



FASCINATING VIETNAM, CAMBODIA & THE MEKONG RIVER WITH HANOI & HA LONG BAY 16 Day River Cruise from Hanoi to Siem Reap

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive Hanoi, Vietnam

Welcome to Vietnam! Hotel rooms are available for mid-afternoon check-in.

Day 2 Hanoi

This morning, take time to look at the life of Ho Chi Minh, the father of modern Vietnam. First, visit the MAUSOLEUM and the humble cottage from which "Uncle Ho" ruled Vietnam until his death in 1969. Next on the agenda: ONE PILLAR PAGODA, the HO CHI MINH MUSEUM, and the Presidential Palace. Stop at the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" before continuing to mystical Hoan Kiem Lake, where you will enjoy a brief guided walk. Also visit the ancient TEMPLE OF LITERATURE, over 900 years old and Hanoi's first university. Lunch is at KOTO, a non-profit restaurant and hospitality program that trains local street children in restaurant skills they can use to find a job and build a stable life. After lunch, enjoy a CYCLO ride through the fascinating Old Quarter, 36 ancient streets where peddlers trade as they have for centuries. An early dinner

this evening is followed by a fascinating performance of Hanoi's renowned WATER PUPPETS, a traditional art form dating back to the 11th century.

 Breakfast  Lunch  Dinner

Day 3 **Hanoi–Ha Long Bay**

Travel from Hanoi through the fertile countryside to Hon Gai, gateway to Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Located in the Gulf of Tonkin, the Bay is dotted with over 3,000 limestone islands carved into fanciful shapes by the action of the water. Tunnels, caves, and weirdly shaped outcroppings with imaginative names can be found on many of the small islets sprinkled across the bay. Board a CRUISE that explores the caves, and admire the beauty and scale before stopping at one of the many secluded bays.

 Breakfast  Lunch  Dinner

Day 4 **Ha Long Bay-Hanoi-Ho Chi Minh City**

This morning, drive to Hanoi and board your flight for Ho Chi Minh City.

 Breakfast

Day 5 **Ho Chi Minh City**

This morning, enjoy a WALKING TOUR of the city's famous and historic landmarks as you stroll through the heart of the city along Dong Khoi Street (formerly Rue Catinat) past Ho Chi Minh Square, the Municipal Theatre, the Central Post Office, and Notre Dame Cathedral. Stop at the Rex Hotel for a refreshing DRINK at the popular ROOFTOP BAR where the U.S. Military held the infamous "Five O'Clock Follies" during the war. Next, visit the WAR REMNANTS MUSEUM followed by BEN THANH MARKET, the largest and oldest in the city. For lunch, participate in a hands-on VIETNAMESE COOKING CLASS. Head into the classroom and learn how to prepare different local dishes and the techniques necessary to recreate them once you return home. Last but not least, sample your delicious creations! The afternoon is at your leisure to explore this lively city. Tonight, enjoy a special welcome dinner.

 Breakfast  Lunch  Dinner

Day 6 **Ho Chi Minh City. Excursion To Cu Chi Tunnels**

This morning, leave the city and drive through vast expanses of rice paddies to visit the CU CHI TUNNELS, an extraordinary network of tunnels more than 120 miles in length that was used by the Viet Cong as a hideout and secret village during the war. Here you will learn about how the tunnels were constructed and have a chance to walk through a section to experience what life would have been like underground. Return to Ho Chi Minh City and enjoy the rest of the afternoon and evening at your leisure. Maybe stop at the famous Rex Hotel for a drink and sweeping views of the city.

 Breakfast

Day 7 **Ho Chi Minh City (Embarkation)**

This morning, transfer to the port on the Saigon River and board your river cruise vessel to start your CRUISE up the Mekong River through Vietnam and Cambodia. Get acquainted with the ship and relax before your welcome reception this evening.

 Breakfast  Lunch  Dinner

Day 8 **Cruising: Vinh Long–Cu Lao Gieng**

This morning, board a sampan for a scenic cruise to Vinh Long. Upon arrival, visit a LOCAL WORKSHOP to see how rice paper, rice wine, and traditional candies are made. Other surprises await for those who are brave! After lunch on the ship, enjoy scenes of daily life along the river near Cu Lao Gieng via sampan. Stop at a LOCAL HOME, where a skilled family works together

to hand-craft sampans for a living. Then, ride a specially designed MOTOR CART to one of Vietnam's oldest churches for a special INTERACTION WITH A CATHOLIC PRIEST.

 Breakfast  Lunch  Dinner

Day 9 **Cruising: Chau Doc–Long Khong A–Cambodian Border Crossing**

After breakfast, walk through the LOCAL MARKET and absorb the atmosphere as locals are busy buying and selling fish, meat, and produce. Then join a sampan excursion down the backwaters of the Mekong to the religious sites at the base of SAM MOUNTAIN. Along the way, see traditional floating homes, speedboat merchants, a market selling dried goods, and more. After lunch, a sampan brings you to the village of LONG KHONG A, where cotton weaving is a well-preserved tradition. Spend time at one house for a COTTON-WEAVING DEMONSTRATION and a chance to talk with the family. Return to the ship and head for the Cambodian border.

