



## Mekong Odyssey Tour Dossier

Classic Tour | 20 Days | Comfortable

Hanoi – Halong Bay – Hue – Hoi An – Saigon – Mekong Cruise – Siem Reap

Venture through Vietnam's cultural centres, natural wonders and fast-paced cities before a Pandaw cruise along the mighty Mekong. Finish up in the resilient land of Cambodia where the temples of Angkor await your discovery.

### Tour Highlights:

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

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

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

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

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

**7 Nights Mekong River Cruise** - Enjoy river cruising with Pandaw from My Tho to Siem Reap

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



## Mekong Odyssey 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.

## Comfortable

'Mekong Odyssey' is a **comfortable** tour. Although this is the easiest grading of tour Wendy Wu Tours offers, it still requires a reasonable level of fitness.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time
- 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 and Cambodia

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.

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. Vietnam Airlines' domestic flights are subject to frequent changes. For this reason we have indicated morning, afternoon or evening flights only. Your Local Guide or National Escort will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them.
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. Some changes have been made to the 2017 to improve the flow of sightseeing:
  - During the Pandaw portion of the itinerary, the cruise will sail further up the river to Kratie where passengers will visit the Dolphin grounds.

## Joining Your Tour

The tour is 20 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 Hanoi and end the tour on Day 19 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 **+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.

## Mekong Odyssey Itinerary

### DAY 1: AUSTRALIA TO HANOI

Fly with Vietnam Airlines to Hanoi for a two-night stay. Your National Escort/Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours will meet you at the Hanoi 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**

**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 2: EXPLORE HANOI

Discover the sights of Hanoi today. First stop will be Ba Dinh Square, then Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, followed by the Humble House on Stilts and the One Pillar Pagoda. Next drive to the serene Temple of Literature, Hanoi's first university.

Later experience an exhilarating cyclo ride through Hanoi's Old Quarter. Each cyclo takes one passenger and is operated by a cyclo driver behind the carriage.

This evening take a culinary adventure, sampling street food in the Old Quarter for dinner.

### **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.

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

**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.

### **DAY 3: CRUISE HALONG BAY**

Drive 4 hours today from Hanoi to Halong, where you will take an overnight cruise to the far-most corners of the bay on a traditional wooden junk. There is usually a crowd of boats at the docks; however, the cruise itself will be scenic and relaxing. Boarding your junk 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 junk boats have been modelled on the traditional 'junk' which was both home and working vessel for fishermen for centuries. They 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 the 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 4: TRAVEL TO HUE**

Spend the morning sailing through Halong Bay. After an early lunch (or brunch meal), disembark your cruise. Here you will have an early dinner before transferring to the airport for your onward flight. Fly 1 hour and 10 minutes to Hue.

### **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.

### **DAY 5: HUE'S IMPERIAL CITADEL**

Hue is the epitome of Vietnam's dynamic past, and considered a scholarly city. 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. 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. Continue by road to Thien Mu Pagoda before travelling approximately 3 hours to the charming town of Hoi An.

### **Destination Information**

**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.

**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 while viewing the remaining woodwork and architecture.

**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.

**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.

**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 6: DISCOVER HOI AN**

This morning, head to the local market where you will pick up fresh produce for your cooking class later this morning. You will be taught some local recipes. This afternoon enjoy a light walking tour of Hoi An's centre, including one of Hoi An's oldest homes, built over 200 years ago and still occupied by the descendants of the merchant family that originally built it, the Quan Cong Chinese Temple and the Japanese Covered Bridge.

### **Destination Information**

**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.

### **DAY 7: DISCOVER SAIGON**

This morning fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to Saigon. On arrival explore the city with its mix of local culture and colonial influences. Visit Notre Dame Cathedral and the Central Post Office, the Reunification Palace, the chilling War Remnants Museum and the bustling Ben Thanh Market.

### **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.

**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 8: CU CHI TUNNELS**

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. Sightseeing here involves two hours on foot on uneven mud paths through the bush and, if you choose, crawling through some of the tunnels. Continue 1 and a half hours to Tay Ninh and visit the Cao Dai Temple. Return to Saigon later this afternoon.

#### **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.

**Cao Dai Temple** - The Cao Dai religion has over two million followers, and was created in 1926 by a Vietnamese man who promptly elected himself the first Pope. It combines the philosophies of Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. The 'Holy See' is one of the most striking and unusual structures in all of Asia, blending the styles of a Western cathedral, a Chinese pagoda with the lurid colours of a Disney cartoon.

