

VOLUNTEER GUIDE 2024-25



ABOUT NK SEEDS



Mélissa Lansmant, a 20-year-old French-Swiss adventurer, founded the French non-profit association NK SEEDS in 2018 to provide basic education to children in Laos.

NK stands for the village of **Nong Khiaw** in northern Laos, where the association's activities began. SEEDS represents the acronyms of **Solidarity, Education, Environment, Development, Support**.

The mission is to develop sustainable initiatives to ensure quality education for the most vulnerable children, while improving their hygiene and nutritional conditions, and ensuring the overall well-being of the villages.

NK SEEDS IN NUMBERS

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- **4 free English schools serving over 300 children**
- **70 sponsored schoolchildren and students**
- **5 villages now have access to water**
- **7 Lao employees and over 100 international volunteers**
- **Over 2,000 people received free medical care**



+2000

free medical care

+300

English students

+70

sponsored children

ABOUT VOLUNTEERING



Why volunteer with NK SEEDS?

Volunteering is a human experience that lets you put your skills to good use in a multicultural associative context. Being a volunteer means to give the best of yourself in a spirit of openness and respect!

Help the Laotian team

The majority of the NK SEEDS team is Laotian as we think Lao people have an active role to play in the development of their own country. It's also the best way to ensure the long-term future of our programs and actions in favor of children.

However, you are welcome to put your skills to work for the association. We offer various missions in different fields for which a good level of English is always an imperative, as well as time staying with us.

Admission requirements

- Be over 18 years old
- To be Independent
- Fluent English (read, spoken and written)
- Good health
- Impeccable interpersonal skills
- Must be available for a period of time



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About Phou Jo English School

Phou Jo English School is a free English school located on Khong Island, the largest island in the Mekong River, at the heart of the 4000 islands (Si Phan Don). This project was created in partnership with NK SEEDS and Josef and Vanthika, a Franco-Lao retired couple who have chosen to dedicate this stage of their lives to educating children in Laos.

English classes are offered to local students five times a week, with around 60 students divided into 2 classes. The classes are taught by a local teacher, assisted by international volunteers. The program began on September 17, 2024.

Volunteers missions

Volunteers will participate in classes and assist the local English teacher five afternoons a week. In the mornings, volunteers are expected to independently prepare their English lessons, using the official curriculum as a guide. Although the head teacher, Davanh, will join them every day at 12:30 for a debrief and feedback session, he is unable to assist in the morning preparation due to his responsibilities as a public school teacher. Volunteers must, therefore, be self-sufficient in lesson planning. **The English classes take place from 3:45 PM to 5:30 PM, with two different classes during this time. Davanh will provide guidance and support during these afternoon sessions.**

ABOUT VOLUNTEERING



Weekends

On weekends volunteers will be free to enjoy Muang Khong and the surrounding area (Don Det & Don Kon islands, Khone Phapheng Waterfall, Boat trip on the Mekong river...), and also enjoy the swimming pool at Kongmany Hotel.

Accommodation & food

Volunteers participating in the Phou Jo English School project in Muang Khong will be accommodated at Kongmany Hotel, located on the banks of the Mekong River, just a 15-minute drive from the public school where they will teach. The family will provide one shared room with single beds and air conditioning.

Meals will be provided at the hotel. Volunteers will receive **breakfast and dinner each day of the week**. Lunch remains the responsibility of the volunteers. **Water is included with meals**, but **other drinks such as soft drinks, shakes, cocktails, and beer will be at your own expense**.

There are several little restaurants close to the Hotel where volunteers can have lunch (noodle soup, fried rice...). Ask Sonia or Phet.

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Transportation

At Phou Jo English School, we provide one electric scooter for volunteers to commute between the hotel and the school. However, **please note that the school is a 15-minute motorbike ride away, so it is essential that volunteers are comfortable riding a scooter.** Although bicycles are available, the heat often makes them impractical. If volunteers are not at ease with riding a motorbike, unfortunately, they will not be able to participate. Additionally, should volunteers wish to rent a motorbike for personal use, the rental costs will be their responsibility.

Fees

We kindly ask all volunteers to contribute a 20€ membership fee to join the NK SEEDS association.

