

EXPLORE!

BEST SELLER

Highlights of Vietnam and Cambodia
15 days

Cambodia, Vietnam - Trip code VC



Highlights of Vietnam and Cambodia

Explore French colonial cities, vibrant river-side life and lost jungle temples on this fast-paced adventure through Vietnam and Cambodia. We travel using a variety of transport on the journey from Hanoi, taking in the jagged limestone cliffs of Halong Bay, the ancient trading port of Hoi An, the history of Ho Chi Minh City and the stilted houses of the Mekong Delta. We then venture into Cambodia to learn about the haunting tales of the Khmer Rouge in Phnom Penh, ending with 3 days to explore the magnificent jungle temples of Angkor.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Halong Bay** - Cruise through the turquoise waters and past the towering limestone cliffs of Halong Bay
- ★ **Hoi An** - Discover the charm of this ancient merchant's town with its temples and Chinese architecture.
- ★ **Ho Chi Minh City** - Learn about the resilience and resourcefulness of the Vietnamese at the Cu Chi Tunnels.
- ★ **Mekong Delta** - Barter for fresh fruit with the locals at Cai Be floating market in the Mekong Delta.
- ★ **Phnom Penh** - Uncover the haunting truths of the Khmer Rouge years at the Killing Fields.
- ★ **Siem Reap** - Marvel at the iconic jungle temples of Angkor.

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

GROUP SIZE:

12 - 18

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Hanoi

Arrive in Hanoi and check-in to your hotel. The rest of the day is free to make your first impressions of Hanoi. You may choose to take a stroll through the narrow lanes of the Old Quarter, or perhaps enjoy a gentle walk around Hoan Kiem Lake.



Accommodation: Anise Hotel Hanoi (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Discover the sights of Hanoi including the Old Quarter

This morning we will embark on a city tour encompassing some of the main sights of Hanoi. The city showcases superb French architecture from its colonial days, with large tree-lined boulevards and low-built mansions and houses. Some of the main sights we will be visiting today will include the One Pillar Pagoda, Confucius Temple and the Presidential Palace. Ho Chi Minh himself, a spartan-living and scholarly man, chose not to live in the Presidential Palace; he preferred instead a simple teak stilt-house specially built for him in the grounds. This afternoon is left free for further exploration. Your Explore Leader will provide you with a map of the Old Quarter should you wish to walk through the narrow lanes of this fascinating district, where the streets are named after various crafts or specialties: Paper Street, Silk Street, Basket Street and so on. The shops themselves have very narrow frontages but are actually quite deep; they are known locally as tube shops. On the pavements food sellers sell noodles, snacks and stir-fries from shoulder panniers, all adding to the charm of this historic quarter of the city.



Accommodation: Anise Hotel Hanoi (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Cruise amongst the limestone cliffs in Halong Bay

We leave the city behind this morning and head east towards Halong Bay. The Bay is as mystical as it is beautiful; it is a place where thousands of jagged limestone islands rise majestically out of the jade green waters of the Gulf of Tonkin. It is also the stuff of legend; in fact Halong means: 'Where the dragon descends to the sea'. It is said that the World Heritage site was created by the pounding tail of a dragon as he ran from the mountains into the sea, carving the islands in his wake. This afternoon we raise anchor and head out of the bay, cruising past the towering limestone cliffs, and visiting the eerie Sung Sot Cave. We spend tonight on board a traditional wooden junk boat which has been converted to offer a traditional sailing experience, but with all comforts of a more modern vessel.



Accommodation: Halong Bay Junk (or similar)



Standard Junk



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 4 - Continue the cruise; overnight train to Danang

We wake this morning to the romantic scenery of Halong Bay and continue our adventure through this awe-inspiring seascape. There will be chances to drop anchor and explore, perhaps visiting a beach, a floating village or a grotto beneath towering cliffs. We enjoy a traditional seafood lunch on board, before disembarking and returning to Hanoi. This evening we board the Reunification Express for our overnight rail journey south, to Danang.



