



Indochina: The Big One Dossier

Immerse Yourself Tour | 27 Days | Physical Level 1

Saigon – Ben Tre – Hoi An – Hue – Hanoi – Mai Chau – Halong Bay – Luang Prabang – Vientiane – Phnom Penh – Siem Reap

This complete Indochina adventure, covering Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, shows you the highlights of the region whilst giving you plenty of time for independent exploration and a choice of experiences to help you delve deeper into the local culture and heritage.

- Cycle along the Mekong Delta
- Be inspired by charming Hoian
- Explore Hue by rickshaw
- Meet the locals in Mai Chau
- Practice Tai Chi on Halong Bay
- Witness sacred Takbat in Laos
- Be captivated by Angkor
- Personalise your tour experience



Indochina: The Big One tour inclusions

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless land only is selected)
- All accommodation
- Meals as stated on your itinerary
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Visa fees for UK and EU passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants and comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with ABTA, ATOL and IATA

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.

Immerse Yourself - Flexible Tours:

Ideal for those who want more choice in what they do. Flexible tours include all the main sights but allow some free time for your own exploration or relaxation. Optional excursions, often more active in nature, are available for those that want to discover more.

Physical Level 1:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

‘Indochina: The Big One’ is rated as a **physical level 1** tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it’s more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You’ll be getting on and off coaches and boats, walking around the sights and climbing some steps. There are also some more **active** optional excursions. By making the more physically demanding features of our active tours optional, these tours are exactly what they say on the tin; flexible. You can pick and mix activities and free time meaning more opportunity for independent exploration. Some of the optional excursions, such as hiking, will require a higher level of fitness to take part.

- There will be both short and long periods of walking whilst sightseeing
- Throughout the tour there will be bicycle tours which may involve cycling over uneven ground
- You will be required to get on and off varying sizes of boats throughout the tour without assistance
- All of our optional excursions are on a shared basis

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

Country Profile: Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia

Vietnam - Vietnam is a country of breath-taking natural beauty with an incredible modern-day history that quickly becomes addictive. It has experienced war and a bloody revolution in the past 100 years, but the revolution is now underway and it is peaceful and prosperous. The speed of the modern-day changes is making Vietnam the absorbing and gripping place that it is today. Vietnam has something to offer everyone, so whether you are a culture vulture, thrill seeker or just looking to relax and take in the beaches, Vietnam will not disappoint.

Laos - Laos has only recently been discovered as a fascinating tourist destination. This delightful jewel is steeped in historical treasures, glorious colonial architecture, lush green jungles and magnificent mountainous terrain. Discover the UNESCO World Heritage listed city of Luang Prabang and the spectacular multi-tiered Kuang Si Waterfalls. Journey by boat along the mighty Mekong River and be amazed by the stunning natural scenery and meet the beautiful, gentle people of Laos. Refreshingly, its long-established ways of life continue; to hurry is simply not the Lao way. This is a truly magical nation.

Cambodia - Cambodia is blessed with unspoilt beaches and beautiful colonial cities like Phnom Penh, Battambang and Kep. In Siem Reap, the breathtaking temples of Angkor are regarded as the heart and soul of Cambodia. Many visitors may never intend to go beyond these magnificent temples; however, they will soon become captivated by other parts of this friendly country.

Joining Your Tour

The tour is 27 days in duration including international flights. Please note that depending on flight schedules passengers may arrive/depart on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only', the price includes visa fees and your arrival/ departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations. Join the tour on day one in Saigon and end the tour on Day 26 in Siem Reap. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

Itinerary Changes

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

2019 changes:

- The Quintessence of Tonkin show with dinner is now optional – with an additional surcharge.
- The sunset at Pre Rup Temple has been replaced by a sunset boat ride on the moat of Angkor Thom.
- The Phare Circus has been added.

Itinerary – Indochina: The Big One

Day 1: Saigon

Meals included: Dinner

Fly to Saigon where you will be met at the airport in the arrival hall by your Local Guide or National Escort. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer 45 minutes to your hotel and check into your room or store any luggage if your room is not ready yet. There is no sightseeing today.



