



## Grand Tour of Indochina

### Classic Tour | 27 Days | Physical Level 2

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

For those with more time to explore this magnificent region, this tour not only covers the highlights of each country, but takes you to more destinations, introduces you to more culture and gives you more opportunities to interact with local people.

- Drift on the Mekong Delta
- See local life in charming Hoi An
- Marvel at Hue's Imperial Citadel
- Walk Sapa's rice terraces
- Practice Tai Chi on Halong Bay
- Witness sacred Takbat
- Be captivated by Angkor



#### Grand Tour of Indochina 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) or Local Guides
- Visa fees for Australian passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

*The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. 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.*

#### Classic Tours:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Southeast Asia on an excellent value group tour whilst 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 or local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

## Physical Level 2:

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

‘Grand Tour of Indochina’ is rated as a **physical level 2** tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it’s more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You’ll be getting on and off coaches and boats, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- On several days there will be sightseeing on foot for extended periods of time.
- You will be required to get on and off varying sizes of boats often without assistance.

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

## Country Profile: Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia

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

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

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

## Joining Your Tour

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

Travellers booked on ‘Land Only, the price includes visa fees and your arrival/ departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations. Join the tour on day 1 in Saigon and end the tour on Day 26 in Siem Reap. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

## 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.

- The Notre Dame Cathedral is currently undertaking restorations which will continue until 2023. During this time customers are unable to enter the Cathedral; however, they can view it from the outside.
- The uppermost level of Bayon Temple will be undergoing restorations from January 2020 and may last several years. During this maintenance period passengers will be unable to access this area but can continue to enjoy the impressive architecture from the lower two levels.



## Itinerary – Grand Tour of Indochina

### Day 1: Saigon

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



#### Destination Information

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

### Day 2: Saigon

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



*Please note: The Notre Dame Cathedral will be under ongoing renovations until 2023, starting in July 2017. During this time, we are unable to enter the Cathedral; however, we can view it from the outside.*

#### **Destination Information**

**Cu Chi** - 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.

Vietnam. It was designed by architect Ngô Việt 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 3: Mekong Delta

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



#### **Destination Information**

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

### Day 4: Saigon – Hoi An

This afternoon, fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to Danang, and transfer 45 minutes to the ancient town of Hoi An for your 3 night stay. Enjoy a walking tour this afternoon of this laid back and traditional UNESCO listed town to see a traditional house occupied by the same merchant family that originally built it over 200 years ago, Quan Cong Chinese Temple and the elaborate Japanese Covered Bridge. Also visit the Reaching Out arts and crafts workshop.



**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.

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

**Day 5: Hoi An**

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

**Destination Information**

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

**Day 6: Hoi An**

Today is free for you to explore the ancient town or relax on the beach.

**Day 7: Hoi An - Hue**

This morning drive approximately 4 hours to Hue; this journey will take you over the scenic Hai Van Pass. Hue is the epitome of Vietnam's dynamic past, and considered a scholarly city. Explore the Royal Tomb of Minh Mang; the complex comprises of almost 40 monuments and is surrounded by gardens and pools, making it one of the more beautiful tombs.

**Destination Information**

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

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

### Day 8: Hue

Visit the Imperial Citadel and the Forbidden Purple City, which is still being restored many years after the destruction caused by street fighting and bombing during the American War in Vietnam. Continue by road to Thien Mu Pagoda before taking a cruise on the Perfume River.



#### Destination Information

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

**Thien Mu Pagoda** - This seven-storey octagonal tower built on a hillock, overlooking the Perfume River is Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda.

### Day 9: Hue - Hanoi

This morning, fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to the charming city of Hanoi to check in to your hotel. Experience an exhilarating cyclo ride through Hanoi's Old Quarter. Each cyclo takes one passenger and is operated by a cycle driver behind the carriage. Wrap up your cyclo ride with a strong Vietnamese coffee at a café overlooking Hoan Kiem Lake - an important symbol of Vietnamese folklore.



