

# EXPLORE!



## Jewels of Indochina

CAMBODIA, LAOS, VIETNAM - TRIP CODE HIC

DISCOVERY

### Why book this trip?

This comprehensive trip through Indochina takes us into Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia. We travel by river, rail, road and even rickshaw as we explore the huge landscapes of these fascinating countries.

- **Luang Prabang** - Soak up the city's charming mix of French colonial architecture and golden Buddhist temples
- **Halong Bay** - Cruise through the incredible limestone landscapes on a traditional junk boat
- **Siem Reap** - Explore the once-hidden jungle temples of Angkor



**INCLUDED MEALS**  
Breakfast: 25  
Lunch: 2  
Dinner: 1



**TRIP STAFF**  
Explore Tour  
Leader  
Boat Crew  
Driver(s)  
Local Guide(s)



**TRANSPORT**  
Bus  
Boat  
Flight  
Train



**ACCOMMODATION**  
1 nights simple  
homestay  
5 nights simple  
hotel  
19 nights  
comfortable hotel  
1 nights simple  
overnight train



**TRIP PACE:**  
Moderate



**GROUP SIZE:**  
12 - 18

## Itinerary

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

### DAY 1 - Join trip in Vientiane

Arrive into Vientiane and check-in at the hotel. Located on the banks of the Mekong River, the Laos capital is a friendly town where we find weathered French Colonial mansions, stunning temples and steaming noodle stalls. A Beer Lao by the river at sunset is the best way to end the day, start your adventure and meet your fellow explorers.



**ACCOMMODATION:**  
New Rose Boutique Hotel (or similar)

**Grade: Simple Hotel**



**SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE**



**MEALS PROVIDED: NONE**

### DAY 2 - In Vientiane, explore the capital; free afternoon

This morning we include a sightseeing tour around the city. This is a low-built, red roofed attractive capital city, with a French feel and a relaxed atmosphere. We explore some of the best sights including

the Victory Gate which is a Triumphal Arch with good views of the town, the That Luang stupa which is said to contain a hair of the Buddha, and Wat Sisaket, a beautiful temple packed with fine Buddha images.

This afternoon is left free for further exploration. It is possible to visit nearby Buddha Park, a vast green expanse just 30 minutes from the city that houses a beguiling selection of Buddhist and Hindu statues. Alternatively you may choose to visit the COPE Museum, a not-for-profit organisation set up to provide prosthetic limbs to the many victims of the unexploded ordinance (UXO) left behind from the Vietnam war. The museum does an excellent job of giving some of the background to the bombing campaign, along with showcasing the important work the COPE foundation is doing. Most report it to be a sobering, emotive but rewarding experience that enhances one's understanding of this fascinating country.



**ACCOMMODATION:**

New Rose Boutique Hotel (or similar)



**Grade: Simple Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 3 - Drive to Vang Vieng, afternoon at leisure**

This morning we make the short three to four hour drive to Vang Vieng. There are some interesting stops to be made en route, including visiting the Sa paper project where traditional paper is made from the bark of a Mulberry Tree. Upon arrival in Vang Vieng, the afternoon has been left free to explore our new surroundings.

We recommend a short stroll down to the riverbank this evening in time for sunset, where there are a number of areas to sit and take in dramatic scenery. Watch people float down the river as the sun starts to dip behind the mountains and the sky turns a deep burnt-orange, just be sure to bring a camera to catch some sunset snaps.



**ACCOMMODATION:**

Diamond Gold Hotel (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE





MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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#### **DAY 4 - Free day in Vang Vieng. Optional visit to caves or kayaking on Nam Song River**

Vang Vieng enjoys an idyllic setting. Perched on the banks of the Nam Song river it is surrounded by a patchwork of lush rice paddies and set to a backdrop of towering jagged limestone cliffs. Once known as a party-town for backpackers, present-day Vang Vieng has now re-invented itself as the home of adventure travel in Laos, where its setting lends itself to a host of activities for anybody from casual walkers to adrenaline thrill-seekers.

As there is plenty of choice available, today has been left free to choose from a number of optional excursions, such as a guided walk past rice paddies to nearby minority villages, a visit to the 2km underground cave network, zip wiring through the forest canopy or kayaking along the gentle Nam Song river.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Diamond Gold Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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#### **DAY 5 - Scenic drive to Luang Prabang crossing mountain passes. Sunset visit to Mount Phousi**

Today we spend a full day driving north to Luang Prabang. The journey winds its way up into the mountainous region of central Laos, passing ramshackle villages that cling to the side of the mountain road, and driving over several high passes with stunning 360 degree views. There will be regular breaks to the drive, stopping for refreshments in a Hmong village and for photos on top of the high passes we drive over. We plan to arrive in Luang Prabang in the late afternoon.

Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Luang Prabang is nestled in a valley of lush rolling hills and sits at the confluence of two rivers, the Khan and the mighty Mekong. Influence from its French occupiers is peppered all over the city, with grand white-washed Indochinese villas lining its leafy streets, oddly complementing the golden-tipped wats (temples) found around almost every corner. Time moves so slowly here that it almost stands still, and a must-do is grabbing a Lao coffee, sitting down outside one of the many cafes and just watching the world go by, in traditional Lao-style.

This evening there is chance to walk to nearby Mount Phousi and climb its 328 steps in time for sunset, offering excellent panoramic views over this sleepy city and beyond.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Villa Kieng Kham Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 6 - Morning walking tour of Luang Prabang, Afternoon free**

Today we'll really get to have a closer look at Luang Prabang. All the main sights of interest are close together and we'll have a chance to walk around the various wats (temples) including the splendid Wat Xieng Thong (the Golden Temple built in 1559), which is strikingly decorated in brilliant red and gold designs, with an imposing tiled roof and mosaic dragon motifs. We'll also visit Wat Sen and the Royal Palace Museum. Afterwards we will board a traditional long-tail boat for the short journey up the Mekong River to Pak Ou Caves. There a number of steps to climb here as we make our way up the limestone cliffs to reach the sacred Buddhist shrine. Although now abandoned by the monks, there is an altar for incense burning, flower offerings and numerous rock shelves crammed with thousands of Buddha images of all shapes and sizes. After returning to Luang Prabang, the rest of the afternoon is at leisure.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Villa Kieng Kham Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 7 - From Luang Prabang, visit Kuang Si Waterfalls; optional afternoon cycle to Lao Loum village**

This morning we travel by bus to the beautiful Kuang Si Waterfalls, approximately 45 minutes from Luang Prabang. Passing forested hills and several ethnic minority villages we arrive at the limestone falls that cascade into several turquoise pools below. Returning to Luang Prabang, there is an opportunity to take an afternoon bicycle trip to the Lao Loum village at Ban Phanom. Approximately 6 km from Luang Prabang, the road gently undulates through cultivated scenery and arrives at a well-kept scenic village on the banks of the Nam Khan River. We will spend time meeting the locals and learning a little more about the everyday life of rural Lao before returning to Luang Prabang for a well-earned Beer Lao.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Villa Kieng Kham Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 8 - In Luang Prabang, free morning; fly to Hanoi, evening walk in Old Quarter

This morning is left free for further exploration of Luang Prabang. In the afternoon, we fly to Hanoi in Vietnam. This evening you can take a walk through the bustling streets and markets of the Old Quarter. The shops themselves have very narrow frontages, but are actually quite deep; they are known locally as 'tube' shops, while on the pavement food vendors sell noodles, snacks and stir-fries from shoulder panniers.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Nesta Hanoi Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## DAY 9 - Discover the sights of Hanoi including the Old Quarter

This morning we make a tour of the main sights of Hanoi. Architecturally styled like a French provincial town with tree-lined boulevards and substantial low-built houses the city is wonderfully nostalgic. Among the interesting sights are the charming 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 walk through the narrow lanes of the fascinating Old Quarter, 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. The smell of food mixes with the smell of incense from small temples dotted around.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Nesta Hanoi Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## DAY 10 - Free time in Hanoi, then drive to Halong Bay

We have some free time in Hanoi this morning perhaps to visit some of the many museums or Ho Chi Minh's austere mausoleum, which resembles Lenin's in Moscow. Afterwards we drive out towards the iconic Halong Bay in the Gulf of Tonkin. Thousands of jagged limestone islands rise out of the jade green waters like the hairy scales of a submerged dragon. In fact Halong means: 'Where the dragon descends to the sea'. As legend has it the rugged seascape was created by the pounding tail of a dragon as he ran from the mountains into the sea, carving the islands in his wake.



