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Chapter 1

135

1.1 135.guide

Texified version of data for Laos.

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Laos

1.2 135.guide/Laos

Laos

Geography (Laos)
People (Laos)
Government (Laos)
Government (Laos 2. usage)
Economy (Laos)
Economy (Laos 2. usage)
Communications (Laos)
Defense Forces (Laos)

1.3 135.guide/Geography (Laos)

Geography (Laos)
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Location:
Southeast Asia, between Vietnam and Thailand
Map references:
Southeast Asia, Standard Time Zones of the World
Area:
total area:
236,800 km²
land area:
230,800 km²
comparative area:
slightly larger than Utah
Land boundaries:
total 5,083 km, Burma 235 km, Cambodia 541 km, China 423 km, Thailand 1,754 km, Vietnam 2,130 km
Coastline:
0 km (landlocked)
Maritime claims:
none; landlocked
International disputes:
boundary dispute with Thailand
Climate:
tropical monsoon; rainy season (May to November); dry season (December to April)
Terrain:
mostly rugged mountains; some plains and plateaus
Natural resources:
timber, hydropower, gypsum, tin, gold, gemstones
Land use:
arable land:
4%
permanent crops:
0%
meadows and pastures:
3%
forest and woodland:
58%
other:

35%
 Irrigated land:
 1,200 km2 (1989 est.)
 Environment:
 deforestation; soil erosion; subject to floods
 Note:
 landlocked

1.4 135.guide/People (Laos)

People (Laos)

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Population:
 4,569,327 (July 1993 est.)
 Population growth rate:
 2.86% (1993 est.)
 Birth rate:
 43.82 births/1,000 population (1993 est.)
 Death rate:
 15.22 deaths/1,000 population (1993 est.)
 Net migration rate:
 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1993 est.)
 Infant mortality rate:
 104.4 deaths/1,000 live births (1993 est.)
 Life expectancy at birth:
 total population:
 51.18 years
 male:
 49.67 years
 female:
 52.77 years (1993 est.)
 Total fertility rate:
 6.16 children born/woman (1993 est.)
 Nationality:
 noun:
 Lao(s) or Laotian(s)
 adjective:
 Lao or Laotian
 Ethnic divisions:
 Lao 50%, Phouthoung (Kha) 15%, tribal Thai 20%, Meo, Hmong, Yao, and other 15%
 Religions:
 Buddhist 85%, animist and other 15%
 Languages:
 Lao (official), French, English
 Literacy:
 age 15-45 can read and write (1985)
 total population:
 84%
 male:
 92%
 female:

76%
 Labor force:
 1-1.5 million
 by occupation:
 agriculture 85-90% (est.)

1.5 135.guide/Government (Laos)

Government (Laos)

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Names:
 conventional long form:
 Lao People's Democratic Republic
 conventional short form:
 Laos
 local long form:
 Sathalanalat Paxathipatai Paxaxon Lao
 local short form:
 none
 Digraph:
 LA
 Type:
 Communist state
 Capital:
 Vientiane
 Administrative divisions:
 16 provinces (khoueng, singular and plural) and 1 municipality* (kampheng, ←
 nakhon, singular and
 plural); Attapu, Bokeo, Bolikhamsai, Champasak,
 Houaphan, Khammouan, Louang Namtha, Louangphrabang, Oudomxai, Phongsali,
 Saravan, Savannakhet, Sekong, Vientiane, Vientiane*, Xaignabouri,, ←
 Xiangkhoang
 Independence:
 19 July 1949 (from France)
 Constitution:
 promulgated August 1991
 Legal system:
 based on civil law system; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction
 National holiday:
 National Day, 2 December (1975) (proclamation of the Lao People's ←
 Democratic
 Republic)
 Political parties and leaders:
 Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), KHAMTAI Siphandon, party president ←
 ;
 includes Lao Front for National Construction (LFNC); other parties moribund
 Other political or pressure groups:
 non-Communist political groups moribund; most leaders fled the country in
 1975
 Suffrage:
 18 years of age; universal
 Elections:

Third National Assembly:
 last held on 20 December 1992 (next to be held NA); results - percent of
 vote by party NA; seats - (85 total) number of seats by party NA

Executive branch:
 president, prime minister and two deputy prime ministers, Council of
 Ministers (cabinet)

Legislative branch:
 National Assembly

Judicial branch:
 Supreme People's Court

Leaders:
 Chief of State:
 President NOUHAK Phoumsavan (since 25 November 1992)

Head of Government: Prime Minister Gen. KHAMTAI Siphandon (since 15 August ←
 1991)

Member of:
 ACCT (associate), AsDB, CP, ESCAP, FAO, G-77, IBRD, ICAO, IDA, IFAD, IFC,
 ILO, IMF, INTERPOL, IOC, ITU, LORCS, NAM, PCA, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO,
 UPU, WFTU, WHO, WMO, WTO

