

## Vietnam & Cambodia Encounters

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**Country(ies):** Vietnam & Cambodia

**Tour type:** Small Group

**Transport:** A/C car/minibus, boats & domestic flight

**Group size:** Min: 2 | Max: 12

**Days:** 16 Days

**Start location:** Hanoi, Vietnam

**End location:** Phnom Penh, Cambodia

**Departs On:** Saturday

**Meals:** Breakfasts - 14, Lunches - 7, Dinners - 5

**Highlights:** Ancient Hanoi, Halong Bay cruise, colonial Hoi An, Mekong Delta homestay & boat trip, Saigon, Phnom Penh sites, local markets, Kulen mountain waterfalls, statues & homestay, Angkor Wat temples, Ta Prohm

**Places Visited:** Hanoi, Halong Bay, Hue, Hoi An, Saigon, Phnom Penh & Siem Reap



# Itinerary

## Day 1: Arrive in Hanoi, airport to hotel transfers included

Once you arrive in Hanoi, one of our staff members will be there to meet and greet you before transporting you to your hotel. We'll have some time to settle in, before your tour guide briefs you on the itinerary over the next few days and arranges a time to meet you tomorrow.

You have the choice to visit Hoan Kiem Lake tomorrow morning to watch or participate in some early morning Tai Chi with the locals, or sleep a little later.

**OVERNIGHT:** Hanoi hotel

**MEALS:** None

**EXTRAS:** Extra day in Hanoi - pre-tour

## Day 2: Exploring Hanoi City

After some early morning Tai Chi at Hoan Kiem Lake or a good night's rest, we'll have a hearty breakfast before heading out to the city. On the agenda today is a visit to the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, the One Pillar Pagoda, the Presidential Palace and a visit to an 11th-century relic. We'll also make our way to the Temple of Literature, built to commemorate the Chinese scholar Confucius.

This afternoon, we'll head to the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, before we make our way to the Old Quarter to try some of Hanoi's unique street cuisine and the local brews. For dessert, we'll visit one of Hanoi's best-known ice cream parlour.

**OVERNIGHT:** Hanoi hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 3: A boat trip on Ha Long Bay

Today we make our way to Ha Long Bay, famed for its tall limestone islands and sky blue waters. We'll be boarding a traditional junk boat - the best way to explore the rainforest islands and mysterious caves dotted around the bay - before enjoying lunch on deck.

After a tasty lunch, we'll make our way to one of the most picturesque caves in all of Ha Long Bay - the Sung Sot Cave, which was discovered by a French Admiral in 1901, before cruising to Titov Island for some relaxation time.

We'll return back to the boat for a sunset party on the sundeck before enjoying dinner and socialising with the rest of the travellers. We'll overnight on the junk boat, the perfect opportunity to take in the natural sounds of your Vietnamese surroundings.

**OVERNIGHT:** Halong Bay junk boat

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 4: Exploring the Luon Cave and a Vietnamese cooking class

This morning we have the choice to either start the day with some Tai Chi or head out on a photo hunt before

breakfast on board the junk boat. Afterwards, we make our way to the arc-shaped Luon Cave situated on Bo Hon Island. Due to its height, the cave can only be reached via a small boat or kayak.

We'll head back to the junk boat to freshen up before we head further down the bay, passing the Ba Hang fishing village, Dog Islet and many more. As we make our way back to the harbour, we'll watch a fruit carving demonstration and join a cooking class before we have a traditional Vietnamese lunch.

We'll say goodbye to the junk boat after lunch as we return to Hanoi for some free time. A day-use hotel room will be made available to freshen up before we board the overnight Reunification Express sleeper train south to Hue.

**OVERNIGHT:** Overnight sleeper train to Hue

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 5: Sightseeing in Hue City

We wake up on board the Reunification Express, as we make our way past rice paddies, water buffalo and rural farmlands. Once we arrive in Hue, we'll head to our hotel before we enjoy a private tour of this historic city and its ancient temples.

We'll also visit the Citadel - a UNESCO World Heritage Site - before we make our way to the Perfume River for a sunset cruise, listening to the sounds of traditional music through the night. We'll spend the night in Hue City.

