



The Majestic Mekong Dossier Deluxe Tour | 22 Days | Comfortable

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

Venture through Vietnam's cultural centres, natural wonders and fast-paced cities, Cruise the mighty Mekong with Pandaw River Expeditions. Finish on a high exploring the temples of Angkor.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS:

- Two nights on Halong Bay
- Watch the A O Show in Saigon
- Seven-night Mekong cruise
- Explore Angkor with an expert
- Sip champagne as the sun sets over Angkor



The Majestic Mekong tour inclusions

- Return international flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals as stated on itinerary
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English-speaking National Escort (If your group is 10 or more travellers)

Personal expenditures e.g. additional drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary are at your own expense.

Deluxe Tour

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
- Spa treatment
- Afternoon tea experience
- Soft drinks included with all meals; local wine/beer included with dinner
- Complimentary AU chauffeur transfers available for clients who live within 60km of selected airports

Comfortable Tour

'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. Accessible to most people with an average level of fitness and average mobility. Tours may involve sightseeing on foot, some climbing of stairs and getting on and off boats.

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.

Joining Your Tour

The tour is 22 days in duration including international flights.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only', the price includes visa fees and your arrival/ departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations. Join the tour on day one in Hanoi and end the tour on Day 21 in Siem Reap. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

Itinerary Changes

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

Changes:

- The new tour route is in the opposite direction, starting in Hanoi and finishing in Siem Reap.
- Replaced a 3N cruise on the Jahan ship with a seven night Pandaw ship to enhance customer experience.
- Replaced Dong Thuyen pagoda with Lien Hoa pagoda due to customer feedback. Customers now have a vegetarian lunch and meet up with local nuns at Lien Hoa pagoda. No touring is missed.

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 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.

The Majestic Mekong Itinerary

DAY 1: FLY TO HANOI

You will be met at Hanoi Airport in the arrivals hall by your Local Guide and/or National Escort from Wendy Wu Tours, together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time travel to your hotel for check in.

Soft drinks during lunch and soft and alcoholic drinks during dinner will be provided where meals are included.

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: 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, take 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.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

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.

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 3: HANOI TO HALONG BAY

This morning drive to the coastal town of Halong, about four hours from Hanoi. On arrival in Halong, we will take a two night cruise to the far-most corners of the bay. Enjoy lunch onboard 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.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch and 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 two 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. Your main luggage will be left in safe storage at the hotel in Hanoi and picked up your return.

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: 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 5: HALONG BAY TO HUE

Spend the morning soaking up the scenery, visit Surprise Cave, enjoy a hearty mid-morning breakfast before returning to Hanoi this afternoon. Transfer to the airport for your flight to Hue. Hue was the imperial capital of Vietnam from 1802-1945. The afternoon is at your leisure.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Dinner

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 6: 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 Lien Hoa 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 dig into 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.

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

DAY 7: HUE TO HOI AN

Today transfer to the charming town of Hoi An, located 30km south of Danang, via the Hai Vin Pass. 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 Tea House, 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, Lunch

Destination Information

Hoi An - 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 8: 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. Learn to cook traditional cuisine with a local family. Take an afternoon at leisure to explore independently, visit the beach or relax at your hotel.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch

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 9: HOI AN TO SAIGON

This morning you will fly 50 minutes to 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.

Please note: A O show dates is subject to change based on show schedule.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Dinner

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.

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

DAY 10: SAIGON

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. Return to Saigon, en route visiting a cricket farm. This afternoon, 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 to the Reunification Palace, the chilling War Remnants Museum and the bustling Ben Thanh Market.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch

Please note: The Notre Dame Cathedral will be under renovation for two years, starting in July 2017. You will go to Tan Dinh Church and Tan Dinh Market as an alternative.

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.

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 Ngô Viết Thụ and was the home and workplace of the President of South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. It was the site of the end of the Vietnam War during the Fall of Saigon on 30th April 1975, when a North Vietnamese Army tank crashed through its gates.

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: SAIGON - MEKONG RIVER CRUISE

Transfer to the jetty where you will say goodbye to your National Escort and be welcomed on board your luxury Mekong River cruise by your English-speaking guide. 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

Destination Information

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

DAY 12: MEKONG RIVER CRUISE

In the morning, visit Cai Be floating market along canals and backwaters and then continue to Sa Dec via Vinh Long

Province. Sa Dec has an interesting local market and the ancient house of Mr Huynh Thuy Le, the 'lover' of Marguerite Duras, a famous French novelist whose book was immortalised in the film L'Indochine.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 13: MEKONG RIVER CRUISE

Visit a Moslem Cham tribal village and a cat fish farm in Chau Doc with our guide or do your own thing and take one of our mountain bikes and explore the local market or the Catholic Church. Return to the ship by boat for lunch and cast off for the Cambodian border for the usual formalities.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 14: MEKONG RIVER CRUISE

Whilst in Phnom Penh you will be provided with your own private cyclo. The Cyclo Centre Phnom Penh which provides the cyclos is a charity that provides basic welfare and medical services to cyclo drivers. You will visit the Royal Palace, Silver Pagoda and National Museum. In the afternoon, optional excursion (by coach) to the Killing Fields and the Khmer Rouge's grim Tuol Sleng or S21 detention centre.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 15: MEKONG RIVER CRUISE

