



## Grand Tour of Indochina Tour Dossier

### Classic Tour | 27 Days | Moderate

Saigon – Hoi An – Sapa – Hanoi – Halong Bay – Luang Prabang – Vang Vieng – Vientiane – Phnom Penh – Siem Reap

Witness the traditions, scenery and sights of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Stand astounded by the intricacies of Angkor, the majesty of Halong Bay and the tranquility of Luang Prabang.

#### Tour Highlights:

**Saigon** - Vietnam's most cosmopolitan and vibrant city

**Mekong Delta** - 'Rice Basket of Vietnam' and home to many living, working and travelling along the river

**Hoi An** - Discover this charming UNESCO World Heritage listed site.

**Hue** - The country's former capital

**Hanoi** - Exploration of this charming, historical centre & its French provincial influences

**Sapa** - A French Hill station nestled within the mountains high above Hanoi and is home to many colourful ethnic groups

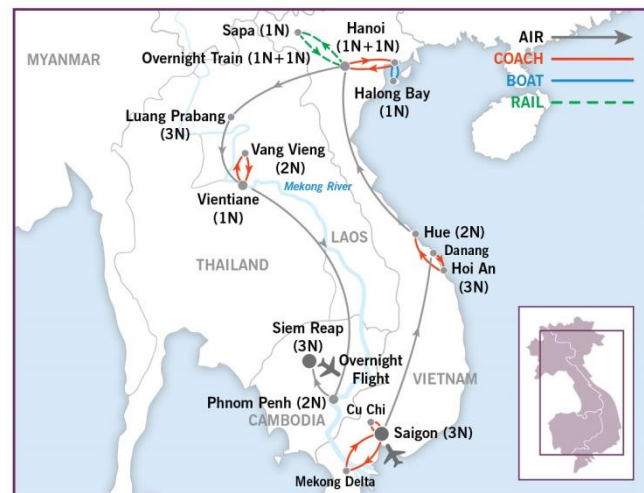
**Halong Bay** - Vietnam's 'jewel in the crown'; the stunning beauty of the 3,000 islets of the Gulf of Tonkin

**Luang Prabang** - Entry point into Laos & UNESCO World Heritage listed town which retains original character

**Vang Vieng** - Idyllic natural scenery.

**Vientiane** - Capital of Laos: a charming city filled with villas and boulevards

**Phnom Penh** - Capital of Cambodia surrounded by the Mekong; home to majestic palaces and pagoda's



**Siem Reap** - Gateway to the Angkor Wat temple complex.

### Grand Tour of Indochina tour inclusions

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English-speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers)
- Visa fees for Australian passport holders

*Personal expenditures 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 are at your own expense.*

### Classic Tours

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Indochina on an excellent value group tour travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

### Moderate

'Grand Tour of Indochina' a **moderate** tour. This means that the itinerary requires a good level of fitness.

- On several days there will be sightseeing on foot for extended periods of time including some hiking in Sapa
- Throughout the tour you will be required to get on and off varying sizes of boats without assistance

Of course, our National Escort 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 now underway 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.

### Itinerary Changes

1. 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.

2. The domestic airlines in this region have frequent schedule changes. For this reason, we have indicated morning, afternoon or evening flights only in the following section. Your Local Guide or National Escort will inform you of any schedule.
3. The Halong Bay Authorities are taking extra precautions to ensure the safety of all passengers cruising around Halong Bay. 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 where you will spend the evening in a hotel. 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.
4. 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.
5. Some improvements have been made to the 2017 itinerary to enhance your experience.
  - To make the tour more comfortable journey, passengers will now fly from Luang Prabang to Vientiane and drive to Vang Vieng on Day 18.

### Joining Your Tour

The tour is 27 days in duration including international flights. Travellers booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the starting point. Join the tour on Day 1 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.

### Important Information Regarding Flight Delays

Due to unforeseen circumstances, flights can be delayed, and therefore connecting flights may be missed. If you find yourself in this situation, please contact our Vietnam office on **+84 989 559 488 (24 hours)** to urgently advise your arrival details have changed. Please ensure you have your trip number, tour name (both included in your final documentation) and new arrival details (flight number and arrival time) handy to pass on to our local office in Vietnam. This will ensure your National Escort/Local Guide can be informed of your most up to date information and ensure someone is at the airport to meet you on arrival.