ACCOMMODATION:  
New Star Ha Long 2 Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 11 - Cruise Halong Bay; from Hanoi overnight train to Hué**

This morning we enjoy the romantic scenery of Halong Bay on a cruise amongst the islands. We'll have the chance to stop at a grotto beneath towering cliffs and perhaps visit a beach. It is interesting to see the curious assortment of tourist boats, traditional junks and wooden sampans gliding through the waters. We enjoy a seafood lunch on board the boat, before returning to a hotel in Hanoi to freshen up before boarding the Reunification Express to Hué.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Overnight train from Hanoi to Hue

Grade: Simple Overnight Train



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

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### **DAY 12 - In Hué; boat along Perfume River to Thien Mu Pagoda**

We arrive in Hué, one of the great cultural and religious centres of Vietnam, a quietly impressive place. The Perfume River divides the city in two and has been the inspiration for poets and painters for many centuries. This afternoon we to take a trip by boat along the Perfume River from Hué to the Thien Mu Pagoda. This serene temple is the oldest in Hué and also the symbol of the city.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Thanh Lich Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE





MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

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### DAY 13 - In Hué, visit the Imperial Citadel; free afternoon

This morning we appreciate Hué's fascinating history with a visit to the Imperial Citadel. Located on the left bank is the river, this palace was built by the Nguyen dynasty, Vietnam's ruling emperors from the early 1800s to 1945. The Citadel has formal moats and impressive ramparts that were constructed by 20,000 men and was a copy of the Forbidden City in Beijing. Although most of the inner part of the city was totally destroyed during the month-long Tet Offensive in 1968, the vast outer walls and the west wing remain an eloquent reminder of the palace's former glory. The remainder of the day is free to perhaps explore some of the outlying Tombs of the Emperors.



ACCOMMODATION:

Thanh Lich Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 14 - Scenic drive via Danang to Hoi An

We enjoy a scenic drive across the spectacular Col des Nuages, otherwise known as the Hai Van Pass observing rural scenes of thatched, wooden houses and lime-green rice paddies as well as enjoying panoramic sea views. Pausing in Danang, once the centre of the Kingdom of Champa (2nd century AD - 1720) we visit the Cham Museum, home to a fine collection of Cham sculptures. Our next stop is at the nearby five peaks of the Marble Mountains, said to represent the five elements of water, wood, fire, gold and earth. Naturally formed grottoes have been transformed into heavily carved Buddhist sanctuaries. A short distance from the mountains we find the white sands of My Khe Beach (nicknamed China Beach by American troops)- an ideal spot for a brief rest. Finally we reach our destination - the UNESCO World Heritage town of Hoi An.





ACCOMMODATION:  
Vinh Hung 2 Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

### DAY 15 - Free day to explore Hoi An; optional visit to My Lai

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. The day is free to explore at leisure. You may choose to visit the Japanese Bridge or some of the Chinese temples and meeting halls in the Old Town. 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 out to the site of the My Lai village massacre memorial. The massacre was a significant turning point in the American War and the horrific story is told through a very emotive exhibition of photography.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Vinh Hung 2 Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



### **DAY 16 - Visit to ancient My Son; free afternoon in Hoi An**

A further day is spent based in this lovely historic town. This morning we take an 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. The afternoon is free to enjoy Hoi An further. The beach is only a short drive by taxi alternatively a boat trip on the river as the late afternoon sun lights up the riverfront is a treat.



**ACCOMMODATION:**  
Vinh Hung 2 Hotel (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



**SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE**



**SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE**



**MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST**

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### **DAY 17 - Fly to Ho Chi Minh City; drive to Mekong Delta**

After a short drive to Danang Airport we fly to Ho Chi Minh City, from where we drive further south to Ben Tre in the Mekong Delta. Surrounded with lush and fertile land the area is home to small villages and swaying coconut palms. We take a local ferry to a nearby village, which we explore by trishaw. Later we board sampans, which are small Chinese wooden boats, and cruise along the narrow canals that shoot of the main vein of the Mekong River. After lunch at a local house we have some free time to explore the area further. Finally we return to Ben Tre by boat where we spend the night in a local homestay, with shared facilities and dorm-style accommodation.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Local House in Ben Tre (or similar)

Grade: Simple Homestay



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

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### DAY 18 - Mekong Delta cruise, then drive to Ho Chi Minh City

We spend the morning exploring the Nuoc Trong canal in the Mekong Delta, meeting some hard working locals, perhaps with time to see coconut processing and trading. We also have options to walk or cycle along the canal to explore further. Later on we drive back to Ho Chi Minh City.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Alagon Central Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 19 - In Ho Chi Minh City; explore Old Saigon, free afternoon

This morning we walk around the central sights of Old Saigon, now District 1 of Ho Chi Minh City. We see the Notre Dame Cathedral and the GPO building as well as some of the old French Colonial hotels such as The Rex. We then drive to the Independence Palace (renamed the Reunification Hall) and the graphic War Remnants Museum. The afternoon is free for you to explore the city further at your leisure, perhaps with a visit to the huge Ben Thanh market.