**OVERNIGHT:** Hue hotel

**MEALS:** Lunch

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 6: From Hue to Hoi An

Today we'll head south, passing the scenic Hai Van Pass to the riverside town of Hoi An. This ancient town, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site was once a bustling commercial port for Chinese, Dutch, French, Japanese, Portuguese and Arab merchants.

We'll continue to the traditional pottery village of Thanh Ha, where we'll learn how to make pottery items such as vases, jars, bowls and pots.

From Thanh Ha, we'll make our way to the traditional village of Kim Bong to witness its carpentry and a shipbuilding area where wooden fishing vessels are crafted. We'll also participate in a carpentry workshop, where we'll witness first-hand how the local furniture, sculptures and souvenirs are crafted.

We'll continue down the Bon River, where we watch the local fisherman and possibly even try our hand at some fishing ourselves.

**OVERNIGHT:** Hoi An hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 7: Free time in Hoi An, optional activities available

We have the day free to explore the lovely town of Hoi An or take one of our optional activities, which includes a boat trip to some of the nearby islands, snorkelling, exploring the My Son Holy Land, browsing through its busy markets or cooking lessons in the Tra Que village. You can also choose to head out on a tour with the local fisherman where you'll learn how to cast nets, catch crabs and race basket boats.

You can also choose to explore some of Hoi An's famous tailor shops, where you can get a new suit or dress made for you in record time for you to collect tomorrow.

**OVERNIGHT:** Hoi An hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 8: Exploring Ho Chi Minh City, evening Vespa tour

We say goodbye to Hoi An as we make our way to Danang Airport to board a flight to Ho Chi Minh City. Once we arrive, you'll have some time to settle in and freshen up before head out this evening on a vintage vespa tour through the city, trying its unique cuisine and listening to love music.

We start our vintage vespa tour at Cafe Zoom for cocktails and a few appetizers before we make our way to a popular restaurant for a meal. Afterwards, we'll experience the Saigon nightlife the way the locals do.

We'll make our way through Chinatown and District 4's busy streets, meeting the locals and enjoying seafood and drinks. We'll also make our way through District 3 and District 1, exploring Banh Xeo, the speciality of Saigon and its southern food. We'll also head to a hidden Vietnamese-style coffee shop for some live music. Drinks and food are included.

**OVERNIGHT:** Ho Chi Minh City hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 9: From Ho Chi Minh City to the Mekong Delta

We'll say goodbye to Ho Chi Minh city as we make our way through the Mekong Delta to the town of Cai Be. We'll have some time to explore its famous for its floating markets before boarding a private boat as we make our way to Vinh Long.

Once we arrive in Vinh Long, we'll have a tasty delta lunch at a Bonsai gardener's house, where we'll taste the popular 'Elephant ear fish' - before we head back out, exploring the tributaries and canals of the delta.

This afternoon we'll visit a local family, where we'll relax and try to catch fish by hand to prepare for dinner. Tonight, we'll have dinner with the locals, learning about their way of life before settling in for the evening.

**OVERNIGHT:** Hai Dao homestay

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 10: Back to Ho Chi Minh City

We'll wake up to the sounds of the Mekong Delta and have an early breakfast before we cycle to a local market to buy some food for lunch. Using the ingredients we've just bought, we'll learn how to make a few traditional Vietnamese dishes for lunch, before we say goodbye to the local family and make our way back to Ho Chi Minh City.

**OVERNIGHT:** Ho Chi Minh City hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch  
**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 11: From Ho Chi Minh to Phnom Penh

Today, you'll have some free time to explore the city before you say goodbye to Vietnam as we cross the border to Cambodia's capital city of Phnom Penh.

You'll have some time to settle in at your hotel for the evening, before we arrange a time to collect you tomorrow.

**OVERNIGHT:** Phnom Penh hotel  
**MEALS:** Breakfast  
**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 12: Exploring Phnom Penh

Today, we'll visit a few remnants of Cambodia's bloody past - the Killing Fields of Choeung Ek and the Toul Sleng Prison Museum.