If we are not advised of late changes and missed connections, Wendy Wu Tours cannot guarantee someone will be able to meet you upon arrival in Vietnam as our local office will have no way of knowing which flight you will be arriving on. Wendy Wu Tours will not be responsible for providing reimbursement of transportation costs from the airport to your hotel in the event that our local office was not advised of changes to arrival time.

## Grand Tour of Indochina Itinerary

### DAY 1: AUSTRALIA TO SAIGON

Fly with Vietnam Airlines to Saigon for a three-night stay. Your National Escort/Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours will meet you at the Saigon International Airport in the Arrivals Hall. Together with other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer to your hotel and check-in. In the event of flight delays or changes to arrival times, please see the details above as to what to do in this circumstance.

#### Destination Information

**Saigon** - The exuberant city of Saigon is driving Vietnam forward into the modern world, but is also a treasure trove

of fascinating heritage. During the 1960s and early 1970s, Saigon was the Pearl of the Orient, which flourished under the American occupation. In more recent times, it was the seat of the South Vietnam government until the events that led to the country's reunification. Today, the old mixes seamlessly with the new and you can wander through timeless alleys to incense-infused temples before catching up with the present in designer malls beneath sleek skyscrapers.

### DAY 2: DISCOVER SAIGON

This morning confront the reality of guerrilla warfare at the Cu Chi Tunnels. The cramped tunnels were central to a few

of the war's strategic operations, including the famous 1968 Tet Offensive, and they did not escape damage. American B52 bombers dropped hundreds of missiles leaving huge tell-tale craters behind. The Cu Chi experience can be emotional for some visitors, but it offers a fascinating window into the hardship and traumas of war. This afternoon explore bustling Saigon with its heady mix of local culture and colonial influences. Visit Notre Dame Cathedral and the Central Post Office before strolling along Dong Khoi street to Saigon Opera House. Then visit Reunification Palace and the chilling War Remnants Museum. You will spend approximately 4 to 5 hours on foot today sightseeing.

#### **Destination Information**

**Cu Chi** - 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. The tunnel systems were of great importance to the Viet Cong in their resistance to American forces, and helped to counter the growing American military effort.

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

**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.

**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 Ngo Viet Thu 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.

**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: MEKONG DELTA**

Drive 2 and a half hours down to the picturesque province of Ben Tre situated along the mighty Mekong. This area is known as the 'Rice Basket of Vietnam', because its rich and fertile lands produce large amounts of rice, coconuts, vegetables and tropical fruit. Spend the day cruising and exploring these waterways by traditional Sampan boat. Sightseeing involves hopping on and off these boats, often on unsteady and slippery surfaces, sometimes without handrails or assistance.

#### **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 river 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: EXPLORE HOI AN**

This afternoon fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to Danang and transfer 45 minutes to the Ancient town of Hoi An for your 2 night stay. Enjoy a walking tour this afternoon of this laid back and wilfully traditional UNESCO listed town to see a traditional house occupied by the same merchant family that originally built it over 200 years ago, Quan Cong Chinese Temple and the elaborate Japanese Covered Bridge.

#### **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.

#### **DAY 5: HOI AN**

This morning visit a local community farming project just outside of Hoi An - Tra Que village where the community has come together to create a large vegetable farm. Learn the traditional methods the farmers use to plant, fertilise and harvest the crop, then try your hand at raking the ground and sowing seeds. The remainder of the afternoon is free at your leisure.

### **Destination Information**

**Tra Que Village** - Located a few kilometres from Hoi An, this picturesque village is renowned for its agriculture. Witness local farming techniques and learn about different exotic Vietnamese produce.

### **DAY 6: HOI AN**

Today is free for you to explore the ancient town, or go to the beach.

### **DAY 7: IMPERIAL HUE**

Drive approximately 4 hours to Hue, this journey will take you over the scenic Hai Van Pass. Hue is the epitome of Vietnam's dynamic past, and considered a scholarly city. Upon arrival, explore 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.

### **Destination Information**

**Hue** - Having been the imperial capital from 1802 until 1945 after the last emperor abdicated; Hue is still regarded as the centre of Vietnam's culture and religion. The city is dominated by the Imperial Citadel that is modelled on the Forbidden City in China. There are many wonderful pagodas and temples of high significance and it contains the Grand Tombs of the Nguyen Emperors.

