

GOOD TO GO CRUISE

LAOS Sacred caves. Elephants. Wild jungle scenery. It's hard to find a more compelling stretch of the Mekong than in Laos, where the river known as the "Mother of Water" has shaped the traditions and customs of the various ethnic groups along its banks. And now, with the launch of *Bohème* (*mekongkingdoms.com*), it's just as easy to cruise these currents in unmatched style.

The newest addition to the Mekong Kingdoms fleet, the three-deck *Bohème* is the largest and arguably best-appointed boat of its kind on the upper Mekong.

Its 13 cabins feature daybeds and Laotian textiles alongside floor-to-ceiling French doors that open onto private balconies. Book the Royal Suite at the stern for the ultimate indulgence: done up in a contemporary Indochine style, the 60-square-meter stateroom comes with a freestanding bathtub and its own wide balcony, from which you can watch the boat's wake stretching out behind.

Bohème cruises between Vientiane and Luang Prabang over the course of five nights. Highlights of the itinerary include languid riverside villages, the

Sayaboury Elephant Conservation Center, and the Pak Ou Caves, a sacred site filled with thousands of Buddha statues. Mornings can be spent bird-watching or enjoying a massage in one of the two onboard treatment rooms. Afternoons are punctuated with cultural adventures or cooking classes, and evenings unfold with meals in the top-deck dining room — the daily changing menus combine international favorites like salmon Wellington and local mushroom ravioli with Thai and Laotian flavors such as *tom kha pla* (coconut soup with giant catfish). And there's perhaps no better place for a nightcap than the awninged alfresco lounge above the bow, where you can toast to a good day on the Mekong with a martini or G&T made from Lao Gin.

—Christopher P. Hill

MEET ME ON THE MEKONG

This 50-meter-long riverboat provides a stylish new way to explore the river between Luang Prabang and Vientiane.

