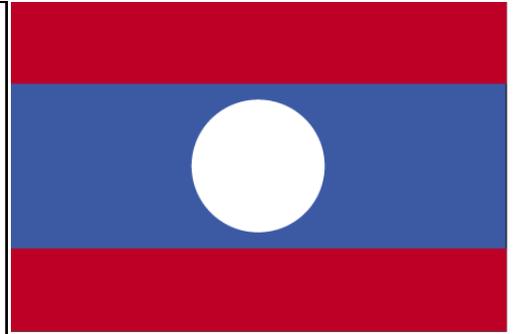


# Laos

- ◆ The capital city of Laos is Vientiane.
- ◆ Laos is a mountainous country in Southeast Asia.
- ◆ Laos was once known as Lan Xang, meaning “The Kingdom of a Million Elephants.”
- ◆ In Laotian schools, classes are conducted in Lao or French. However, the government is now encouraging the study of English as a second language instead of French.
- ◆ There is no refrigeration in most of Laos, so all meals must be freshly prepared. Mint is used in most food preparation to keep food fresh.
- ◆ In Laos, as in many Asian cultures, the head is the most sacred part of the body. Touching a person’s head is not acceptable.
- ◆ The main religion of Laos is Buddhism. Buddhist men usually spend several weeks or months in a monastery after leaving school and before starting work. They live with few possessions, practice meditation, and use a begging bowl to gather food for the monastery from people in the neighborhood.
- ◆ The Laotian people are very superstitious and many practice spirit worship.
- ◆ In Laos, sharing about Jesus is against the law and sometimes the government closes churches and takes Bibles away from Christians.
- ◆ The tropical heat and rich topsoil make the land of Laos good for growing crops like wheat, corn, rice, millet, sugarcane, fruits, and vegetables.



## Story: The Man of the Family

Kimo is an eight-year-old boy who lives in Vientiane, the capital city of Laos. Every night, he sleeps on the dusty ground between rows of parked buses. For a very long time, the bus station, behind a busy market, has been home to Kimo, his mother, and his sisters Kalia, who is four years old, and Koa, who is two and a half. During the day, Kimo and his sisters go to the city’s main square to beg for money and food. Why is begging a dangerous job? Because there are no adults around to look after the children, and they often work near busy streets. They are also at risk for abuse and kidnapping.

## Story cont...

After a day's begging, Kimo, Kalia, and Koa take everything back to their mother in the evening. But they don't know how much money they have because neither Kimo nor his mother can count. Kimo was five when they left their home village, and he never went to school. "I would like to go to school," says Kimo. "I don't like begging." There are many children like Kimo and his sisters who beg on the streets of Laos.

There are 246 million children around the world, most between the ages of 5 and 14, who work every day without the chance to go to school or play with other kids. They work because they have to help their families buy food and clothing.



## Recipe: Pumpkin Custard



Small baking pumpkin  
5 eggs  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 cup coconut cream\*

A steamer

\*If you cannot find coconut cream, use 1/2 cup coconut milk and 1/2 cup whole milk. If you like, you can add a teaspoon of coconut extract as well.

Cut off top of pumpkin, remove seeds.

Whisk eggs, add sugar, salt, and coconut cream. Stir until completely blended.

Pour mixture into pumpkin and cook in a steamer for 30 minutes. Serve warm.

## Activity: Kataw

Kataw is played with a small ball woven out of rattan (modern balls may be made of plastic). The players stand in a circle and try to keep the ball in the air, without using their hands, by kicking it or hitting it with their knees and elbows.

A more competitive version is called sepak takraw. Two teams of three players toss the ball back and forth over a volleyball net, using their legs, arms, shoulders, and head. Laotian sepak takraw teams participate in the King's Cup international competition, which attracts competitors from throughout Southeast Asia.



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