**Royal Tomb of Minh Mang** - Emperor Minh Mang reigned in the Nguyen Dynasty, the last of the Vietnamese dynasties, from 1820-1840. The construction of his tomb was completed after his death and is said to have taken approximately 10,000 workers to complete. The complex comprises of almost 40 monuments and is surrounded by gardens and pools, making it one of the more beautiful tombs in Vietnam.

### **Day 8: HUE**

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. Continue by road to Thien Mu Pagoda before taking a cruise on the Perfume River.

### **Destination Information**

**Forbidden Purple City** - Constructed for personal use by the Imperial family, their concubines and eunuchs. This royal structure is still being restored many years after the destruction caused by street fighting and bombing during the American war in Vietnam. Wander the grounds and

foundations whilst viewing the remaining woodwork and architecture.

**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: JOURNEY TO HANOI**

This morning fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to the charming city of Hanoi to check in to your hotel. Experience an exhilarating cyclo ride through Hanoi's Old Quarter. Each cyclo takes one passenger and is operated by a cycle driver behind the carriage. This evening enjoy a traditional Water Puppet show.

### **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.

**Hanoi Old Quarter** - A maze of streets weaving through Hanoi and dating back to the 13th century. Each street specialises in merchants and artisans selling their wares of silk, silver, wood and more.

**Water Puppets** - Vietnamese Water Puppets were invented thousands of years ago by farmers in the Red River Delta region near Hanoi, as a means to entertain themselves when the rains flooded their paddy fields. Today puppeteers stand in waist deep water and control the puppets via poles and strings. Most plays focus on folklores and tales of rural life.

### **DAY 10: HANOI**

Enjoy a morning at leisure before visiting the Temple of Literature and the Ethnology Museum that is widely acknowledged as the best in the country, with an extensive display dedicated to Vietnam's 54 ethnic minority people. This evening transfer to the station to board your overnight train to Lao Cai station. You may have to carry your luggage over numerous train tracks to reach your platform and carriage because of the layout of Hanoi station. You will be sharing a 4 berth cabin with other passengers who may not be part of the Wendy Wu Tours group. Private use of the cabin is available but it is at an additional cost. Wear

comfortable clothes on board to sleep in and take snacks as none are readily available. This journey usually takes 9 hours (over 340km) and can be quite bumpy.

*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.*

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

#### **Destination Information**

**Temple of Literature** - Hanoi's first university dating back to 1070 and a historical centre of learning, now dedicated to Confucian worship.

**Ethnology Museum** - Numerous artefacts from 54 different ethnic minorities across Vietnam are on display here. Gain an insight into the heritage and diversity of the country while wandering the exhibitions.

#### **DAY 11: SAPA COUNTRYSIDE**

Arrive into Lao Cai station early this morning and drive on a winding, mountainous road up to Sapa. Store your luggage at the hotel before a half day light trek to Ban Khoang village visiting the Black H'mong and Red Dzao minority people.

*Please ensure you have sturdy walking shoes as the mountain trails can be slippery when wet.*

#### **Destination Information**

**Sapa** - Located 1,600m above sea level and close to the Chinese border. This mountainous area with its spectacular landscapes and temperate climate is sure to make a lasting impression on its visitors. The H'mong and Dao people, the largest and most colourful ethnic groups in the region, are a cultural highlight.

#### **DAY 12: SAPA**

After breakfast, you will take a light trek, for approximately 1 hour to Cat Cat village inhabited by the Black H'mong people, located west of Sapa at the foot of Fansipan Mountain. You will have a chance to visit a stunning waterfall and the remains of a hydraulic power station built by the French in 1925. Later transfer to Lao Cai railway station to board your overnight sleeper train back to Hanoi.

#### **Destination Information**

**Black H'mong Tribe** – Migrating from China in the 19th Century, the Black H'mong wear distinctive indigo dyed linen typically accompanied by aprons, leggings and cylindrical hats. They are now one of the largest ethnic groups in Vietnam, cultivating the lands of Sapa with rice and medicinal plants.