We'll then head to the Royal Palace and the famous Silver Pagoda and its silver tiled floors. The treasures found inside the Silver Pagoda include a solid gold Buddha encrusted and weighing 90 kilograms and a small 17th century emerald and baccarat crystal Buddha.

We'll make our way to the National Museum which is home to a stunning collection of Khmer Art before we spend the rest of the night relaxing in Phnom Penh.

**OVERNIGHT:** Phnom Penh hotel  
**MEALS:** Breakfast  
**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 13: The journey to Siem Reap

After spending some time in Cambodia's busy capital - we make our way to Siem Reap - the gateway to the Angkor ruins. We'll make a few pit stops along the way - first at the Skoun District to visit a spider market, where if you're brave enough, can eat fried spiders. We'll also visit the Santuk District for a stone carving workshop, before we visit the ancient Naga Bridge.

Upon arrival in Siem Reap, we'll visit the statue of Yeay Teap as well as the Preah Ang Chek and Preah Ang Chorm Shrine, built to commemorate two Buddhas. The locals believe that Preah Ang Chek and the Preah Ang Chorm Shrines protect the entire town of Siem Reap.

Later in the day we'll head to the Psar Chars, also called the 'Old Market', where anything and everything is for sale, before heading to Kulen Mountain to check in at our accommodation for the day.

**OVERNIGHT:** Kulen Mountain homestay  
**MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner  
**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 14: The wonders of Kulen Mountain

After breakfast, we'll head out to explore Kulen Mountain. We start by taking a forest trail to find the life-size elephant statue, which represents the mountain's guardian, and the smaller statues of lions, a cow and a frog.

Once we reach the waterfall, we'll have a picnic before we visit the reclining buddha statue in Wat Preah Ang Thom,

which is carved into a huge sandstone boulder. Preah Ang Thom is the sacred and worshipping God for Phnom Kulen. We'll reach a rock plateau, providing us with scenic views over Kulen Mountain, before stopping at a waterfall for a swim. We'll return to Siem Reap and check in at our hotel for the night.

**OVERNIGHT:** Siem Reap hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 15: Angkor's ancient ruins and an evening street food tour

Today we'll explore Angkor's ancient ruins such as the South Gate of Angkor Thom - home to huge human faces carved in stone, the impressive Bayon Temple, the Royal Enclosure, Phimeanakas, the Elephant Terrace, the Terrace of the Leper King and the largest as well as the most complete temple of Angkor Wat, built in the 12th century.

This evening, we'll head out to Pub Street Siem Reap - the nightlife hub of the town, which has rows of backpacker-friendly bars and pubs, packed nightclubs and international restaurants. We'll overnight in Siem Reap.

**OVERNIGHT:** Siem Reap hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 16: Your Vietnam & Cambodia adventure comes to an end, airport transfer included

We hope that you had an amazing time in Vietnam and Cambodia! After breakfast, we'll transfer you to the airport to board your flight home.

**OVERNIGHT:** N/A

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Extra day in Siem Reap - post-tour || Half-day local village tour & cooking class || Half-day silk farm tour || Half-day remote temples tour || Half day cycling tour of the temples || Half-day tour to Tonle Sap Lake

## Included

- 11-nights accommodation in 3 to 4-star hotels
- 1 night on Halong Bay junk boat
- 1 night on Reunification Express sleeper train
- 2 nights in simple homestays
- Transport and transfers in private AC car/minibus
- 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- Internal flight from Danang to Ho Chi Minh
- Services of local tour guides during sightseeing and activities
- Admission fees, with instruction where necessary
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary

## Excluded

- International Flights (available on request)
- Visas fees
- Travel Insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Single room supplements

- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Optional tours
- Tips for tour guides and drivers
- Any other items not mentioned above

# Options

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Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting.

However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

## Single Room Supplement (VETMVC)

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$465.00

This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. Room shares are not available on this tour, so if you are single traveller then you will need to add this option to your booking.

**Note:** The price shown is a low season price. Slightly higher prices may apply during high and peak seasons - the exact price for your dates will be shown on the online booking form and is always available on request.