Destination Information

Saigon - Saigon is one of the world's truly cosmopolitan cities with a history, culture and style obtained from colonial France, ancient China and the art deco era. Once the main port of Cambodia's Mekong territory, Saigon became the capital of France's Cochinchina and later the capital of the Republic of Vietnam. It remained the capital of South Vietnam until reunification at the end of the American War in Vietnam in 1975, when the capital was moved to Hanoi.

Day 2: Saigon

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

This morning drive 2 hours to discover the amazing network of the Cu Chi Tunnels. Sightseeing here involves 2 hours on foot on uneven mud paths through the bush and, if you choose, crawling through some of the tunnels. You will pass the Notre Dame Cathedral before visiting the Reunification Palace, the Central Post Office, the War Remnants Museum. Sightseeing in central Saigon will be approximately 3 hours.



Please note: The Notre Dame Cathedral will be under renovation for 2 years, starting in July 2017. During this time we are unable to enter the Cathedral; however we can view it from the outside.

Destination Information

Cu Chi Tunnels - the tunnels of Cu Chi are an immense network of connecting underground tunnels located in the Cu Chi district of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam, and are part of a much larger network of tunnels that underlie much of the country. The Cu Chi tunnels were the location of several military campaigns during the Vietnam War, and were the Viet Cong's base of operations for the Tet Offensive in 1968. The tunnels were used by Viet Cong soldiers as hiding spots during combat, as well as serving as communication and supply routes, hospitals, food and weapon caches and living quarters for numerous North Vietnamese fighters.

Reunification Palace - Built on the site of the former Norodom Palace, is a landmark in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. It was designed by architect Ngô Viết Thụ and was the home and workplace of the President of South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. It was the site of the end of the Vietnam War during the Fall of Saigon on 30th April 1975, when a North Vietnamese Army tank crashed through its gates.

Central Post Office - Located next to the Notre-Dame Cathedral. The Central Post Office building was constructed in the late 19th century. It counts Gothic, Renaissance and French influences and was designed by Auguste Henri Vildieu and Alfred Foulhoux, but is often erroneously credited as being the work of Gustave Eiffel.

Notre Dame Cathedral - Influenced by French design and built between 1863 and 1880, the red brick exterior and 60-meter bell towers overlook downtown Saigon.

War Remnants Museum - Comprised of numerous buildings displaying military equipment, photographs and artefacts relating to the Vietnam War from 1961-1975. This museum illustrates a harrowing period in this nation's history.

Day 3: Saigon – Mekong Delta

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Head south for 2 hours to Ben Tre, gateway to the Mekong Delta. Here, you will take a boat ride on the river, observing daily life and the beautiful scenery, passing by the mangrove and palm trees along the river bank. Visit a handy brickkiln, a coconut processing workshop and a candy workshop. Continue boating through the winding natural canal whilst discovering the rural countryside. Visit a farmer's house making sleep mats. Take a bicycle on paths to a local house for lunch and continue on a rowing boat along the canal. Ride on coconut tree-shaded paths through the village, and stop at Mr. Sau Khanh's house – a local man who has collected a lot of ancient ceramics, potteries like bowls, vases and sculptures originally from Asia.



You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for your trip to the Mekong Delta. Main luggage will be left in safe storage at the hotel in Saigon and picked up on your return.

Destination Information

Mekong Delta - Although primarily rural, the Mekong Delta is a densely populated area where life progresses around its fertile banks. The Mekong Delta is the 13th longest, and the 10th largest, by volume alone and people live, trade, travel and even go to school on the riverbanks. The rice which is cultivated in the many farming lands is said to be enough to supply the entire country with a little extra.

Day 4: Mekong Delta – Saigon

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Drive to Cho Lach district and pay a visit to Vinh Bac bonsai and flower village, where we will stop to admire and take photos of several kinds of bonsai. Tourists can interact with the locals by finding out about the feeding and the growing of the plants. Finally make a visit to the Cai Nhum Cathedral before driving 2 to 3 hours' back to Saigon.