Accommodation: Overnight Train from Hanoi to Danang



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 5 - In Hoi An, afternoon tour of the Old Town

Upon arrival in Danang, we make the short transfer by road to Hoi An. The historic merchant town of Hoi An had become one of the busiest international trading ports of Southeast Asia by the 17th and 18th centuries. First colonised by the Portuguese in the 16th century it still retains its medieval charm today, with many of its old buildings superbly preserved. After some time to freshen up we will set off on foot for a walking tour through this charming port town. We visit the famous Japanese Bridge, along with some of the Chinese temples and grand meeting halls. The traditional wooden houses are an interesting feature in this town and offer us some wonderful photographic opportunities.



Accommodation: Vinh Hung 2 Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 6 - In Hoi An, free day to explore

Today is left free to explore and soak up Hoi An's unique atmosphere. There are many shops, bars and restaurants in this charming town and it is a great place to buy souvenirs, have clothing tailored or simply watch the world go by in a riverside café. You may wish to take an optional excursion to the holiest and most evocative of Vietnam's Cham sites, My Son. The Chams were dynastic lords who rejected the authority of China in 2AD and established their own kingdom. Although they benefited from strong sea links with the rest of Southeast Asia the kingdom's interior could not supply sufficient food for a strong military force. For 1000 years they managed to stave off attacks by the Vietnamese and Chinese, before being overcome by the Vietnamese in the 15th century. The track that leads to the site is slow and bumpy through wooded hills, but the site is certainly impressive with several groupings of Cham temples to be visited. Nowhere are the fine masonry skills of the Chams more evident than at My Son, despite the fact that much of the site was bombed in the 1960s. Alternatively, if you would prefer to stay in Hoi An, you can attend a cookery course. Here you can learn the secrets to sumptuous Vietnamese cuisine and sample your own creations for lunch.



Accommodation: Vinh Hung 2 Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - In Hoi An, free morning, overnight train to Ho Chi Minh City

This morning has been left free for some last minute-shopping or sightseeing before driving up the coast to Danang. Here we will board our overnight sleeper train south, to the rather different and modern Ho Chi Minh City.



Accommodation: Overnight train from Danang to Ho Chi Minh City



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Walking tour of Old Saigon, free afternoon in Ho Chi Minh City

This morning we arrive into Ho Chi Minh City, or Saigon as it is better known by the locals. Saigon was heavily bombed during the war, and modern day Ho Chi Minh City is now a curious mix of French Colonial architecture and modern gleaming skyscrapers. Today we walk around the central sights of this multi-faceted city, taking in the Notre Dame Cathedral and the GPO building as well as some of the old Colonial hotels such as The Rex. We then drive to the Independence Palace (renamed the Reunification Hall) and the graphic War Remnants Museum, where you will learn about the Vietnam War from a very different view point to that of Hollywood. This afternoon has been left free to either relax, or perhaps for further exploration of this fascinating city.



Accommodation: Asian Ruby Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 9 - Cruise along Mekong Delta and visit floating market

Today we head into the fertile lands of the Mekong Delta that lie sandwiched between the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand. A traditional area where people have lived off the land for generations, we have the chance to witness the daily life of the fisherman and farmers as we cruise through the myriad of waterways that make up the Delta. Passing through narrow tree-lined canals and past floating villages, we reach the trading town of Cai Be where we have the chance to visit the floating market and barter with the locals for exotic fruit, vegetables and refreshments. We enjoy a fresh seafood lunch at a local restaurant before visiting a family business to see how coconut sweets are made. We then transfer back to Ho Chi Minh City late this afternoon.



Accommodation: Asian Ruby Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 10 - Morning visit to Cu Chi Tunnels, drive onto Phnom Penh

This morning we take a short drive out to the infamous Cu Chi Tunnels, which formed an incredible underground command base for 10,000 Viet Cong troops and were a major part of the 1968 Tet Offensive. The site offers a fascinating insight into the resourcefulness of the Vietnamese. There is the opportunity to crawl through a small, specially adapted section of the tunnels should you wish to sample the claustrophobic conditions in which the Viet Cong lived. Afterwards we continue north to cross the border into Cambodia, and seemingly into a different world compared to Vietnam. Border formalities take place at Moc Bai (Vietnam) and Bavet (Cambodia) crossing point. Our final destination is Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital.



