* AMERICA

Buddhist temple on the Mekong River. Dinner on your own.

Hotel: Villa Meuang Lao

Meals: B, L

Wednesday, May 28



Today, we spend the entire day at Ock Pop Tok's Living Craft Center in a peaceful riverside setting just outside Luang Prabang. Ock Pop Tok (East meets West) was founded 13 years ago by Lao weaver Veomanee Duangdala and English photographer Joanna Smith, a current TSA member. OPT's mission is to empower women through weaving and to promote Lao textiles across the globe. Veo and Jo will offer an overview of their weaving, natural dye, and batik projects, as well as the new Passa Paa design studio. We also view OPT's extensive antique textile collection in their on-site gallery. After a "weaver's lunch" in the Ock Pop Tok café, each participant will take a dye or weaving workshop from a

master artisan. Workshops will be selected in advance of the trip from a description provided by the trip leader. Dinner on your own. This would be a good night to try a massage at one of Luang Prabang's many massage studios (recommendations provided).

Hotel: Villa Meuang Lao

Meals: B, L

Other: Visit the [Ock Pop Tok website](#) for a comprehensive overview of the organization, their mission, and activities.

Optional for Tuesday or Wednesday evening: Enjoy a fun evening cooking class at [Tamarind Cooking School](#) in a beautiful countryside setting. You will prepare an array of Lao foods for your dinner, including chicken stuffed lemongrass and steamed fish in bamboo leaves. No special cooking skills are needed. An extra charge will apply.

Thursday, May 29: Luang Prabang



This morning we cross the Nam Khan river to Xangkhong Village to visit Veo's mother's Textile Natural Dye workshop and have the exceptional opportunity to view the textile collection from this remarkable family of master weavers. We also visit one of the handmade paper workshops in this village of paper artisans. After lunch at a restaurant along the Mekong River, there will be ample free time to visit some of Luang Prabang's unique artisan retail stores, including a tribal jewelry shop in Dara market, Sandra Yuck's Caruso Lao with wood products, the Salon de Jade, and others. In the late afternoon, Celine Dream of Kopnoi hosts the group in her shop that features artisan products in a variety of media. Afterwards we walk around

TEXTILE SOCIETY *of* AMERICA

the corner to the Hive Bar to watch their upbeat and fun Ethnik Fashion Show that features young hip models wearing traditional clothing from 14 of the nearly 50 ethnic groups currently living in Laos. Dinner on your own.

Hotel: Villa Meuang Lao

Meals: B, L

Friday, May 30: Nong Khiaw



Today we leave Luang Prabang for a two-day visit to villages outside the city. First, we drive 150 km north to Ban Nay Yang, a Tai Lue village in an area of cotton farmers and weavers. Jo Smith of Ock Pop Tok has arranged for a hands-on indigo workshop and visits with local artisans. We will also tour the village temple with its beautiful textiles and enjoy a picnic lunch along the way. We spend the night in Nong Khiaw at Phasang Resort in a beautiful setting on the banks of the Nam Ou River. As Jo will be traveling with us for these two days, we have the unique opportunity for conversations with her about Lao textile traditions, contemporary design, transitions, and challenges for marketing textiles to tourists and in the international market. Dinner

on your own.

Hotel: Phasang Resort

Meals: B, L

Saturday, May 31: Luang Prabang



We return to Luang Prabang by private boat via a leisurely trip on the Nam Ou and Mekong Rivers, stopping along the way for a picnic lunch and a visit to the Pak Ou Caves. The caves enshrine a pantheon of Buddhist statuary reached by steps up a steep hill. As we meander the rivers, opportunities abound for viewing daily life along the riverbanks and in houseboats. Upon afternoon arrival in Luang Prabang, we check into our hotel, refresh, and depart for a very special event. Our guide Kahmsouk's family generously hosts us at a dance performance and memorable farewell *baci* blessing ceremony in the family

home. Dinner on your own and perhaps a leg or foot massage before tomorrow's flight.

Hotel: Villa Meuang Lao

Meals: B, L

TEXTILE SOCIETY *of* AMERICA

Sunday, June 1: Siem Reap, Cambodia



We take a morning international flight from Luang Prabang, Laos to Siem Reap, Cambodia. Airfare is included in the trip price. As in Laos, we will purchase Cambodia visas upon arrival at the airport. After transfer to our hotel, and perhaps a dip in the pool, we depart with our local guide to visit the well-stocked Old Market (Psar Chas) and the new National Museum. The evening's dinner will be at Haven restaurant that operates on a social enterprise concept and offers Cambodian culinary specialties.

Hotel: [Journeys Within Boutique Hotel](#)

Meals: B, D

Monday, June 2: Siem Reap



This morning, while it is still cooler and quiet, we get an early start to explore the extensive Angkor Wat temple grounds (60 sq. miles) with our guide. Late morning we return to the hotel for lunch and a refreshing swim. In the late afternoon we return to the temple complex to visit Angkor Thom and its masterpiece, the 148-ft. Bayon temple, with its many magnificent smiling faces. We watch the sunset at Angkor Thom. Dinner on your own with recommendations.

Hotel: Journeys Within Boutique Hotel

Meals: B, L

Tuesday, June 3: Siem Reap



This morning, we depart around 6:00 am for a 45-minute drive to Banteay Srei, the intricately carved, red sandstone temple, to spend some quiet time just as it opens and before the crowds arrive. Afterwards, we have been invited to visit the nearby forest compound of the Institute for Kymer Traditional Textiles (IKTT), a non-profit organization working to revive traditional weaving and dye techniques, and to meet with the visionary founder Kikuo Morimoto. After returning to town for lunch and a swim or rest, we travel again to Angkor Wat to visit Banteay Kdei and Ta Prohm temples at sunset. Ta Prohm is best known for the thick jungle foliage that still has a hold on this dynamic temple. Tonight, we dine at [Madame Butterfly](#), a French-influenced Khmer restaurant located in a traditional wooden house in a beautiful setting. Seating for this exquisite meal is in low rattan chairs surrounded by fine Kymer and Buddhist artifacts.

