

MEKONG EXPLORER

Classic Tour | 22 Days | Physical Level 1

Hanoi – Halong Bay – Hue – Hoi An – Saigon – 4N Victoria Mekong Cruise – Phnom Penh – Siem Reap

See Halong Bay and the wonders of Vietnam as you explore the country from tip to toe. Embark the Victoria Mekong for a 4-night river cruise into Cambodia, where you will discover the majestic Temples of Angkor.

- Stroll through Hanoi's alleyways
- Cruise the magnificent Halong Bay
- Indulge with a Royal Dining Experience in Hue
- Stroll across the breath-taking 'Golden Bridge'
- Learn traditional farming techniques in Hoi An
- Test your senses at Noir in Saigon
- Relax on a 4-night Victoria Mekong cruise
- Visit captivating Phnom Penh
- Be inspired by spectacular Angkor temples

TOUR MAP



MEKONG EXPLORER TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals – 19 breakfasts (B), 17 lunches (L), 19 dinners (D)
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Vietnam e-visa fees for New Zealand passport holders
- Cambodia visa fees for New Zealand passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with IATA

The only things you may have to pay for are 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.

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 will travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

PHYSICAL LEVEL 1:

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.

'Mekong Explorer' is rated as a **physical level 1** tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required, and you should expect to be on your feet for much of the day. You will be getting on and off coaches and boats and walking around the sights, often including steps, plus occasional longer walks.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time, often on uneven surfaces.
- You will be required to get on and off small boats 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.

If you require any more information about the pace of our tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

JOINING YOUR TOUR:

The tour is 22 days in duration including international flights or 20 days in duration based on 'Land Only'.

Travellers booked on a 'Land Only' package, the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to our reservations team.

Join the tour on Day 2 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:

We intend 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 dictated by local conditions. In these circumstances, we will endeavour to make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Days 1-2: Fly overnight to Hanoi Meals: D



Fly to Hanoi where you will be met at the airport in the arrival 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.

Early check-in is not included. Additional nights before and after your tour can be arranged. Please contact our Reservations team to book.

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 3: Hanoi Meals: B, L, D



Discover the sights of Hanoi today. Visit the serene Temple of Literature, Hanoi's first university, before experiencing an exhilarating cyclo ride through Hanoi's Old Quarter. Each cyclo takes one passenger and is operated by a cycle driver behind the carriage. Stop for the opportunity to taste some traditional egg coffee. This afternoon, continue to the Ho Chi Minh Quarter and Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, followed by the Humble House on Stilts and the One Pillar Pagoda.

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.

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.

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 surrounding.

Day 4: **Hanoi – Halong Bay** Meals: B, L, D



Drive around 2 and a half hours from Hanoi 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 on board as you cruise out into the bay, stopping to anchor for an afternoon of activities. Activities are subject to change due to cruise selection and weather conditions. Sightseeing usually includes visiting underground caves on the islands which involves climbing up and down lots of steps. End the day on deck with a drink in hand to watch the sunset over the bay followed by a freshly prepared dinner, before retiring to your cabin for the night.

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

Please note: Weather conditions such as mist, fog, wind, rain and storms may delay the departure time of your cruise, or in some cases, your cruise may be cancelled. Notifications of any delays or cancellations may not be known until your group's arrival in Halong Bay. If your cruise is cancelled after your arrival in Halong Bay, you will have lunch in Halong City and return to Hanoi. If notification of the cruise cancellation is given prior to your departure for Halong Bay an alternative day trip will be arranged to Hoa Lu and Tam Coc or 'Halong Bay on Land', an area located approximately 2 hours from Hanoi. Our guides will make every effort to inform the group at the earliest possible moment should there be any itinerary changes.

Destination Information

Halong Bay – Compared to the landscape of the limestone islets of Guilin in China and Krabi in southern Thailand, Halong Bay shares a common border with China in the north and harbours some of the most stunning scenery in Vietnam. Unique rock sculptures jut out dramatically from the clear emerald waters of the Gulf of Tonkin and numerous grottoes have created an enchanting, timeless world, looking out onto the horizon with the sails of the junks and sampans completing the picture.

Day 5: **Halong Bay – Hue** Meals: B, L, D



Spend the morning sailing through Halong Bay. After brunch return to Hanoi for your 1-hour flight to Hue.

