

## HIGHLIGHTS OF VIETNAM TOUR Ex Ho Chi Minh

**Day 1: Depart your country** *Meals: Breakfast | Accommodation: Edem Deluxe Saigone (Deluxe)*

Arrive in Ho Chi Minh city from Sydney. You will be picked up and transferred to your hotel in center Saigon.



**Day 2 Free morning in Saigon.**

**Afternoon transfer to the airport for your flight to Siem Reep. Met and Transferred to your hotel**

*Meals: breakfast/Lunch Accommodation: Tara Angkor Hotel (Deluxe)*

**Day 3: The Jungle temple of Ta Prohm, The jewel temple of Bantey Srei and the ancient Angkor Thom City.**

*Meals: breakfast/Lunch Accommodation: Tara Angkor Hotel (Deluxe)*

**PICK UP: 6AM.**

The reason for the early tour is to avoid the midday heat. After your morning visit you will return to your hotel to relax, swim visit the Spa for a massage. In the late afternoon your guide will return to the hotel to continue your visit.

### **Description of your visit to Ankor Wat**

We rise early to travel to Ta Prohm in the dawn light. Ta Prohm has been abandoned to the elements, a reminder that while empires rise and fall, the riotous power of nature marches on, oblivious to the dramas of human history. Left as it was 'discovered' by French explorer Henri Mouhout in 1860, the tentacle-like tree roots here are slowly strangling the surviving stones, man first conquering nature to create, nature later conquering man to destroy.

We continue further north to Banteay Srei, Angkor's ultimate art gallery. This petite pink temple is the jewel in the crown of Angkor-era sculpture. The elaborate carvings here are the finest found in Cambodia and the name translates as 'Fortress of the Women', thanks to the intricate detail here, considered too fine for the hands of a man.

Originally believed to date from the latter part of the Angkor period, inscriptions at the site suggest it was built by a Brahman in 967. However, some architectural historians have suggested that the inscriptions may date from an earlier structure on this site and the temple is in fact later, marking a high-water mark in Khmer sculpture.

In the afternoon, we visit the immense walled city Angkor Thom that was the masterpiece of King Jayavarman VII. Following the occupation of Angkor by the Chams from 1177 to 1181, the new king decided to build an impregnable fortress at the heart of his empire. The scale is simply staggering and we are immediately overwhelmed by the audacity of Jayavarman on arrival at the city's gates. The causeway is lined by an intricate bridge depicting the Churning of the Ocean of Milk from Hindu mythology in which the devas (gods) and asuras (devils) play tug of war with a naga (seven-headed serpent) to obtain the elixir of immortality.

We begin our visit at the Terrace of the Leper King. This intricately carved platform was the royal crematorium and the statue that was originally thought to be the leper king is now believed to be Yama, the god of death. We continue along the Terrace of Elephants, originally used as a viewing gallery for the king to preside over parades, performances and traditional sports. At the southern end lies the Baphuon, once of the most beautiful temples at Angkor, dating from the reign of Uditayavarman 1 in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It has undergone a massive renovation by the French and is now once again open for viewing.

Our climax is the enigmatic and enchanting temple of the Bayon. At the exact centre of Angkor Thom, this is an eccentric expression of the creative genius and inflated ego of Cambodia's most celebrated king. Its 54 towers are each topped off with the four faces of Avalokiteshvara (Buddha of Compassion), which bear more than a passing resemblance to the king himself. These colossal heads stare down from every side, exuding power and control with a hint of compassion, just the mix required to keep a hold on such a vast empire. Before clambering upwards, we unravel the mysteries of the bas-reliefs, with their intricate scenes of ancient battles against the Chams and their snapshot of daily life during the Angkor period.

#### **Day 4: Angkor Wat and Floating Village of Chong Kneas**

*Meals: breakfast | Lunch Accommodation: Tara Angkor Hotel (Deluxe)*

#### **PICK UP AT 6AM.**

After breakfast we travel south to one of the largest and least-visited villages on the Tonle Rising at the crack of dawn, we journey out to the Mother of all temples, Angkor Wat. Believed to be the world's largest religious building, this temple is the perfect fusion of symbolism and symmetry and a source of pride and strength to all Khmers.

Built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by King Suryavarman II, this is most famous temple at Angkor. We stay at Angkor Wat to enjoy a picnic breakfast. As the crowds return to their hotels, we venture into Angkor Wat to enjoy its magnificence in peace and quiet. We begin by unravelling the mysteries of the bas-reliefs that tell of tales from Hindu mythology and of the glories of the Khmer empire. Stretching for almost one kilometre, these intricate carvings are a candidate for the world's longest unbroken piece of art.