#### **DAY 13: CRUISE HALONG BAY**

Arrive early in Hanoi and freshen up before driving 4 hours to Halong, where you will take an overnight cruise to the far-most corners of the bay on a traditional Vietnamese boat. There is usually a crowd of boats at the docks; however, the cruise itself will be scenic and relaxing. 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.

The boats usually hold about 40 passengers; have an enclosed dining area and an open area on the upper deck. 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.*

#### **DAY 14: HALONG BAY TO HANOI**

Spend the morning sailing through Halong Bay. After brunch disembark your cruise and return to Hanoi for an afternoon at leisure.

#### **DAY 15: FLY TO LUANG PRABANG**

Discover the sights of Hanoi this morning. First stop will be the Ho Chi Minh Quarter and visit Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, followed by the Humble House on Stilts and the One Pillar Pagoda. Have an afternoon at leisure and this evening say goodbye to Vietnam, transferring to the airport for your 1 hour flight to Luang Prabang.

*Please note: Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum is closed for entry on Mondays and Fridays every week and from September to December each year. During these times we are unable to enter the Mausoleum; however, we can view it from the outside.*

#### **Destination Information**

**Ho Chi Minh Quarter** - Dedicated to the father of modern Vietnam and where Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum stands in Ba Dinh Square. Ho Chi Minh first declared independence from French rule in 1945.

**One Pillar Pagoda** - Rebuilt in 1955 after damage during the French evacuation, the pagoda is made of wood and sits on a single pillar. Designed to reflect the shape of a lotus flower emerging from the water, it has become a popular spot for locals to enjoy the tranquil surroundings.

**Humble House on Stilts** - In the grounds of the Presidential Palace sits the 2 storey wooden home of Ho Chi Minh who ruled Vietnam from here until his death in 1969.

**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 16: TAKBAT**

Rise early this morning to witness Takbat, a Buddhist ceremony before climbing Phousi Hill for panoramic views of the city. Visit Wat Xieng Thong; before boarding a boat to cruise the mighty Mekong up to the sacred caves of Pak Ou, known for the hundreds of miniature Buddha sculptures that reside within. Return to Luang Prabang visiting the local villages to witness the daily life of the local people.

#### **Destination Information**

**Phousi Hill** - A 100m high hill in the centre of the old town of Luang Prabang. It lies in the heart of the old town peninsula and is bordered on one side by the Mekong River and on the other side by the Nam Khan River. The hill is a local religious site, and houses several Buddhist shrines. Halfway up the hill, overlooking the Nam Khan is Wat Tham Phou Si, a Buddhist temple. At the summit of the hill, overlooking the town and surrounding countryside, is Wat Chom Si, which is also a Buddhist temple and is a tourist highlight of Luang Prabang.

**Pak Ou Caves** – Near Pak Ou (mouth of the Ou river) the Tham Ting (lower cave) and the Tham Theung (upper cave) are caves overlooking the Mekong River, 25 km to the north of Luang Prabang, Laos. They are a group of two caves on the west side of the Mekong River, about two hours upstream from the centre of Luang Prabang. The caves are noted for their miniature Buddha sculptures. Hundreds of very small and mostly damaged wooden Buddhist figures are laid out over the wall shelves. They take many different positions, including meditation, teaching, peace, rain, and reclining (nirvana).

**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 17: KUANG SI WATERFALLS**

This morning visit the National Museum. Drive 1 hour to Kuang Si Waterfall, sightseeing at the waterfall will involve around 1 hour of light walking and on the way up to the waterfall you follow a bush walking track which has a slight upward gradient. It is possible to take a swim in the river near the falls and if you wish to do this, please remember to bring along your swimsuit and a towel. Changing rooms are available on site. Return to Luang Prabang stopping at Ban Na Ouane village and Ock Pop Tok Weaving Centre.

#### **Destination Information**

**National Museum** – Built in 1904 in the French colonial era, the original building was the Royal Palace that was later converted into a museum.

**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 accessible 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.

#### **DAY 18: TRAVEL TO VANG VIENG**

Fly 50 minutes to Vientiane and drive approximately 3 and half hours to Vang Vieng. On the way stop at Nam Nguem Lake and enjoy a short cruise.

#### **Destination Information**

**Vang Vieng** - A town in Vientiane Province about four hours bus ride north of the capital. The town lies on the Nam Song River. The most notable feature of the area is the karst hill landscape surrounding the town.

