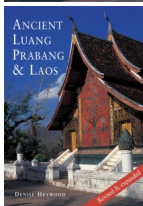
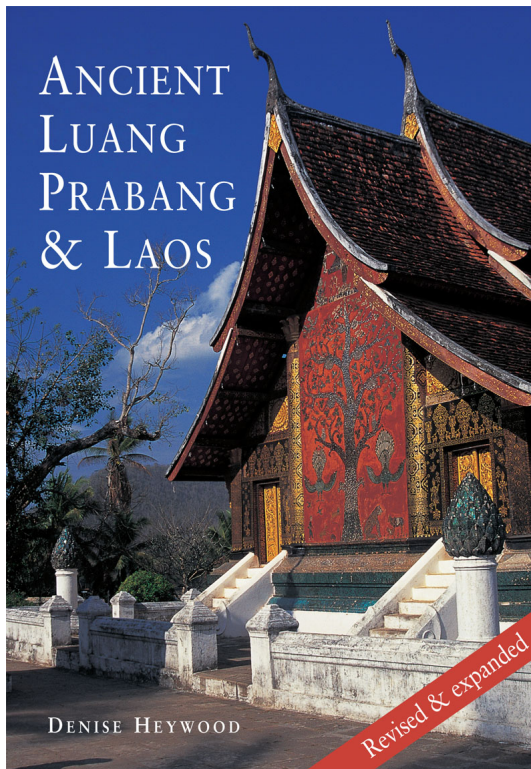


Ancient Luang Prabang



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Description

Laos is one of the most beguiling destinations in Southeast Asia. This fully revised and updated cultural guide includes all the key sites in a country of unique artistic and geographical richness.

The main focus remains Luang Prabang, high in the mist-shrouded mountains of the north, cut through by the Mekong river, a remote town of glittering Buddhist temples and saffron robed monks. The natural setting of the town, on a promontory by the river, encircled by an amphitheatre of steep, verdant mountains enhances its jewel-like identity.

Luang Prabang is a treasure trove of sacred art dating from the 17th century. There are 35 Buddhist temples, carved from wood, exquisitely frescoed and gilded, with layered roofs sweeping to the ground. Interiors are adorned with Buddha images of serene grace and dignity. With the arrival of the French colonisers in the 19th century came a secular architectural tradition. The fusion of these two disparate cultures resulted in a singular beauty. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Luang Prabang is considered the best preserved town in Southeast Asia.

Visit the historic capital Vientiane and travel to the enigmatic Plain of Jars or journey south on the Mekong to Wat Phu and admire the beauty of its breathtaking riverside location. The temple, uncovered by archaeologists who were part of the French 'mission civilisatrice' and creators of the elegant colonial buildings of Luang Prabang, dates from the 6th century and forms the northernmost point of the Khmer empire. Laos is revealed as a place of artistic diversity and ancient history steeped in myth and legend.