



## The Majestic Mekong Tour Dossier

Deluxe Tour | 22 Days | Comfortable

Siem Reap – Mekong River Cruise – Phnom Penh – Chau Doc – Can Tho – Saigon – Hoi An – Hue - Hanoi – Halong Bay

Venture through Vietnam's cultural centres, natural wonders and fast paced cities before cruising on the mighty Mekong on the RV Jahan. Finish on a high exploring the magnificent temples of Angkor.

### Tour Highlights:

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

**Mekong Delta** - Relax for 3-nights on the RV Jahan

**Phnom Penh** - Capital of Cambodia surrounded by the Mekong River; home to majestic palaces and pagodas

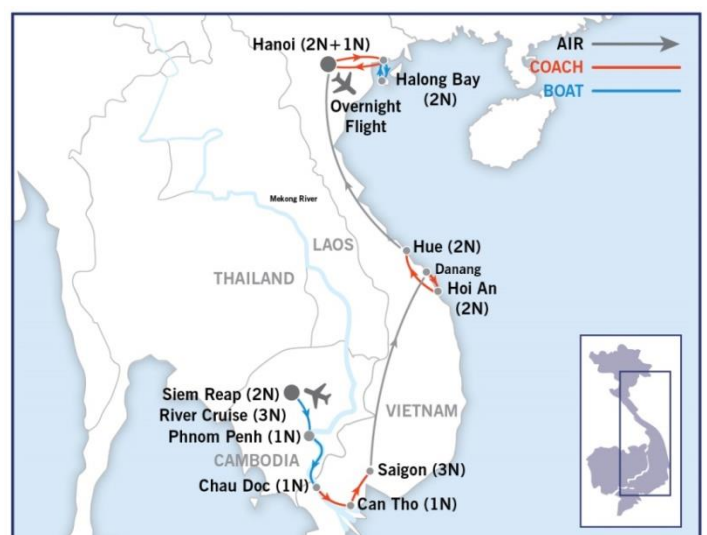
**Saigon** - Vietnam's most cosmopolitan and vibrant city

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

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

**Hanoi** - Exploration of this charming, historical centre and 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



## The Majestic Mekong tour inclusions

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- Most meals as specified on the below itinerary
- 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.*

## Deluxe Tours

These tours have been meticulously designed with the more discerning traveller in mind. Our deluxe journeys through Asia feature distinctive and exclusive experiences which bring the region to life. Our Deluxe tours include:

- Champagne moments
- Unique experiences
- Small group sizes
- Porter service to and from your hotel rooms
- A mid tour laundry service

## Comfortable

'The Majestic Mekong' is a **comfortable** tour. Although this is the easiest pace of tour Wendy Wu Tours offers it still requires a reasonable level of fitness.

- On several days there will be sightseeing on foot for extended periods of time often on an incline or on uneven surfaces.
- You will be required to get on and off varying sizes of boats often 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: Cambodia and Vietnam

**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.

**Vietnam** is a country of breathtaking 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. 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.

## 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 Central Tower of the Angkor Wat complex has a limited number of visitors allowed at any given time, under new regulations from UNESCO since its recent restoration. 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' program on the day of visiting.

4. There will be an opportunity to view Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum in Hanoi from the outside but we no longer include a visit due to restricted opening hours.
5. 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.

## Joining Your Tour

The tour is 22 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 Siem Reap and end the tour on Day 21 in Hanoi. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

## Important Information Regarding Itinerary Changes and 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 Cambodia office on **+85 5 17 510 528 (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 Cambodia. 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 Cambodia 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.

## The Majestic Mekong Itinerary

### DAY 1: AUSTRALIA TO SIEM REAP

Fly with Singapore Airlines to Siem Reap for a three-night stay. Your National Escort/Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours will meet you at the Siem Reap 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.

Meals included: None

### **Destination Information**

**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.

This huge complex of palaces and temples were built on the sprawling alluvial plain to the north of Tonle Sap.

### DAY 2: 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. Rise early and begin touring the temples of Angkor, visiting the fabulous Ta Prohm, undoubtedly the most atmospheric ruin at Angkor. Unlike the other monuments of Angkor, it has been left to be swallowed by the jungle. Continue to the incredible fortified city of Angkor Thom. Start at the South Gate, flanked by a row of 54 stone figures on each side and then continue on to the 12th-century Bayon. From here visit the Elephant Terrace, which was used as a giant viewing platform for public ceremonies and served as a base for the King's grand audience hall, and the Terrace of the Leper King.

After lunch visit the magnificent 12th-century Angkor Wat. This evening enjoy a glass of champagne and watch the sunset at Phnom Krom.

