

A MEKONG EXPERIENCE

Classic Tour | 14 Days | Physical Level 1

Saigon – 4N Victoria Mekong Cruise – Phnom Penh – Siem Reap

With 4 nights onboard the Victoria Mekong, soaking up the sights and sounds of the river, this 2-week tour also showcases the beauty of southern Vietnam and Cambodia's magnificent temples of Angkor.

- Test your senses at NOIR in Saigon
- Cruise for 4 nights on the 4* Victoria Mekong
- Explore Phnom Penh by cyclo
- Drift along Angkor's moat at sunset
- Cook traditional Cambodian dishes
- Enjoy Cambodia's famous Phare Circus

TOUR MAP



A MEKONG EXPERIENCE TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals – 11 breakfasts (B), 10 lunches (L), 11 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.

'A Mekong Experience' 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 14 days in duration including international flights or 12 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 Saigon and end the tour on Day 13 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 Saigon — Meals: D



You will be met in Saigon in the arrivals hall by your Local Guide 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.

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

Saigon – Formally renamed Ho Chi Minh City, but still locally known by its older name of Saigon, this exuberant city is driving Vietnam forward into the modern world, but is also a treasure trove of fascinating heritage. It was a major base of the American military during the Vietnam War, and 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 3: Saigon — Meals: B, L, D



Confront the reality of guerrilla warfare at the Cu Chi Tunnels. The cramped tunnels were central to a few of the war's strategic operations, including the famous 1968 Tet Offensive, and they did not escape damage. American B52 bombers dropped hundreds of missiles leaving huge tell-tale craters behind.

The Cu Chi experience can be emotional for some visitors, but it offers a fascinating window into the hardship and traumas of war. Sightseeing here involves two hours on foot on uneven paths through the woods and, if you choose, crawling through some of the tunnels.

This afternoon, explore modern day Saigon with its heady mix of local culture and colonial influences. See the Notre Dame Cathedral's facade, the Central Post Office, and the War Remnants Museum, stopping for a coffee break en route. Later on, enjoy a 'dining in the dark' 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), 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.

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.

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.

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 4: 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. After a welcome briefing, the ship will cast off into the waters of the Mekong Delta. Relax with a sundowner on deck and sit down to a welcome gala dinner whilst enjoying a performance of Đờn ca tài tử - traditional folk music of the Mekong. Drop anchor at Long Xuyen.

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 5: 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.

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 for a scenic walk through rice fields and gardens, visit local plant pot makers, and hear the story behind 'Mr. Tiger's Temple'.

Day 6: Victoria Mekong Cruise Meals: B, L, D



Enjoy a leisurely breakfast in Phu Tan, the capital of An Giang Province in the Mekong Delta. Tender ashore in Phu Tan and visit a craft village famous for hand-making Ca Rang clay stoves.

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

Day 7: 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.

In the late afternoon, dock in downtown Phnom Penh, where you will be entertained with a traditional Cambodian apsara performance. Afterwards, enjoy a final gala dinner.

Day 8: Victoria Mekong Cruise – Phnom Penh Meals: B, L, D



Enjoy breakfast on board before bidding farewell to the Victoria Mekong and meeting your new Cambodian National Escort. 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. Visit the Tuol Sleng Museum, commemorating the atrocities that occurred during the regime of Pol Pot. The museum visit involves 1 hour on foot. End the day with a cold glass of local beer at a sky bar.

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 Pala`fce – Built in 1866 by the French, these ornate buildings are the official residence of the reigning Cambodian royal family and King Sihamoni.

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 kilogram 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.

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.

Day 9: Phnom Penh – Siem Reap Meals: B, L, D



Reflect on the history of the city with a visit to the Killing Fields, where you will spend an hour on foot for a harrowing insight into Cambodia's tumultuous past. Many people find it quite confronting and emotional, so you will be given time to explore on your own. Later on, transfer to the airport for your 45- minute flight to Siem Reap.

Destination Information

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 10: Siem Reap

Meals: B, L, D



Spanning from the 9th to 15th century, the Angkor complex with over a thousand temples was the seat of the thriving Khmer Empire. The complex is now managed by UNESCO; to enter, your group will drive approximately 6 kilometres out of town to the main 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. Later, relax onboard a boat and admire the sunset on Angkor Thom's moat.

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 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.

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

Ta Prohm – Swallowed by the jungle, 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.

Day 11: 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 12: Siem Reap Meals: B, L, D

Today, travel by tuk-tuk to a shared cooking lesson, 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 13-14: 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. Check out is usually at noon – please contact our Reservations team if you would like to prebook Late Checkout.



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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