Following in the footsteps of the devout and the destructive before us, we then continue to the upper levels of the inner sanctuary. The final steps to the upper terrace of Angkor are the steepest of all, as pilgrims of old were to stoop on their pilgrimage to encounter the Gods. Finally the pinnacle, the sacred heart of Angkor Wat, a blend of spirituality and symmetry so perfect that few moments will measure up.

Taking a break from the temples, we travel out to the mighty Tonle Sap Lake to visit the floating village of Chong Kneas. Nestled under the hill of Phnom Krom, this floating community moves location with the waters of the lake. During the wet season when the lake swells to five times its size, the village is near Phnom Krom, but during the dry season, it moves as much as 4km from the hill.

Everything floats on water in this living fishing community. There are floating schools, floating shops, floating petrol stations, even floating karaoke bars. Many of the houses are floating fish farms with large pens of fish underneath. For those that are interested, we can also make a stop at the Gecko Environment Centre to learn more about lake, which is like the heartbeat of Cambodia, providing sustenance to millions of Khmers.



### Day 5 Siem Reap – Saigon.

*Meal: Breakfast, Lunch | Accommodation: Royal Lotus (Classic New Wing)*

After breakfast transfer to the airport for your 1030 flight to Saigon Arrive 1150. Met and transferred to your hotel, check into your hotel freshen, lunch then afternoon visit to the Cu Chi Tunnels. You will have an opportunity to get the unique experience of guerillas living and fighting underground during the war (a crawl through 50 – 100 meters out 200 km of the tunnel system is unforgettable). Local rice paper workshops, nice paddy fields are pleasant sights on the way.

### Day 6 : Saigon- Can Tho Mekong Delta

*Meal: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner | Accommodation: Victoria Resort (Superior)*

Dep., Sai Gon at 8h00 head south to Cai be. On arrival walk through the village streets and watch locals making manioc chips before boarding a boat for a journey through the town's floating market. Cruise through the secluded canals to an island where we stop to enjoy seasonal fruits before our boat takes us to Vinh Long where we get back on the bus for our trip to Can Tho to stay overnight.



### Day 7 : Can Tho

*Meal: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner | Accommodation: Victoria Resort (Superior)*

An early start for a boat trip to Cai Rang and Phong Dien floating markets. We stop for a walk on a quiet country road to take in the magnificent scenery and get close to the locals as they go about their daily routine. We try a xe loi, the local colonial-era cab pulled by motorbike, on a country road. In the afternoon, you will be free at leisure to enjoy the peaceful atmosphere at the hotel.

### Day 8 : Can Tho- - Cu Chi- Saigon

*Meal: Breakfast, Lunch | Accommodation: Royal Lotus (Classic New Wing)*

After breakfast you will return to Saigon, check into your hotel, free afternoon in Saigon

### Day 9: Saigon- Hoian

*Meal: Breakfast, Dinner | Accommodation: Vinh Hung resort (Superior)*

You will be picked up at your hotel at 9h30 to transfer to Saigon airport to get a flight to Danang (VN1312- 0920- 10250). Your local guide in Hoian will pick you up in Danang and take you to Hoian. With sightseeing tour on the way. Transfer to your hotel late afternoon. Lunch snack on flight

### Day 10: Hoi An –Cooking class

*Meal: Breakfast, Lunch | Accommodation: Vinh Hung resort (Superior)*

- We start the day (8.15am / 1.30pm) with a drink at Hai Scout Café – our meeting point.
- Visit Hoi An's colorful market, and experience the amazing sights, sounds and aromas of this busy market. We will have the opportunity to interact with the local sellers and purchase some of the ingredients to be used in the cooking lesson later.

- We board the Red Bridge boat for a leisurely cruise (25 minutes) along the Hoi An River to the Red Bridge Cooking School. This is a chance to view local river life, so make sure your camera is handy.
- On arrival, we explore the cooking school's herb and vegetable garden, before learning about some of Hoi An's and Vietnam's well-known dishes. The cooking lesson runs for about 2 hours – each dish is first demonstrated by the Red Bridge chef's, before we prepare the same dish ourselves. Included in the class is a brief introduction to Vietnamese food carving (plate decoration).
- After the lesson, we sit down and eat exactly what we have cooked.



### **Day 11: Hoi An- Free day**

*Meal: Breakfast | Accommodation: Vinh Hung resort (Superior)*

Free day in Hoian to enjoy the beach or shopping in the old town.

