



INSIDER JOURNEYS

Highlights of South East Asia

Duration
13 days

Guaranteed
2 travellers

Group size
16 travellers

Price
From AUD \$ 3,749



WHAT TO EXPECT

Venture to the Mekong Delta and spend the day exploring the many palm fringed canals, local temples and markets. Start your day like a local as you explore the bustling streets of Phnom Penh whilst on a cyclo. Journey along the meandering canals and meet the local people as you discover the beauty of the Mekong Delta.

Day 1: Arrival in Saigon

Welcome to Vietnam! On arrival in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon, a transfer will be arranged to take you from the airport to your hotel. Enjoy some free time before your tour briefing and 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 - Mekong Delta - Can Tho

An early morning departure from your hotel takes you to Cai Be, deep in the heart of the Mekong Delta. Embark on your wooden boat to explore the Mekong Delta's unique market and, also the symbol of the region, Cai Be floating market. Disembark the boat temporarily to explore deeper the local life by visiting the town's business and craft factories. Have fun with a leisure sampan ride through canals before we transfer you to an ancient house where a delicious home hosted lunch with Mekong's specialties awaits. After lunch, continue to cruise upstream the Mighty

Mekong toward Vinh Long. Along the way, you will observe the typical Mekong Delta rural local life with stops at a local brick & pottery making factory and a floating fish farm before we take you back to the mainland where your car will take you back to Can Tho for the night.

- Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch
- Activities included: Unique - River cruising along the Mekong Delta on a traditional wooden boat, Taste - Home hosted lunch with Mekong's specialties in an ancient house

Day 4: Can Tho - Chau Doc

Can Tho is a university town on the confluence of three rivers in the heart of the delta. The Mekong Delta was once part of the Khmer Kingdom, and today many ethnic Khmers still live here. This morning, we'll make an early start to visit the floating markets of Cai Rang, which are in full swing at 7:00 am. You'll take a small boat and explore the waterways, which are packed with people coming from the surrounding rural areas to sell their produce. It's a lively and colourful scene. After that you will leave Can Tho for Chau Doc. Upon arrival in Chau Doc take a boat to Chau Giang District where a tiny mosque serves the local Cham community. The Cham minority who dominated coastal Vietnam from the 2nd to the 9th centuries were originally Hindu, but became Muslim as a result of contact with Arab seafarers and merchants in the Middle Ages. In South-East Asia Islam was disseminated primarily by merchants who, following the monsoon winds, lived in various coastal towns for months at a time. The Chams also practice silk weaving and you may have the opportunity to see them at work. The architecture here is rather distinctive. You'll visit a beautiful Khmer temple, and later visit the floating houses that double as catfish farms, now a huge industry for the country. Check in the hotel and stay the night in Chau Doc.

- Meals included: Breakfast
- Activities included: Unique - Boat cruise to the floating markets of Cai Rang, Visit of Chau Doc including a Khmer temple and the floating houses

Day 5: Chau Doc - Phnom Penh

After breakfast travel by speedboat to the Cambodian Border. After clearing border requirements cruise along the Mekong River to Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia. Upon arrival, transfer to check in at your hotel, where you will enjoy a welcome drink and a tour briefing. In the late afternoon, board on a river cruise along the Tonle Sap River and the Mythical Mekong. Relax and enjoy unique panorama on the Cambodian capital, scenic landscapes on the banks of the Mekong including floating fishermen villages, and a spectacular sunset over the Phnom Penh skyline.

- Meals included: Breakfast
- Activities included: River cruising along the Tonle Sap and the Mekong Rivers

Day 6: Phnom Penh

Explore Phnom Penh with Cyclo (Bicycle Rickshaw), a chaotic, energetic and always fascinating city. Start our tour at Wat Phnom, the birthplace of the capital. Then, visit to the Royal Palace, the residence of King Norodom Sihamoni, the Silver Pagoda, and the National Museum, which contains a comprehensive collection of Khmer art. Then, visit of Phnom Penh's great markets, the Central Market, a labyrinth of stalls selling everything from CDs and DVDs to silks, crafts, jewelry and more. In the afternoon by private vehicle, visit Sleng Museum, formerly a High School which became the interrogation and torture facility for the Khmer Rouge regime.