This evening is free, or there are three optional excursions available:

1) Dinner and a performance of the AO Show, a music, dance and acrobatic spectacular at the Saigon Opera House (US\$80pp)

**Please note because of schedule changes this may not be available to book on certain dates.*

- 2) A tour of Saigon at night riding pillion on a Vespa (US\$150pp)
- 3) Discover the varied and delicious flavours of Vietnamese street food on a tour of Saigon's very best street eats (US\$50pp)

Day 5: Saigon – Hoi An

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

This afternoon fly to Danang, the nearest airport to charming Hoi An. This afternoon, enjoy a half-day walking tour. Your journey through Hoi An's flower-lined streets includes stops at several famous landmarks. The first is Chua Ong Pagoda, dating back to 1653 and built in honour of the Chinese general Quan Cong, who is worshipped by many as a symbol of loyalty and justice. Next, visit the Phuc Kien Assembly Hall, to see the Jinshang Temple which is dedicated to the goddess of the sea and the protector of sailors. Then it's a short walk to Tam Ky House, a 200 year old ancestral house and finally, stroll across the much photographed 17th century Japanese covered bridge. The beautifully built bridge doubles as a temple and is a major landmark of Hoi An. Visit the Reaching Out Arts and Crafts Workshop which is a social enterprise, training and employing people with disabilities.



Destination Information

Hoi An - Perhaps more than any other place in Vietnam, Hoi An retains the feel of centuries past. Once known as Faifo, Hoi An was an influential port along the Silk Road. For over 500 years merchants from China, Japan, France and Portugal settled in the prosperous town resulting in a distinctive blend of culture, cuisine, religion and architecture.

Japanese Covered Bridge - First constructed in the 1590s to link the Japanese and Chinese quarters of the town. This iconic pink hued bridge has been restored to its former splendour.

Reaching Out – Provides opportunities for people with disabilities to learn skills and gain meaningful employment. The arts and crafts workshop provides a platform for local people to showcase their talents.

Day 6: Hoi An

Meals included: Breakfast

Today is at leisure.

Optional Tours:

- 1) A half day cooking class tour (US\$65pp)
- 2) A farmer and fisherman full day tour (US\$90pp)



Day 7: Hoi An – Hue

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Today drive approximately 4 hours to Hue, via the stunning Hai Van Pass. Stop en route to visit the tallest Buddha statue in Vietnam located at Linh Ung Pagoda on Son Tra Peninsula in Da Nang, and enjoy a panoramic view of the city of Danang and the beach surrounded by fine white sand shore.

Day 8: Hue

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Hue is the epitome of Vietnam's dynamic past, and considered a scholarly city. Take a cyclo-ride to visit the Imperial Citadel and the Forbidden Purple City which is still being restored many years after the destruction caused by street fighting and bombing during the American War in Vietnam. Hop back into your vehicle to visit the Royal Tomb of Minh Mang; the complex comprises of almost 40 monuments and is surrounded by gardens and pools, making it one of the more beautiful tombs. After lunch, move on to a beautiful old maison that has been transformed to an art space and workshop by a team of enthusiastic young artists. Watch the process of how the artists make souvenirs from bamboo pulp. Continue by road to Thien Mu Pagoda and take a cruise on the Perfume River.

**Destination Information**

Hue - was the former imperial capital of Vietnam and the imperial palace is based on the Forbidden City in Beijing.

Imperial Citadel - A walled fortress accompanied by cannons, artilleries and surrounded by a moat for protection. Inside the Citadel are numerous gates, courtyards and the Forbidden Purple City.

Thien Mu Pagoda - This seven-storey octagonal tower built on a hillock, overlooking the Perfume River is Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda. Wander the grounds where bonsai, ponds and the smell of incense set a peaceful backdrop.