### **Day 12 Hoian**

*Meal: Breakfast | Accommodation: Vinh Hung resort (Superior)*

Free day in Hoian to enjoy the beach or shopping in the old town.

**\*\*\*We deliberately did not include some meals whilst in Hoian as there are many wonderful restaurants close to your hotel to experience.**



### Day 13 Hue

*Meal: Breakfast Lunch Dinner | Accommodation: Gerberra Hotel (Superior)*

In the morning, you will transfer to Hue, with a great chance to visit the Marble mountain and Cham Sulpture musuem and drive over the stunning Hai Van pass. Check into Asia Hotel. In the afternoon, you will take a Dragon style boat trip on Perfume river to visit the ancient Thien Mu (Heavenly Lady) pagoda. Hue is also very famous for its historical relics including King's tomb. Your boat will stop by Tu Duc tomb, one of the nicest King's tomb which is set in hamony of Earth, Heaven, Green trees, Water and monuments. You will take a small walk to a smaller tomb of Dong Khanh before your bus pick you up to go back to your hotel.

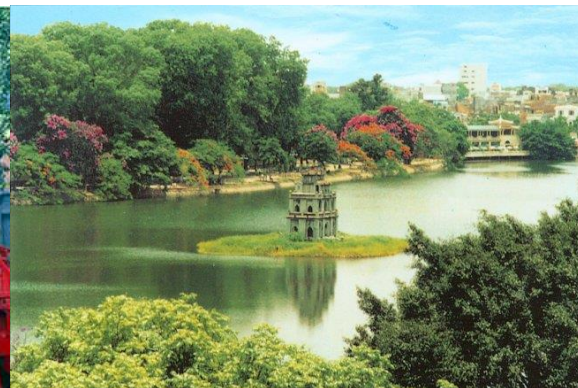


### Day 14 Hue- Hanoi

*Meal: Breakfast Lunch Dinner/ Accommodation: Church Boutique Hanoi (Classic)*

This morning take you to the Forbidden Purple City, the former living place of the Royal family during the Nguyen dynasty in from 19th century to mid 20th century. Although most of palaces were destroyed during the American War (Vietnamese War) especially in Tet offensive (1968), this place still worth a visit with many palaces and temples. Your guide will help you to understand more about this period in Vietnam history as well as the daily life of the Royal family.

Afternoon fly to Hanoi (VN 1514- 1305 - 1415). Your friendly Hanoi guide will meet you at Hanoi airport and transfer to Hanoi down town.



### Day 15 Hanoi City tour

*Meal: Breakfast Lunch Dinner | Accommodation: Church Boutique Hanoi (Classic)*

After breakfast in your hotel you will be met by your guide at 8:00am for an insightful city tour to visit the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and Museum, One Pillar Pagoda (ad 1049), and The Temple of Literature (ad 1070). Following lunch, you will visit the Ethnology museum which will give you an overview of 54 ethnic minorities in Vietnam including the Thai people who you will meet in Mai Chau and Hmong, Dzao, Dzay... people who you will meeting in Sapa. After that, you will take a fascinating 2 hour tour of Ha Noi's Old Quarter by Cyclo. The history of the Old Quarter dates back some 2000 years with it's 36 narrow streets each named after the trade or merchandise made and sold there. With various influences in the architecture and the many temples dedicated to the patron saint of each guild, this is truly a shoppers and photographers delight.

### Day 16 Hoian – Halong Bay

*Meal: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner | Accommodation: Treasure Junk (Superior)*

Depart from Hanoi at 8.00 for a 3.5 hours drive to Halong City through the Red River Delta. Upon arrival, get on board of the Treasure Junk. Start cruising from Hon Gai pier to the boundaries of Halong bay while lunch with fresh seafood is served (vegetarian and kids menus available).



After lunch, just make yourself at ease and relax. We are slowly getting off the classic cruising routes, far from the clichés of a busy tourism spot. Limestone rock formations will parade around us for about 2 hours before our first stop.

We reach the perfect spot, remote and scenic, where the waters of Halong and Bai Tu Long hit and wave together. Let's get ready for serious things. Swimming suits, ok. Kayaks and tender boat, ok. Paddles and gears, ok. Let's get closer to the water and explore the bay in depth.

After one/one and a half hour kayaking, we get back on board to refresh and start the aperitif on the sundeck. Dinner is served either inside or outside depending on weather conditions. Overnight on board in a cozy air-conditioned cabin with en-suite bathroom facilities.