## Extra day in Hanoi - pre-tour

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$30.00

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

**Note:** Single room and peak season supplements apply.

## Extra day in Siem Reap - post-tour

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$35.00

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport departure transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

**Note:** Single room and peak season supplements apply.



## Visit My Son heritage site

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$140.00

You also have the option of exploring the lush green countryside of the My Son Holy Land, to take a closer look at how the locals live and it will provide you with plenty of photographic opportunities.

Once you arrive, you will be briefly introduced the history, culture and the Indian-Hinduism influence on the Champa Kingdom before visiting the remains of a carefully-crafted red brick temples with monuments and epitaphs which are often described as Vietnam's Angkor Wat.

The tour starts at your hotel at 08.30am and takes around 4 hour, including the return 100km drive to and from My Son. This is a private tour, just for any travellers in our group. Prices shown are based on min 2 people, with a supplement due if only 1 person does the tour.

To provide better experience and flexibility throughout this optional tour it is operated by jeep, not minibus or coach.

## Cooking class at Tra Que village

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$40.00

A tour guide will meet you at your hotel before cycling to Hoi An's colourful central market. Here, you'll have the opportunity to interact with the local sellers and learn about the ingredients to be used in the cooking lesson later.

You'll then hop back on your bike and head towards the Tra Que vegetable village. You'll be welcomed with a drink before being introduced to the vegetable gardens where the local farmers work using traditional methods of yesteryear - no electricity needed.

After familiarising yourself with the locals, you'll go to the restaurant to meet the chef - who will give you a cooking master class on the traditional ways of preparing and cooking Vietnamese food, before enjoying the fruits of your labour for lunch (included in the tour price).

The tour starts at your hotel at 08.00am or 2.00pm and takes around 4 hours. The tour is arranged as a sharing tour, joining other people, but is available privately for a supplement if you prefer (please contact us for prices).

## Fish & Chips tour

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$55.00

You'll cycle to the Tra Que Village to explore the vegetable fields and see how the local farmers go about their daily activities before heading towards the Hoi An Beach dock, where you'll take a boat to the Cua Dai sand dune, where the local fishermen will display their net casting skills and you'll even have a chance to learn how to do it.

You'll then travel to the Cam Thanh Water coconut village, where the local fishermen will teach you how to catch crabs. You'll then be divided into groups for basket boat racing - the winner gets a wonderful gift!

You'll have a delectable lunch (included in the tour price) at a local family house before learning how to make funny tools with a water coconut leaf, before visiting a craftsman's house in the village.

The tour starts at your hotel at 08.00am and takes around 6 1/2 hours. The tour is arranged as a sharing tour, joining other people, but is available privately for a supplement if you prefer (please contact us for prices).

## Saigon craft beer Vespa tour

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$130.00

The Saigon craft beer tour takes you to four of the best craft breweries in town, as you ride around the busy city streets in between venues on the back of our vintage Vespas. These new breweries in Saigon are taking flavours to the next level, exploring worldwide brews with local Vietnamese essences.

All the beers have been carefully selected by each Master Brewer especially for this Vespa Adventure, so you can get a taste of the broad range of flavours of the impressively growing craft beer scene in this vibrant city.

The brewers will join you and take delight in sharing their knowledge, story and the actual brewing process with unique ingredients & flavours, so you can fully appreciate the taste of their creations.

Our scope goes from independent brewers still producing small batches of beer at home, to the most famous brands of craft beer and cider in town. Apart from multiple tastings of the best beers, each place also offers a variety of delicious and elaborate food pairings include the best pizza in the city, gourmet tapas and some Vietnamese inspired bites.

The tour starts at your hotel at 5.30pm and finishes around 10pm. The tour is arranged as a sharing tour, joining other people, but is available privately for a supplement if you prefer (please contact us for prices).

## Half-day local village tour & cooking class

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$95.00

If you're looking to learn more about Cambodia's unique cuisine, then this half-day cooking class is perfect for you.

Taking place approximately 25 kilometres away from Siem Reap, you'll board an ox-cart, exploring the surrounding villages, crossing a rice paddy through the largest crocodile farm in the region to witness the lifestyle of the locals who call these rural villages home.