#### **DAY 9: BOARD YOUR MEKONG RIVER CRUISE**

Transfer to the meeting point in Saigon where you will be picked up for your Pandaw cruise. Drive 2 hours to My Tho this morning where you will board your elegant cruise vessel for a 7 night cruise up the Mekong River. Sit on the sun deck and sip your welcome cocktail before dining on delicious local cuisine.

#### **Destination Information**

**Mekong River** – The 7<sup>th</sup> longest river in Asia and the heart of Southeast Asia civilisation, there is no tapestry of river life as fascinating and varied as the Mekong.

#### **DAY 10: SA DEC AND VINH LONG**

Take an exciting Sampan boat excursion to Sa Dec via Vinh Long, along canals and backwaters and see the local market,

a brick factory and the ancient house of Mr Huyn Thuy Le, a famous French novelist. Your afternoon Sampan boat ride will last approximately 3 hours.

#### **DAY 11: CHAM TRIBAL VILLAGE AND CHAU DOC**

Travel by speedboat for approximately 3 hours today. Visit a Cham tribal village, a cat fish farm, and enjoy a trishaw ride round Chau Doc, there will be 1 hour of walking. Return to the cruise by boat for lunch and cast off for the Cambodian border for the usual formalities.

#### **DAY 12: PHNOM PENH**

Today visit Phnom Penh by private cyclo for a 3 hour tour. The Cyclo Centre Phnom Penh which provides the cyclos is a charity that provides basic welfare and medical services to cyclo drivers. In the afternoon, choose to take an optional excursion (by coach) to the Killing Fields and the Tuol Sleng Museum to learn about life under the Khmer Rouge or explore the city independently. Touring this afternoon will be approximately 4 hours.

*Please note the afternoon tour is included in the cost of the cruise but must be requested at the time of booking.*

#### **DAY 13: TONLE SAP RIVER**

Travel up the Tonle River today, either by boat or coach depending on the water levels, to a silver making village, Kampong Trolach, and Chong Koh, exploring the vast wetlands around the mouth of the river.

#### **DAY 14: COUNTRYSIDE SCENERY**

Enjoy a leisurely morning stroll of Angkor Ban, enjoying the countryside and learn about traditional village life. Touring today will include 2 and half hours on foot in total. Continue by boat to reach the charming French colonial town of Kratie in the evening.

#### **DAY 15: DOLPHIN WATCHING NEAR KRATIE**

From Kratie travel by bus to view the dolphin grounds in a national park protected area. In the afternoon stop at a curious shrine known as the Monkey Temple on the way to moor overnight near Kampong Cham.

#### **DAY 16: SIEM REAP**

This morning disembark from your cruise vessel and take a shuttle bus to Siem Reap (approximately 5 hours), stopping en route at a local village and school. Arriving at the drop off point in Siem Reap you will be picked up and transferred to your hotel to store your luggage. Continue on 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**

**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 Rajendravarman II and may have been an early royal crematorium.

#### **DAY 17: 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.

#### **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 18: TONLE SAP LAKE**

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.

#### **DAY 19: DEPART SIEM REAP**

Any time before your flight is free at your leisure today. You will be transferred 1 hour from the hotel to the airport, according to the departure time of your international flight.

#### **DAY 20: ARRIVE AUSTRALIA**

Arrive home today.

## MEKONG ODYSSEY TRAVEL INFORMATION

### Visas

Entry visas are required by all visitors to Vietnam 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.

Rests assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standard 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.

## Development in Vietnam and Cambodia

Although Vietnam 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.

## Cambodia and Vietnam public holidays

If you are travelling within the below Vietnamese and Cambodian 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. In Vietnam Tet Holiday is between 27<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017 and 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> January 2018, International Labour Day is on 1<sup>st</sup> May every year, Reunification Day is on 30<sup>th</sup> April every year and National Independence Day is on 2<sup>nd</sup> September every year.

In Cambodia Khmer New Year is celebrated between 13<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> April every year, the King's birthday is celebrated between 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and the Water festival is between 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

## Souvenirs

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.

### 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.

### 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 Cambodia and Vietnam, 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

Cambodia and Vietnam 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 by 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**