- Meals included: Breakfast
- Activities included: Cyclo tour of Phnom Penh, Visit of the Sleng Museum

Day 7: Phnom Penh - Siem Reap

In the morning transfer overland to Siem Reap, visiting the infamous Spider Market in Skun and Naga Bridge in Kampong Thom on the way.

- Meals included: Breakfast
- Activities included: Visit of the Spider Market in Skun, Visit of the Naga Bridge in Kampong Thom

Day 8: 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, Spiritual - Monk Blessing ceremony, Guided tour of Angkor complex

Day 9: Siem Reap

This morning travel to Kampong Kleang floating village about 55 km from Siem Reap. The village is on Tonle Sap, the largest freshwater lake in South East Asia. Take a boat trip to explore the fishing village and get an understanding of the unique life on the water. Enjoy the views of the lake and the surroundings. After lunch continue to Banteay Srei or the "Citadel of Victory" which was consecrated in 967 A.D. This was the only major temple at Angkor not built by a monarch; its construction is credited to a courtier named Yajnavaraha, who was a scholar and philanthropist and a counsellor to king Rajendrarvarman. The temple is built primarily in red sandstone with elaborate decorative wall carvings which are still observable in fine details today. On the way back we will see Banteay Samre temple.

- Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch
- Activities included: Visit of Kampong Kleang floating village, Excursion to Banteay Srei

Day 10: Siem Reap - Poipet Border – Bangkok

Transfer overland to the border between Cambodia and Thailand at Poipet for your entry to Thailand. You will meet your English Speaking Guide and have a transfer to your hotel in Bangkok.

- Meals included: Breakfast

Day 11: Bangkok

After breakfast visit the The Grand Palace or Wat Phra Kaew also known as the temple of the Emerald Buddha. Regarded as the most significant of all Thai temples with the small green-jade statue of the Buddha the most sacred Buddha image in Thailand. Then visit Wat Pho, one of Bangkok's oldest and largest temples. Wat Pho was built by King Rama I about 200 years ago and houses the gigantic gold plated Reclining Buddha image. This unique image is 49 meters long and 12 meters high with beautifully inlaid mother-of-pearl soles. After lunch at a local restaurant continue to Rattanakosin Island, the original area of Bangkok when it was first established. Enjoy the canal (klong) tour along Bangkok's legendary Chao Phraya River and in the Thonburi area known as the 'Venice of the East'. Bangkok's waterways are an integral part of the city's landscape and offer a glimpse into the traditional Thai way of life. Continue to Wat Arun also known as The Temple of Dawn, the most well-known landmark and photographed image of Bangkok. The spire, over 70m high, is beautifully decorated with tiny pieces of coloured glass and Chinese porcelain placed delicately into intricate patterns. The smaller towers are equally beautifully adorned with ceramics that sparkle in the sun. Although it is known as the Temple of the Dawn, it is absolutely stunning at sunset.

- Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch
- Activities included: Visit of Bangkok's major sites, Visit of the klongs on the Chao Phraya River and the Thonburi area

Day 12: Bangkok

Today is at leisure to explore the bustling shops and markets of Bangkok, or just enjoy the day relaxing.

- Meals included: Breakfast

Day 13: Departure from Bangkok

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



- Taste - Home hosted lunch with Mekong's specialties in an ancient house
- Unique - River cruising along the Mekong Delta on a traditional wooden boat
- Unique - Boat cruise to the floating markets of Cai Rang
- Unique - Sunrise over Angkor Wat temples
- Spiritual - Monk Blessing ceremony

Accommodation



12 nights in 3-4 star hotels

Transport



Airport transfer on arrival and departure
Air-conditioned vehicle (except Tuk Tuk)

Meals



Daily breakfast
4 local lunches

Touring



English speaking tour guide
All entrance fees
All tipping

Contact your local travel agent