#### Destination Information

**Hanoi** - With a population of approximately 4 million, Hanoi is a charming and richly historic city of lakes, shaded boulevards and leafy open parks. The centre is an architectural museum piece housing groups of ochre coloured buildings holding the air of provincial French towns of the 1930s, a "Paris of the Orient" as people have called it.

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



### Day 10 : Hanoi - Mai Chau

This morning, visiting the Temple of Literature and the Ethnology Museum that is widely acknowledged as the best in the country, with an extensive display dedicated to Vietnam's 54 ethnic minority people. This afternoon, depart the city bound for Mai Chau, a scenic town about a five-hour drive away. The route takes you through some of northern Vietnam's most picturesque scenery, with mountain roads carving through lush foliage and overlooking stunning panoramas.

#### **Destination Information**

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

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

### Day 11 : Mai Chau

After breakfast, transfer by car to the Sa Linh village inhabited by H'mong hill tribes. Located 1,000m above sea level, look for fruit trees and the occasional glimpses of wildlife as you walk along the green mountains.

The tour starts with a 40 minute drive from the valley up to the higher elevation of the Sa Linh village. After that, a one hour hike will take you to the Pa Co village. These villages are located in the area of the Black and Flower H'mong people.

Note:

\* Please ensure you have sturdy and comfortable walking shoes as mountain trails can become slippery in wet weather.

### Day 12: Mai Chau - Hanoi

This morning, take 1 hour walk to discover the interesting surroundings and ethnic minority tribes with a relaxing walk to Thai villages of Pom Coong and Lac which are the typical village of Thai communities with traditional stilt house facing stretching green rice fields. Stroll through the tranquil Mai Chau countryside, learn about the life of Vietnam's White Thai ethnic minority and experience their warm hospitality as you chat with local families and have a look at their traditional stilt houses.

After lunch, drive back to Hanoi.

### Day 13: Hanoi - Halong Bay

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



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

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

*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.*

### Day 14: Halong Bay – Hanoi

Spend the morning sailing through Halong Bay. After brunch, disembark your cruise and return to Hanoi for an afternoon at leisure. This evening, attend The Quintessence of Tonkin show, an artistic open-air performance celebrating the rich history of northern Vietnam.



### Day 15: Hanoi – Luang Prabang

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



#### Destination Information

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

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

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

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

### Day 16: Luang Prabang

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



**Destination Information**

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

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

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

**Day 17: Luang Prabang**

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





**Destination Information**

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

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

**Day 18: Luang Prabang – Vang Vieng**

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

**Destination Information**

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

**Day 19: Vang Vieng**

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

**Destination Information**

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

## Day 20 Vang Vieng – Vientiane

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



### Destination Information

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

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

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

## Day 21: Vientiane – Phnom Penh

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

### Destination Information

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

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

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

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

## Day 22: Phnom Penh

Visit Tuol Sleng Museum for a harrowing insight into Cambodia's tumultuous past. This museum commemorates the atrocities that occurred during the regime of Pol Pot. Most people find it quite confronting and emotional so you will be given time to explore on your own. Stop at the Apsara Arts Association before visiting the Russian and Central Markets to explore the many stalls selling souvenirs in abundance.

### Destination Information

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

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

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

## Day 23: Phnom Penh – Siem Reap

This morning visit Wat Phnom. Sightseeing here involves a climb of 30 metres high and on ladders up to the hilltop temple. Later, transfer to the airport for your 45-minute flight to Siem Reap. On arrival, travel to Banteay Srei to explore the fascinating Hindu temple. Later, relax onboard a boat and view the sunset on Angkor Thom's moat.

