



TONE OF VOICE

The Southern Laos Tone of Voice is an embodiment of the spirit of Southern Laos, opening a channel of communication between this fascinating region and the growing body of explorers eager to visit. Establishing guidelines for how we communicate with those potential visitors ensures that the expectations they develop for a holiday in Southern Laos are in line with the brand identity.

TRAITS OF SOUTHERN LAOS

This Tone of Voice document helps copywriters adhere to the brand essence when crafting marketing messages. The following four traits inform the brand culture of Southern Laos:

Intrinsic Diversity

In Southern Laos, diversity runs deep. This applies to the region's history, culture and even its natural environment.

Natural Tranquillity

The culture and environment of the region give Southern Laos an undeniably laid-back appeal – even by Laos standards.

Southern Charm

The big hearts, generosity and spritely nature of Southern Laos people paint the visitor experience in warm hues.

Sabai Sabai

There's a time for everything in Southern Laos – especially if slowing down and enjoying life are on your agenda. Just don't expect an hour-by-hour itinerary.

SOUTHERN LAOS TOV PERSONA

The Southern Laos voice speaks directly to readers. It's the voice of a trip counsellor, a local expert who knows the region forwards and backwards.

Intrepid and far-sighted, Southern Laos speaks in the present tense as if readers have already arrived on the scene. This is all happening right now. It invites readers into an ever-unfolding landscape of soaring highlands, rushing rivers and unlikely contrasts. This is uncharted territory, and copy should invoke a tinge of excitement. Readers are about to embark on an adventure. Their own personal epic.

Speaking directly to travellers, it encourages them to 'explore', 'embark' and 'strike out', understanding that entering Southern Laos means crossing a threshold. This is a land where hospitality is a necessity – a way of life. Where place names are literal and descriptive. The colours, people and languages here are otherworldly. Highlighting these qualities, copy stokes anticipation of Southern Laos' Intrinsic Diversity and Natural Serenity.

The copy addresses readers as competent, capable travellers. As equals. There's not a travel agent in the world who could plan this journey for them. Staging an adventure like this requires loading up on supplies in Pakse and plotting a route on a well-worn map. The TOV communicates a taste for adventure, cultural engagement and a desire to explore outside of well-travelled areas as key drivers for visiting the region. Southern Laos TOV is:

- Direct
- Adventurous
- Capable
- Seasoned
- Reliable
- Courageous

Southern Laos TOV is not:

- Gruff
- Condescending
- Elitist
- Bossy
- Boastful
- Distant

Southern Laos TOV Dos and Don'ts

Sentence Length

Do: Vary sentence length between short and direct invitations to explore and medium-length descriptions of the natural landmarks, people and culture.

Don't: Use too many long or compound sentences.

Descriptions

Do: Create spaces to explore – paint a descriptive image of southern Laos. Sketch a landscape, fill in broad strokes of colour and populate it.

Don't: Resort to well-worn clichés (such as 'off the beaten path') or flowery language when something simpler is just as descriptive.

Sense of Place

Do: Create a sense of crossing over, entering a new, pristine world, passing a threshold.

Don't: Depict Southern Laos as backward or strange.

Travel Challenges

Do: Be honest about the challenges of travelling in Southern Laos – limited transport, basic facilities, lack of infrastructure, etc.

Don't: Do the above without offering an upshot or solution – lack of organised activities equals time to relax, limited transport means few tourists venture here, lack of Wi-Fi forces you to live in the moment, etc.

SOUTHERN LAOS TOV LEXICON

- Invocations to explore, uncover, experience, venture, embark
- Engage / engaging
- Authentic
- Raw
- Untouched
- Pristine
- Serene
- Secluded
- Intriguing
- Timeless
- Highlands (when referencing Bolaven plateau)

Advertising Direction

AD COPY EXAMPLE 1: CALLS TO ADVENTURE WITH A SABAI SABAI TWIST

- Headlines begin with a directive – ‘Explore’, ‘Discover’, ‘Experience’, ‘Embark’, ‘Uncover’, etc.
- Image and ad copy showcase key benefits of a particular element, attraction or way of life in Southern Laos.

A: Discover the world’s most laid-back public transport network

While it’s a far cry from the metro, the tangle of waterways at Si Phan Don makes for a pretty sleek public transportation system. Forget about jockeying with crowds or memorising timetables. Instead, all you need to do is borrow a kayak and a paddle from the bungalow operator. Then again, you could also just stay in this hammock and wait for the world to come to you.

B: Explore ancient ruins on two wheels

[Image of dilapidated Champ pagoda with scooter in frame]

[Ad copy champions the ancient ruins of Wat Phu Champasak and the ease of exploring the surrounding country roads on a rented scooter.]

AD COPY EXAMPLE 2: PLAYFUL JUXTAPOSITIONS CELEBRATING THE CHARMS, WILES AND RHYTHMS OF SOUTHERN LAOS

- Headlines highlight an intriguing contrast about the Southern Laos experience.
- Headlines are broken into two parts (not necessarily complete sentences).
- Ad copy plays up a key benefit of the Southern Laos experience in juxtaposition with one of the local culture's charms or playful quirks.

A: One landlocked region. Four Thousand Islands.

Only in landlocked Laos could you find a frontier as audacious as Si Phan Don. Four Thousand Islands. The Mekong unfurls a tangle of islets in churning waters that swell when the rains settle in. You can swap stories with other travellers at Don Det or Don Khon, or steer for the seclusion of Don Khlong. It's the largest of the Four Thousand Islands and sees the fewest visitors. String up that hammock you brought in Pakse, brew a cup of Bolaven coffee and watch the river slip away to Cambodia. With a good eye and a little patience, you may even catch a silvery glint off the riverbank. Water rolling off the back of a freshwater dolphin.

B: Highland coffee takes 4 minutes to brew. But who's counting?

EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

The Southern Laos TOV addresses the reader directly and in the second person. However, it never refers to itself in any sense – let alone in the first person.

Language

Prefer international English with British spellings and conventions.

Currency

To maintain a colloquial feel, refer to local currency as kip and not as LAK, Laotian kip or Laos kip. For other countries – and only when it is natural to do so -- use currency symbols rather than ISO currency codes:

- euro: €10
- pound: £10
- dollar: US\$10, HK\$10, AU\$10

Dates and time

Always use international date conventions in marketing materials: DD Month YYYY. Spelling out the month limits confusion.

The 24 hour clock is far too regimented for use with Southern Laos collateral. Avoid it altogether, as there is always an equally descriptive 12-hour alternative.

Usage examples:

- 11 December 2015
- 4:30 p.m. (not 4.30 pm)
- 9 a.m. (not 9:00 am)
- midnight (not 12 a.m.)

Prefer common parlance (morning, noon, evening, midnight, etc.) when writing about non-specific times:

- “Strike out early in the morning to catch the sunrise at Wat Phu.”
- “Most guesthouse owners are laid-back about check-out times. If you plan on leaving in the afternoon, you can usually just let them know.”

Use specific times only when it is important to do so. For example, if breakfast is served at 9 a.m. sharp, then by all means indicate the specific time.

Region name

Refer to the region as Southern Laos – not southern Laos, Southern Lao or South Laos.

Numbers and figures

Write out numbers one to nine, and use numerals for 10 and above. Hundreds and thousands are separated by commas.

Example: 9,000

For larger quantities, use numerals followed by the unabbreviated quantity (100 billion, 4 million).

Estimate liberally.