Day 9: Hue – Hanoi

Meals included: Breakfast

Today is at leisure until you fly approximately 1 hour to Hanoi, Vietnam's colonially-influenced, atmospheric capital. This evening is free.

Destination Information

Hanoi - With a population of approximately four million, Hanoi is a charming and richly historic city of lakes, shaded boulevards and leafy open parks. The centre is an architectural museum piece housing groups of ochre coloured buildings holding the air of provincial French towns of the 1930s, a "Paris of the Orient" as people have called it.

Day 10: Hanoi

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

This morning you will visit Ba Dinh square and the Ho Chi Minh complex, passing the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum & House on Stilts, followed by the Museum of Ethnology. This afternoon, visit the Confucian Temple of Literature and then Ngoc Son temple. This afternoon, enjoy a cyclo ride in the old quarter and a traditional Vietnamese coffee. Later, enjoy a performance of the famous Water Puppets, which have a history dating back thousands of years.



Please note: The Ethnology Museum is closed on Mondays and on Vietnamese New Year. If your visit falls on these days, you will go to the Vietnamese Women's Museum as an alternative.

Destination Information

Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum – is a large memorial, located in Ba Dinh Square. It is the final resting place of Ho Chi Minh, who announced Vietnam's independence in the same location in 1945.

Ethnology Museum –At the Ethnology Museum you will learn about the minority groups of Hanoi, including the black and red H'mong hill people. The museum is made up of an inside and outside area. The outside area displays traditional Vietnamese houses.

Temple of Literature – Dating back to 11th century, the Temple of Literature has long played an important centre for Confucianism and scholarly learning.

Day 11: Hanoi - Mai Chau

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Depart at 8.30am from your hotel and head towards Mai Chau. The ride from Hanoi to Mai Chau takes about four hours, and you won't be bored by the lush scenery. Around noon, you will arrive at Mai Chau Lodge and enjoy a freshly prepared lunch. In the afternoon, start your journey to discover the interesting surroundings and ethnic minority tribes with a relaxing walk to Thái villages of Pom Coong and Lac and explore Mo Luong cave on the other side of the hotel. As you'll discover, Mai Chau offers a mix of culture and adventure set against one of Vietnam's most striking backdrops. There are waterfalls, towering limestone mountains, rice paddies, corn fields, bamboo groves and terraced tea plantations. Relax at the lodge, a rustic-but-comfortable retreat with an outdoor pool and Roman-style Jacuzzi. Enjoy a dinner of Vietnamese dishes, followed by traditional dancing by members of the local ethnic-minority group in Lac village.



Please note: Mountain trails can become slippery in wet weather so please ensure you have sturdy and comfortable walking shoes.

Day 12: Mai Chau

Meals included: Breakfast

Today is at leisure, or you can choose between the following experiences:

- 1) Spend the day walking amongst the incredible limestone landscapes of Pu Luong Nature Reserve (US\$96pp)
- 2) A cycling adventure through Mai Chau, an alternative way to see this beautiful, untouched area (2 hours) (US\$30pp)

Day 13: Mai Chau – Hanoi

Meals included: Breakfast

This morning is at leisure. In the afternoon, you will drive back to Hanoi.

Day 14: Hanoi – Halong Bay

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Drive 4 hours today from Hanoi to Halong, where you will take an overnight cruise to the far-most corners of the bay. Boarding your boat could involve navigating your way over and through other boats, moored between it and the dock, sometimes without handrails, ladders or assistance from staff.

Enjoy lunch onboard as you cruise out into the bay, stopping to anchor for an afternoon of activities (which are subject to change due to cruise selection and weather conditions).

Sightseeing includes visiting underground caves on the islands, which require climbing up and down steps inside and outside of the caves. End the day on deck with a drink in hand to watch the sunset over the bay followed by a freshly prepared dinner, before retiring to your cabin for the night.



You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for your trip to Halong Bay. Main luggage will be left in safe storage at the hotel in Hanoi and picked up your return.

