



# CLASSIC MEKONG

2024 - Classic Tour | 19 Days | Physical Level 1

SIEM REAP – PHNOM PENH – VICTORIA MEKONG CRUISE – SAIGON  
– HOI AN – HANOI – HALONG BAY

PLEASE NOTE: THIS TOUR DOSSIER APPLIES TO ALL DEPARTURES OF CLASSIC MEKONG FROM 2024 ONWARD.

IF YOU REQUIRE A TOUR DOSSIER FOR TRAVEL IN 2023, PLEASE REQUEST THIS FROM OUR SALES TEAM.

Enjoy one of our favourite itineraries featuring Cambodia & Vietnam. Embark on a glorious adventure, starting amongst the magnificence of the temples of Angkor before a four-night Victoria Mekong cruise, complete with shore excursions designed to give you an authentic glimpse of Mekong life. Sail into Vietnam to discover its many treasures, including vibrant Saigon, charming Hoi An and historic Hanoi. End your trip with an overnight cruise through Halong Bay.

- Experience an Angkor sunset boat ride
- Cruise the Mekong for 4 nights
- Try 'dining in the dark' at NOIR Saigon
- Take a walking tour of delightful Hoi An
- Sail through magnificent Halong Bay

To book call **0800 396 3998** or visit your local travel agent

Visit [wendywutours.co.nz](http://wendywutours.co.nz)

## TOUR MAP

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## CLASSIC MEKONG TOUR INCLUSIONS:

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- 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 Escorts (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Cambodia and Vietnam visa fees for New Zealand passport holders (please see visa section below for further information)
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with IATA

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 check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

## CLASSIC TOURS:

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These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of South-east 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 and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

### PHYSICAL LEVEL 1:

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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.

'Classic Mekong' is rated as a physical level 1 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.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time
- You will be required to get on and off small boats without assistance

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

### JOINING YOUR TOUR:

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The tour is 19 days in duration including overnight international flights in both directions as this is the most likely flight option from New Zealand. Please note, some flights may depart and arrive on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only', the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour, or when booking pre and post night accommodation with Wendy Wu Tours. Please email your international flight times to [info@wendywutours.co.nz](mailto:info@wendywutours.co.nz) so we can arrange your transfers accordingly.

Join the tour on Day 2 in Siem Reap and end the tour on Day 18 in Hanoi. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure. An informal Welcome Dinner will be held on Day 2 of the itinerary. If you miss this due to your arrival time, all information will be provided to you at breakfast the following morning.

### ITINERARY CHANGES:

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It is our intention is 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 whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

## DETAILED ITINERARY

### Day 1-2: Arrive Siem Reap

Meals: D

You will be met at Siem Reap 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. Any time before this evening's dinner and welcome briefing is at leisure to start your explorations.

#### Destination Information

**Siem Reap** – Siem Reap translates to 'the defeat of Siam', in reference to the centuries-old conflict between Cambodia and Thailand. Since the French purchase of Angkor from Siam, Siem Reap has grown from a small village to a popular tourist destination, thanks to its proximity to the World Heritage Site of Angkor Wat.

### Day 3: Angkor

Meals: B, L, D

The UNESCO-managed Angkor complex boasts over 1,000 temples, and was the seat of the colossal Khmer Empire from the 9th to the 14th centuries.

We spend the morning at the city of Angkor Thom, built by Jayavarman VII during his restoration of the Angkorian Empire in the late 12th century. Here, sights include the enigmatic Bayon, the Elephant Terrace and the Terrace of the Leper King. One of the most evocative ruins here is to the monastery temple of Ta Prohm, enveloped in a labyrinth of jungle just outside Angkor Thom.



Enjoy lunch before devoting the afternoon to the fascinating and awe-inspiring temple complex of Angkor Wat, the largest religious monument in the world. It predates the city of Angkor Thom and is considered to be Cambodia's spiritual heart. Later, return to Angkor Thom to enjoy the sunset from its moat, with a refreshing drink in hand.

#### 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 covers an area of 9 square km and encompasses many temples.

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



**Elephant Terrace and Terrace of the Leper King** - These giant viewing platforms were used for public ceremonies, which served as a base for the King's grand audience hall. The Elephant Terrace is named for the carved elephant parade on its eastern side. 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 Jayarajadaman, 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. Angkor temples were traditionally dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, but Angkor Wat broke tradition in that it was originally dedicated to Vishnu, and was later reworked as a Buddhist temple.

