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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

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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)

=====

Location:

Southeast Asia, between Vietnam and Thailand

Map references:

Southeast Asia, Standard Time Zones of the World

Area:

total area:

236,800 km<sup>2</sup>

land area:

230,800 km<sup>2</sup>

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)

=====

### 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