

# EXPLORE!

**BIG 15 SALE**

**Northern Indochina Encompassed**  
19 days

Laos, Thailand, Vietnam - Trip code **QLB**

## Northern Indochina Encompassed

This tour combines our 'Backroads of Hanoi' trip with 'Rivers, Roads and Rails to Rangoon' - allowing for a comprehensive journey through northern Indochina. Combine the rich history of northern Vietnam with traditional ways of life in Laos, along the garden cities of northern Thailand, and incredible temples and pagodas of Burma. This three week trip is varied, diverse and action packed!

### Trip highlights

- ★ **Hanoi** - Explore the narrow streets on a walking tour of the Old Quarter
- ★ **Luang Prabang** - Witness hundreds of monks line the streets during the alms giving ceremony at sunrise
- ★ **Chiang Mai** - Discover the relaxed north of Thailand and the ancient walled city of Chiang Mai
- ★ **Inle Lake** - Cruise out onto Inle Lake and witness the distinct 'one-legged' rowing style of the fisherman
- ★ **Bagan** - Marvel at the vast plain of 1000 year old temples in Bagan

#### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

##### Simple

These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, sometimes 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:**

**10 - 16**

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 tour in Hanoi

Join tour in Hanoi. Later today there may be the option to see a performance of traditional water puppetry, a practice that dates back to the 15th century. Set on a flooded stage, the stories tell tales of legendary heroes and everyday life, with dragons and unicorns sharing the stage with ducks and frogs, and even fireworks and naval battles!



**Accommodation: Flower Hotel** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 2 - Drive to Halong Bay; overnight on boat

We drive around 4 hours by charter bus to the incredible setting of Halong Bay, one of Vietnam's most spectacular natural attractions recently voted as one of the eight natural wonders of the world. A UNESCO World Heritage site, Halong Bay boasts hundreds of jungle-clad islands (over 1600 at the last count) that rise from the jade green waters of the bay like the scales of some great submerged dragon. Indeed Halong means 'where the dragon descends to the sea' and local legends tells of a time when this rugged landscape was created by the pounding tail of a mighty dragon as he ran from the mountains into the glittering waters of the bay below. On arrival we will board our shared junk boat and set sail, threading our way through a flotilla of boats, junks and wooden sampans as they ply their way across the gentle waters of the bay. There may be swimming opportunities so have swimming costumes to hand. We spend the night on the boat.



**Accommodation: Halong Bay Junk** (or similar)



Standard Junk



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 3 - In Halong Bay, morning cruise; Return to Hanoi; walk in Old Quarter

This morning we continue to enjoy the romantic scenery cruising amongst the islands as we return to the jetty. It is interesting to see the assortment of boats, junks and wooden sampans, their sails hoisted, gliding through waters. We then drive back to Hanoi where this afternoon we take a walk through the Old Quarter. This is a maze of narrow streets that are named after various crafts or specialties: Paper Street, Silk Street, Basket Street etc. The shops themselves have very narrow frontages but are actually quite deep; they are known locally as 'tube' shops. Street vendors tempt you with noodles, snacks and stir-fried delights from shoulder panniers, all adding to the charm of Hanoi's historic heart.



**Accommodation: Flower Hotel** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Fly to Luang Prabang in Laos

This morning we fly to Luang Prabang. The remainder of the day is free to enjoy this lovely riverside town at your own pace. Home to the impressive Thad Makmo stupa (Buddhist shrine) and the beautifully ornate Wat Xieng Thong, Luang Prabang has a wealth of architectural highlights that include both traditional Laotian style and French colonial buildings. Perhaps you would like to try your hand at Lao cooking or simply relax with a coffee or a Beer Lao in one of the riverside bars and watch the world go lazily by.



**Accommodation: Villa Kieng Kham Hotel** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - In Luang Prabang, free day with option to visit Kuang Si Waterfalls

Today is also free. There is opportunity to explore further afield with an excursion to Kuang Si Falls, a stunning three-tiered waterfall with the opportunity for swimming.



**Accommodation: Villa Kieng Kham Hotel** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Journey by boat on Mekong River; overnight in Pakbeng village

Today we board a slowboat to take us along the Mekong towards Thailand. Running from the Tibetan plateau, through Laos and Cambodia and finally meeting the sea through the Mekong Delta of Vietnam the Mekong River is the life blood of this region. By boat we can watch as the scenery changes, as we pass thick forested hills and riverine forests, along with glimpses of local life on the banks. We have the chance to stop off at Pak Ou caves, a shrine crammed full of Buddha images of all sizes and styles. We disembark to overnight in Pakbeng on the banks of the river.