*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.*

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

#### **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.

**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.

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

**Angkor Wat** - Surrounded by a 190-meter 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 3: MEKONG CRUISE**

Join your luxury Mekong River cruise today; you will be greeted with a welcome drink and buffet lunch on board. Spend a relaxing afternoon on deck as the ship glides along the river.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

#### **DAY 4: TONLE SAP**

Start your day with an invigorating Tai Chi lesson on deck just as the sun begins its slow rise. Your ship will set off across the Tonle River, passing the spectacular marshlands of the Kampong Chhnang province. This afternoon there will be a short bus ride to see Khmer-styled pottery. Later see the floating houses and fish farms before reaching Kampong Cham in the evening and take part in an ox-cart rally.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

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#### **DAY 5: WAT HANCHEY**

Today visit Wat Hanchey located at the top of a hill overlooking the river, the temple offers one of the most breath-taking views in Cambodia, you can either take a motor-taxi or climb 303 steps to the top. Return to the Ship to witness a blessing ceremony performed by orange-clad local monks. Continue on to visit Wat Nokor.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

#### **DAY 6: PHNOM PENH**

Disembark after breakfast and head into the city of Phnom Penh to further discover its culture and history. This afternoon visit the Royal Palace, the Silver Pagoda, the National Museum and Central Market.

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

#### **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 7: MEKONG SPEEDBOAT**

Relax with a morning at leisure. This afternoon transfer to the port and take a speedboat to your Chau Doc hotel.

Meals included: Breakfast

#### **DAY 8: TRA SU SANCTUARY FOREST**

This morning transfer to Tra Su Sanctuary Forest, on the way you will visit a small village of ethnic Khmer, where you will learn about the importance of Buddhism in the community and have the opportunity to chat with monks at the local monastery. On arrival travel by traditional Sampan through endless waterways flanked by mangroves and lush

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greenery. After lunch, continue driving to Can Tho for your overnight stay.

Meals included: Breakfast

#### **DAY 9: MEKONG DELTA CRUISE**

Today drive to the township of Cai Be to board the Cai Be Princess, a traditional riverboat made from native bamboo, wood and rattan. During Vietnam's French colonial period, boats like this were an essential means of transport in swampy areas with poor roads. On the river, boat traffic is endless and the activity never ceases, observe the local life from the comfort of your sampan as it plays out on the riverbanks, making stops along the way to give you glimpses of local industries including coconut candy and puffed rice (the local equivalent of popcorn). Your cruise ends at Le Longanier Restaurant where lunch is served in an exquisite colonial-style villa set in tropical gardens by the river, giving you a sense of life during Indochinese times. After lunch, take a short walk along a small canal, towards the Ba Bon Bridge where you will be picked up and transferred to the vibrant city of Saigon. Tonight enjoy the A O Show, the show is a spectacular showcase of Vietnamese culture and performance art, and combines in beautiful precision elements of both old and new.

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

#### **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.

**A O Show** - Featuring Vietnam's most talented performance artists, traditional musicians and circus-like choreography, A O Show explores the lives of the Vietnamese people through its ensemble creations.

#### **DAY 10: EXPLORE SAIGON**

Today explore Saigon city with its heady mix of local culture and colonial influences. Start at the central Post Office and the Opera house then continue on to Reunification Palace and the chilling War Remnants Museum. Take off on your cyclo tour of fascinating Chinatown arriving at Cha Tam Church, a stunning example of Chinese-inspired architecture. Later head down a traditional herbal medicine street where your tour guide will share with you how locals use their herbal remedies. Continue to the Bitexco Building - a glittering example of modern architecture in the city to

enjoy sunset views and a cocktail. Tonight glide along the river on-board a beautifully restored rice barge from the Mekong Delta for a dinner cruise.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

#### **Destination Information**

**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. 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 11: CU CHII 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. Next, it's a short drive through the countryside to visit a cricket farm before returning to Saigon.

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

#### **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) 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.

#### **DAY 12: DISCOVER HOI AN**

Transfer to the airport to fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to Danang. Upon arrival in Danang, transfer to the charming town of Hoi An, located 30km south of Danang. Perhaps more than any other place in Vietnam, Hoi An retains the

feel of centuries past. Take a walking tour through the streets of Hoi An, arriving first at Chua Ong Pagoda. Next pass by the 200-year old Tan Ky House and take a short break at the Japanese Covered Bridge - one of Hoi An's most iconic structures. Visit the Reaching Out Teahouse, an establishment that aids locals with disabilities, for a rejuvenating cup of tea before having lunch at a restaurant specializing in traditional Hoi An delicacies.

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

#### **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 13: HOI AN COOKING CLASS**

This morning you will start your cooking class with a 1 hour market tour to learn about and choose fresh Vietnamese ingredients. After learning about Vietnamese food culture, nutrition, herbal remedies and cooking techniques, your hands-on class includes cooking & cutting techniques. Take an afternoon at leisure to explore independently, visit the beach or relax at your hotel.