A **week fee of 100€** will be required from the volunteers. This amount includes the services mentioned in the previous points. Volunteers will pay the fees for their stay directly to Siew, the coordinator **on the last day of arrival.** Volunteers can pay in cash (LAK, USD, THB or EUR) or by credit card (3% surcharge). The exchange rate applied will be 1 euro = 23,000 kips. Ex : 2 weeks stay = 200 euros (4'800.000 kip)

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Workspace and Teaching Materials

A workspace including a desk, Wi-Fi connection, and a computer will be provided at the Mekong House, located close to the school, for volunteers to prepare their English lessons. Teaching tools and a stock of paper, pens, and other supplies needed for the proper functioning of the school and the preparation of lessons are also available.

Additionally, a LOGBOOK is available for volunteers, Attendance, folders containing previous lesson materials to help with lesson planning and continuity also a document to help volunteers to plan the lessons.

Here is the location of the Mekong House : [Click here](#)

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Supporting Teacher Davanh

Teacher Davanh is the main teacher, and volunteers are there solely to assist him. During the day, Davanh teaches at the public school and does not have time to prepare the lessons, so it will be up to the volunteers to plan activities based on the topic and his guidance.

Every day at noon, Davanh will meet with the volunteers to go over the afternoon lessons. Therefore, it is important that lesson preparation is done in the morning.

Davanh is quite shy and lacks confidence, so it is essential to give him the space he needs to feel comfortable in his role as the lead teacher. Encouraging him and giving him compliments will help boost his confidence and create a better teaching environment for both him and the students.

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Sunday Arrival & Welcome by Teacher Davanh

On Sunday afternoon, upon arrival, Teacher Davanh will come to welcome the volunteers. He will take them on a short tour to visit the Mekong House and the school, giving them an introduction to their new environment. This will be a great opportunity to get familiar with the surroundings and ask any initial questions before starting the week.

Evening English Lessons with the Hotel Staff

If the hotel staff is available, a one-hour English lesson will be scheduled in the evening at the hotel. This is a great opportunity for them to improve their language skills, particularly for their work in the tourism industry. The lessons will be informal and adapted to their level and needs. Volunteers are encouraged to make these sessions interactive and practical, focusing on conversational English and useful vocabulary for their daily tasks.

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Communication

Volunteers use WhatsApp to communicate with the Lao teacher and the hotel staff. A complete list of contacts will be provided to the volunteers.

ATM

There is a BCEL ATM close to the hotel. You can ask the hotel staff about it.

We recommend you to withdraw a sufficient amount of LAK during your stay in Pakse.

Wifi

Wifi is available at the hotel, at the Mekong House, but not at the school. We recommend buying a Lao SIM card (Unitel).

TIPS FOR VOLUNTEERS!



Teaching in Laos is an incredible experience, but it's important to understand and adapt to the local culture. Here are some key things to keep in mind:

1. Cultural Differences – Don't Misinterpret Behavior

Lao culture and education are different from what you might be used to. Some behaviors may seem unusual, but they are not signs of rudeness or disinterest. It's essential to observe, adapt, and avoid quick judgments.

2. Time & Flexibility – Go with the Flow

Schedules in Laos are more relaxed. It's common for people to arrive late or for plans to change last minute. Try not to get frustrated—things are just more laid-back here. The key is to stay flexible and go with the rhythm of local life.

3. Shyness – Building Trust Takes Time

Lao children are often very shy at first. They might avoid eye contact, step back when a volunteer approaches, or hesitate to speak. This is completely normal, and it takes time for them to feel comfortable. Be patient, smile often, and create a safe and encouraging environment for them.

4. Respect & Hierarchy in the Classroom

In Laos, teachers are highly respected, and students may not engage in the same way as in Western classrooms. They might be hesitant to ask questions or express opinions openly. Encourage participation gently without forcing them.



TIPS FOR VOLUNTEERS!



5. Teaching Style – Keep It Fun & Interactive

Many Lao students are used to rote learning (repeating and memorizing), so interactive methods like games, songs, and role-playing can make lessons more engaging. Visual aids and gestures also help since some students might have limited English vocabulary.

6. Non-Confrontation – Stay Calm & Positive

Lao culture values harmony, and direct confrontation is avoided. If an issue arises, address it calmly and respectfully rather than showing frustration or raising your voice. A gentle approach always works best.

7. Dress Modestly & Respectfully

Laos is a conservative country, especially in rural areas. Volunteers should dress modestly—covering shoulders and knees is recommended, especially when teaching.