Please note: Weather conditions such as mist, fog, wind, rain and storms may delay the departure time of your cruise, or in some cases your cruise may be cancelled. Notifications of any delays or cancellations may not be known until your group's arrival in Halong Bay. If your cruise is cancelled after your arrival in Halong Bay, you will have lunch in Halong City and return to Hanoi. If notification of the cruise cancellation is given prior to your departure for Halong Bay an alternative day trip will be arranged to Hoa Lu and Tam Coc or 'Halong Bay on Land', an area located approximately 2 hours from Hanoi. Our guides will make every effort to inform the group at the earliest possible moment should there be any itinerary changes.

Destination Information

Halong Bay - Compared to the landscape of the limestone islets of Guilin in China and Krabi in southern Thailand, Halong Bay shares a common border with China in the north and harbours some of the most stunning scenery in Vietnam. Unique rock sculptures jut out dramatically from the clear emerald waters of the Gulf of Tonkin and numerous grottoes have created an enchanting, timeless world, looking out onto the horizon with the sails of the junks and sampans completing the picture.

Day 15: Halong Bay – Hanoi

Meals included: Brunch

Spend the morning sailing through Halong Bay. After an early lunch (or brunch meal) disembark your cruise and return to Hanoi in the afternoon.

Day 16: Hanoi – Luang Prabang

Meals included: Breakfast

Today is at leisure until your flight to Luang Prabang.

In Hanoi, before you fly, you have the option to:

- 1) Enjoy a half day cooking class (US\$85pp)
- 2) Take a walking tour of Hanoi's heritage and history (US\$45pp)

**Destination Information**

Luang Prabang - The capital of Luang Prabang Province in northern Laos, lies in a valley at the confluence of the Mekong and Nam Khan rivers. It's known for its many Buddhist temples, including the gilded Wat Xieng Thong, dating to the 16th century, and Wat Mai, once the residence of the head of Laotian Buddhism.

Day 17: Luang Prabang

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Rise early to the sound of the temple gong and witness Luang Prabang's mystical ritual. In the cool of the early morning, a daily procession of about three hundred young monks walk silently by, collecting sticky rice and other foods in their bronze bowls. The ritual is linked to a Buddhist tradition in which monks beg for their daily food as a way to demonstrate humility. The early morning is the perfect time to stroll through Luang Prabang's morning market where you will see the locals haggling for fresh meat, fruit and vegetables.



Afterwards, travel a short distance to the stunning Kuang Si Waterfalls where you can take a swim. The falls cascade over many calcified tiers and down several metres into a series of cool, turquoise pools. Then, visit the Sun Bear Reserve a conservation centre that rescues these furry creatures from the wildlife trade. This afternoon, explore many of the former royal capital's cultural highlights. You'll visit Wat Xieng Thong, one of the largest and most decorative temples, and climb 328 steps to the top of Mount Phousi and enjoy panoramic views of the city.

You also have the following option:

1. See a Baci ceremony take place (US\$55pp)

Destination Information

Kuang Si Waterfalls - A three tier waterfall about 29 kilometres south of Luang Prabang. The falls begin in shallow pools atop a steep hillside. These lead to the main fall with a 60 metres cascade. The falls are accessed via a trail to a left of the falls. Water collects in numerous turquoise blue pools as it flows downstream. The many cascades that result are typical of travertine waterfalls. There are walkways and bridges for your enjoyment. Most of the pools are open to swimming.

Wat Xieng Thong - A Buddhist temple (wat), located on the northern tip of the peninsula of Luang Prabang, Laos. Wat Xieng Thong is one of the most important of Lao monasteries and remains a significant monument to the spirit of religion, royalty and traditional art. There are over twenty structures on the grounds including a sim, shrines, pavilions and residences, in addition to its gardens of various flowers, ornamental shrubs and trees.

Day 18: Luang Prabang – Vientiane

Meals included: Breakfast

Today is at leisure until your flight to Vientiane.

