



Grand Tour of Indochina

Classic Tour | 28 Days | Physical Level 2

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

For those with more time to explore this magnificent region of Southeast Asia, this tour not only covers the highlights of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, helps you explore further into the region's magnificent beauty, fascinating culture and friendly communities.

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

TOUR MAP



GRAND TOUR OF INDOCHINA INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escorts (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos visa fees for New Zealand passport holders
- 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:

See the classic sights in the company of expert guides so you can really understand the history and culture of the destination. On our classic tours we take care of everything, leaving you to sit back and enjoy the experience to the full. The tours are fully inclusive with all meals and a comprehensive touring programme.

PHYSICAL LEVEL 2:

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

'Grand Tour of Indochina' is rated as a physical level 2 tour. A good level of fitness is required as you need to be comfortable walking for 2-3 hours and covering longer distances. Walking or other activities such as cycling will be at a gentle pace and will involve straightforward terrain.

- On most days, there will be sightseeing on foot for extended periods of time
- There will be some gentle hiking in the rice terrace region of Mai Chau
- Throughout the tour, you will be required to get on and off varying sizes of 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:

The tour is 28 days in duration including international flights. Please note that depending on flight schedules passengers may arrive/depart on Day 2.

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

Join the tour on day 2 in Saigon and end the tour on Day 27 in Siem Reap. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

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

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1-2: Saigon

Meals: D

Fly to Saigon, where you will be met at the airport in the arrival's 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

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

Day 3: Saigon

Meals: B, L, D

Confront the reality of guerrilla warfare at the Cu Chi Tunnels. These cramped tunnels were central to some of the war's strategic operations, including the famous 1968 Tet Offensive.



This afternoon, explore modern day Saigon (HCMC) with its heady mix of local culture and colonial influences. We pass the Notre Dame Cathedral, visit the impressive Central Post Office, see the Reunification Palace and spend some time in reflection at the poignant War Remnants Museum.

Please note: The Notre Dame Cathedral will be under renovation until further notice. During this time we are unable to enter the Cathedral; however, it can be viewed from the outside.

Destination Information

Cu Chi Tunnels - 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. Sightseeing here involves two hours on foot on uneven mud paths through the bush and, if you choose, crouching to walk through a short section of the tunnels. You will also see recreations of some of the infamous bamboo traps of the VC.

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 during the French colonial period in the late 19th century. Its grand architecture shows Gothic and Renaissance influences.

Reunification Palace - Built on the site of the former Norodom Palace, this 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.

Day 4: Mekong Delta

Meals: B, L, D

Drive 2 and a half hours down to the picturesque province of Ben Tre situated along the mighty Mekong. This area is known as the 'Rice Basket of Vietnam', because its rich and fertile lands produce large amounts of rice, coconuts, vegetables and tropical fruit. Spend the day cruising and exploring these waterways by traditional Sampan boat.



Sightseeing involves hopping on and off these boats, often on unsteady and slippery surfaces, sometimes without handrails or assistance.

Destination Information

Mekong Delta - This densely populated region is Vietnam's most productive area in terms of agriculture and fishing. Its fertile farmland has earned it the nickname 'the rice bowl of Vietnam'. It was considered a part of Cambodia until at least the 15th century, with growing incursions and control by the Cham and Vietnamese throughout the 16th and 18th centuries. In the 1860s, it became part of Cochinchina (France's first colony in Vietnam) and later Indochina. After the Vietnam War, Cambodia's Khmer Rouge attempted to recapture the Delta, triggering a Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia that led to the fall of the Khmer Rouge.

Day 5: Saigon – Hoi An

Meals: B, L, D

Fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to Danang, and transfer 45 minutes to the ancient town of Hoi An for your 3 night stay.

This afternoon, take a walking tour of Hoi An's beautifully traditional Old Town, with its network of lantern-lit streets, small bridges, and cheerful yellow houses. See Tan Ky, a traditional house occupied by descendants of the same merchant family that originally built it over 200 years ago. Visit Quan Cong Chinese Temple and stop to admire the pink-hued Japanese Covered Bridge, constructed in the 1590s.

**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, prosperous merchants from China, Japan, France and Portugal settled here, resulting in a distinctive blend of culture, cuisine, religion and architecture.

Day 6: Hoi An

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, visit Tra Que, a local community farming project just outside of Hoi An. Here, multiple farming families have come together to create a co-operative herb and vegetable farm, which supplies most of the local restaurants. Learn the traditional methods the farmers use to plant, fertilise and harvest the crop, then try your hand at raking the ground and sowing seeds.