Destination Information

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

Day 6: Hue Meals: B, L, D



This morning, visit the Imperial Citadel containing 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. Visit the Royal Tomb of Minh Mang to explore the opulent and exotic resting place laid out in formal Chinese style.

Continue with a cruise along the Perfume River to the Thien Mu Pagoda, Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda, built on a hillock overlooking the river. Boarding your cruise could involve navigating your way over and through other boats, moored between it and the dock, sometimes without handrails, ladders or assistance from staff. 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.

Destination Information

Imperial Citadel – A walled fortress accompanied by cannons, artilleries and surrounded by a moat for protection. Inside the Citadel are numerous gates, courtyards and the Forbidden Purple City.

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

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

Thien Mu Pagoda – This seven-storey octagonal tower built on a hillock, overlooking the Perfume River is Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda. Wander the grounds where bonsai, ponds and the smell of incense set a peaceful backdrop.

Day 7: Hue – Hoi An Meals: B, L, D



After breakfast, drive approximately 4 hours to Hoi An, this journey will take you over the scenic Hai Van Pass. Stop en route at Ba Na Hills for lunch, visiting the Golden Bridge, a beautiful bridge held by gigantic stone hands with panoramic views.

Please note: To visit Ba Na Hills and the Golden Bridge, you will take a 30-minute cable car journey up the hill, with scenic views. There is a small altitude adjustment as it is at 1400 metres.

This evening, enjoy the captivating Teh Dar Show, a spectacular blend of acrobatics, contemporary dance and live tribal music inspired by the cultural traditions and untamed landscapes of Vietnam's Central Highlands.

Destination Information

Golden Bridge – At 1,414 metres above sea level, this beautiful bridge has been likened to 'giant hands of Gods' and is home to some of the best scenic views around.

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 8: Hoi An Meals: B, L, D



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. After lunch at the local restaurant, 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.

In the afternoon, enjoy 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.

Then, take part in an artisanal lantern-making workshop, where expert local craftspeople will introduce you to the time-honoured techniques behind one of the region's most cherished traditions, as you create your own silk lantern.

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.

Japanese Covered Bridge – First constructed in the 1590s to link the Japanese and Chinese quarters of the town. This iconic pink hued bridge has been restored to its former splendour.

Day 9: Hoi An - Saigon

Meals: B, L, D

Spend some time at leisure before flying to Saigon. After check-in, the rest of your day is at leisure.



Destination Information

Saigon – The adrenaline-fuelled city of Saigon was officially renamed Ho Chi Minh City following North Vietnam's military defeat of South Vietnam. The name change was originally controversial, but both names are now in use; Saigon renames the more popular name with locals. This ever-expanding metropolis is a mish-mash of French colonial architecture, sleek glass skyscrapers and traditional Vietnamese temples, all rolled into one energetic and unforgettable city.

Day 10: Saigon

Meals: B, L, D

Explore modern day Saigon, with its heady mix of local culture and colonial influences. Begin at the emotive War Remnants Museum, exploring independently. Here, learn of the turmoil that once gripped the country, gaining a greater insight into the echoes of Saigon's past.



Explore further with an exhilarating cyclo ride through the modern city. Each cyclo takes one passenger and is operated by a cycle driver behind the carriage. Pass by the Notre Dame Cathedral and the Central Post Office, ending your ride at the Reunification Palace.

Destination Information

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

Central Post Office – Located next to the Notre-Dame Cathedral. The Central Post Office building was constructed in the late 19th century. It counts Gothic, Renaissance and French influences and was designed by Auguste Henri Vildieu and Alfred Foulhoux, but is often erroneously credited as being the work of Gustave Eiffel.

Reunification Palace – Built on the site of the former Norodom Palace, is a landmark in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. It was designed by architect 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 Vietnamese history.

Day 11: Saigon Meals: B, L, D



Confront the reality of guerrilla warfare at the Cu Chi Tunnels. The cramped tunnels were central to many of the Vietnam 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 craters behind.

The Cu Chi experience can be emotional for some visitors, but it offers a fascinating window into the hardship and traumas of war. Sightseeing here involves two hours on foot on uneven paths through the forest, seeing examples of reconstructed bamboo traps, Viet Cong kitchens, and tunnel entrances. Should you choose, you will also have the opportunity to spend a few minutes underground, on a short, crouched walk through an example section of the tunnel network.

This evening, dine in the dark as you enjoy a unique culinary experience at Noir.

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). They 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 fighters.