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**Day 4: Tonle Sap**

**Meals: B, L, D**

This morning, visit a small rural village and enjoy a glimpse into the personal life of a Khmer family, learning about local dynamics and daily routines.

After lunch, visit the Tonle Sap lake for an insight into how local communities create floating homes on the water. Return to Siem Reap for dinner. The exact village visited will depend on water levels at the time of your visit.



**Destination Information**

**Tonle Sap** - The Tonle Sap Lake joins with the 120km long Tonle Sap River, which flows into the Mekong River. Water levels in the Mekong vary according to the season and directly affect the direction of flow in the Tonle Sap River, which flows for 6 months in one direction and 6 months in the other. There are multiple communities living on the lake, whose main source of income is fishing.

**Day 5: Siem Reap - Phnom Penh****Meals: B, L, D**

Depart Siem Reap and fly 1 hour to Phnom Penh. This fascinating capital city sits on the banks of the Mekong, at the junction with the Bassac River. The architecture here is a pleasant mixture of Khmer, French and modern styles.



Board a cyclo and visit Wat Phnom and the ornate Cambodian Royal Palace with the opulent Silver Pagoda before dinner. Check into your hotel for a one-night stay in the city.

**Please note:** Local flight schedules between Siem Reap and Phnom Penh can be irregular. If the local flight departs too late in the day, you will drive from Siem Reap to Phnom Penh, with lunch and stops en route.

**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 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 90kg 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 6: Tuol Sleng, The Killing Fields & Victoria Mekong****Meals: B, L, D**

Reflect on the history of the city with a visit to the Tuol Sleng Museum (the former S-21 Prison) and the Killing Fields, where you will learn about the suffering of the Khmer people under the brutal Khmer Rouge regime of the 1970s. These visits are educational, but can be emotional; you will be given time to explore alone.



After lunch, transfer to the ship's embarkation point in Phnom Penh (usually at Sisowath Quay), where you will say goodbye to your National Escort and board the Victoria Mekong, your river cruise ship and home for the next four nights. Relax with a sundown drink and enjoy a dance performance and welcome briefing on board before dinner in the panoramic restaurant.

### Destination Information

**Khmer Rouge** – A totalitarian group of revolutionaries who seized and held power in Cambodia from April 1975 to January 1979. The Khmer Rouge turned Cambodia into a military dictatorship in which all rights, arts and intellectual pursuits were abolished. Approximately 2 million Cambodians (nearly 25% of the population) were killed in labour camps, prisons and mass execution sites. They continued their guerilla warfare for many years after the Vietnamese forces invaded and overthrew them in 1979.

**Pol Pot** – Born Saloth Sar, Pol Pot was one of the most brutal dictators in world history. He created the Khmer Rouge as a guerilla force, and organised the Phnom Penh coup in 1975, installing himself as prime minister.

**Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum** – This former secondary school was seized by the Khmer Rouge in 1976 and turned into the brutal S-21 prison; one of almost 200 such prisons operated by the Khmer Rouge and Santebal (secret police). An estimated 20,000 people were imprisoned and tortured here between 1976-79. Today, the museum commemorates the atrocities that occurred here during the regime of Pol Pot.

**Choeung Ek Killing Fields** – This orchard was the site of one of the Khmer Rouge's largest mass execution sites. Today, it is a memorial site with a Buddhist stupa at the centre. Be aware that the memorial stupa contains victims' skulls, which are visible; it can be avoided if you prefer.

### Day 7: Into Vietnam

Meals: B, L, D

The Victoria Mekong departs this morning, with plenty of onboard activities available; alternatively, spend the morning relaxing on the sun deck or by the pool. Cruise into Vietnam around lunchtime, anchoring near Tan Chau. Border crossing formalities will be handled on your behalf during lunch.

Tender ashore to visit a Taoist temple and colourful market, and see the intriguing stilt houses. Return to the ship in time for an exciting lion dance performance on the Sky Deck as the sun sets.



**Days 8: Phu Tan & Tiger Island****Meals: B,L,D**

After breakfast, tender ashore in Phu Tan to visit a craft village famed for its handmade clay stoves.

Return to the ship for lunch in the panoramic Claypot Restaurant, watching the scenery drift by as you cruise downstream. This afternoon, anchor at Tiger Island and head ashore to explore, learning about local industries such as ceramics and incense making. Return to the ship in time for a cocktail competition and the evening's entertainment.

**Day 9: Long Xuyen & Dinh Yen****Meals: B, L, D**

Arrive in Long Xuyen and hop on a tender to visit the bustling floating market. Stop in town to visit An Giang Museum and see its exhibits on ancient local cultures before returning to the Victoria Mekong.