 Breakfast  Lunch  Dinner

Day 10 **Cruising: Phnom Penh**

The capital city of Phnom Penh retains its French charm to this day. This morning, your sightseeing tour by private cyclo includes visits to the ROYAL PALACE with the spectacular SILVER PAGODA and the NATIONAL MUSEUM, featuring an outstanding display of Khmer artifacts. The remainder of the day is at your leisure to enjoy the city. Just before dinner, children from a local orphanage will put on a SHOW featuring local song and dance.

 Breakfast  Lunch  Dinner

Day 11 **Phnom Penh**

Sightseeing this morning provides a glimpse of the atrocities inflicted on the Cambodian people by the Khmer Rouge regime. Visit the TUOL SLENG GENOCIDE MUSEUM, a former high school that housed over 17,000 prisoners. Of this number, it is believed that fewer than 15 survived the torture and avoided being sent to the Killing Fields. You will also visit one of the KILLING FIELDS, where more than 200,000 people were killed by the Khmer Rouge. After lunch, depart Phnom Penh and enjoy some time at leisure on the ship.

 Breakfast  Lunch  Dinner

Day 12 **Cruising: Wat Hanchey–Angkor Ban**

This morning, visit WAT HANCHEY, a temple dating back to the 8th century and the Chenla Empire. Located on a hilltop, enjoy stunning views of the surrounding area and partake in a TRADITIONAL WATER BLESSING given by local monks. After lunch, enjoy a WALKING TOUR through the rural village of Angkor Ban. Here you will see traditional Khmer houses and visit a LOCAL SCHOOL.

NOTE:

The climb to Wat Hanchey features a steep incline. If you feel you are unable to make the climb, you will be driven to the top by car.

 Breakfast  Lunch  Dinner

Day 13 **Cruising: Konpong Louang–Kampong Tralach**

Today, start your sightseeing at the SILVERMITH VILLAGE of Konpong Louang. Here you will see talented craftsmen use age-old techniques to turn pure silver into works of art. Continue on to Kampong Tralach for an OX CART RIDE past rice paddy fields and the beautiful Cambodian countryside. Along the way, stop to MEET A LOCAL FARMER and learn about his daily life. Return to the ship for lunch. This afternoon, cruise up the Tonle River to Tonle Sap (Great Lake). After the rainy season, this massive body of water can cover around 10,000 square miles and is the perfect breeding ground for fish, which play a vital role in providing food for people living on the lake.

NOTE:

During low water conditions, generally mid-December to August, we will not be able to cruise up the Tonle River to Tonle Sap. Low water conditions vary from year to year so this will be evaluated on a cruise-by-cruise basis.

 Breakfast  Lunch  Dinner

Day 14 Cruising: Siem Reap (Disembarkation)

This morning, arrive in Siem Reap and start your sightseeing of the TEMPLES OF ANGKOR, considered by many to be the most spectacular architectural ruins on Earth! Constructed between the 9th and 13th centuries, the temples were built around the Khmer interpretations of Indian religious and political beliefs that ultimately evolved from Hinduism to Buddhism. The complex architectural grandeur of the Angkor temples is arguably unmatched among ancient ruins anywhere in the world. First, visit the best preserved and most famous of all the temples: ANGKOR WAT, honoring the Hindu god Vishnu. Featuring five trademark towers and stunning bas reliefs, it has become a symbol of Cambodia. Then, visit BANTEAY SREI, a unique temple dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva. Unlike other temples, it is built on a small scale from red sandstone, which can be carved like wood. This evening is at leisure to explore charming Siem Reap—or stay to witness sunset at Angkor Wat!

NOTE:

During low water conditions, generally mid-December to August, we will not be able to cruise across Tonle Sap to Siem Reap. In these cases, we will fly from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap and sightseeing will begin in the afternoon. No included sightseeing will be missed. Low water conditions vary from year to year so this will be evaluated on a cruise-by-cruise basis.

 Breakfast  Lunch

Day 15 Siem Reap

Today, continue your sightseeing of the Angkor temples by tuk-tuk. Start at ANGKOR THOM where you will explore BAYON TEMPLE. One of the few Buddhist temples in Angkor, it features some 200 striking faces carved in 54 towers and impressive bas reliefs. Next stop is TA PROHM, which, unlike the other temples, has been left relatively untouched. Tree roots grow over and through the ruin walls, allowing you to experience the temple with the same wonder as the early explorers who discovered it. Lastly, stop at LES ARTISANS D'ANGKOR, a development project teaching young adults traditional handicraft techniques. The rest of the afternoon is at your leisure. This evening, enjoy a PRIVATE APSARA DANCE PERFORMANCE, where the ancient Khmer culture is brought to life by talented dancers, singers, and musicians.

 Breakfast  Dinner

Day 16 Siem Reap

Your vacation ends with breakfast this morning.

 Breakfast

Book your next glam vacay today!



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