**Accommodation: Phetsokxai Hotel** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 7 - Continue by boat, cross Thai border; drive to Chiang Rai

We continue on our boat journey enjoying the landscape as we go. When we reach the Thai border at Chiang Khong we are met by a new tour leader. We drive around 2 hours to Chiang Rai in the far north of Thailand very close to both the Laos and Burmese borders, in the area known as The Golden Triangle. This evening we recommend a visit to the night market to discover some of Thailand's delicious street food.



**Accommodation: Diamond Park Inn Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 8 - Drive to Chiang Mai via The White Temple

Today we make the 3 hour journey to Chiang Mai visiting Wat Rong Khun, otherwise known as The White Temple, along the way. This is an unusual and quirky Buddhist temple as it was designed by a contemporary artist who began construction in 1998. On arrival in Chiang Mai the remainder of the day is left free to make your first impressions of the city.



**Accommodation: Park Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 9 - In Chiang Mai; orientation walk of Old Town

This morning we take an orientation walk of the Old Town and see some of the many temples and the ancient city walls, as well as visit the market. This afternoon there is the option to drive out to Doi Suthep temple, and enjoy great views of Chiang Mai from its vantage point on the hill. This evening we pay a visit to the night market and bazaar, where there is plenty of opportunity for shopping.



**Accommodation: Park Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 10 - Morning free for optionals in Chiang Mai; afternoon drive to Chiang Rai

There are a range of optional activities to enjoy this morning, including visiting the beautiful Doi Suthep temple which towers over the city, having a relaxing Thai massage at one of the city's many parlours, or just taking a leisurely stroll along Chiang Mai's quiet streets, taking in its many temples. This afternoon we head out of the city, where the buildings soon give way to picturesque rice fields and undulating forested hills as we head for Chiang Rai. This afternoon is free to explore the quiet streets of Chiang Rai, a cultural melting pot of different ethnic groups.



**Accommodation: Diamond Park Inn Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 11 - Cross the border into Burma, fly to Heho, drive to Inle Lake

This morning we set off after breakfast for the Thai/Burmese border. Before reaching the border we visit the infamous 'Golden Triangle', where the borders of Thailand, Laos and Burma meet at the confluence of two rivers - the Ruak River and the mighty Mekong. This area was known for being one of the premier opium growing regions in the world in its heyday, and the borders formed a major smuggling and drug trafficking route. We plan to stop at a view point where can take in the three countries, before visiting the Opium Museum to add context to what we are seeing. We will then continue on to the border, and after completing the border formalities, will cross into Burma and meet our Burmese leader where we have chance to explore Tachileik market, a sprawling bazaar that sits right on the border. After lunching at one of the local stalls we continue onto the airport for our short flight to Heho, the gateway to Inle Lake. We plan to arrive at Inle Lake in the late afternoon in time to witness the sun set into the calm and serene waters of the lake.



**Accommodation: Hupin Nyaung Schwe Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 12 - Morning cruise by longtail boat on Inle Lake, free afternoon to explore

Inle Lake enjoys a picturesque, moderately high-altitude setting on the Shan Plateau, surrounded by hills and home to the Intha people, as well as some Shan, Taungyo, Pa-o and Danu ethnicities. Local communities are devout Buddhists that live in simple houses of wood and woven bamboo, raised above the water on stilts. They are mostly fishermen, skilled artisans and self-sufficient farmers, whose vegetables are grown on floating gardens made of grass and seaweed.

The local fishermen are known for practicing a distinctive rowing style which involves standing at the stern of their boat on one leg and wrapping the other leg around the oar. We spend time this morning amongst these village communities and visit their cottage industry workshops, admiring their talents for silk and cotton weaving, as well as the rolling of traditional Cheroots (Burmese cigars).

This afternoon has been left free to relax and enjoy our peaceful surroundings. There is also the chance to take an optional visit to Indein Village. Located up a small creek in the western part of the lake, Indein Village plays host to a vast complex of about 1,000 stupas of varying sizes, built between the 17th and 18th centuries.



**Accommodation: Hupin Nyaung Schwe Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 13 - Public bus through rural Burmese villages to Bagan

Today we take an adventurous journey across central Burma as we catch our express bus to Bagan. This service is mainly used by locals and perhaps a couple of backpackers, so it is a great opportunity to engage with curious and friendly locals. The route takes us through rural Burma, where the scenery seems almost ever-changing as we make our way to Bagan. The road first winds its way up to the scenic hill station of Kalaw, before dropping down past swathes of lush countryside and through many small villages before hitting the central dry zone, where the trees give way to vast dry and arid plains. There will be opportunities to stop, stretch your legs and take a comfort break, and perhaps have a quick look around some of the local markets we pass en-route. The seats on the bus are pre-assigned, and the cabin is air-conditioned. Today's total journey should take around eight hours, and subject to local conditions, we plan to arrive into Bagan in the late afternoon.