#### **DAY 19: EXPLORE VANG VIENG**

Today venture into the cave of Tham Chang. Sightseeing here involves approximately 1 hour on foot over uneven surfaces, and climbing steps to get up to the cave. Later enjoy an easy walking tour on the banks of the Nam Song River.

#### **Destination Information**

**Tham Chang Cave** - Tham Jang is a cave just to the southwest of Vang Vieng, Laos. The cave is reached by crossing a bridge that spans across the Nam Song River. You will need to then climb a long flight of steps to the entrance. A spring is located about 50m inside the cave. The cave was used as a bunker in the early 19th century during the Chinese-Ho invasion.

#### **DAY 20: DISCOVER VIENTIANE**

Drive back to Vientiane, a delightfully quaint city, more a friendlier backwater than the chaotic capital. Spend the afternoon exploring That Luang Stupa, Wat Si Saket, and Wat Phra Keo. Continue your sightseeing at and the Patuxai Victory Monument, resembling Paris' Arc de Triomphe. Sightseeing today involves around 2 to 3 hours on foot. Tonight enjoy dinner and a traditional performance showcasing Lao music and dance.

#### **Destination Information**

**That Luang Stupa** - A gold-covered large Buddhist stupa in the centre of Vientiane. Since its initial establishment, suggested to be in the 3rd century, the stupa has undergone several reconstructions as recently as the 1930s due to foreign invasions of the area.

**Wat Si Saket** - Wat Si Saket is a Buddhist wat built in 1818 on the order of King Anouvong (Sethathirath V.) Wat Si Saket was built in the 'Siamese style' of Buddhist architecture, with a surrounding terrace and an ornate five-tiered roof, rather than in the Lao style. This may have kept it safe, since the armies of Siam that sacked Vientiane following Anouvong's rebellion in 1827 used the compound as their headquarters and lodging place. It may be the oldest temple still standing in Vientiane. The French colonial government restored Wat Si Saket in 1924 and again in 1930. Wat Si Saket features a cloister wall with more than 2,000 ceramic and silver Buddha images.

**Patuxai Victory Monument** - Patuxai means Victory Gate or Gate of Triumph, is a war monument in the centre of Vientiane. It was built between 1957 and 1968. The Patuxai is dedicated to those who fought in the struggle for independence from France.

#### **DAY 21: ROYAL PALACE**

Fly 1 and half hours to Phnom Penh for a 2 night stay. Enjoy a sightseeing tour of the city this afternoon, spending around 3 hours exploring on foot, visiting the Royal Palace, Silver Pagoda and the National Museum.

#### **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.

**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: EXPLORE PHNOM PENH**

Visit Tuol Sleng Museum for a harrowing insight into Cambodia's tumultuous past. This museum commemorates the atrocities that occurred during the regime of Pol Pot. Most people find it quite confronting and emotional so you will be given time to explore on



your own. Stop at the children of the Apsara Arts Association before visiting the Russian and Central Markets to explore the many stalls including souvenirs in abundance.

#### **Destination Information**

**Tuol Sleng Museum** - This former school was used by the Khmer Rouge as a detention and torture centre in the late 1970s. Today this building houses paintings and photographs of the victims. You can see the crude cells built in the classrooms and the torture devices used to extract confessions by the regime.

**Apsara Arts Association** - Established to cultivate traditional arts; dance, music and theatre of Cambodian culture whilst keeping Cambodian culture alive.

**Central and Russian Markets** - One of the liveliest areas in Phnom Penh. Everything that is used, worn or eaten is piled high throughout the labyrinth of stalls.

#### **DAY 23: SUNSET FROM PRE RUP**

This morning visit Wat Phnom, sightseeing at Wat Phnom involves a climb of 30 metres high and on ladders up to the hilltop temple. Later transfer to the airport for your 45-minute flight to Siem Reap. On arrival, travel to Banteay Srei to explore fascinating Hindu temple. Later climb to the summit of Pre Rup Temple to view the sunset over the paddy fields.

#### **Destination Information**

**Wat Phnom** - Home to a hilltop temple that carries the cities namesake. Locals flock here to pray for good luck and success.