Optional Tours in Luang Prabang before you fly:

- 1) Learn about all the traditional uses of bamboo, from products to food with a bamboo experience (US\$80pp)
- 2) Travel up the Mekong by boat to visit the Pak Ou Caves (US\$70pp)

Day 19: Vientiane

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Nestled in a languid bend in the Mekong, Vientiane is a delightfully quaint city, more a friendlier backwater than the chaotic capital. Spend your day exploring Wat Si Saket, and Wat Phrakeo before visiting COPE - an organisation helping survivors of land mines. Continue your sightseeing at That Luang Stupa and the Patuxai Victory Monument, resembling Paris' Arc de Triomphe. This afternoon, discover the weird, wonderful and quirky statues of Buddha Park just 25km outside of Vientiane. Tonight, enjoy dinner and a traditional performance showcasing Lao music and dance.



Destination Information

Buddha Park - The park is the folly of Luang Pu Bunleua Sulilat, a monk, shaman and mystic of Hinduism and Buddhism. Untrained in sculpture, Sulilat and his students created more than 200 cement statues filled with cryptic symbols of horror and fantasy. Keep your eye out for the skeleton thin Buddhas, a giant pumpkin with a demon head, a gigantic 40m long reclining Buddha, or a Shiva with eight arms of swords.

Day 20: Vientiane – Phnom Penh

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Today fly an hour and a half to Phnom Penh.

**Destination Information**

Phnom Penh - The capital of the Kingdom of Cambodia is built around four river arms formed by a sharp curve in the Mekong River near the junctions of the Bassac and the Tonle Sap tributaries. This charming city has a pleasant blend of oriental and colonial architecture, but reminders of a troubled past are also evident.

Day 21: Phnom Penh

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Start a cyclo ride to visit Wat Phnom, the Royal Palace, built by King Norodom in 1866 on the site of the old town, and the Silver Pagoda, located within the grounds of the Royal Palace. The treasures found inside includes a solid gold Buddha encrusted and weighing 90 kilograms and a small 17th century emerald and baccarat crystal Buddha. Continue to visit the National Museum (called Musée des Beaux-Arts) which is one of Phnom Penh's true architectural gems.

This afternoon is free, with two optional extra experiences:

- 1) A visit to Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and the Killing Fields, which tell the story of the reign of the Khmer Rouge (US\$45pp)
- 2) A boat trip up the Mekong to Silk Island to visit a silk weaving village. (US\$75pp)

Destination Information

The Royal Palace - Built in 1866 by the French these ornate buildings are the official residence of the reigning Cambodian royal family and King Sihamoni. View the Throne Hall and Silver Pagoda.

Silver Pagoda - This concrete and marble structure includes a floor with over 5,000 silver tiles each weighing 1kg. Famous artefacts include a 90kg solid gold Buddha made in 1907 and an Emerald Buddha said to be made of baccarat crystal.

National Museum - Housing the world's finest collection of Khmer pottery, bronzes and sculptures dating from the 4th century.

Day 22: Phnom Penh – Siem Reap

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Today you will fly 1 hour to Siem Reap, the gateway to the Temples of Angkor!

**Destination Information**

Siem Reap – Known as the gateway to Angkor, the architecture in Siem Reap is heavily influenced by Chinese, French and Khmer styles. Siem Reap literally translates as ‘Defeat of Siam’, a reference to a historical battle between the Khmer people and the Thai Siam people.

Day 23: Siem Reap

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Take an early morning tuk tuk to visit the South Gate of Angkor Thom where statues of the gods of good and evil line the entrance. Your next stop is the Bayon, known for the hundreds of smiling faces that grace the towers. Move on to Phimeanakas, shaped a bit like a pyramid with two ponds in the rear. The ponds were once used for religious rituals but today serve as swimming pools for Khmer kids. Walk to the top of the temple for impressive views of the Angkor complex. See the rows of trunks that form the wall of the Terrace of the Elephants, a platform from which King Jayavarman surveyed his army. Close by is the Terrace of Leper Kings, which includes a statue depicting Yana, the Hindu god of death. Then it’s a short drive to one of the most loved temples of all - Ta Prohm. Then later in the afternoon explore the magnificent Angkor Wat, the world’s largest religious monument. Relax on-board a boat to view the sunset on Angkor Thom’s moat before heading to watch a performance by the PHARE Cambodian Circus, an NGO which teaches street children to become internationally renowned circus artists.

