

## Kuang Si Waterfall

The Kuang Si Waterfall is arguably one of the most popular waterfalls in Luang Prabang. Located 29 kilometers south of the city, we took a 45-minute van ride to the site of the waterfall.

Just outside the entrance of the waterfall, there are several street shops selling silk scarfs, intricate art pieces and paintings, snacks, and even t-shirts. I did not buy anything from the shops as they had a limited variety of items and were overpriced, so I headed straight to the entrance of the waterfall.

One could choose to go to the Kuang Si Waterfall directly, or visit the Tat Kuang Si Rescue Bear centre first, before proceeding to the waterfall. I chose the latter and headed towards a path that was lightly shielded from the sun by the trees.

The rescue centre was founded by Free The Bears Fund Inc. in 2003 after the Lao authority confiscated some bear cubs and needed help to look after them. That was when the rescue centre was formed and it continued taking in more cubs and providing care for them.

There were about 10 Sun Bears in the Tat Kuang Si Rescue Bear Centre, and there bears were in an enclosed cage, furnished with swings made of tires, nets, and obstacle courses, for the bears to play and laze. The bears seemed unfazed by the human company and even showed their true colours by fighting and bickering with each other, in front of us.

Just a short 5 minute stroll away from the bear rescue centre lies the magnificent Kuang Si Waterfalls. The 3 stories high waterfall cascades down to about 4 smaller pools where tourists can waddle and swim in.

The water was a nice shade of baby blue, and it seemed almost mystical like. Unfortunately, the pools were filled with tourists soaking themselves, or attempting dangerous stunts. I personally did not enjoy the pool area much as it was extremely crowded and felt like a public pool, instead of a waterfall site.

Climb 2 stories up, and you will be met with the majestic Kuang Si Waterfalls. This was simply breathtaking as you can see and feel the rush from the waters. This is also a perfect photo-taking opportunity as this part of the waterfall is not littered with ignorant tourists, and you would be able to take a good shot (or two).

After taking a few pictures of the waterfall, a few friends and I decided to trek up the Kuang Si Waterfalls. Mind you, I have no idea what I was thinking that day as my fitness level was close to a zero.

The trek up Kuang Si Waterfalls was a pretty quiet trek but I was met with a few challenges. Firstly, I am a very unfit person, so it was difficult and definitely challenging to climb up the waterfall. Secondly, some of the steps were extremely steep and are not well constructed, so I had to be on my toes (get that pun?) at all

times. Lastly, there is a lack of directions so you will need to remember the way back down and trust your instincts if you lose your way.

I have to admit, it was a pretty good trek despite the challenges because the view was incredible and you will be able to trek next to the waterfall, where you can see the water gushing over rocks. It is definitely an experience not to be missed!