Accommodation: Silver River Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Uncover the sights of Phnom Penh including the Royal Palace, afternoon free

Phnom Penh is now a lively city, complete with trendy river-side restaurants and bars, a warm welcoming atmosphere and smiling friendly locals. The modern upbeat nature of the city is fascinating to witness, given the recent atrocities the residents of this city would have endured just forty years before. Accompanied by a local guide we visit the National Museum, a treasure trove of beautifully preserved carvings and lintels rescued from Angkor; the glittering Royal Palace Silver Pagoda as well as the temple of Wat Phnom before having some free time in the city. This afternoon there is the option to visit the emotive Tuol Sleng Genocide

Museum, formerly a high school that became the Khmer Rouge's main torture and interrogation centre; and the Killing Fields of Choeng Ek - where the memorial stupa is a glass tower filled with human skulls - a gruesome reminder of the scale of Pol Pot's atrocities.



Accommodation: Silver River Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Drive to Siem Reap and visit the floating village of Chong Kneas

We set off into the countryside this morning, driving out of the city and towards Siem Reap. The drive is very picturesque, taking us through rural Cambodia, past vast rice fields and through stilted villages. After checking into our base in Siem Reap for the next 3 days, we set off towards the vast Tonle Sap Lake. Here we board our charter boat for a leisurely cruise through the fascinating floating village of Chong Kneas, where we see floating houses, riverside markets and an array of locally made boats.



Accommodation: Angkor Panoramic Boutique Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Full day visiting the temples of Angkor

Our exact programme over the next three days may change slightly at our local guide's discretion. Angkor was actually a series of cities, built between the 9th and the 13th centuries by the Khmer kings, with a population of 750,000 in its heyday. The Angkor complex is spread out over some 155 square kilometres, scattered with magnificent carved stone temples, elegant sculptures and incredible bas reliefs. We visit the Rolous group, which are some of the earliest temples. In the afternoon we visit the temples of Banteay Srei, a small but beautiful temple with exquisite carvings. We end the day at East Mebon, with a visit to Pre Rup temple which enjoys a spectacular sunset.



Accommodation: Angkor Panoramic Boutique Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Further exploration of the Angkor temple complex

We continue our exploration with a visit to the temples of King Jayavarman VII, reputedly Angkor's greatest king. The fortified city of Angkor Thom, which he built at the end of the 12th century, is enclosed by a square wall with five monumental gates decorated with stone elephant trunks. Originally, crocodiles inhabited the moat and huge statues of 54 different gods protected each gate. The city contains another of Angkor's true gems - The Bayon. Although not as impressive as Angkor Wat from a distance, The Bayon is nevertheless incredible for its maze of corridors, gothic style towers and magical central temples. We leave the best known and most breathtaking of all the sights, Angkor Wat, to the end - where we stay until the sun sets on the last night of our adventure.



Accommodation: Angkor Panoramic Boutique Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 15 - Trip ends in Siem Reap

The trip ends after breakfast. If you have time you may choose to browse the old market for some last minute bargains, visit a fish spa or enjoy afternoon tea at The Foreign Correspondent's Club.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

This trip gives you the opportunity to discover the highlights of two fascinating countries in two weeks. The trip uses a variety of transport including junk boats, overnight trains, buses, riverboats, cyclo-rickshaws and more to transport you through Vietnam's iconic landscapes and across the rural plains of Cambodia. If you enjoy making the most of your time whilst away, like using local transport, enjoy breath-taking landscapes, want to engage with friendly locals and visit historic temples, this is the tour for you.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 12
Lunch: 3
Dinner: 1



Transport

Bus
Boat
Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Boat Crew
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

11 nights standard hotel
1 nights standard junk
2 nights simple overnight train

Trip information

Country information

Cambodia Holidays & Tours

Climate

Cambodia is a hot and tropical country, being hottest in April and coolest in January (still high 20s). Although rainfall is at its maximum in October, Phnom Penh and Siem Reap receive very little rain compared to the coastal areas, and when it does rain it tends to be in the form of sporadic mid afternoon downpours. There is normally very little rain between December and March.