Noir Restaurant – A unique culinary experience, Noir is a restaurant where you dine in the dark and experience your food in new ways. Waiters with visual impairments become your eyes and guide you through a delicious meal to challenge your other four senses.

Day 12: Saigon – Victoria Mekong Cruise Meals: B, L, D



Today, prepare for your next adventure: a four night river cruise up the mighty Mekong.

Drive southwest to the cruise embarkation point in Can Tho, a city on the Mekong Delta, stopping en route for lunch. Bid farewell to your Vietnamese escort and embark the Victoria Mekong and settle into your cabin.

Enjoy a welcome briefing before relaxing with a sundown cocktail on deck as you sail towards Long Xuyen. Sit down to a sumptuous gala dinner whilst enjoying a performance of Đờn ca tài tử - traditional music of the Mekong.

Destination Information

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

Day 13: Victoria Mekong Cruise Meals: B, L, D



Hop on a tender boat for an extended visit to Long Xuyen's captivating floating market and gain a deeper insight into daily life along the river. Each morning, farmers from across the Mekong Delta converge here, navigating their boats filled with fresh fruit and vegetables to trade with locals and wholesalers.

Return to the ship for lunch in the ship's panoramic Claypot Restaurant, with floor-to-ceiling windows offering a view of the delta. This afternoon, tender to Tiger Island, where you can stretch your legs for a scenic walk through rice fields and gardens, visit local plant pot makers, and hear the story behind 'Mr. Tiger's Temple'.

Day 14: Victoria Mekong Cruise Meals: B, L, D



After breakfast in Phu Tan, tender ashore to visit a craft village known for Ca Rang clay stoves, used for centuries in Southern Vietnam.

Enjoy lunch on board while cruising to Tan Chau, then explore a floating village to see how locals farm freshwater fish beneath their stilt houses. This evening, enjoy a lively Vietnamese lion dance on the sky deck before dinner.

Day 15: Victoria Mekong Cruise Meals: B, L, D

Today, the Victoria Mekong will pass over the border into Cambodia and sail towards Phnom Penh. Spend a relaxed day enjoying the passing scenery and a wealth of onboard activities, such as lectures and cocktail making.

In the late afternoon, dock at Phnom Penh's Sisowath Quay where, this evening, you will be entertained with a traditional Cambodian Apsara performance. Sip a farewell cocktail before a final gala dinner.



Day 16: Victoria Mekong Cruise – Phnom Penh Meals: B, L, D

Enjoy breakfast in the restaurant before disembarking and bidding farewell to the Victoria Mekong. Board a cyclo and head from the pier into the heart of the city to visit the magnificent Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda before perusing the treasures of the National Museum. After lunch, check in to your hotel and enjoy a couple of hours at leisure before dinner this evening.



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 by the French in 1866, 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 a kilo in weight. Famous artefacts include a 90 kilograms solid gold Buddha, made in 1907, and the Emerald Buddha; opinions differ as to whether the latter is made of emerald, jade, or French Baccarat Crystal.

Wat Phnom – A hilltop temple, rebuilt on multiple occasions. The walls within the sanctuaries are covered in murals, chiefly telling the stories of the Buddha. Locals flock here to pray for good luck and success.

Day 17: Phnom Penh – Siem Reap Meals: B, L, D



Reflect on the history of the city with a visit to the Tuol Sleng Museum and Killing Fields. The Tuol Sleng Museum, a former school that was converted into a barbaric detention centre known as S-21. Now a museum, it commemorates the victims of the atrocities that occurred during the regime of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge.

The drive south-west to the Killing Fields takes approximately half an hour and will take 30 minutes. You will be invited to watch a short documentary on the tragic history of the Killing Fields. Spend around an hour here on foot, gaining an insight into the tumultuous past that Cambodia is working to overcome. Most people find these sites quite confronting and emotional; you will be given time to explore and reflect quietly on your own. Later, transfer to the airport for your 1-hour flight to Siem Reap.

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.

Killing Fields – The emotional Killing Fields of Cheung Ek, made famous by the film of the same name. More than 17,000 civilians were killed and buried in mass graves here, making this place a chilling reminder of the brutalities of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime.

Day 18: Angkor Wat & Angkor Thom Meals: B, L, D



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 6 kilometres out of town to the main entrance gate to get your entrance passes, which you must carry with you. If you choose to climb steps 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, relax on board a boat and enjoy a drink as the sun sets on the moat of Angkor Thom.