The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure to shop, head to the beach, or perhaps visit one of Hoi An's famous express tailors or sandal-makers – known for their ability to whip up high-quality tailored clothing and deliver it to your hotel in as little as 24 hours.

Day 7: Hoi An at leisure

Meals: B, L, D

Today is at leisure for you to explore the ancient town or head to the beach to relax.

**Day 8: Hoi An - Hue**

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, drive approximately 4 hours north to Hue - a journey that will take you over the famously scenic Hai Van Pass.

The scholarly city of Hue is the embodiment of Vietnam's dynamic past, wearing its history on its sleeve. Upon arrival, head to Minh Mang's Tomb to explore this opulent and exotic resting place, laid out in formal Chinese style.

**Destination Information**

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

Royal Tomb of Minh Mang - Emperor Minh Mang reigned in the Nguyen Dynasty, the last of the Vietnamese dynasties, from 1820-1840. The construction of his tomb was completed after his death and is said to have taken approximately 10,000 workers to complete.

The complex comprises of almost 40 monuments and is surrounded by gardens and pools, making it one of the more beautiful tombs in Vietnam.

Day 9: Hue

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast, visit the Imperial Citadel and the Forbidden Purple City. These fascinating sites are still being restored many years after the destruction caused by street fighting and bombing during the American War in Vietnam.

Later, drive to the outskirts of Hue to visit one of its traditional garden houses. This afternoon, enjoy an hourlong cruise along the Perfume River to the Thien Mu Pagoda. Explore here before returning to Hue for dinner.

**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 the personal use of 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 but retains its historic atmosphere.

Thien Mu Pagoda – This seven-storey octagonal tower is built on a hillock overlooking the Perfume River. Dating back to 1601, it is Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda, and considered the unofficial symbol of the city. Wander the grounds where bonsai, ponds and the smell of incense set a peaceful backdrop.

Day 10: Hue - Hanoi

Meals: B, L, D

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



Please note: As you have multiple stops in Hanoi, your guide may vary the order of touring for you to have the best possible experience of the city. No touring will be missed. Please be aware that domestic flight schedules can vary.

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 with an air of the provincial French towns of the 1930s; a "Paris of the Orient" as people have called it.

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

Day 11: Hanoi – Mai Chau

Meals: B, L, D

This morning take a visit to the Museum of Ethnology Temple of Literature, Hanoi's first university, before you take the picturesque mountain road to Mai Chau.

This afternoon, take a gentle trek out to see the rice fields. Visit the White Thai community villages of Pom Coong and Lac.



A smaller overnight bag is recommended for your trip to Mai Chau. Main luggage will be left in safe storage at the hotel in Hanoi and picked up your return. Please wear sturdy walking shoes as the mountain trails can be slippery when wet.

Destination Information

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

Pom Coong - The village of Pom Coong is made up of some 70 stilt houses in the Thai tradition, built from bamboo or wood, and raised about two metres above the ground on solid wooden pillars.

Day 12: Mai Chau

Meals: B, L, D

Drive higher into the mountains to visit the H'mong hill tribe village of Xa Linh, a mixture of modern and traditional thatched wooden buildings sitting 1000 metres above sea level.

Hiking times are approximate and depend on the group. Hikes are weather dependent and sensible footwear is essential. If conditions require, the hike will be moved to the morning of the following day.

**Day 13: Mai Chau - Hanoi**

Meals: B, L, D

Return to Hanoi along the scenic mountain route. You will stay in Hanoi overnight.



Day 14: Halong Bay

Meals: B, L, D

Transfer around 2 and a half hours to Halong, where you will take an overnight cruise to the far-most corners of the bay by boat. Enjoy lunch on board as you cruise out into the bay, stopping to anchor for an afternoon of activities (subject to change due to weather conditions). Excursions may include visiting underground caves on the islands, gentle kayaking, or visiting the bay's island beaches. End the day on deck with a drink in hand, watching the sun set over the bay, 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 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.

Day 15: Halong Bay - Hanoi

Meals: B, L, D

Spend the morning sailing through Halong Bay. After brunch, disembark your cruise and return to Hanoi for an afternoon at leisure.

This evening, attend The Quintessence of Tonkin show, an artistic open-air performance celebrating the rich history of northern Vietnam. It is performed by a huge cast of dancers and farmers on a hydraulic pavilion, built on a natural lake.

**Day 16: Hanoi – Luang Prabang**

Meals: B, L, D

Discover more sights of Hanoi this morning. First stop will be the Ho Chi Minh Quarter and pass Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, followed by the Humble House on Stilts and the One Pillar Pagoda.

This evening, say goodbye to Vietnam, transferring to the airport for your 1-hour flight to Luang Prabang.