ACCOMMODATION:

Alagon Central Hotel (or similar)

**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 20 - Visit Cu Chi Tunnels, then drive to Phnom Penh**

This morning we take a short drive out of the city 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 is 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 bid farewell to our tour leader who continues back to Ho Chi Minh City while you continue by road into Cambodia. 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)

**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 21 - Discover the sights of Phnom Penh; free afternoon**

Phnom Penh took over from Angkor as Cambodia's capital city in the 1440s. It is now a lively city with many French colonial buildings and plenty to see. Accompanied by a local guide we visit the National

Museum, a treasure trove of beautifully preserved carvings and lintels rescued from Angkor; the Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda as well as the temple of Wat Phnom.

This afternoon we 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 Choeung Ek - the memorial stupa is a glass tower filled with human skulls - a gruesome reminder of the scale of Pol Pot's atrocities before returning back in the city.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Silver River Hotel (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## **DAY 22 - Free day in Phnom Penh; optional visit to Silk Island**

Today is free allowing you the opportunity to explore the city or its surrounds further. Optional excursions close to the city include a trip to Silk Island, Chiso Mountain or the abandoned Royal City of Oudong. Each of these excursions are half a day in duration and may be combined, your tour leader will discuss in more detail. Silk Island or Koh Dach is reached by a short ferry journey along the Mekong where the majority of villagers on the island earn a living through producing handicrafts. It is a great opportunity to learn more about traditional ways of life and interact with locals as you learn about the island's iconic silk weaving. Chiso Mountain (380m), located in Sia village about 62 km south of Phnom Penh, is topped by the ruins of an 11th century Khmer Brahmanic Temple with fine views of the surrounding paddy fields. Oudong is about an hour north of the capital and offers the opportunity to explore attractive historic temples and stupas.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Silver River Hotel (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE







MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 23 - Drive to Siem Reap; cruise on Tonle Sap Lake**

This morning we make an early start for our drive to Siem Reap, stopping somewhere for lunch on the way. Later in the day we journey to nearby Tonle Sap Lake where we board our charter boat for a leisurely cruise through the fascinating floating village of Chong Kneas, where we see stilt houses, floating markets and an array of boats.



ACCOMMODATION:

MotherHome Inn (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 24 - From Siem Reap, explore Angkor temples with sunset**

Our exact programme over the next three days may change slightly at our local guide's discretion (to avoid crowds, coincide with sunsets, etc.). 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 temples with exquisite carvings. We end the day at East Mebon, with a visit to Pre Rup temple for sunset.



ACCOMMODATION:

MotherHome Inn (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 25 - From Siem Reap, explore Angkor Thom

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'll explore The Terrace of the Elephants and the Leper King, the Baphuon and Phimeanakas, and some of the surrounding temples such as Preah Khan.



ACCOMMODATION:  
MotherHome Inn (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 26 - From Siem Reap, explore Ta Phrom and Angkor Wat

On our final day we make a visit to the 2nd Angkor capital that includes the temples of Prasat Kravan, Banteay Kdei and Takeo. A highlight for many is a visit to the atmospheric temple of Ta Phrom, where the

film Tomb Raider was filmed, lying half consumed by the jungle. 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:  
MotherHome Inn (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 27 - Tour ends in Siem Reap

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



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## Trip information

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### Country information

Cambodia

## 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 | Plugs       | Religion | Language |
|------------------------|-------------|----------|----------|
| +7                     | 2 Pin Round | Buddhism | Khmer    |

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## Laos

### Climate

The area of Laos and Thailand is tropical 'cool' from November to February, (15 to 27 Degrees Centigrade); 'hot' from March to May (up to 38 Degrees); 'wet' from June to October (rainy, hot and muggy). Bangkok and lowland areas are sticky all year round, but the northern highlands (Luang Prabang) are more temperate with a drier heat. The so-called 'cool' season can get very cold in the uplands at night and in the morning, bring a fleece.

