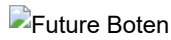


Future Boten – The gateway city on the Laos-China border

May 30, 2022 By [James Clark](#) — [Leave a Comment](#)



Boten is a town in Northern Laos on the border of China. It is one of the main entry points for freight from China to Southeast Asia, and it has been designated as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

A casino opened in Boten in 2002 to attract gamblers from China (where gambling is illegal in mainland China). The casino was then closed down in 2011 upon request of the Chinese government. The casino closure ended the main reason anyone from China would visit Boten, sending this border outpost into decline.

Boten's fortunes were revived in 2015 with the signing of the Mohan-Boten Economic Cooperation Zone. This preceded the start of the construction of [the Laos-China Railway](#), which began in December 2016. The railway construction was completed in December 2021, with Boten being one of the main stops on the line to Vientiane.



[Boten Railway Station.]

The railway opened in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, and the China border remains closed. Boten will enter a new era as a gateway city when the border reopens,

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receiving passenger trains from Kunming. The eventual plan is to turn this town into a city of over 300,000 people.

[Hue construction update – 2022 edition](#)



[Boten in May 2022.]

Ho Chi Minh City Metro Concept Map



Links And Resources

[Boten](#) | [Boten Special Economic Development Zone](#) | [U/C](#) – SkyscraperCity news and discussion.

Images





Projects

[Boten | Jing Land Hotel](#)

[Boten CBD International Financial Centre – 2-1, 2-7 | 29fl | 136m | U/C](#)

[Boten CBD International Financial Centre – N16-1, N16-2, N16-3, N16-4 | 1x20fl, 1x18fl | 68m, 56.4m](#)

[Boten CBD International Financial Centre – B5, B6, B7 | 1x26fl, 2x15fl | 96.3m, 58m, 56.8m | U/C](#)

[Boten CBD International Financial Centre – 2-2, 2-3, 2-5 and 2-6 | U/C](#)

News Archive

2022

[Luang Namtha SEZ attracts 260 investor companies – \[25/05/22\]](#)

[Boten Special Economic Zone/Boten Beautiful Land – \[01/04/22\]](#)

“One of the largest infrastructure investments in Laos, the Boten Special Economic Zone (SEZ) or ‘Boten Beautiful Land’, is a 10-billion-USD Chinese-built and funded zone.”



[Boten: A ghost town waits to be waked up by China-Laos-Railway – \[01/01/22\]](#)

2021

[Bokeo-Boten expressway project to link China and Thailand through Laos – \[01/07/21\]](#)

[Boten: the renaissance of Laos's golden city](#) – [14/05/21]

“The one-time casino boom town on the Laos-China border is on the rise again, powered by billions in Chinese investment.”



2020

[A border town's second gamble](#) – [24/11/20]

“The first stop in Laos on the new railway from China, Boten prepares for new connections.”



[Boten.com boosts info for “Beautiful Boten” in Laos – \[24/08/20\]](#)

“Boten.com launched its upgraded website on 24 August 2020, to provide information on “Beautiful Boten”. The Specific Economic Zone (SEZ) on the Lao-China border is currently being transformed into a tourism and commercial center along the upcoming high-speed railway running from Kunming to Vientiane.”

[Borderlands – S1E2: The golden city of Boten – \[14/01/20\]](#)

“A notorious casino town frequented by Chinese tourists that saw suicides due to the upsurge in gambling. A new high-speed railway development brings new promise to the area.”

2019

[We visited the infamous Laos-China Border town of Boten – \[27/11/19\]](#)

“Until 2011, Boten was known for casinos, brothels and nightclubs – all the trappings of a weekend getaway for Yunnan residents looking for a walk on the wild side.”

[Laos’ special economic zone bordering China to lure 10 bln USD investment – \[28/10/19\]](#)

“Boten Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in northern Laos bordering China is anticipating investment of at least 10 billion U.S. dollars to fully develop the site, according to a zone representative.”

[Boten: The “resurrection” of the ghost town – \[29/09/19\]](#)



[Chinese investors scrambling to buy into Laos’ Boten SEZ ahead of railway – \[03/04/19\]](#)

“Locals fearful that investment in Boten and other zones will benefit only Chinese.”



2018

[Inland container depot opens in northern Laos to facilitate trade with China](#) – [29/03/18]

“A Lao company has officially opened an inland container depot (ICD) at the Boten Specific Economic Zone (SEZ) in Laos’ northern province of Luang Namtha.”

[A most internationally modernized city](#) – [07/05/18]

“In this excerpt from “High-Speed Empire: Chinese Expansion and the Future of Southeast Asia,” Next City contributor Will Doig gets a look at hyper-development along the remote Laos-China border.”

2017

[The ‘golden city’ of Boten](#) – [11/05/17]

“Touted as a futuristic hub for trade and tourism, Boten ran on Beijing time and made transactions in Chinese yuan.”



[Gambling with time along the China-Laos border](#) – [18/01/17]

“Chinese families in a Lao border town struggle after casino cash runs out.”

2016

[Ex-casino town set for rail rebirth](#) – [07/07/16]

[The rise, fall and possible renewal of a town in Laos on China's border](#) – [06/07/16]

“Boten, a onetime casino boomtown with thousands of visitors a month, is trying to come back, this time without gambling.”



2015

[The Boten crossborder zone is revived](#) – [07/09/15]

“On September 1st, during the visit of the Lao president, Choummaly Sayasone, to the Chinese capital, Beijing, for ceremonies marking the 70th anniversary of the end of the second world war, the Chinese and Lao governments signed an agreement to establish a crossborder economic co-operation zone.”

[China and Laos signs the Joint General Scheme of Mohan-Boten Economic Cooperation Zone](#) – [01/09/15]

2014

[The rise and fall of Boten Golden City](#) – [12/06/14]

2013

[Golden Boten City has been closed down – will it wake up again with help from China?](#) – [07/04/13]

2012

[Laos ends gambling in former casino city](#) – [21/03/12]

“Laos is ending gambling in the former casino enclave of Boten on the Chinese border because of worries about crime, state media said Wednesday.”

2011

[Bungle In The Jungle](#) – [27/07/11]

“The idea was a Chinese economic colony in the Lao wilderness, and that was okay with Laos. Then the gamblers, hookers and gangsters took over, and that was not okay with China.”

[Casino in business despite allegations](#) – [19/07/11]

“A casino in Laos is entertaining Chinese customers amid reports of illegal activities.”

[Busted flush](#) – [26/05/11]

“How a Sino-Lao special economic zone hit the skids.”

2007

[In Xanadu did Kubla Khan ...](#) – [09/01/07]

“Megacity takes shape in the north.”

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About James Clark

James Clark is the editor of Future Southeast Asia and is currently based in Ho Chi Minh City. Follow his travels at nomadicnotes.com and on Twitter at [@nomadicnotes](https://twitter.com/nomadicnotes)

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