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 group's schedule.

Destination Information

Angkor Thom – (lit. 'Great City') This was the last capital of the Khmer empire, established by Buddhist King Jayavarman VII in the 12th century. This walled city, covering an area of 9 square km, 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.

The Bayon – A rich, late 12th century state temple at the centre of Angkor Thom. Its beautifully crafted central towers are decorated with four opposing faces representing Jayavarman. Bayon's stone galleries display extraordinary bas-reliefs incorporating over 11,000 figures.

Elephant Terrace and Terrace of the Leper King – The Elephant Terrace is named for the carved elephant parade on its eastern side. Giant viewing platforms used for public ceremonies, which served as a base for the King's grand audience hall. To the north is the Terrace of the Leper King, named for a statue found there.

Ta Prohm – One of Angkor Thom's most atmospheric ruins, swallowed by the roots of the jungle, Ta Prohm has several towers, closed courtyards and narrow corridors to explore. Originally dedicated to Sri Jayarajacudamani, the mother of the king who established Angkor Thom, it was made famous by the film Tomb Raider.

Angkor Wat – This 12th century temple complex is the largest religious monument in the world. Surrounded by a 190-metre moat and taking 30 years to build, Angkor Wat showcases the Khmer civilisation at its grandest, and was designed to represent Mt Meru, the Hindu equivalent of Mt Olympus. With its fascinating decorative flourishes, extensive bas-relief and multiple tiers, it is the best-preserved temple within the complex.

Day 19: Siem Reap Meals: B, L, D

In the high-water season, drive to Kampong Phluk, a cluster of three villages of stilt houses built within the floodplain of the Tonle Sap Lake. In the lower water season, you will visit Chong Kneas floating village. Get a glimpse into local life at the home of a Khmer family.

Return to Siem Reap to enjoy a performance by the PHARE Cambodian Circus, an NGO which teaches street children to become internationally renowned circus artists.



Day 20: Siem Reap Meals: B, L, D

Today, travel by tuk-tuk to a Khmer cooking school, where you will learn to prepare traditional Khmer dishes. The chef will teach you all about what goes into the local cuisine, as you create a delicious meal! Spend your afternoon at leisure before a farewell dinner.



Days 21-22: Depart Siem Reap Meals: B

Fly home to New Zealand, arriving the following day. Please note: Only breakfast is provided on the group's day of departure; no refund will be given for meals missed.



TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

Vietnam: New Zealand passport holders require a visa to enter Vietnam. For Wendy Wu Tours group tours, the cost of the e-Visa is included and we will send you the application details prior to departure.

Cambodia: New Zealand passport holders must obtain an e-Visa in advance to enter Cambodia. For Wendy Wu Tours group tours, the cost of the e-Visa is included. An online immigration arrival form must be completed before entry – details will be provided in your final documentation.

Boat entry tours only: As an e-Visa is not valid for entry by boat, a physical visa will be required instead to present upon arrival in Cambodia. The physical visa will be printed and included in your final documents. For Wendy Wu group tours, the cost of this visa is included.

Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back in New Zealand.

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.

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.

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, minibuses 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 one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

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

ACCOMMODATION:

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between New Zealand 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 or 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.

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 many local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian 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.

When dining in Southeast Asia, 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 is 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. 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.

SOUVENIRS:

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs, so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions which demonstrate 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.

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 New Zealand. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in New Zealand; 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.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:

If you are travelling within the below Cambodian and 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. In Vietnam, Tet Holiday is 29th January 2025 & 17th February 2026; 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 14th – 16th April every year, the King's birthday is 14th - 15th May and the Water festival is between 14th – 16th November in 2024 and between 4th – 6th November in 2025.

GROUP SIZE:

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 24 travellers in a Victoria Mekong 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, instead of a National Escort.

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

TIPPING POLICY:

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and Southeast Asia is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your National Escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed to local guides and drivers throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the National Escort.

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.

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

Wendy Wu does not give specific health advice, but we do recommend you see your doctor at least six weeks prior to travel for advice and to allow time for any necessary vaccinations. Please remember to take your itinerary with you. Safe travel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.safetravel.govt.nz

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.safetravel.govt.nz as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.

Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements. You can also access the New Zealand 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. If a visa is required, our Visa Department will be in touch with the paperwork and next steps. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

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