You'll have the opportunity to assist the local school, pagoda or community, before we learn the intricacies of Khmer's gastronomic customs and learn how to cook as the locals.

This tour includes a private English speaking guide, AC transport, entry fees where applicable, and drinking water. Prices shown are based on a minimum of 2 people travelling, with solo traveller supplements applying if you choose the option on your own.

## Half-day silk farm tour

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$50.00

This half-day silk farm tour takes place in the Pouk district, situated 15 kilometres west of Siem Reap.

Here, you'll see a fascinating silk-making workshop, where you'll learn how silk is made, how the silkworms are fed and bred, extracting and refining the silk and the traditional pattern dyeing and looming process. You'll also have the chance to browse through a retail silk and souvenir shop, giving you the chance to take some home to your loved ones.

As we make our way back to our hotel, we'll make one more stop at the Western Baray - a massive reservoir

situated just west of Angkor Thom, which provides water to cultivate the lands around Angkor.

This tour includes a private English speaking guide, AC transport, entry fees where applicable, and drinking water. Prices shown are based on a minimum of 2 people travelling, with solo traveller supplements applying if you choose the option on your own.

## Half-day remote temples tour

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$95.00

This half-day tour starts after breakfast at your hotel, as we make our way to Banteay Srei, a 10th century old temple dedicated to the Hindu God, Shiva. This is one of Cambodia's most well preserved temples and boasts some of the finest stone carvings on the planet.

We'll also head to the Preah Dark Village, a popular place to pick up a few souvenirs for your journey back home, before we head to the impressive Banteay Samre Temple, built in the early 12th century. You'll be mesmerised by its distinctive Angkor Wat-style architecture, artistry and reliefs which depict scenes of Vishnu as well as Krishna legends.

This tour includes a private English speaking guide, AC transport, entry fees where applicable, and drinking water. Prices shown are based on a minimum of 2 people travelling, with solo traveller supplements applying if you choose the option on your own.

## Half day cycling tour of the temples

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$110.00

After breakfast at your hotel, we'll hop on a bicycle as we make our way to Pre Rup - the ancient state temple of Khmer king Rajendravarmen II built in 961 AD or 962 AD. The temple was built to commemorate the Hindu God, Shiva and it's believed that it was used as a cremation temple.

We'll then cycle to East Mebon, Ta Som and Neak Pean, before stopping for a visit to the Preah Khan Temple, which was built in the 12th century, with its name directly translating to 'sacred sword'. The Preah Khan temple is also the location where the Khmer soldiers defeated the Siam military. We'll spend the night in Siem Reap.

This tour includes a bicycle and helmet, private English speaking guide, AC transport, entry fees where applicable, and drinking water. Prices shown are based on a minimum of 2 people travelling, with solo traveller supplements applying if you choose the option on your own.

## Half-day tour to Tonle Sap Lake

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$70.00

This half-day tour takes you to the floating village of Chong Khneas, situated 10 kilometres south of Siem Reap. Once we arrive, we'll head out on a traditional wooden boat on the waters of the seasonal Tonle Sap Lake. It's the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia at the end of the wet season, but shrinks to a fraction of its size in the dry season.

Five provinces border the Tonle Sap Lake, namely, Siem Reap, Battambang, Pursat, Kampong Cham, and Kampong Thom. Approximately one million Cambodians depend on this lake, with 90% of these people staying in houses built

around the lake and 10% living in its floating villages.

This tour includes a private English speaking guide, AC transport, entry fees where applicable, and drinking water. Prices shown are based on a minimum of 2 people travelling, with solo traveller supplements applying if you choose the option on your own.

# Tour Notes

## 1. Accommodation

We use good quality hotels rated at the local 3 and 4-star level on this tour and a comfortable stay onboard a deluxe Junk boat in Halong Bay together with two nights in more basic homestays, first in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam and then in the Kulen Mountain in Cambodia. Hotel rooms all have air-conditioning and en-suite bathrooms. Facilities at the homestay are simple but with all beds & bedding provided, and shared bathrooms.