Enjoy a refreshing lunch as the ship continues downstream to Dinh Yen, where you'll see villagers weaving colourful straw mats, and meet a family who specialise in making beancurd (also known as tofu skin, similar to Japanese yuba). This evening, the ship continues to Can Tho, the beating heart of the Mekong Delta.

**Destination Information**

**Dinh Yen** – A local craft village on the Mekong, where almost 3000 people of all generations are employed in harvesting, dyeing, and weaving the mats. Red, green, yellow and purple are the main colours used.

**Days 10: Can Tho - Saigon****Meals: B, L, D**

Bid farewell to the Victoria Mekong and drive from Can Tho to Saigon, stopping en route in Cai Be for a delicious local lunch. Meet your National Escort, who will guide you through all that Vietnam has to offer.

This evening, dinner will be at Noir, a restaurant that supports Saigon's visually impaired, for a sensory 'dining in the dark' experience.





### 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, there were many different subcurrents of emotion in response to the American occupation. Today, the old mixes seamlessly with the new.

**Noir Restaurant** – A unique culinary experience, Noir is a social enterprise restaurant where you ‘dine in the dark’ and experience your food in new ways! Waiters with visual impairments will guide you through a delicious mystery meal in total darkness challenge your other four senses.

Dietary requirements can be catered for – please advise Wendy Wu Tours in advance.

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### Day 11: Cu Chi & Saigon

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, visit the fascinating Cu Chi Tunnels to learn the history of the Viet Cong and their guerilla tactics during the Vietnam War. Sightseeing here involves two hours on foot on wide but 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, which has been slightly enlarged for visitors' safety.

Stop for lunch at an organic farm en route back to Saigon. Explore the city's heady mix of local culture and colonial influences. See the Notre-Dame Cathedral and visit the Central Post Office, the Reunification Palace and the poignant War Remnants Museum. The latter is an emotional visit; you will be given time to explore independently.

*Please note: Those with back issues or claustrophobia are advised to forego the Cu Chi underground tunnel walk.*

*Please note: The Cathedral will be under renovation until 2027. During this time, we are unable to enter*

### Destination Information

**Cu Chi** - The tunnels of Cu Chi are an immense network of connecting underground tunnels located in the Cu Chi district of Saigon, and are part of a much larger network of tunnels that underlie much of the country. The Cu Chi tunnels were the location of several military campaigns during the Vietnam War, and were the Viet Cong's base of operations for the Tet Offensive in 1968.

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.

**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, this is a landmark of the city. 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 period from 1961-1975. This museum illustrates a harrowing but crucially important aspect of the nation's history.

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**Day 12: Saigon – Hoi An**

**Meals: B, L, D**

Take a 1h20min flight from Saigon to Danang and transfer 45 minutes through the countryside to the enchanting town of Hoi An. Head out on a walking tour of the Old Town, with visits including Chua Ong Chinese Pagoda, a 200-year-old merchant house, and the spectacular Japanese Covered Bridge.

With its charming yellow buildings and vivid silk lanterns, a stroll through this traditional town feels like stepping back in time.



### 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. It remains a wonderful place to get high quality custom clothing, tailored to your needs in as little as 24 hours.

**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 13: Tra Que Village**

**Meals: B, L, D**

Head out into Hoi An's peaceful countryside to visit an organic farming community.

Here you can enjoy the lush green landscapes and stroll through the gardens to see the farmers at work. You'll even have an opportunity to try the techniques for yourself!

The afternoon is at leisure to head to the beach or explore the Old Town's charming shops and boutiques.



### Destination Information

**Tra Que Vegetable Village** – Located just outside Hoi An, this co-operative project is a first-choice supplier for most local restaurants, growing delicious herbs and vegetables using traditional techniques. Their secret is in the fertiliser: natural seaweed from a local lagoon.

**Day 14: Hoi An – Hanoi**

**Meals: B, L, D**

After breakfast, transfer to Danang and fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to the charming city of Hanoi. This afternoon, visit the serene Temple of Literature, Hanoi's first university, before taking a cyclo tour of Hanoi's Old Quarter. Each cyclo (rickshaw) takes one passenger and is operated by a cycle driver behind the carriage. Wrap up your ride with an opportunity to taste some 'egg coffee' – a local speciality!



Please note that as you have multiple days in Hanoi, your National Escort may change the order of touring based on local flights and schedules. No touring will be missed.