**Accommodation: Thazin Garden Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 14 - Discover the 1000 year old temples of Bagan

As the stand-out highlight of the trip for a large proportion of our customers, many report that their photos do not do justice to Bagan's magnificence and scale. Without doubt one of the world's premier archaeological wonders, its vast plain is studded with literally thousands of 1,000 year-old temples and stupas. From the 9th to 13th centuries, Bagan was the capital of the Kingdom of Pagan - a precursor of modern Burma. During the height of its success between the 11th and 13th centuries, over 10,000 buildings were constructed here, of which over 2,200 still remain. Its sheer magnitude can be realised when you consider that there are more temples, stupas and pagodas on this Manhattan Island-sized plain than there are medieval cathedrals in Europe.

We set out this morning to discover these marvels of ancient architecture, and with so many to choose from we plan to focus on some of the most iconic and distinctive. These include Shwezigon - a prototype of later Burmese stupas; Wetkyi-in-Gubyaukgyi - a 13th century cave temple with some interesting frescoes and Ananda Pagoda - one of the finest, largest and best preserved in Old Bagan. We are also likely to visit Ananda ok Kyaung - a former monastery with spectacular 18th century wall paintings.

This afternoon has been left free for further optional sightseeing, where we can explore the Sulamani Temple, built by King Narapatisithu in 1183, and the towering Dhammayangyi Temple which showcases some of the finest brickwork in all of Bagan. Our afternoon in Bagan draws to a close as our local guide takes us to the upper terraces of the one of the temples to witness the sun set over the vast templed plains of Bagan.



**Accommodation: Thazin Garden Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 15 - Overnight cruise up the Irrawaddy River to Mandalay

Today we board our privately chartered vessel for a leisurely cruise along Burma's most well-known river, the Irrawaddy. The boat travels at a gentle pace, allowing us to enjoy the passing scenery and spot friendly locals waving at us as we pass. There will be chances to stop along the way, including a stop at Yandabo, a small settlement known for its intricate potteries. We plan to moor alongside a small village in the evening where we will rest for the night. We overnight aboard the boat, where padded mattresses are laid out along the top tier of the boat, the sleeping is communal and all bedding is provided, along with a mosquito net. It is a basic but rewarding experience, sleeping out under the stars with the gentle rocking of the Irrawaddy and the sounds of nature as your evening's soundtrack.



**Accommodation: Overnight Cruise from Bagan to Mandalay** (or similar)



Simple Boat



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 16 - Morning visit to Mingun village, afternoon arrival in Mandalay

After a leisurely river-side breakfast we continue upstream to Mingun village, and the ruins of the unfinished Mingun Pahtodawgyi (pagoda) which, had it been completed, would have been the largest pagoda in the world. Undertaken by King Bodawpaya in 1790, the work on the monument ceased with the king's death in 1890. Nearby we also visit the giant 90 tonnes bronze Mingun Bell. We then continue upriver to Mandalay, where we disembark and transfer to our hotel, with the rest of the day free to spend at leisure.

This afternoon there is the option to explore some of this old capital's major highlights, including the world's largest book at the Kuthodaw Pagoda and the intricate wooden majesty of the Shwenanda (Golden Palace) Monastery. There will also be the opportunity to visit some craft shops where you can observe traditional and skilled gold-leaf making, tapestry making and wood carving as well as the fascinating jade market. If time allows we will then head up Mandalay Hill for sunset and views across the river and over the city.



**Accommodation: Victoria Palace Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 17 - Free day to explore Mandalay; overnight train to Rangoon

Today has been left free to explore Mandalay at your leisure, or perhaps take an optional tour to the ancient cities of Amarapura and Inwa. We will first head to the formal royal capital of Amarapura where we explore the Mahagandayon Monastery, a school teaching ancient Buddhist traditions to the young monks of today. We then journey out to the beautiful U-Bein bridge, intricately made from teakwood and, at 1.2 km, it is the longest of its kind in the world. After some time marvelling at this centuries-old structure, we continue onto Inwa, another one of Burma's old royal capitals. Here we discover the 'leaning tower of Ava' and the elegant teakwood monastery of Bagaya Kyaung.

Later this evening we transfer to the train station in time to catch our overnight express train to Rangoon. Accommodation on the train will be in a lockable 4 berth cabins with a rotating ceiling fan. Pillows and top sheets are provided, but a sleeping sheet/sleeping bag is recommended as it can get cool at night. Toilets are located at each end of the carriage, and there is a restaurant coach on board where drinks and snacks can be bought. The going is slow, and you should expect a bumpy ride, but in return you are rewarded with wonderful views of the Burmese countryside and villages, and a chance to travel like the locals do.



**Accommodation: Overnight train from Mandalay to Yangon**



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 18 - Discover the sights of Rangoon; free afternoon

We start this morning with a traditional breakfast in a tea shop not far from the train station. This buzzing diner is where 'Yangoners' come to catch up with friends and enjoy a traditional breakfast of fried rice, eggs and coffee before starting their day.