Explorations up Tonle River to a silver making village, Kampong Trolach, and Chong Koh either by ship or by coach depending on water levels. This river is very pretty and there is a vibrant local life to be viewed along the river banks and in lesser craft.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 16: MEKONG RIVER CRUISE

Enjoy a morning walk at Angkor Ban and after an all-day sail through delightful Cambodian countryside you reach the charming French colonial town of Kratie in the evening. No other river ships get this high but thanks to the Mekong Pandaw's shallow draft you can attempt it.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 17: MEKONG RIVER CRUISE

From Kratie, go further upstream using a local bus to view the dolphin grounds in a national park protected area. In the afternoon, on your return downstream, stop at a curious shrine known as the Monkey Temple on the way to moor overnight near Kampong Cham.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 18: MEKONG RIVER CRUISE TO SIEM REAP

Early this morning, have a coach transfer to Siem Reap. Refreshments will be provided and you will stop at Kampong Thom along the way. Arrive at Siem Reap mid-afternoon. Disembark your cruise and transfer to your hotel. The rest of your afternoon is at leisure.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch

Whilst in Siem Reap you have a complimentary spa treatment at the hotel's spa. You will be given a voucher so you can book your chosen treatment with the hotel directly. You have the option of foot reflexology, Chakra head and shoulder massage, aromatherapy massage or a traditional Khmer massage.

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 19: SIEM REAP

Go behind-the-scenes in Angkor with one of its lead stone conservation experts working in Angkor for over 25 years. During an exclusive two and a half hour master class, learn the little-known secrets to how ancient people carved, moved and designed these spectacular religious structures. After a historical primer, get a hands-on crash course in the conservation methods employed by experts like your guide, and continue on your full-day temple tour to explore the complex's best temple relics. Visit the temples of Angkor, visiting 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. Continue to 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. After lunch visit the magnificent 12th - century Angkor Wat. This evening, enjoy a glass of champagne and watch the sunset at Phnom Krom temple.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch

Please note: The Central Tower of the Angkor Wat complex is closed on Buddhist holidays and on all other days has a

limited number of visitors allowed at any given time, under regulations from UNESCO. If you wish to visit this tower, you will be required to wait in the queue alongside all other visitors. The ability to do this will be determined upon the groups' schedule.

Destination Information

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

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

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

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

DAY 20: SIEM REAP

Embrace your inner explorer as you discover the ancient ruins of Beng Mealea, a forgotten and lost jungle temple on the outskirts of the Angkor Complex. It's about a two hour drive to reach the Beng Mealea which some say may have been a prototype for the centrepiece of the empire - Angkor Wat. The actual history of the temple remains a mystery, although it is thought to have been built in the 12th century. Completely overgrown by jungle, the temple has an eerie, abandoned feel. There are fantastic photo opportunities of trees sprouting out of the towers, walls covered in thick green moss and tree roots entwined in the crumbling structure. No restoration work has been carried out and some parts of the temple are inaccessible, however, a large boardwalk with viewing platforms wraps around the temple.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 21-22: FLY SIEM REAP TO AUSTRALIA

Fly to Australia, arriving home the same or following day.

Meals Included: Breakfast

THE MAJESTIC MEKONG 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 six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

Visa application forms and all relevant documentation are due in our office **60 days prior to departure**; if received after this, urgent visa processing fees will apply. Also, please note we do not accept passports and visa applications within 30 days prior to departure. Passports will be returned with your Final Documentation **four weeks prior to your group tour's scheduled departure**. If you require your passport to be returned earlier, a \$15AUD courier fee will apply.

Insurance

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

Eating in South East Asia

South East Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in most local dishes. 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. Meals and beverages as stated on the above itinerary are included in our 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 South East Asia, 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 Cambodian and Vietnamese cuisine, including information for travellers with restricted diets.

Accommodation

The hotels used in all of our South East Asia Deluxe Collection 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

Australian Airport Transfers - Your Deluxe Collection tour includes private chauffeur-driven transfers from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Canberra and Cairns based on executive sedan or similar. Available within a radius of 60 driven kilometres from the nearest international airport. After hours surcharges apply between 12:00am-6:00am. Please contact reservations for further information.

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.

Cruise: On this tour, you will spend seven nights aboard a Pandaw Cruise. All cabins have private bathrooms with shower and toiletries, air conditioning, an in-room safe and amenities such as a hairdryer and slippers. The cabins do not have minibars, televisions or phones, encouraging you to enjoy the river views from the deck. All cabins have direct access to the promenade deck.

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

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

Development in Vietnam and Cambodia

Although Vietnam and Cambodia are developing quickly, they still lack 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 15th and the 20th February 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 Cambodia Khmer New Year is celebrated between 13th – 17th April every year, the King's birthday is celebrated between 14th - 16th May 2018 and the Water festival is between 21st – 23rd 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 both a National Escort/Local Guides. 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 eight 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

Local tipping is customary in Asia. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experience in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is paid in US Dollars, as specified. Any additional tipping on any our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

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

Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. 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\$400 per person, per week 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

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

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

Cultural Difference

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

Appropriate Dress

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

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

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

Vaccinations and Your Health

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

Before You Leave

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

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 four weeks prior to departure.

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