

## Highlights of Indochina

Duration  
**14 days**

Guaranteed  
**2 travellers**

Group size  
**16 travellers**

Price  
**From AUD \$ 5,161**



### WHAT TO EXPECT

Escape the crowds and travel by tuk-tuk to Angkor Wat for sunrise over Angkor Wat's famous spires. Enjoy a hands-on traditional Lao-style cooking demonstration at the Bamboo Experience cooking school. Learn about the typical ingredients used in Lao cooking and prepare a feast for dinner. Receive a blessing when you take part in a local 'Baci' blessing ceremony. Cruise overnight through the 3,000 islands rising from the sea in Ha Long Bay.

#### Day 1: Arrival in Saigon

Welcome to Vietnam! Your airport representative will meet and greet you. A transfer from the airport of Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon, to your hotel will be arranged. Enjoy some free time before your tour briefing and some welcome drinks with your fellow travellers.

#### Day 2: Saigon

The day starts with a tour of Cu Chi. Discover the network of over 200km-long underground tunnels and their significance during the Vietnam War, before returning to Saigon. After lunch join a guided walking tour and discover the rich history of this spirited city as you visit some of its main attractions. Visit the former Presidential Palace, it was towards this modern building that North Vietnamese resistance fighters tanks (Viet Cong) rolled on the morning of April 30, 1975 as Saigon fell. From the palace you will go on foot (your car will be available at all times) to visit the major sights of colonial Ho Chi Minh City including the red-brick Catholic cathedral of Notre-Dame, the nearby 19th century Empire-style Post Office, and the next door 'Hotel de Ville' or City Hall all look indomitably European, Dong Khoi Street (formerly Rue Catinat), Opera House. Continue your tour by stopping at Ben Thanh market, one of the biggest market in the downtown area of Saigon. The market is one of the earliest surviving structures in Saigon and today is considered one of symbol of Saigon, popular with tourists seeking local handicrafts, textiles, "ao dai" (Vietnamese traditional custom), and souvenirs, as well as local cuisine.

- Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch
- Activities included: Half day excursion to Cu Chi, Walking tour of Saigon city

#### Day 3: Saigon - Day Trip to Mekong Delta

Escape to the stunning Mekong Delta region from Ho Chi Minh City as we journey towards My Tho, a peaceful town perched on the banks of the Mekong River. Once in My Tho, visit Cao Dai Temple. Then embark on a traditional boat ride along the Mekong River and discover the famous Four Islands namely the Dragon, Unicorn, Turtle and Phoenix Islands. During the trip, we will make various stops to immerse ourselves in the local daily life of the people living on the Mekong. We will see how they sustain themselves by cultivating orchards, chocolate factory, coconut candy factory

and many more. Take a glimpse of the past and breathe that magic atmosphere of ancient times. Lunch will be served in a local restaurant, before we head back to Ho Chi Minh City in the late afternoon.

- Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch
- Activities included: Visit of the Cao Dai temple, Unique - River cruising along the Mekong Delta on a traditional wooden boat

#### **Day 4: Saigon - Danang - Hoi An**

Fly to Danang, and then enjoy a scenic drive to Hoi An for your hotel check in. In the afternoon we will do a walking tour. The tour starts at the Museum of Folk Culture where you will learn about the history of this charming and peaceful town before you walk around the small market. Walk along the main street to the Chinese Assembly Hall of Fujien Chinese community. The hall, built in 1697, has been used as the worshipping place to dedicate to Thien Hau (the Goddess of the Sea or Holy Mother). Continue to the river bank along narrow streets - on both sides are old houses transformed into beautifully decorated shops with colourful lanterns. Next we'll stop to see the Japanese covered bridge built in the early 17th century by Japanese traders who settled in the town. The special pagoda-shaped bridge is now the official symbol of Hoi An. We will finish the tour of this UNESCO-recognized town, with the visit of a historic old house.