All couples will be given a private double room. If you are a single traveller who would like to share, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up. If we don't have anyone to pair you up with when you book, then a single room supplement will be due, but we will remove this or provide a refund if/when we can pair you up later. Check with us for guaranteed no single supplement offers on some tours and departures.

## 2. Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time we want you to finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour. On this tour we use private AC vehicles for most of the sightseeing tours and transfers. We also spend one night on the overnight Reunification Express sleeper train from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh, and to save time, take an internal flight from Danang to Ho Chi Minh.

### Sleeper trains:

The sleeper trains in Vietnam are of a good standard and are popular with tourists. Each carriage has its own steward who ensures the train is kept clean and tidy. You will stay in a 4-berth cabin with 3 other passengers. Supplements can be paid to book a private cabin. Bedding is provided onboard the train. The berths are on two tiers and we cannot pre-book lower tier berths. A ladder is provided but you therefore need a reasonable degree of mobility to climb up to the top tier berths.

When travelling in a group, we cannot guarantee that everyone in the group will be seated together in the same cabins. However, the train stewards are generally very helpful at arranging seat swaps, and the local travellers on the train are friendly and interesting to talk to during your journey too.

## 3. Transfers

Our South East Asia tours all include a 24-hour arrival and departure airport-hotel transfer service, and all other transfers throughout the tour. If you are already in the country then we will provide you with your first hotel details, contact numbers for our local representatives, and details of your first meeting time.

## 4. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don't include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour.

Our Vietnam tours start and finish in either Hanoi airport (HAN) or Ho Chi Minh airport (SGN).

If you are booking a tour that combines Vietnam and Cambodia we may not include the connecting flight between the two countries in the tour price (see the inclusions/exclusions or extension option sections for details). This flight can often be built into your main international flight ticket, or we may be able to book this flight for you separately if you prefer - please contact us and we will advise you on available airlines, times and prices.

## **5. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides**

We are committed to making sure our small-group tours in South East Asia have low maximum numbers as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. Having a smaller group also allows us to be a bit more creative with the places you stay and activities you do, which may simply not be possible with larger numbers. The group size for this tour is therefore a minimum of 2 and maximum of 12.

At Encounters Travel we aim to only use local guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

On this tour we may use separate guides in Hanoi, Hue-Hoi An and Ho Chi Minh, and then in Cambodia. The Halong Bay cruise and some optional tours are a sharing basis and you may join other travellers for these parts of the tour.

## **6. Entrance Fees**

The tour price includes entrance fees to all the tourist sites mentioned in the itinerary. You will need to cover the cost of entrance to any other extra sites that you may wish to visit.

## **7. Tipping**

Tipping is not part of culture in South East Asia in the same way that it is standard practice in other parts of the world. However it has become more customary but not compulsory in the tourist and service industry. Tipping is always optional, and any amounts paid should reflect excellent service. You may therefore wish to tip your guide and driver at the end of the tour. You should not feel obliged to tip any particular amount, and should consider your personal budget. We are often asked to provide a guide however, and can suggest that approx. USD 5-10 per person per day would be appropriate for your guide(s).

## **8. Health and Vaccinations**

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are:

**Thailand:** Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

**Vietnam:** Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an infected area.

**Cambodia:** Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

**Laos:** Additional vaccinations: Diptheria, Poliomyelitis, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an infected area.

The above information can change at short notice. For up to date health information & vaccination requirements we recommend that you contact your medical practitioner or a travel clinic.

**Malaria:** Vaccinations are not available against Malaria, which is a disease transmitted by mosquitoes that can be very serious and sometimes fatal. You should avoid mosquito bites by covering up bare skin with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers and applying insect repellents to exposed skin. When necessary, sleep under a mosquito net. Mosquitoes are most active during and after sunset. You should consult with your GP/medical practitioner/travel clinic about the most appropriate malaria prophylactic medication to take for the regions you are visiting.