| Time difference to GMT | Plugs      | Religion | Language |
|------------------------|------------|----------|----------|
| +7                     | 2 Pin Flat | Buddhist | Lao      |

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## Vietnam

### 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 | Plugs       | Religion                                   |
|------------------------|-------------|--|
| +7                     | 2 Pin Round | Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism |

### Language

Vietnamese

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## Budgeting and packing

## Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may

depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Vientiane - Buddha park US\$8

Hanoi - Water Puppets from US\$4

Hue - Trip to Royal Tombs US\$9; trip to countryside from US\$12; cooking course from US\$24

Hoi An - Cookery class from US\$24; trip to My Lai from US\$12

Ho Chi Minh City - Trip to Mekong Delta from US\$15

Phnom Penh - Sunset cruise US\$ 10, Koh Dach Island - US \$24, Oudong Mountain - US \$32, Chiso Mountain - US \$35

Siem Reap - Scenic helicopter flight over Angkor temples from US\$ 135-260; Apsara traditional khmer dance and dinner US\$ 22, Tonle Sap boat optional US\$ 42; cookery class US\$ 12; National Museum Culture Show US\$ 12 - US\$20 (limited availability during low season May - September)

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 greater. The prices listed are generally only entrance fees and do not include the price of transport to and from the excursion, Your Explore Leader will quote this when you are on tour, as the price for transport will depend on the number of participants.

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 included (entrance fees etc.) or services will not operate at the same safety and quality standards.

## **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.

## **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

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. You may however, want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

### 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\$ 70.

## Cambodia

### 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 | Dinner price   | Beer price | Water price |
|-------------|----------------|------------|-------------|
| £6          | £10.00 - 12.00 | £1.3       | £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.

## Laos

### 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.

|                     |                   |                    |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Dinner price</b> | <b>Beer price</b> | <b>Water price</b> |
| £6                  | £0.75             | £0.75 - 1.50       |

## Foreign Exchange

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Local currency</b> | <b>Recommended Currency For Exchange</b>  |
| Kip.                  | US\$ are the easiest to exchange in Laos. |

### Where To Exchange

All major currencies and travellers cheques are exchangeable in the main towns.

### ATM Availability

ATMs are available in most major towns and cities including Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Vang Vieng and Savannekhet.

### Credit Card Acceptance

There is very limited credit card use.

### Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are exchangeable only in the main towns.

## Vietnam

### 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.

|                     |                   |                    |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Dinner price</b> | <b>Beer price</b> | <b>Water price</b> |
| £9                  | £2.00 - 4.00      | £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**

Credit card's are widely accepted throughout Vietnam

### **Travellers Cheques**

Travellers cheques are not recommended as they can be difficult to exchange

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## **Transport, Accommodation & Meals**

### **Transport Information**

Bus, Boat, Flight, Train

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## **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.

### **Price Guarantee**

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 and Passport Information**

Laos: A single visa is required by UK, New Zealand, Australian, US & Canadian citizens and can be obtained on arrival. The visa on arrival costs 30USD for New Zealand and Australian citizens, 35USD for UK & US citizens and 42USD for Canadian citizens. For other nationalities the price varies between US\$30-42. One passport sized photo is required to arrange this.

Vietnam: Until 30th June 2021 '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.

Visa's are required for citizens of the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. eVisa's can be applied for via <https://evisa.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn>

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. The current cost is 30 USD, a passport sized photograph for immigration will also be required. Alternatively, you can arrange your visa in advance in the form of an e-Visa. To make your application, and for more information contact the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs direct at [www.mfaic.gov.kh](http://www.mfaic.gov.kh).

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

## **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 complimentary transfers will be arranged

from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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**

### **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. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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 Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## **Laos**

### **Vaccinations**

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Although not compulsory, travellers may wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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 Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## **Vietnam**

### **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. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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 Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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### **Additional Information**



## Why book this trip

This four week trip is ideal for travellers with extended holiday time who want to see the highlights of the Indochina region. This trip takes you through Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia showcasing the best of each diverse destination along the way. Ideal for lovers of history and culture this adventure holiday will give you a great insight into the regions turbulent past and a flavour for how different each country is, while endeavouring to experience local life along the way.



# Reviews

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AWARD WINNING  
EXPLORE LEADERS



PRICE GUARANTEE  
PROMISE



AIRPORT  
TRANSFERS