1.6 135.guide/Government (Laos 2. usage)

Government (Laos 2. usage)

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Diplomatic representation in US:
 chief of mission:
 Ambassador HIEM Phommachanh
 chancery:
 2222 S Street NW, Washington, DC 20008
 telephone:
 (202) 332-6416 or 6417

US diplomatic representation:
 chief of mission:
 Ambassador Charles B. SALMON, Jr.
 embassy:
 Rue Bartholonie, Vientiane
 mailing address:
 B. P. 114, Vientiane, or AMEMB, Box V, APO AP 96546
 telephone:
 (856) 2220, 2357, 2384
 FAX:
 (856) 4675

Flag:
 three horizontal bands of red (top), blue (double width), and red with a
 large white disk centered in the blue band

1.7 135.guide/Economy (Laos)

Economy (Laos)

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Overview:

One of the world's poorest nations, Laos has had a Communist centrally planned economy with government ownership and control of productive enterprises of any size. In recent years, however, the government has been decentralizing control and encouraging private enterprise. Laos is a landlocked country with a primitive infrastructure; that is, it has no railroads, a rudimentary road system, limited external and internal telecommunications, and electricity available in only a limited area. Subsistence agriculture is the main occupation, accounting for over 60% of GDP and providing about 85-90% of total employment. The predominant crop is rice. For the foreseeable future the economy will continue to depend for ↵ its

survival on foreign aid from the IMF and other international sources; aid from the former USSR and Eastern Europe has been cut sharply.

National product:

GDP - exchange rate conversion - \$900 million (1991)

National product real growth rate:

4% (1991)

National product per capita:

\$200 (1991)

Inflation rate (consumer prices):

10% (1991)

Unemployment rate:

21% (1989 est.)

Budget:

revenues \$83 million; expenditures \$188.5 million, including capital expenditures of \$94 million (1990 est.)

Exports:

\$72 million (f.o.b., 1990 est.)

commodities:

electricity, wood products, coffee, tin

partners:

Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, USSR, US, China

Imports:

\$238 million (c.i.f., 1990 est.)

commodities:

food, fuel oil, consumer goods, manufactures

partners:

Thailand, USSR, Japan, France, Vietnam, China

External debt:

\$1.1 billion (1990 est.)

Industrial production:

growth rate 12% (1991 est.); accounts for about 18% of GDP (1991 est.)

Electricity:

226,000 kW capacity; 990 million kWh produced, 220 kWh per capita (1992)

Industries:

tin and gypsum mining, timber, electric power, agricultural processing, construction

Agriculture:

accounts for 60% of GDP and employs most of the work force; subsistence farming predominates; normally self-sufficient in nondrought years; principal crops - rice (80% of cultivated land), sweet potatoes, vegetables ↵

corn, coffee, sugarcane, cotton; livestock - buffaloes, hogs, cattle, poultry
 Illicit drugs:
 illicit producer of cannabis, opium poppy for the international drug trade,
 third-largest opium producer

1.8 135.guide/Economy (Laos 2. usage)

Economy (Laos 2. usage)

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Economic aid:
 US commitments, including Ex-Im (FY70-79), \$276 million; Western (non-US) countries, ODA and OOF bilateral commitments (1970-89), \$605 million; Communist countries (1970-89), \$995 million
 Currency:
 1 new kip (NK) = 100 at
 Exchange rates:
 new kips (NK) per US\$1 - 710 (May 1992), 710 (December 1991), 700 (← September 1990), 576 (1989), 385 (1988), 200 (1987)
 Fiscal year:
 1 July - 30 June

1.9 135.guide/Communications (Laos)

Communications (Laos)

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Railroads:
 none
 Highways:
 about 27,527 km total; 1,856 km bituminous or bituminous treated; 7,451 km gravel, crushed stone, or improved earth; 18,220 km unimproved earth and often impassable during rainy season mid-May to mid-September
 Inland waterways:
 about 4,587 km, primarily Mekong and tributaries; 2,897 additional kilometers are sectionally navigable by craft drawing less than 0.5 m
 Pipelines:
 petroleum products 136 km
 Ports:
 none
 Airports:
 total:
 54
 usable:
 41
 with permanent-surface runways:

8
with runways over 3,659 m:
0
with runways 2,440-3,659 m:
1
with runways 1,220-2,439 m:
15
Telecommunications:
service to general public practically non-existent; radio communications
network provides generally erratic service to government users; 7,390
telephones (1986); broadcast stations - 10 AM, no FM, 1 TV; 1 satellite
earth station

1.10 135.guide/Defense Forces (Laos)

Defense Forces (Laos)

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Branches:

Lao People's Army (LPA; including naval, aviation, and militia elements),
Air Force, National Police Department

Manpower availability:

males age 15-49 980,274; fit for military service 528,450; reach military
age (18) annually 43,849 (1993 est.)

Defense expenditures:

exchange rate conversion - \$NA, NA% of GDP