Please note: The Central Tower of the Angkor Wat complex is closed on Buddhist holidays and on all other days has a limited number of visitors allowed at any given time, under regulations from UNESCO. If you wish to visit this tower, you will be required to wait in the queue alongside all other visitors. The ability to do this will be determined upon the groups’ schedule.

Destination Information

Ta Prohm - Swallowed by the jungle where Strangler Figs and Kapok Trees have entwined themselves around the ruins. Undoubtedly, the most atmospheric ruin at Angkor with several towers, closed courtyards and narrow corridors to explore.

Angkor Thom - This fortified city is flanked by a row of 54 stone figures on each side, which leads you through a 23-metre imposing stone entrance gate to the various temples inside.

Bayon - Beautifully crafted central towers, decorated with four opposing faces representing King Jayavarman VII. Bayon’s stone galleries display extraordinary bas-reliefs incorporating over 11,000 figures.

Elephant Terrace and Terrace of the Leper King - Giant viewing platforms used for public ceremonies, which served as a base for the King's grand audience hall.

Angkor Wat - Surrounded by a 190-metre moat and taking 30 years to build, Angkor Wat represents the Khmer civilisation at its grandest. With its fascinating decorative flourishes, extensive bas-relief and multiple tiers, it is the best-preserved temple within the complex.

Day 24: Siem Reap

Meals included: Breakfast

Today you can decide to enjoy a free day or to take part in one of the following optional tours. Choose between:

- 1) A full day amongst rural Cambodian communities, learning about their daily life and trying your hand at fishing, farming or animal husbandry. (US\$80pp)
- 2) Head into the dense forest close to Tonle Sap lake to explore the hidden temple of Beng Mealea (US\$70pp)

Day 25: Siem Reap

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

In the high water season, you will visit Kompong Khleang – a fully-fledged village of both floating and stilted houses, here you'll get a glimpse of real Cambodian village. In the lower water season, you will visit Chong Kneas floating village. Return to Siem Reap via a Cambodian artistry assembly - Les Artisan D'Angkor before arriving back at your hotel this evening. Tonight, enjoy dinner while watching an Apsara dance performance.



Destination Information

Beng Mealea - Dating from the 11th century, this sprawling temple covers over one square kilometre. Largely overrun by vegetation and constructed in a distinctly Angkor Wat-style, Beng Mealea precedes and may even have served as a 'prototype' for Angkor Wat.

Artisan D'Angkor - Established in 1998, this community workshop teaches the unique arts of painting, silk weaving, wood and stone carving in traditional Cambodian style to local young people.

Days 26-27: Depart Siem Reap

Meals included: Breakfast

Today you will be transferred around 1 hour to the airport to fly back to Australia, arriving home the following day.

Late check-out is not included in our South East Asia group tours. If you wish to book a late check-out for your final day, please contact our reservations department who can confirm additional pricing and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel.

Indochina: The Big One - Travel Information

Visas

Entry visas are required by all visitors to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa.

We will supply you with all paperwork and submit the visa application on your behalf. Visas for Vietnam are issued with specific start and expiry dates which are based on the dates stated on the visa application form. Travel must be completed within those dates. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

Visa application forms and all relevant documentation are due in our office **75 days prior to departure**; if received after this, urgent visa processing fees will apply. Also, please note we do not accept passports and visa applications within 30 days prior to departure. Passports will be returned with your Final Documentation **four weeks prior to your group tour's scheduled departure**. If you require your passport to be returned earlier, a \$15AUD courier fee will apply.

Insurance

We strongly encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the originals.