### Destination Information

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

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

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

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

## Day 24: Siem Reap

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 city of Angkor Thom and the enigmatic Bayon, the Elephant Terrace and the Terrace of the Leper King, before continuing to the temple of Ta Prohm, enveloped in a labyrinth of jungle. This afternoon is devoted to the fascinating and awe-inspiring Angkor Wat. In the evening, watch a performance by the PHARE Cambodian Circus, an NGO which teaches street children to become internationally renowned circus artists.



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

### Destination Information

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

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

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

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

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



### Day 25: Siem Reap

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

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

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

### Days 26-27: Depart Siem Reap

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Australia arriving home the following day; any time before your flight is at leisure.

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

## Grand Tour of Indochina Travel Information

### Visas

Entry visas are required by all visitors to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

For the latest information on visa procedures, processing times and requirements, please kindly refer to our website <https://www.wendywutours.com.au/help-and-advice/passports-and-visas/>

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate, Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa.

Wendy Wu Tours does not accept responsibility for lost or undelivered items.

All information with regards to visas will be updated regularly on our website as we find visas process' are changing on regular basis.

### Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also 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 original.

### Eating in Southeast Asia

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

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.

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

Those with dietary requirements will be well catered for - just make sure to inform your booking agent of any specific requirements well in advance of your trip.

All the restaurants we visit will be researched and inspected regularly to ensure that they follow the strictest health, cleanliness, and safety guidelines. All waiting staff will wear face masks and gloves and self-service buffets will be avoided in favour of à la carte dining, waiter-served meals, or waiter-assisted buffets. Hand sanitiser will be provided to the group before and after every food and beverage service.

Please read your travel guide, which you will receive with your final documents for more information about eating in Southeast Asia. We recommend that when it comes to Asia food, you stay open minded and try to be adventurous!

### 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 3 to 4-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and Southeast Asia. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs. Please note that double bed requests can be made at time of booking but can't be guaranteed.

### Porterage

Please be aware that porterage is not included on our tours in Southeast Asia. You will therefore need to be able to handle your own luggage within the hotel and when using transportation like trains and coaches.

### Transport

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

Roads in 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 1 or 2 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 Southeast 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 seatbelts are used where available and customers must 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

**Rail Journeys:** This trip involves two overnight train journeys where you will share a 4-berth cabin with other travellers. Please refer to your Travel Guide for more information. We will always endeavour to keep group

members together in the same compartment, however there may be times where this is not possible. In this case, you may find yourself sharing with group members of the opposite gender and other travellers. Facilities on board are basic with both Western-style and Asian-style toilets. Some members of the group will be allocated a berth on the middle or top of the cabin, so please be prepared to climb ladders in and out of bed.

### Development in Southeast Asia

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

### Vietnam, Laos & Cambodia Public Holidays

If you are travelling within the below 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.

**Vietnam:** Tet Holiday is between 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021, Reunification Day is on 30<sup>th</sup> April every year, International Labour Day is on 1<sup>st</sup> May every year and National Independence Day is on 2<sup>nd</sup> September every year.

**Laos:** International Women's Day 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and Laos New Year Holiday 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

**Cambodia:** Khmer New Year is 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> April every year, the King's birthday is 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> May and the Water festival is between 30<sup>th</sup> October – 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020.

### 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

The group size on our Classic Tours is on average 21 passengers, with a maximum group size of 28. You may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling. On our group tours we operate a seat-and-a-half policy, allowing you to travel in greater comfort.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). A national escort will accompany each group of 10 or more. 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.



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

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

### Packing list and Climate

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 travelers 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 5kg. It is essential that your luggage is lockable.

### Exchanging Cash

It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling outside major cities in Vietnam. US Dollars are easily exchanged throughout Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, however other currencies such as Australian Dollars can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are new and undamaged. 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. Old series notes can be difficult to exchange, apart from in some national banks in Vietnam, such as Vietcombank.

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

### Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of AU\$250.00 per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that cannot resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

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

### Climbing Steps

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.

### Appropriate Dress

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

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.

### Cultural Difference

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

**Last updated: September 2020**