Destination Information

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

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

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

Luang Prabang - The former royal capital and seat of government, Luang Prabang lost its status as capital after the Pathet Lao overthrew the Royal Government at the end of the Laotian Civil War in 1975. In 1995, it was listed by UNESCO for its unique, well-preserved architecture, which blends cultural heritage with the French colonial influence of the 19th and 20th centuries. Each morning, the monks of Luang Prabang's many monasteries walk through the streets, collecting alms in a ritual called Takbat.

Day 17: Luang Prabang

Meals: B, L, D

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



Destination Information

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

At the summit of the hill, overlooking the town and surrounding countryside, is Wat Chom Si, which is also a Buddhist temple and is a highlight of Luang Prabang.

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

Wat Xieng Thong - A Buddhist temple (wat), located on the northern tip of the peninsula of Luang Prabang, Laos. Wat Xieng Thong is one of the most important Lao monasteries and remains a significant monument to the spirit of religion, royalty and traditional art. There are over 20 structures on the grounds, including shrines, pavilions and residences, in addition to its gardens of various flowers, ornamental shrubs and trees.

Day 18: Luang Prabang

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, visit the National Museum, housed in the former Royal Palace. Admire the Crown Jewels of Laos, on display in the mirrored Throne Room. From here, drive 1 hour to the beautiful Kuang Si Waterfall. Sightseeing at the waterfall will involve around 1 hour of light walking. Electric shuttles may be available to transport visitors to the falls. It is possible to take a swim in the river near the falls; if you wish to do this, please remember to bring along your swimsuit and a towel. Changing rooms are available on site.



Return to Luang Prabang, stopping at Ban Na Ouane village and Ock Pop Tok Weaving Centre.

Day 19: Luang Prabang – Vang Vieng

Meals: B, L, D

Fly to Vientiane. Transfer 1h45 through the scenic countryside to Vang Vieng, a town beautifully set in a spectacular karst landscape.

**Day 20: Vang Vieng**

Meals: B, L, D

Visit the Tham Chang Cave before taking a walk through the dramatic countryside, where limestone karsts dominate the skyline. Admire the peaceful Nam Song River, which cuts through the valley of rice fields, and enjoy a walk along its banks.

**Day 21: Vientiane**

Meals: B, L, D

Drive back to Vientiane. A delightfully quaint city, Vientiane feels more like a friendly backwater than a chaotic capital. Spend the afternoon exploring That Luang Stupa, Wat Si Saket, and Wat Phra Keo. Continue your sightseeing at the Patuxai Victory Monument, resembling Paris' Arc de Triomphe. Sightseeing today involves around 2 to 3 hours on foot.



Destination Information

That Luang Stupa - A gold-covered large Buddhist stupa in the centre of Vientiane.

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

Patuxai Victory Monument – A war monument in the centre of Vientiane. It was built between 1957 and 1968 and is dedicated to those who fought for independence from France.

Day 22: Vientiane – Phnom Penh

Meals: B, L, D

Take a 90-minute flight to Phnom Penh. Enjoy a sightseeing tour of the city this afternoon, spending around 3 hours exploring on foot, visiting the Royal Palace, Silver Pagoda and the National Museum.



Destination Information

Phnom Penh – The capital of the Kingdom of Cambodia is built around four 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 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 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.

Day 23: Phnom Penh

Meals: B, L, D

Reflect on Cambodia's recent history with a visit to the Tuol Sleng Museum, where you will learn about the suffering of the Khmer people under the brutal Khmer Rouge regime of the 1970s. The visit to the Tuol Sleng Museum involves 1 hour on foot. This museum is also the site of the former S21 prison used by the Khmer Rouge and commemorates the atrocities that occurred here during the regime of Pol Pot. Today, these Killing Fields are a memorial site for quiet reflection.



The visit is educational but can be emotional; you will be given time to explore on your own. Afterwards, return to Phnom Penh for lunch before a visit to the city's hilltop temple, Wat Phnom.

You may like to visit the Central Market to browse shops or enjoy a stroll along the riverfront before dinner at a local restaurant this evening.

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.

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.

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.

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

Day 24: Phnom Penh – Siem reap

Meals: B, L, D

Transfer to the airport for your 45-minute flight to Siem Reap. Continue to Banteay Srei, a 10th-century temple famous for its pink sandstone architecture and astonishingly fine carving. This is a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva and is considered by many to be the 'jewel in the crown' of Angkorian art. The temple is cut from pink sandstone and contains some of the finest stone carvings in the world.



This evening, watch a rollicking performance by graduates of the PHARE Cambodian Circus. This is an NGO which transforms the lives of disadvantaged youths through vocational arts training. The project offers them an education and a career, while reviving arts that were almost lost under the strict anti-performance laws of the Khmer Rouge.