### **Day 17: Kayaking in Halong Bay**

*Meal: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner | Accommodation: Treasure Junk (Superior)*

The breakfast will be served from 7.15am. But if you like, we invite you to share a cup of tea or coffee from 6.30am and participate then in a Tai Chi session before breakfast. Around 8.30am, we board a smaller boat. It takes us even farther from the touristy area, to the hidden nooks of the archipelago.



A whole day of fun and relaxation. More kayaking, more swimming, more sandy beaches, more floating houses, more local cuisine, definitely a "cruise++"... The exact program depends on tide and weather conditions but we guarantee that we will make this trip extension worth. Lunch will be served on the support boat.

The guide will lead you back to the Treasure Junk in the mid-afternoon. Time to refresh and to make yourself cozy on the sundeck. Dinner will be served again either in the dining room or on the deck. Second night onboard.

### **Day 18: Ha Long – Ha Noi**

*Meal: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner | Accommodation: Treasure Junk (Superior)*

We will be back at the pier about 11am, and driven to Hanoi with an expected arrival time about 4pm. The day will be short so let's wake up early to take the maximum of it.

Coffee, tea and cakes will be served from 6.30am. Wake up smoothly while witnessing the silence of beautiful misty bay. A 30-minute Tai Chi session will be organized, energize your body and soul or just allow yourself some farniente time on a sunbath with a cup of coffee.

About 7.45am, we hop on bamboo boats to go visiting a secluded floating village surrounded by the mountains. We spawn our way between numerous floating houses and small rowing boats that serve the everyday life as vehicle, itinerant shops, fishing utility, sometimes overnight shelter.



Back on treasure before 9am, we start cruising back to the pier. From 9.30am, a brunch will be served. Take a last glance at the rocks, standing still as the eternal guardians of a kingdom, we are about to reach the pier.

Once on land, we sit in a small café to wait for our overland vehicle.

**Farewell dinner at Wild Rice restaurant.**

### Day 19: Free in Hanoi

Free in Hanoi to do some retail therapy before you check out of your hotel at 12 noon flight departs at 1600

### TOUR COST PER PERSON TWIN SHARE \$3500

#### Accommodation Hotels or similar:

City	Hotel	Room type	Rate	Location
Saigon	Royal Lotus hotel – New Wing	Classic	4 star	City Saigon Center near Dong Khoi
Can Tho	Victoria Can Tho	Superior	4 star	By Mekong river with 5 minute shuttle boat to city center
Hoian	Vinh Hung resort	Superior	4 star	By Thu Bon river with 2 minute walk to the Old town
Hue	Gerbera Hue hotel	Deluxe city view	4 star	City center
Hanoi	Golden Silk Hotel	Luxury	4-star	Old quarter
Halong	Treasure Junk	Superior cabin	4 star	n/a

### SIEM REEP CAMBODIA

- All sightseeing tour and transfer services as detailed in our itinerary,
- 3 nights Accommodation with daily breakfast /lunch (in twin sharing in 4 star hotel)
- English speaking local guide
- All entrance fees
- Boat trip on Tonle Sap
- Private air conditioned car
- Drinking water during sightseeing

### Services not included:

- Evening Meal
- Visa fees, currently USD 20-- per person
- International airport tax, currently USD 25-- per person
- Expenditure of a personal nature.
- Travel Insurance
- Travel insurance (cover against all cancellation costs, medical expenses, including repatriation, in the event of accident of illness)

## VIETNAM

### Service included

- **Two** Internal flights with Vietnam Airlines
- Local English-speaking guides, except for free time in Hoian
- Ho Chi Minh & Mekong Delta: 01 Guide
- Hoian & Hue: 01 Guide
- Hanoi & Halong: 01 Guide
- Accommodation in double/ twin shared at mentioned hotels with daily breakfast
- Private transfer by appropriate vehicle with air-conditioner and by experienced driver:
- Boat trip cruise in Halong Bay and Bai Tu Long bay by Treasure Junk
- Meals as mentioned in the itinerary: B- Breakfast, L- Lunch, D- dinner
- Boat trips in Mekong Delta river as specified
- Entrance fees for all sightseeing.

### Services not included:

#### International flights

- Travel insurance
- Other meals, tip, drinks even drinking water
- Single room supplement
- Personal expenses
- Visa and visa service to Vietnam/ Cambodia
- Any optional additional tours or activities during free time
- Late check out from the hotels
- Things are not mentioned in above lists



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