- Meals included: Breakfast
- Activities included: Half day walking tour of Hoi An

#### **Day 5: Hoi An**

This morning, we will go to Vong Nhi village, where we will start with a cycling tour (around 6 km). On our way, we will see stunning landscapes of the peaceful countryside such as green water coconut forest, prawn & red snapper farms and rice fields. The day continues at Thanh Dong organic farm - a 10,000sqm organic garden supporting 11 local families. We will take a short stroll around the vegetable gardens while listening to the life-changing story of the local farmers. We will join the farmers in some gardening activities, such as preparing and applying organic manure to the land, raking the ground, sowing herb seed, watering or picking vegetables. Afterwards, we will leave the farm to take a basket boat ride along the Do River, taking us to The Field Restaurant. You may enjoy the beautiful scenery or fishing life of local villagers on the way there. Before getting back to the hotel, enjoy a cooking class and a Vietnamese family style lunch.

- Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch
- Activities included: Cycling tour through Vong Nhi village, Social - Farm life experience at Thanh Dong Organic Farm, Taste - Cooking class and Vietnamese family style lunch at The Field Restaurant

#### **Day 6: Hoi An - Danang – Hanoi**

Transfer to Danang airport for your flight to Hanoi, capital city of Vietnam. Upon arrival, transfer to your hotel for check in. After that, your guide will meet you at the hotel for a city tour of Hanoi. Your first stop will be the popular Hoan Kiem Lake, situated in the heart of Hanoi city and Dong Xuan market. Your next stop will be Ho Chi Minh complex comprising Ba Dinh Square, Presidential Palace (for outside photos), as well as his private residence from 1954 until 1969. The wooden ethnic minority style house, built on stilts, is surrounded by lovely peaceful gardens. In the same complex you will see the One Pillar Pagoda, founded by King Ly Thai To in 1049. This structure has become an important symbol for the people of Hanoi. We will continue on to the Temple Of Literature, Vietnam's first university. Constructed in 1070, the gardens and well-preserved architecture offer a relaxing glimpse into Vietnam's past. You will then visit Hoa Lo Prison (formerly known as the "Hanoi Hilton" during the American war). The last stop of the day, before returning to your hotel, will be the visit of the inside of the Opera House. We will end the tour with a sip of traditional Vietnamese coffee.

- Meals included: Breakfast
- Activities included: Guided city tour of Hanoi

### Day 7: Hanoi - Halong Bay

Drive past scenes of traditional rural life from Hanoi to Halong City, the gateway to Halong Bay. Board a well-appointed junk boat, enjoy a delicious lunch and begin cruising among the 3,000 islands which rise from the sea. In the evening, retreat to your private cabin, relax on the main deck or enjoy a drink at the bar. Spend the night on board.

- Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Activities included: Unique - River cruising on the Halong Bay and overnight onboard

### Day 8: Halong Bay – Hanoi

Take part in a sunrise Tai Chi lesson on the sundeck before enjoying brunch on board. Upon arrival back in port, transfer to your hotel in Hanoi. Take a walking tour to visit the Hanoi's Old Quarter, also known as "36 streets". This bustling area of narrow streets and alleys is home to literally thousands of small businesses and shopkeepers. It's a great place to explore with plenty of photo opportunities all around you. Continue your visit by strolling around Hoan Kiem Lake before joining your group for a last dinner in Vietnam.

- Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner
- Activities included: Unique - Tai Chi lesson on the Halong Bay at sunrise

### Day 9: Hanoi - Luang Prabang

Fly to Luang Prabang in Laos and get a transfer to your hotel where you will enjoy some free time to unwind. Spend the afternoon on a guided tour through the city and discover why it is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The tour starts with a visit to Wat Xienthong, "The Temple of the Golden City" considered the finest in all of Laos. Get the heart-rate going with a small hike up to the Phou Si Mountain for a breath-taking view of the entire city. Ending our day taking part in a traditional Baci ceremony and a traditional dinner at The Bamboo Experience.

- Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner
- Activities included: Guided tour of Luang Prabang, Traditional Baci ceremony

### Day 10: Luang Prabang

Wake up before dawn to observe a long standing sacred Lao tradition and Buddhist ritual "Tak Bat" (Almsgiving), where monks dressed in saffron-coloured robes line up to receive food offerings from devout Buddhists along the street. Enjoy a leisurely tour around the old quarters of Luang Prabang starting with the Morning Market, full of fresh produce and exotic delicacies from small provincial village farms. Walking along the city's main street, we will visit the Wat Mai and the National Museum once home to the Laotian Royal Family. After that, we will embark on a scenic boat ride along the Mekong River, to the sacred pilgrimage of Tam Ting Cave (cave of thousand Buddhas). Before heading back to the city, we will cruise to the village of Ban Xang Khong where Saa paper are handcrafted from the barks of Mulberry trees. Here play the local favourite game of petanque with a sunset drinks.

- Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch
- Activities included: Spiritual - Observation of Lao tradition and Buddhist ritual "Tak Bat" (Almsgiving), Visit of the Wat Mai and the National Museum, River cruise on the Mekong River, Game of local petanque with a sunset drink

### Day 11: Luang Prabang - Siem Reap

Travel by car to reach our main highlight of the day, the multi-tiered turquoise-colored Kuang Si Waterfall, deemed one of the most beautiful waterfalls in South-east Asia. Then transfer to the airport for your flight to Siem Reap, in Cambodia. Check in to your hotel where a welcome drink will be waiting for you. Enjoy the rest of the day at your own pace.

- Meals included: Breakfast
- Activities included: Excursion to Kuang Si Waterfall

## Day 12: Siem Reap

Today we start at pre-dawn to witness the breathtaking view of Sunrise Over Angkor Wat temple. After sunrise visit the bas-relief and central complex of Angkor in the quiet early morning. Continue to the Southern Gate of Angkor Thom 'Great City'. This will include many of the finest Temples of King Jayavarman VII, who ruled from 1181 to 1220. Marvel at the imposing 23m (75-foot) high stone faces of Avalokiteshvara, featured in the Tomb Raider movie. At the centre of this citadel lies the state temple of Bayon, built at the end of the 12th century and adorned with hundreds of gigantic stone faces. The tour also includes the Terrace of Elephants, the Terrace of the Leper King and later in the day you will discover the most famous temples from the 11th century: Baphuon, Phimeanakas. Witness a religious ceremony Monk Blessing at a pagoda nearby the temple. The Blessing is a sacred ritual that is performed in Pagodas across Cambodia. Continue the day by visiting Ta Prohm, known for the massive trees with thick roots that entangle the walls.

- Meals included: Breakfast
- Activities included: Unique - Sunrise over Angkor Wat temples, Guided tour of Angkor complex

## Day 13: Siem Reap

Visit Beong Mealea Temple, a 12th-century Buddhist sanctuary built from perfectly-squared sandstone blocks, still partly buried under vegetation. The pediments of some buildings are sculpted with narrative scenes from the Ramayana, and while Hindu iconographic themes are plentiful, Boeng Mealea is clearly a Buddhist sanctuary as Banteay Samre, which is more or less contemporaneous. This is confirmed by the magnificent statue of the Bodhisattva Lokeshvara discovered in the monument and today housed at the Angkor Conservancy. Enjoy some lunch at a local restaurant before our afternoon visit of Kampong Pluk. Kampong Pluk is an isolated community of three villages built on stilts. These scenic villages are flooded from Aug – Feb, enabling row boat journeys that provide income for the local community. We will take the small boat through the flooded mangrove forests fostering a variety of wildlife. End the day with a spectacular performance of Khmer ancient culture, while enjoying the finest cuisine in town.

- Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Activities included: Visit of Beong Mealea Temple, Social - Visit of the isolated community of Kampong Pluk, Arts & Craft - Apsara dance performances

## Day 14: Departure from Siem Reap

It's time to say goodbye, but just think of all the wonderful stories you will take home. A transfer will take you to the airport for your onward travels.

- Meals included: Breakfast

## Inclusions

### Insider Experiences

Arts & Craft – Apsara dance performances

Social – Farm life experience at Thanh Dong Organic Farm

Social – Visit of the isolated community of Kampong Pluk



Spiritual – Observation of Lao tradition and Buddhist ritual “Tak Bat” (Almsgiving)

Taste – Cooking class and Vietnamese family style lunch at The Field Restaurant

Unique – River cruising along the Mekong Delta on a traditional wooden boat

Unique – River cruising on Halong Bay and overnight onboard

Unique – Tai Chi lesson on the Halong Bay at sunrise

Unique – Sunrise over Angkor Wat temples

### Accommodation



12 nights in 3-4 star hotels

1 night on a boat

### Transport



Airport transfer on arrival and departure

Air-conditioned vehicle (except Tuk Tuk)

All flight specified in itinerary

### Meals



Daily breakfast

6 local lunches

4 local dinners

### Touring



English speaking tour guide

All entrance fees

All tipping

Contact your local travel agent