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

#### **DAY 14: PERFUME RIVER**

Head north, driving over the scenic Hai Van Pass, passing the fishing village of Lang Co, to enjoy panoramic views of the central coastline. Hue was the imperial capital of Vietnam from 1802-1945, when the last emperor abdicated the throne, yet is still regarded as the seat of Vietnam's culture and religion today. This afternoon take a boat trip along the Perfume River and visit Thien Mu Pagoda.

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

#### **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.

**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.

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#### **DAY 15: IMPERIAL HUE**

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel before exploring Hue's Imperial Citadel. Created in the 19th century, the Imperial City was modelled on the Forbidden City in Beijing and holds many palaces and temples inside its giant walls. Many of the buildings have been damaged by war over the years and are now being restored to their former glory. Transfer to Minh Mang Tomb to explore the opulent and exotic resting place laid out in formal Chinese style. For lunch, feast on a vegetarian meal prepared by nuns at Dong Thuyen Pagoda, a temple located on the top of a hill with a fantastic view. Visit the kitchen to see how your meal is prepared in a wood burning stove, then enjoy your food in the company of the nuns who made it. Take the opportunity to learn about the religion Buddhism or just get to know your friendly hosts. Next, make your way to Thanh Tien Village, well known for over 300 years of crafting paper flowers. Meet one of the local villagers and learn how to make your own ornate paper flower. Finally, visit Tha Om Garden House and its owner, Mr Vinh. Explore the traditional 19th century Hue residence and listen to Mr Vinh's stories of his royal heritage before returning to your hotel.

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

#### **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.

**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 almost 40 monuments and is surrounded by gardens and pools, making it one of the more beautiful tombs in Vietnam.

#### **DAY 16: FLY TO HANOI**

Transfer to the airport for your 1 hour and 20 minute flight to Hanoi. This afternoon will be free for you to explore independently.

Meals included: Breakfast

#### **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.

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### **DAY 17: EXPLORE HANOI**

This morning visit Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, then drive to the serene Temple of Literature, Hanoi's first university dating back to 1070 and a historical centre of learning, now dedicated to Confucian worship. This afternoon takes a walking tour of Hanoi's old quarter, this area of crowded market alleys is still laid out as it was 300 years ago and is also known as the '36 Streets'. Traditionally in Vietnam, all the shops on a single street were devoted to selling one product so you will spot Tin and Bamboo Street. Later visit the home of a water puppet artist, the descendant of a family of water puppet performers. This Vietnamese traditional performance art has roots dating back to the 10th century. You will have a chance to talk with the artist, watch the process of making the puppets and enjoy a private water puppet show.

*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.*

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

#### **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.

**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 pole and strings.

### **DAY 18: HALONG BAY**

This morning drive to the coastal town of Halong Bay, about 4 hours from Hanoi. On arrival in Halong Bay, we will take a two-night cruise to the far-most corners of the bay. Enjoy lunch on board as you cruise out into the bay, stopping to anchor for an afternoon of activities. End the day on deck watching the sunset over the bay followed by a freshly prepared dinner.

*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.*

*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.*

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

#### **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 19: HALONG BAY**

Wake up to the beauty of the bay and enjoy breakfast on board the cruise. Today you will enjoy a range of activities on the bay, then as the sun begins to set, relax on deck with a drink followed by another al fresco dinner.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

### **DAY 20: HALONG BAY TO HANOI**

Spend the morning soaking up the scenery, enjoy a hearty mid-morning breakfast before returning to Hanoi this afternoon.

Meals included: Breakfast

### **DAY 21: DEPART HANOI**

Any time before your flight is free is at your leisure. You will be transferred 1 hour from the hotel to the airport, according to the departure time of your international flight. *Due to flight schedules, Perth passengers will arrive home on Day 21.*

Meals included: Breakfast

### **DAY 22: ARRIVE AUSTRALIA**

Arrive home today.

## THE MAJESTIC MEKONG TRAVEL INFORMATION

### Visas

Entry visas are required by all visitors to Cambodia and Vietnam 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. Most meals (excluding drinks) are included in our deluxe group tours. 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, appetizers 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

The hotels used in all of our Deluxe Indochina tours are deluxe hotels and boutique resorts. All of these hotels have private Western bathroom facilities including a hair dryer, air conditioning, TV and a telephone. 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. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide.

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 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 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.

## Vietnam 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 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 13<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> April every year, the King's birthday is 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> May and the Water festival is between 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> November.

## 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/Local Guide. 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 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 Cambodia and Vietnam. US Dollars are easily exchanged throughout Indochina, 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\$350 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 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**