After dropping our bags at the hotel, we take to the streets of Rangoon on a walking tour showcasing the city's rich colonial architecture and bustling street markets. The walk takes us past the lakes and parks that provided the city's alternative name as the 'Garden city of the East', before visiting the Scott (Bogyoke) Market famous for its expertly made handicrafts and gemstones including rubies and jade. The highlight though, has to be a visit to the magnificent Shwedagon Pagoda, the most revered Buddhist temple in Burma, whose golden stupa dominates the city skyline.

The afternoon has been left free to soak up the warm atmosphere of this friendly city, or to indulge in some last minute souvenir shopping.



**Accommodation: Panda Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



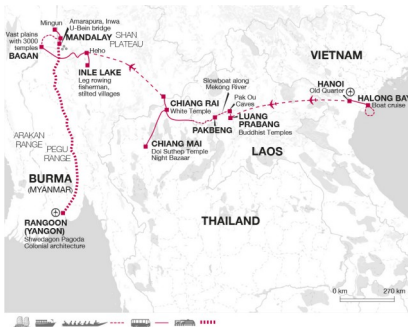
Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 19 - Trip ends in Rangoon

Trip ends after breakfast



Meals Provided: Breakfast



# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 18  
Lunch: 1  
Dinner: 1



## Transport

Bus  
Boat  
Flight  
Taxi  
Train



## Trip staff

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



## Accommodation

1 nights simple boat  
5 nights simple hotel  
10 nights standard hotel  
1 nights standard junk  
1 nights simple overnight train

# Trip information

## Country information

### 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

+7

#### Plugs

2 Pin Flat

#### Religion

Buddhist

#### Language

Lao

### Thailand

#### Climate

Generally hot with high humidity. There is some rainfall from April to September with most days being hot (around 33 Degrees) and a light breeze on the islands. If it does rain, it will be more of a heavy tropical downpour that lasts a few hours. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>.

#### Time difference to GMT

+7

#### Plugs

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Buddhism

**Language**

Thai

## 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**

+7

**Plugs**

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism

**Language**

Vietnamese

## 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.

Chiang Mai - Visit to Doi Suthep Temple - 800 Thai Baht

Inle Lake - Inle Village visit - 8,800 Burmese Kyat

Bagan - Afternoon Temple tour including sunset - 15,400 Burmese Kyat

Mandalay - Tour of Amarapura, Inwa and Sagaing - 53,900 Burmese Kyat

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

### Clothing

Pack essentially for hot weather although December through to February warmer clothing is needed for the north of Vietnam. Days are hot and humid. Lightweight rainwear essential at all times.

### Footwear

Comfortable shoes and sandals/trainers for relaxing.

### Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

## Equipment

A torch, water bottle, insect repellent and high factor sunscreen are all essential, as are good quality sunglasses and a lip salve with sun protection. Don't forget your swim wear! An overnight bag is useful for the overnight train/bus.

## 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.

## Country Information

### 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.

##### Dinner price

£6

##### Beer price

£0.75

##### Water price

£0.75 - 1.50

#### Foreign Exchange

##### Local currency

Kip.

##### Recommended Currency For Exchange

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.

### Thailand

#### 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

£4.00 - 8.00

**Beer price**

£1.5

**Water price**

£0.5

## Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Thai Baht

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

We recommend that you bring your money in GBP or US\$.

**Where To Exchange**

Most major towns and on the islands - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

**ATM Availability**

ATMs are available in Bangkok but are limited on the islands.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Major stores and restaurants.

**Travellers Cheques**

Can be exchanged at banks and exchange offices throughout the tour although rates may not be as favourable.

## 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.

**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**

Credit card's are widely accepted throughout Vietnam

**Travellers Cheques**

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

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Flight, Taxi, Train

### Accommodation notes

#### Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

On this tour we have opted for simple, basic and clean accommodation that provides value for money and a warm welcome. All hotel rooms have air-conditioning and attached bathrooms. Expect rooms to be furnished in a no frills manner and be prepared for both electricity supply and plumbing standards to be somewhat erratic.

## 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

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.

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.

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.

Thailand: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens for a stay of less than 30 days. All passports must have at least 6 months validity remaining on entry to Thailand. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

Burma: An e-visa is required to enter Burma and must be arranged prior to travel through the following website:

<http://evisa.moip.gov.mm/>. Visas are valid for 90 days from issue and allow a 28-day, single-entry visit. You should select Tachliak land border as your port of entry

All visa related issues including information for other nationalities should be confirmed with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

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](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 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, 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.

## Non refundable permits

## 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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## **Thailand**

### **Vaccinations**

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and infectious hepatitis. Although not compulsory, travellers may also wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on Malaria and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. 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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