8. Be Open to Learning

While you are there to teach, you will also learn a lot from your students and the local culture. Approach this experience with curiosity, humility, and an open mind.



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Arrival and departure days

The **arrival** day is **Sunday before 2pm**, and the departure day is Saturday.

The hotel managers, Davanh, our local teacher and Sonia, our local representative, will be informed in advance of the volunteer's arrival. Likewise, they will ensure the smooth departure of volunteers on Saturday.

How to get to Muang Khong

Coming from Bangkok, you can either fly, take a train or a long distance bus to Ubon Ratchathani. From there, you will need to take another bus to Pakse. We recommend paying your Lao visa with USD (~\$40 at the time of writing). Remember to bring a passport photo with you. **Please note that e-visas are not accepted for entry via land transport.**

Pakse has different types of accommodation available. Two places that know about our association are Sanga Hostel and Residence Sisouk.

To travel from Pakse to Don Khong:

The trip is made by minibus, with Don Det usually as the final destination. Ask your hotel to arrange the ticket for you (approximately 140,000 kip). The minivan will pick you up at around 8:30 AM. The island is connected to the mainland by a bridge, and the minivan will drop you off at the intersection near the bridge.

Phet, the manager of Kongmany Hotel on Don Khong, will pick you up. It's important to message him beforehand with your estimated time of arrival (ETA) and a photo of your ticket. The journey takes approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes.

ABOUT VOLUNTEERING



Autonomy and Initiative: Key Requirements for Volunteers

One of the key requirements for volunteering with us is the ability to be autonomous. Muang Khong is a remote island with few tourists and limited activities. We need volunteers who can manage their free time independently and take initiative in planning and organizing lessons to best support the local teachers.

Insurance and Liability

Volunteers are fully responsible for obtaining insurance covering accidents, health, repatriation, and civil liability for the entire duration of their stay. In the event of an accident or medical issue, NK SEEDS and Kongmany Hotel decline all responsibility.

Respect for Rules and Conflicts

Volunteers commit to follow the instructions provided by Sonia, Phet and Davanh, as well as the NK SEEDS charter, which they will have signed before arriving on the island. In case of any breach of these rules, our local team reserves the right to ask one or more volunteers to leave the accommodation immediately, with no right to refund or compensation. NK SEEDS will support the family, the teacher and the hotel staff in their decision.

WEEKLY PLANNING



Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Location
07:00-09:30	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Hotel Kongmany
10:30-12:00	Lesson preparations	Lesson preparations	Lesson preparations	Lesson preparations	Activities preparations + update the LOGBOOK	Mekong House Mueng Sane
12:00-12:30	Meeting with Lao Teacher	Mekong House Mueng Sane				
12:30 – 15h30	Lunch / Free time					
15:30-17:30	English classes	English classes	English classes	English classes	English classes sports/games Day Outdoor	Secondary school Mueng Sane
18:30-19:00	English with hotel staff	Hotel Kongmany (if available)				
19:00	Dinner with staff	Hotel				

Public holiday in Laos (no teaching during these days)

17 Oct: Ok Phansa (End of Buddhist Lent Day)

18 Oct : Lao Boat Racing Festival

2 Dec: Lao National Day

1 Jan: New Year's Day

10 Mar: Women's Day

14-18 Apr: Pii Mai Lao

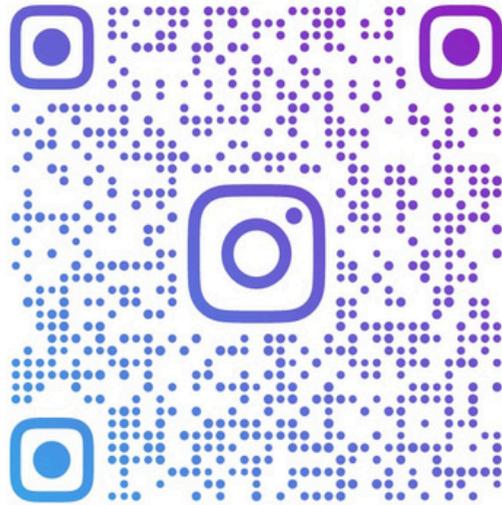
1 May: Labour Day

2 June: Children's Day

School holidays

Due to the official school holidays, our school is closed in June, July and August.

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