**Siem Reap** - Siem Reap is a bustling tourist destination due to its proximity to both the ancient Khmer national capital city of Angkor as well as Tonle Sap Lake. Angkor Wat is one of the main attractions and is the world's largest religious monument, in addition to being the spiritual and cultural heart of Cambodia.

**Banteay Srei** - A Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva and considered by many to be the 'Jewel in the Crown' of Angkorian art. The temple is cut from stone of a pinkish hue and contains some of the finest stone carvings in the world.

**Pre Rup Temple** - A popular place to view the sun setting as the view over the rice fields is spectacular. Pre Rup was built by Rajendravarmā II and may have been an early royal crematorium.

#### **DAY 24: EXPLORE ANGKOR**

Spanning from the 9th to 15th century, the Angkor complex with over 1,000 temples was the seat of the thriving Khmer Empire. UNESCO manages the complex and to enter, your group will drive approximately 6km out of town to the main entrance gate to get your entrance passes, which you must carry with you. If you choose to climb at any site, you must be able to climb and descend without assistance. Begin at the temple of Ta Prohm, enveloped in a labyrinth of jungle before continuing to the city of Angkor Thom and the enigmatic Bayon, the Elephant Terrace and the Terrace of the Leper King. This afternoon is devoted to the fascinating and awe-inspiring Angkor Wat.

*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 23m 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 190m 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 25: TONLE SAP**

Today explore the less visited Beng Mealea, a mysterious temple completely overrun by the jungle where you will explore on foot for approximately an hour and half. In the

high water season, you will also visit Kompong Khleang a unique village on stilts. 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.

#### Destination Information

**Bang 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.

Any time before your flight is free is at your leisure today. You will be transferred 1 hour from the hotel to the airport for your overnight flight home.

#### DAY 27: ARRIVE AUSTRALIA

Arrive home today.

#### DAY 26: DEPART SIEM REAP

### GRAND TOUR OF INDOCHINA 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 6 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 **2-3 weeks prior to your group tour's scheduled departure**. If you require your passport to be returned earlier, a \$15 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.

#### Eating in Indochina

Indochina 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. The 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. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from dinner on the day of your

groups' arrival until breakfast on your day of departure. When dining in Vietnam, 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, appetisers and main courses might be served when they are ready instead of following a particular order.

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 Indochina, forks and spoons 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. Dining in Vietnam is fairly casual with not too many rules. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Please refer to your travel guide for more information on Vietnamese 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 Indochina. 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 double bed requests can be made at time of booking but cannot be guaranteed.

## 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. Roads in Southeast 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 Indochina 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.

**Planes:** Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

**Rail Journeys:** This trip involves two overnight train journeys where you will share a 4 berth cabin with other passengers. Please refer to your Travel Guide for more information. We will always endeavour to keep group members together in the same compartment, however there may be times where this is not possible. In this case, you may find yourself sharing with group members of the opposite gender and other travellers. Facilities on board are basic with both Western-style and Asian-style toilets. Some members of the group will be allocated a berth on the middle or top of the cabin, so please be prepared to climb ladders in and out of bed.

## Development in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia

Although Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are 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 and 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 27th – 31st January 2017 and 17th – 20th January 2018, 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 14th – 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 4th – 7th 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 28 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 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 only.

## Tipping Policy

Tipping is a firm and expected element in the tourism industry. A nominated tipping amount is included in all group tour pricing, however is not collected in your final payment received by Wendy Wu Tours. This is so that it can be paid directly to your National Escort who will then distribute the tips among your main service providers – guides and drivers– on your behalf. Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants, hotel porters taking luggage to your room or river guides is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services. The final tipping amount will be outlined in your final documentation.

If you are travelling in a smaller group with local guides only, then tipping is paid in each destination. To be fair to the guides we ask for slightly higher amounts per traveller with small groups.

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

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](http://www.weather.com).

## Luggage

All clients 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 7kg. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

## 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

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 AUD\$250 should be sufficient; however for those that cannot resist a bargain, 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

Some sightseeing involves climbing quite a number of steps. 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.

## Cultural Differences

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

## 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](http://www.travelvax.com.au).

## Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://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.

## After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice with deposit documentation via email. This includes important information and links to access the visa application form and instructions sheet online (if applicable). Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

**Updated: 03 May 2017**