Time difference to GMT

+7

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Buddhism

Language

Khmer

Vietnam Holidays & Tours

Climate

As Vietnam is a long, narrow country from north to south climate conditions vary considerably. The climate can be divided into three distinct patterns between the north, central and south regions. The climate in the north is generally humid and subtropical, although the winter months from November to March can be colder with temperatures from 10 - 15 degrees. Summer months, May to September can be quite hot with temperatures from 30 - 35 degrees. Meanwhile south Vietnam enjoys a tropical climate all year round, with little variation throughout the year (around 27 - 32 degrees), however May to November is the rainy season when short, heavy downpours are quite frequent. Central Vietnam lies somewhere in between. The coastal strip is usually dry and hotter from April to October while November to March is wetter and cooler. A light rain jacket and small umbrella are recommended year round.

Time difference to GMT

+7

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism

Language

Vietnamese

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Hanoi - Water Puppets Show from US\$ 6; 'Cyclo' tour of Old Quarter US\$ 8 Hoi An - Cookery class US\$ 30; My son (full day) from US\$35 Siem Reap - Blessing ceremony at local monastery US\$33; Scenic helicopter flight over Angkor temples from US\$202 Phnom Penh - Private blessing US\$34 The prices stated are based on a minimum number of participants (usually 5-6). Please be aware that the optional excursions can run with fewer people but the price may be higher. Likewise, a slightly reduced price may be applicable where the participation is greater. These excursions are generally run via our agent in the country. Local companies may offer similar excursions at a cheaper price. Should you want to use these companies please be aware that a lower price may mean that not all costs are

Clothing

From December through to February warmer clothing is needed for the North. Days are hot and humid. Lightweight rainwear essential at all times. The northern region is cold at night during the winter. When visiting religious sites you will need to dress respectfully by covering your knees and shoulders.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes, trainers and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main lockable bag/case, an overnight bag for your trips to Halong Bay and the Mekong delta when your main luggage is left behind and a daypack. Please remember that you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

Even though bed linen is provided on the train journey, you may want to bring your own sleeping sheet (it can be purchased in Hanoi); torch, and don't forget mosquito repellent (no need for a mosquito net as when necessary, it is provided).

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 35.

Country Information

Cambodia Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£6

Dinner price

£10.00 - 12.00

Beer price

£1.3

Water price

£0.6

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Riel.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

In Cambodia, US\$ is the most commonly used currency (small denomination notes are easier to use).

Where To Exchange

Large towns.

ATM Availability

There are ATMs in most towns and cities.

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are accepted in some large shops and restaurants in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap.

Travellers Cheques

They can be hard to change outside of Siem Reap and Phnom Penh; we recommend them for emergencies only.

Vietnam Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price

£9

Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

Water price

£0.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Dong.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Carry your money in US\$ Dollars cash. You can also take GBP but US\$ are easier to exchange. (Dollar bills can be used in some hotels and shops; change is often given in local currency).

Where To Exchange

Most towns.

ATM Availability

There are ATMs virtually everywhere in Vietnam and in Cambodia, though we also recommend bringing cash.

Credit Card Acceptance

Some shops in Hanoi, and Hoi An. The occasional restaurant.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques can usually be changed in the towns, but only during bank opening hours.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Train

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Vietnam: Until 30th June 2018 'British Citizen' passport holders can visit Vietnam for up to 15 days without a visa. A visa will be required if you enter after this date or if you wish to re-enter within 30 days of your departure. For visits of up to 30 days, you can get an e-visa before you travel from <https://evisa.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn/> For visits of longer than 30 days you must get a visa from the nearest Vietnamese embassy before travelling to Vietnam. If you want to make a second visit within 30 days of leaving Vietnam, you'll need to get a multiple entry visa to re-enter. Please note that it is a pre-requisite for entry into Vietnam that your passport is

valid for a minimum of 6 months from your date of entry All visa related issues including information for other nationalities should be confirmed with the relevant Embassy prior to departure. Cambodia: A single visa is required by UK, New Zealand, Australian, USA & Canadian citizens and can be obtained on arrival. A passport sized photograph for immigration will also be required. Alternatively you can now obtain an e-visa prior to departure from www.mfaic.gov.kh All visa information should be confirmed with the relevant consulate.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Cambodia Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, infectious hepatitis, tetanus, typhoid, diphtheria and polio. Consult your GP regarding tablets advised for malaria. Though not compulsory, travellers may wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Vietnam Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on Malaria and Zika Virus. Although not compulsory travellers may also wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.