Destination Information

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

Day 25: Angkor Wat & Angkor Thom

Meals: B, L, D

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.

This evening, take a cruise on the moat of Angkor Thom, enjoying a refreshing drink as the sun sets. *Please note: The Central Tower of the Angkor Wat complex is closed on Buddhist holidays. If you wish to ascend this tower, you may be required to wait in the queue alongside all other visitors. The ability to do this will be determined based on the group's schedule.*

Destination Information

Angkor Wat - The state temple of Angkor Wat was built by the Khmer King Suryavarman II in the early 12th century and was originally dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu. It fell to the Chams in 1177. A later king, Jayavarman VII, converted Angkor Wat to a Buddhist site. With its well preserved decorative flourishes, extensive bas-relief and multiple tiers, Angkor Wat showcases Khmer classical architecture at its grandest.

Angkor Thom - The last capital of the Angkor (Khmer) Empire. After Angkor Wat was sacked by the Chams in 1177, the empire was subsequently restored by a new king, Jayavarman VII, who built Angkor Thom a few kilometres north of Angkor Wat. Look out for the Elephant Terrace and the Terrace of the

Leper King - giant viewing platforms in Angkor Thom used for public royal ceremonies. The Bayon - Built by King Jayavarman VII, the Bayon was the state temple at the heart of the city of Angkor Thom. Its beautifully crafted central towers are decorated with faces representing Jayavarman VII. The Bayon's stone galleries display extraordinary bas-reliefs incorporating over 11,000 figures.

Ta Prohm - The ancient Buddhist monastery of Ta Prohm is one of the most atmospheric sites in the whole Angkor archaeological park. It was built in 1186 by King Jayavarman VII, slightly to the east of his new capital, Angkor Thom. Swallowed by the jungle, it is dominated by the strangler figs and Kapok trees that have entwined themselves around the ruins. Originally dedicated to Sri Jayarajadamani, the mother of the king, it was made famous by the film Tomb Raider. For many, Ta Prohm is the most enduring memory of visiting Angkor

Day 26: Tonle Sap Lake

Meals: B, L, D

Enjoy a morning cruise on Tonle Sap Lake, visiting a local village and observing the way of life of these lake communities. In the high-water season (August to February), you will also visit Kampong Khleang, a unique village on stilts. In the low water season (March to July), you will visit Chong Kneas, a floating village.



On your way back to Siem Reap, stop by the SATCHA social enterprise, before enjoying this evening's farewell dinner with an Aspara Dance Show.

Destination Information

The SATCHA Handicraft Centre - A social enterprise showcasing traditional Cambodian art. Local creators are supported with materials and training to produce their crafts such as intricate bamboo weavings and wood carvings, with many of the handicrafts available to purchase from the shop.

Day 27 - 28: Depart Siem Reap

Meals: B,

Any time before your flight is free at your leisure today. You will be transferred from the hotel to the airport, according to the departure time of your international flight. Fly to New Zealand, arriving home the same or 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.

GRAND TOUR OF INDOCHINA TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia - Entry visas are required by all visitors, Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. We will supply you with all paperwork if applicable and submit the visa application on your behalf. 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. Currently a visa is required for New Zealand Passport holders. Your travel consultant will inform you if any changes are applicable prior to your departure.

Cambodia Entry Requirement - Effective 01 July 2024, all guests travelling to Cambodia must complete a mandatory online e-immigration application within 7 days prior to their arrival. You may complete the form via the mobile phone app called Cambodia e-Arrival (CeA), or the form can be completed online at <https://arrival.gov.kh/>. The app and the registration process are free of charge.

INSURANCE:

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

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

EATING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

Southeast Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in 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's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. In Vietnam, dishes are normally placed in the centre and people serve food for themselves with their own chopsticks and bowl. 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.

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!

Please inform us of any allergies and/or special dietary requirements at time of booking

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.

TIPPING POLICY:

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

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

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/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 need.

LUGGAGE:

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

PORTERAGE:

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

EXCHANGING CASH:

It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling outside major cities in Thailand and Laos. US Dollars are easily exchanged throughout Thailand and Laos however other currencies such as New Zealand Dollars can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are undamaged. We suggest for your convenience that you ensure your US Dollars are from the new series (2013 onwards) to avoid any difficulties exchanging money during your trip. Old series notes can be difficult to exchange.

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

PERSONAL EXPENSES AND OPTIONAL TOURINGS:

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:

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.

APPROPRIATE DRESS:

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

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

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

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.

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

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

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

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

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 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.

Updated: January 2025