Hotel: Journeys Within Boutique Hotel

Meals: B, L, D

TEXTILE SOCIETY *of* AMERICA

Wednesday, June 4: Bangkok

As one of Cambodia's leaders in the production, visual merchandising, and retailing of Cambodia artisan work, Artisans d'Angkor is not to be missed. Artisans d'Angkor is a Cambodian company which was originally created to help young rural people find work near their home villages where there were limited educational opportunities. Artisans d'Angkor has maintained its commitment to education by developing its own training program. It now has 42 workshops in Siem Reap province and provides employment to over 1300 people, including more than 900 artisans. We visit several of the workshops and the stunningly displayed main showroom with products in silk, wood, lacquer, silver, and stone. Lunch follows at Khmer Kitchen for our last taste of Cambodian food before we transfer to the airport for the international flight from Siem Reap to Bangkok. Airfare is included in the trip price. Upon arrival in Bangkok and clearing Immigration and Customs, we transfer to our overnight hotel.

Hotel: Best Western Amaranth Hotel Suvanabhumi

Meals: B, L

Thursday, June 5

Check out of the hotel and catch the airport shuttle for international flights home or for onward travel in Thailand or other parts of SE Asia.

Meals: B

TEXTILE SOCIETY *of* AMERICA

TOUR DETAILS

Pricing Based on airfares and hotel rates as of December 2013 and a trip enrollment of 14 participants. Subject to change based on 2014 rates.

Trip cost for group of 14: \$3,900

Trip cost for group of 10: \$4,050

Single Supplement: \$600

Price includes:

- International flights from Bangkok—Luang Prabang—Siem Reap—Bangkok
- 11 nights hotel accommodations as described, or similar, in a shared room
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)
- Transfers and local transport as indicated by van and boat
- Local guide service: Meuang Lao Tours in Laos and Journeys Within in Cambodia
- Textile workshop as indicated in the itinerary
- Admissions and fees for special events as described in the itinerary

Not included:

- International airfare between your home city and Bangkok
- Visas for Laos (\$35) and Cambodia (\$20) purchased upon arrival in each country. These are 2013 visa rates. You will be informed if visa rates change for 2014. You must have the exact amount in cash and will need two passport size photos for each country. In addition your passport must be valid for 6 months beyond the date of the end of the trip.
- Tips to guides and drivers. Please plan to contribute \$150, which we will pool and distribute as a group for our local guides and drivers.
- Optional hands-on cooking class in Laos. Once you have signed up for the trip, you will be provided with additional details about the class.

Activity Level and Climate

This trip is designed for people who are able to walk as much as two miles over the course of a day. You must be able to get in and out of a boat. At Angkor Wat, the ground is not always level and the steps up into temples can be uneven. Average temperatures in both countries in late May and early June is 83 degrees F. in a humid climate. Plan for daily rain showers during the trip.

Health requirements

Good physical condition is recommended as preparation for this trip. An exercise regimen of brisk daily walking is recommended prior to the trip. By forwarding the trip deposit, the participant certifies that he/she meets the trip requirements for Activity Level (see above) and does not have any physical or other conditions of impairment that would create a hazard for him/herself or other travelers. If you have any concerns about your ability to travel, please speak to your doctor.

TEXTILE SOCIETY *of* AMERICA

Arrival and Departure

The trip begins and ends in Bangkok, Thailand at the Best Western Amaranth Hotel Suvanabhumi. You must arrive in Bangkok, no later than May 25. We return to Bangkok on June 4. Your hotel in Bangkok for the nights of May 25 and June 4 is covered in the price of the trip. Departure to your home country or for on-ward travel would commence on June 5.

Note Regarding Airline Tickets

Do not purchase your airline tickets until you have been informed that the trip is fully enrolled and confirmed.

Photography

We are traveling in a country rich in color and drama. It is always courteous to ask before taking photos of people. Our local guide in Laos is a former monk who will advise us of appropriate photography in temple settings. Jo Smith, of Ock Pop Tok, will do the same during village visits in Laos.

Pre-departure Packet

Pre-departure information will be provided to all participants. The packet will include suggested reading, attire and packing suggestions, immunizations and health, meals, and passport and visa details.

TOUR LEADER



The tour will be led by Mary Littrell, Professor and Department Head Emeritus in the Department of Design and Merchandising at Colorado State University. For the past 20 years, Mary's research has focused on how textile artisan enterprises achieve sustainability in the increasingly competitive global market. Known for her work on fair trade, Mary's most recent book is *Artisans and Fair Trade: Crafting Development* (Kumarian Press, 2010). She has conducted study tours for students, researchers, and textile artists and enthusiasts to India, Guatemala, and Peru and has traveled widely in SE Asia, including Laos and Cambodia. Mary resides in Santa Fe, NM, where she is a Research Associate at the Museum of International Folk Art and active with the International Folk Art Market—Santa Fe. She is currently conducting research for a new book on artisan leadership in shaping cultural traditions while transitioning to new markets.

Ock Pop Tok, a Lao artisan group to be visited on the tour, will be featured in the book. Mary served on the TSA Board of Directors as Treasurer from 2000-2004 and from 2010-2012.

Registration

To register and pay your deposit, visit http://textilesocietyofamerica.org/tsa_events/laos-cambodia/. When the trip is full and confirmed, Esprit Travel & Tours will contact you to arrange final payments and collect traveler details.