### Destination Information

**Hanoi** - The history of this fascinating Vietnamese capital is visible at every turn; a blend of French neoclassical architecture, imperial temples, and post-war apartment complexes, interspersed with green parks and leafy boulevards. At its heart is the picturesque Hoan Kiem Lake, where locals come to meet, play sports, or enjoy a stroll and an ice cream.

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

**Hanoi Old Quarter** - A maze of streets weaving through Hanoi and dating back to the 13th century.

**Day 15: Hanoi**

**Meals: B, L, D**

Discover the sights of Hanoi. Visit the Ho Chi Minh Quarter for an insight into the Vietnam War. Visit the Humble House on Stilts, where Ho Chi Minh lived in the grounds of the Presidential Palace, and see his Mausoleum in Ba Dinh Square.



This evening, sit back and enjoy the Quintessence of Tonkin, a cultural celebration of northern Vietnamese history.

Please note: The performance schedule is subject to change; if the Quintessence of Tonkin is not operating, you will enjoy a similar artistic performance in Saigon or Hoi An.

### Destination Information

**Ba Dinh Square** – Ba Dinh Square was named after a Vietnamese uprising against colonial rule in the 1880s. It was here that President Ho Chi Minh read the Proclamation of Independence in 1945, when North Vietnam declared its independent status. It had previously been part of French Indochina, though it was under Japanese control for a number of months in 1945. Its dominant landmarks are Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum, where his body lies embalmed and on display, and the National Assembly Building.

**Presidential Palace** – This yellow, distinctly European building was built by the French as the Palace of the Governor-General of Indochina in the early 1900s. When Vietnam achieved independence, President Ho Chi Minh refused to live in the grand structure, instead building the Humble House on Stilts in its grounds. He used the Palace only to receive guests; it is still used for major political meetings.



**Humble House on Stilts** - The two-storey wooden home of Ho Chi Minh, who ruled Vietnam from here until his death in 1969. A carp pond sits on one side, with a fruit garden on the other.

**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.

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**Day 16: Halong Bay**

**Meals: B, L, D**

Drive 2.5 hours from Hanoi to Halong Bay, where you will take an overnight cruise to the far-most corners of this famously beautiful bay by boat.



Enjoy lunch onboard as you cruise out into the bay, stopping to anchor for an afternoon of activities such as kayaking, swimming, or relaxing on an island beach (determined by the local weather conditions). Sightseeing may include 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, followed by a freshly prepared dinner, before retiring to your cabin for the night.

Please note: 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.

Please note: Weather conditions 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.

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**Days 17: Halong Bay - Hanoi**

**Meals: B, L, D**

After a night anchored out on the bay, rise early to enjoy a Tai Chi lesson on deck as the sun rises. Cruise back to port, stopping en route to visit one of the bay's impressive caves.



Return to Hanoi, where your afternoon is at leisure ahead of this evening's farewell dinner.

**Days 18-19: Depart Hanoi**

**Meals: B**

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You will be transferred 1 hour from the hotel to the airport, according to the departure time of your international flight. Any time before your flight is at leisure. You may arrive back into New Zealand today or the following day.

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.

If you wish to extend your stay in Southeast Asia, please talk to our team about our various private extension packages before your departure. We have options for hiking in Sapa, beach breaks in Mui Ne, Phuket or Hua Hin, city stays in Bangkok or Singapore, and more.

## CAMOBODIA & VIETNAM TRAVEL INFORMATION

### VISAS:

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

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:

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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 CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM:

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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. Vietnam, for example, is perhaps best known for its fresh and aromatic dishes – relying heavily on flavours from fresh herbs such as mint, basil and dill.

Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead. 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. 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's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. 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 - just make sure to inform your booking agent of any specific requirements well in advance of your trip.

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!

#### **GROUP SIZE:**

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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 10 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only.

#### **ACCOMMODATION:**

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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/Local Guide. Rest assure that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your need.

#### PORTERAGE:

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

#### TRANSPORT:

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**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 South East Asia have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

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

#### TIPPING POLICY:

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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.

#### DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA:

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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:**

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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 usually in late January or early February. International Labour Day is on 1st May, Reunification Day is on 30th April, and National Independence Day is on 2nd September. 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 26th – 28th November.

### **SOUVENIRS:**

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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.

### **LUGGAGE:**

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

### **PERSONAL EXPENSES AND OPTIONAL TOURINGS:**

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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.

Optional Tours - May be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available.

Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

### CLIMBING STEPS:

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Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defence 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.

### VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

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We recommend that you contact either your doctor or local Health Centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Safe Travel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)

### BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

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We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://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:

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Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice including 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: December 2023