Evenings at Leisure

To give you more flexibility and choice when travelling on selected Immerse Yourself range; we have carefully balanced special highlight meals with evenings at leisure so that you can explore the many culinary delights that Southeast Asia has to offer. Alternatively, you can use this time to enjoy the facilities of your hotel. Your National Escort will be happy to provide you with advice about good places to eat, and assist in the booking of transportation to get you there (at your own expense).

Eating in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in most local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region actually has its own distinct characteristics. Vietnam, for example, is perhaps best known for its fresh and aromatic dishes – relying heavily on flavours from fresh herbs such as mint, basil and dill.



Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead. When dining in Southeast Asia, although some restaurants have adopted a western approach to dining, expect some restaurants to follow the traditional communal style of eating. Typically, this will mean each diner has their own small bowl and may serve themselves from a variety of shared dishes. At some local restaurants, appetizers and main courses might be served when they are ready.

Determining when it's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. In Vietnam, dishes are normally placed in the centre and people serve food for themselves with their own chopsticks and bowl. In Thailand and some other countries in Southeast Asia, fork and spoon are used for most dishes and chopsticks are typically provided to eat noodles. Usually chopsticks or other utensils are provided to scoop the food into your bowl to prevent your own chopsticks from touching the food that remains on the table. There aren't many rules when dining in Southeast Asia. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Please refer to your travel guide for more information on Southeast Asian cuisine, including information for travellers with restricted diets.

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and Southeast



Asia. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs. Please note that double bed requests can be made at time of booking but can't be guaranteed.

Solo travellers:

If you are a solo traveller and willing to share a room, you will not have to pay a single supplement for any hotel rooms.

Willing to share single travellers booking within 75 days of the first day of a group tour will be subject to availability. If no suitable match is available at time of booking you will be required to pay all single supplements.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. **However, mini buses may be used for smaller groups (under 10 passengers).**

Roads in South East Asia have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

Seatbelts: Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in South East Asia and therefore the local people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason, some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving. If you have any concerns, please notify your National Escort/Local Guides.

Air: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Pre-flight seat allocation is not available on international and internal flight sectors

Development in Southeast Asia

Although Southeast Asia is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in Australia. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in Australia; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides.

Vietnam, Laos & Cambodia public holidays

If you are travelling within the below Vietnamese Public Holidays please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Tourist attractions will be open but may be crowded. Tet Holiday is between 4th to the 8th February 2019, International Labour Day is on 1st May every year, Reunification Day is on 30th April every year and National Independence Day is on 2nd September every year.

In Laos: International Women's Day - 8th March, Laos New Year Holiday 13th – 17th April.

In Cambodia: Khmer New Year is 13th – 17th April every year, the King's birthday is 14th – 16th May and the Water festival is between 21st – 23rd November. We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions, which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone, so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

Souvenirs

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Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 18 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as

Tipping Policy

we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides instead of a National Escort.

Local tipping is customary in Asia. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time.



For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in US Dollars and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy, but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

Packing list and Climate

Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the 'Suggested Packing List', which will be included in the pre-departure information link sent within your deposit documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on www.weather.com

Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable.

Exchanging Cash

It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling outside major cities in Vietnam. US Dollars are easily exchanged throughout Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, however other currencies such as Australian Dollars can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are new and undamaged. US Dollars should be from the new series from the year 2003 onwards. Old series notes can be difficult to exchange, apart from in some national banks in Vietnam, such as Vietcombank. We suggest for your convenience that you ensure your US Dollars are from the new series to avoid any difficulties exchanging money during your trip.

We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of \$350AUD per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour at an additional cost. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide.

Climbing Steps

Cultural Difference

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside. People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have many religions, cultures and histories. Please be considerate of the local beliefs and customs and dress with consideration.

Appropriate Dress

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques.

Religious sites and homes throughout South East Asia – for Hindus, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory, so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove your shoes, you will have to remain outside.

We recommend shoes that easily slip on and off and carry a pair of thick socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces. The following itinerary will indicate when you need to consider this.

Vaccinations and Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.travelvax.com.au

Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.smartraveller.gov.au as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit

After your booking

documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

Last updated: 16 May 2019