**Yellow Fever:** This disease is spread by infected mosquitoes that bite during the day. A Yellow Fever Certificate of vaccination may be required as a condition of entry depending on which country you are arriving from, or that you have travelled or transitted through recently (including connecting flights with stopovers of over 12 hours). You can view a [World Health Organisation map](#) of areas where the virus is present in monkeys and therefore a potential risk to humans. Please ensure you have this certificate with you and to hand if necessary.

Please inform us of any pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or asthma and any prescription medicine you may be taking. We also need to know about any food allergies or physical disabilities that you may have.

## 9. Passports and Visas - Vietnam

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities.

British citizens (plus Japan, South Korea, Denmark, Russian, Sweden, Norway, Finland, , France, Germany, Italy, Spain) are currently subject to a visa exemption scheme, so no visa is required for stays in Vietnam of up to 15 days. Other nationalities and those staying longer in Vietnam will need to obtain a visa in advance. As this isn't always convenient we offer the option of obtaining a visa on arrival approval letter which means that you can then purchase you visa on arrival in Vietnam. However if you try to board the flight without this letter or a visa you'll be refused board. Visa approval letter fees are normally USD 10 p/p for single entry, or USD 15 p/p for multiple entry visas. The visa stamp fee on arrival at the immigration desk is then USD 25 p/p for single entry, or USD 50 p/p for multiple entry. These fees are given as a guide and may vary over time and subject to nationality. Please contact us if you have any queries.

## 10. Passports and Visas - Cambodia

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities.

Many nationalities (including British, EU, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand amongst many others) can obtain

a 30-day tourist visa on arrival in Phnom Penh or Siem Reap Airport (and some land borders). At the time of publishing the visa fee is \$30.00. You'll need to make sure you have a passport sized photograph for the visa. If you are arriving via Phnom Penh or Siem Reap Airports then you can obtain an e-visa prior to arrival at - [www.evisa.gov.kh/](http://www.evisa.gov.kh/) (these are not accepted at land borders).

As visa regulations often change we recommend that you check this information with your nearest consulate. Obtaining the correct visa is the responsibility of the traveller.

## 11. Time

The time in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos is GMT plus 7 hours. Daylight saving adjustments are not observed.

## 12. Voltage

Sockets are two round or flat pronged and 220 volts (Type A, B, C). Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. Standard European adapters will work fine, though sometimes they may feel a little loose in the sockets. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are normally available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already. If you have US appliances (110 volts) you will need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

## 13. Money - Vietnam

The Vietnamese currency is the 'Dong' (VND). Most people prefer to be paid in Dong rather than US dollars. It can sometimes be difficult to change large notes at smaller villages so try to keep a stash of smaller notes with you.

You can also change all major currencies with any private moneychangers, at the local markets, shops or hotels, or at a bank. Banks usually open from 8.00am to 3.00pm, except Saturday afternoons and Sundays. Although all major currencies are usually accepted, the US\$ is by far the most widely accepted and preferred currency, with large notes (\$50 and \$100 bills) getting a better exchange rate. Travellers' cheques in major currencies are accepted at all banks, though a commission will be charged.

At banks throughout Vietnam you can draw cash, in both dong and dollars on all major credit cards. Approx. 3% commission will be charged for this service. Many souvenir shops, restaurants and hotels will accept payment with credit cards. There is, however, a 3-4% surcharge.

There are ATMs in Major cities like Ho Chi Minh, Hanoi and Hué, which accept major credit cards. We recommend that you consider bringing both credit cards, some cash in a hard currency (e.g. GB Pounds, Euros, US Dollars), and some travellers' cheques.

## 14. Money - Cambodia

The Cambodia currency is the 'Riel' (KHR). US\$ are widely accepted in the country and more or less work as a second currency. Because of its location so close to Thailand, you will find that Thai baht is also accepted in most places. Bear in mind that if paying in US\$ or Thai baht, your change will be given back in riels.

It's also possible to change Thai baht or US\$ with local private moneychangers, at some shops and markets or as usual, any banks that you may come across. These banks will also change most other currencies such as Sterling, Euros etc. The banks tend to open from 7.30am to 2.30pm.

If you have travellers cheques in major currencies then the banks will accept these although it is likely that a commission will be charged.

In Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, banks and even some travel agents will allow you to draw cash against most major



credit cards but you can expect a surcharge of around 3-4%. These days, more and more shops, restaurants and hotels in the major tourist destinations will accept payment with credit cards. Until recently, Cambodia had no ATM's whatsoever but this is changing fast and it's now possible to withdraw money from ATM's located in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. Most credit cards and some debit cards are accepted but its best not to rely on this as a way of accessing your funds while in the country.

## 15. What to take

**Luggage:** Suitcases, rucksacks or fabric holdalls are all fine to bring with you to Vietnam and Cambodia, though if your itinerary has many stops and different travel included within it, we recommend packing light and not bring any large cases. You should also bring a small daypack/bag to take out during the day. Your main luggage will normally be left in the hotel during your sightseeing trips - you will not need to carry it far, and there are nearly always hotel porters to assist.

**Luggage limits:** There is no luggage limit for this tour. However, most airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 25kg for your hold luggage and between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage. Please check with your airline before travelling to the airport.

**Climate and Clothing:** There are three reasonably well-defined seasons in this region, but unlike in Europe, where seasons are temperature based, Indochina is tropical and generally speaking warm all year round. Take light clothes with something warmer for the winter nights. Some light raingear would be useful in the wet season.

**Other items:** We recommend you also bring:

- Cool footwear (sandals are ideal). If you are interested in exploring the reefs, a pair of reef shoes is recommended to avoid injuries. If you are trekking, then bring comfortable and sturdy walking shoes or light walking boots.
- Swimming costumes - rash-guards/t-shirts are recommended for snorkelling to avoid sunburn.
- Sunscreens, after sun lotions and personal hygiene products - Please adhere to 100ml restrictions for anything you wish to carry on hand-luggage on flights.
- Prescription medications (if required) - please bring supporting documents.
- Power adapter for phones, laptops etc
- Sunglasses and hats
- Basic first aid kit and toiletries
- Money belt
- Small torch
- Dive certification card and log book if you intend to participate in SCUBA diving.
- Sleeping bag if your tour includes any hill-tribe or village trekking

## 16. Dates & Prices

We run regular small-group departures on this tour throughout the year starting on Saturdays. All departures are guaranteed to run with a minimum of 2 people. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website and on a separate dates & prices sheet available on request. Extra nights can be added to the start and/or finish of the tour if you would like to extend your time.

The tour can also be run privately on any other dates for any number of people. An additional supplement will be due for private departures, the amount depending on your dates and the number of people in your party.

## 17. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the

Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

## 18. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and an ABTA Member (Y4447) and you can be confident when booking with us that your money is safe and protected.

Financial failure insurance is also provided through Affirma to protect all customers for the land portion of your tour. Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

## 19. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event). [More information...](#)

You may arrange your own insurance, or you can take advantage of a comprehensive policy that we can arrange for you through Endsleigh Insurance which has been designed to be suitable for our tours. The policy is available to travellers of all nationalities and you do not need to live in the UK to take out the policy. For full details of cover provided, prices and to apply for one of our policies, please complete [travel insurance application form](#).

Note: Any country that borders the Mediterranean is considered as 'Europe' for the purposes of travel insurance (including Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Morocco). If you are doing a tour that visits one country in 'Europe' and one that is 'Worldwide' (for example, an Egypt and Jordan tour), then you need a 'Worldwide' policy. When completing the form you should enter your travel dates including any extra days involved in overnight flights or connecting travel between your home and the tour. Our policies are not able to cover any extra time or activities other than your tour and options booked with us and your travel to & from home.

Note - to comply with insurance sales regulations, our travel insurance policies are only available to customers booking directly with us. If you have booked through a travel agent you will need to arrange your own insurance.

If you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally, or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

***IMPORTANT:** We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.*

## 20. Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

## 21. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

[www.facebook.com/encounterstravel](http://www.facebook.com/encounterstravel)

[www.twitter.com/encounterstravl](http://www.twitter.com/encounterstravl) (yes, without the 'e')

## 22. Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's ['Travel Aware' campaign](#) which provides further useful and invaluable information.



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**Note:** Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.

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