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TRIP NOTES



Indochina Encounter + Good Morning Vietnam! (QBV 2017)



TRIPDURATION
20
DAYS



Tour Style: Simply
Tour Pace: Moderate

Tour Type: Small Groups
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Trip Code: QBV

Trip Highlights - Indochina Encounter + Good Morning Vietnam!

- ✓ Bangkok - Explore the 'klongs', the network of waterways skirting the city's modern skyscrapers (optional)
- ✓ Siem Reap - Gateway to the iconic and awe-inspiring Khmer temple complex of Angkor
- ✓ Battambang - Dusty streets lined with Colonial buildings and Khmer temples
- ✓ Phnom Penh - Learn about the dark history of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia's buzzing capital (optional)
- ✓ Ho Chi Minh City - Learn about the resourcefulness of the Viet Cong at the Cu Chi Tunnels (optional)

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 5 nights Standard Hotel
11 nights Simple Hotel
3 nights Simple Overnight Train

Included Meals: 12 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 0 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Bangkok
End Point: Trip ends: Hanoi
Transport: Train, Boat, Public Bus, Taxi

Countries: Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam

Indochina Encounter + Good Morning Vietnam!

This overland adventure takes us from Bangkok over the border into Cambodia, where we have the chance to explore the ancient temples of Angkor as well as delve into the vibrant capital of Phnom Penh. Our journey continues to Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta, before we venture north along the Ho Chi Minh trail via the beaches of Nha Trang and ancient towns of Hoi An and Hue. We end in the north in Hanoi and the iconic Halong Bay.

Why Book this trip

Visiting Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam this adventurous journey is perfect for travellers who want the convenience of having their travel arrangements planned for them but the flexibility to tailor their exploration in each destination as they wish. You travel mainly by public transport, so some early starts and long journeys can be expected, however, you are rewarded with plenty of free time to discover the unforgettable highlights in each destination.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Simply

If your idea of adventure travel is to experience everyday local life in a country then try one of our Simply Explore tours. These grassroots adventures are flexible, affordable and fun

Tour Pace: Moderate

These moderately paced tours provide some busy days with plenty of experiences to enjoy, as well as time to relax along the way.

Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours. Handpicked and expertly trained, they are native to the region and bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Their passionate approach will make your tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others. Your tour leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey, enabling you to relax and enjoy the experience fully.

Our multi-country tours often have more than one tour leader, which helps us to really get under the skin of each unique destination. As such, the QBV tour has a different tour leader for Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

DAY 1 Join tour in Bangkok

Arrive Bangkok and check-in at the hotel. If your flight time allows you may choose to take an optional cruise along the city's Klongs (canals) in a traditional longtail



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boat. This is the ideal way to explore Bangkok's network of meandering waterways that branch off from the main channel of the Chao Phraya River. The excursion will also include visits to the Royal Barge Museum and the iconic Wat Arun, the Temple of the Dawn, which was built to represent the towering slopes of Mount Meru, the home to the gods of Khmer mythology.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Journey overland to Siem Reap

This morning we make an early start with a train ride before boarding a scheduled bus service to the Cambodian city of Siem Reap. Operated as a through service, travellers will nevertheless change vehicles once in Cambodia. Your Thai leader will accompany you to the border and you will then meet your Cambodian Tour leader to continue your journey by local bus to Siem Reap.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**

Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 In Siem Reap; free time to discover the temples of Angkor

Today is left free to explore the incredible jungle temple complex of the Angkor period, whose history covers some 600 years, from the 9th through to the 15th centuries. No activities or excursions have been included in Siem Reap and your time here is very much your own, although your tour leader will be more than happy to help organise any visits that you wish. Two of the best ways to explore are by bicycle or striking a deal with one of the many tuk tuks that ply their trade here. Obvious choices are the magnificent complex of Angkor Wat, without doubt one of the most incredible of the jungle sites, the fortified city of Angkor Thom (home to the Bayon, with its mysterious giant faces) and the wonderfully overgrown and atmospheric Ta Prohm, set amidst tangled tree roots and lush jungle and famous as the setting for some of the Lara Croft film Tomb Raider. Other possibilities include taking to the waters of the Roluos River, to visit the floating villages and local wat at Kompong Phluk and explore the flooded forest and great lake of Tonle Sap (the largest freshwater lake in SE Asia, covering nearly a seventh of Cambodia's entire landmass). Those wishing to gain a little understanding of Cambodia's more recent past might like to seek out the fascinating Landmine Museum just to the south of Banteay Srei Temple. Set up in 1997 by a former Khmer Rouge soldier, the museum offers support for countless victims of landmines, as well as providing visitors with a poignant reminder of one of the country's most violent and tragic periods.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**

Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 4 In Siem Reap; free time to explore Angkor further

Today is left free to explore the incredible jungle temple complex of Angkor.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**

Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 5 Public Bus past rural villages to Battambang

Today we travel by public bus from Siem Reap onto Battambang, a journey of approximately 3 hours. Battambang lies along a route that has seen countless Thai and the Khmer Rouge soldiers wind their way north and south, either in the pursuit of conquest, or in the case of the Khmer Rouge to escape the invading Vietnamese in 1979. The town is, surprisingly, Cambodia's second largest, a factor that has done little to detract from its laid-back feel, enhanced by a wealth of colonial villas and leafy streets. Depending upon our arrival time there may be an opportunity to explore this afternoon, taking in its traditional temples and French-colonial architecture.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 6 Drive to Phnom Penh; orientation walk in the city

A public bus takes us on to the Cambodian capital this morning, the 6-hour journey getting us to the city in time for an afternoon's orientation tour. Phnom Penh sits at the confluence of the Sap, Mekong and Bassac Rivers, a charming testament to the country's ancient and colonial past, with tree lined boulevards and colonial villas dotted amongst the reminders of its turbulent history. The Cambodian capital since the mid 15th century, Phnom Penh's origins lie in the legend of 4 statues of Buddha, washed on the shores of the Mekong and discovered by a woman named Penh, which were later housed in the 14th century Wat Phnom, located on a small

hill at the northern end of the city. On arrival there should be time to freshen up, after which you may join your tour leader on a short walking tour of the city.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 7 In Phnom Penh; free time to visit the Killing Fields

Today has been left free for you to continue exploring this fascinating city at your own pace. Options include the National Museum, with its impressive collection of Angkor statues and the impressive French built Royal Palace, whose spectacular pagoda style structure is without doubt one of Phnom Penh's most impressive sights. A replica of King Norodom's old wooden palace, the building presents an ostentatious display of elaborate Khmer architecture, with golden nagas, orange, sapphire and green tiles and scenes from the Ramayana painted on the ceiling. The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and the 'Killing Fields' of Choeung Ek provide gruesome testaments to life under the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot, the skull filled glass tower a vivid memorial to the 17,000 men, women and children who were murdered there between 1975-1978. You should be aware that by their very nature Tuol Sleng and the 'Killing Fields' can be a distressing experience for some people. You might like to take a trip along the Mekong, or perhaps visit some of the capital's numerous markets, such as the old Russian Market of Psar Toul Tom Pong, renowned for its textiles, jewellery and antiques. Of course you may just prefer to wander Phnom Penh's vibrant streets, soaking up the atmosphere and perhaps enjoying a drink in one of the city's old colonial riverfront bars.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 8 Drive to Ho Chi Minh City; orientation walk of Old Saigon

Transferring to the bus station this morning, we catch the non-stop public bus to Ho Chi Minh City, an unescorted journey of some 6.5 hours that gets into the city in time to meet up with our Vietnamese tour leader. We cross the border at Bouret (Cambodia) and Moc Bai (Vietnam). Lying to the north of the Mekong Delta, on the banks of the Saigon River and still unofficially referred to as 'Saigon', the city today is the largest in Vietnam, an eclectic mix of the traditional and the new, where pagodas and markets compete alongside the trappings of Vietnam's newly discovered entrepreneurial spirit. Depending upon our arrival time we plan to make a short orientation tour on foot around the city, taking in some of its more obvious highlights, including the prominent Hotel de Ville, whose ornate grandeur is today the home of the city's People's Committee, as well as the Romanesque Notre Dame Cathedral and the impressive French style edifice that is the GPO building (should our arrival time render this option impossible, then we will do the tour tomorrow morning instead).

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 9 In Ho Chi Minh City; free time to visit Cu Chi Tunnels or Mekong Delta

Today is free for you to choose from a number of options. You may wish to visit the remarkable Reunification Palace and the emotive War Remnants Museum, which contains a fascinating, and at times chilling reminder of the cost of what the Vietnamese refer to as the American War. Or perhaps browse the bustling stalls of the Binh Tay Market, the largest wholesale market in southern Vietnam and a fabulous place to stroll and meet the locals.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 10 Free day; overnight train to Nha Trang

This morning you'll meet with the rest of the tour passengers for our Good Morning Vietnam Tour and continue the trip with them. Today sees an opportunity to journey down into the Mekong Delta and explore the fertile hinterlands that lie sandwiched between the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand. Heading down towards the town of My Tho takes you into a region where the orchids, lychees and coconut palms that are grown in the delta are bartered at breakneck speed and taking to the waters you have a chance to enjoy the timeless tableau of river life that has continued pretty much unchanged for generations, visiting local villages and floating along the narrow tree-lined canals of the Mekong. There will be an opportunity to take lunch on one of the islands, before returning to My Tho by boat to make the return journey back to Ho Chi Minh City. This evening the group transfers to the city's train station by taxi, in order to catch the overnight train to Nha Trang.

Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

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DAY 11 Arrive Nha Trang; free time

Early this morning we arrive in Nha Trang and transfer to the hotel. Given the early hour of our arrival, dayrooms are provided to freshen up prior to our own rooms becoming available. The day has been left free to explore Nha Trang at your own leisure and the town's picturesque location, amidst a golden landscape of white beaches and blue waters, makes it an ideal spot to enjoy some quality beach time. Other options include a relaxing mud bath, or perhaps a boat trip out to the islands that lie offshore with the chance for snorkelling. Those looking for something a little more active might like to consider a trip by bicycle to explore the nearby Cham Towers and the old part of the town. Probably Nha Trang's most iconic attraction, the Po Nagar Cham Towers span a period of some 500 years and present a haunting reminder of the long forgotten kingdom that once ruled these lands through their divine kings. Only 4 of the original 10 towers remain (many were destroyed during the intense fighting of the Vietnam War), but nonetheless they conjure up an impressive feeling of power and mystery and, along with the remnants of Nha Trang's past and the captivating sights of its fishing villages present an enthralling introduction to the town.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 12 Full day in Nha Trang; overnight train to Danang

Another full day in Nha Trang offers the chance to continue with some personal sightseeing, or perhaps enjoy a little more of the beach, before we transfer to the railway station for an overnight train to Danang.

Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 13 Arrive Danang. Drive to Hoi An via China Beach

On arrival in Danang we will continue our journey by charter bus to Hoi An. On our way we pass the popular beach resort of My Khe, better known as China Beach, an area that during the Vietnam War was popular with the American GIs on RnR. Given the early hour of our arrival at the hotel we might not be able to check-in so we plan to store our bags, have breakfast (not included) then embark on a walking tour of Hoi An. First colonized by the Portuguese in the 16th century, by the 17th and 18th centuries Hoi An had become one of the busiest international trading posts in southeast Asia and, even today, it still retains the engaging charm of a medieval port, with many of its old buildings superbly preserved. Highlights include the Phuc Kien Assembly Hall, a pagoda dedicated to the worship of Buddha originally built by the Vietnamese people in the 16th century and the 400 year old Japanese covered bridge. We end at the colourful riverside market, a perfect setting for exploring, the rest of the day is free to enjoy as you wish.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 14 Free in Hoi An

Today is free to wander through the historic heart of this World Heritage Site at your leisure. An early morning visit to the fish market presents a riot of noise and colour that is perfect for some great photo opportunities and some choice local interaction. You might also like to pay a visit to the Japanese Bridge, Hoi An's emblematic symbol, believed to have been constructed to quell the violent rumblings of a restless monster, or perhaps explore the traditional wooden houses and Chinese temples that line the streets. There are numerous tailors shops in Hoi An providing an incredibly cheap and quick service and almost all visitors have at least one item made before they depart. Hoi An is also a great place to hire a bicycle as the roads are relatively quiet. There's a good beach just a few kilometres from the town or alternatively why not set out to explore nearby villages. Cooking classes are yet another option available in this popular travellers hangout.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 15 Public bus to Hue via Hai Van Pass

This morning sees us heading along the coastal road towards the historic setting of Hué, crossing part of the Truong Son Mountains and travelling via the Hai Van (Sea Cloud) Pass. This stunningly scenic region once marked the boundary between Vietnam and the Champa Kingdom to the south and the journey should get us into the old imperial city around lunchtime, after which the rest of the day is free for personal exploration. Once the capital of Vietnam and an inspiration for poets and artists alike for centuries, Hué is divided by the waters of the Perfume River, which separate the city's 19th century citadel from the suburbs that radiate from the eastern shore and, even today, its easy air of leisurely ambience makes it one of the most engaging cities in the country to explore.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 16 In Hue; overnight train to Hanoi

With the better part of the day to enjoy the city, Hué offers a wealth of options to make the most of your time here. You could pay a visit to the iconic Thien Mu Pagoda, home to the oldest monastery in the city, whose 21m high tower has become something of a symbol for Hué. Dedicated to the Manushi- Buddha, the existing temple was constructed in the middle years of the 19th century, under the auspices of the Emperor Thieu Tri, and within its confines you can find a number of superb Buddhist statues, as well as an enormous cast bell that weighs in at over 2000kg and is reputed to be audible over 10km away. Another alternative is to spend some time exploring the Old Citadel that dominates the left bank of the Perfumed River. 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 to be an exact copy of the Forbidden City in Beijing. During the bloody conflicts of the Vietnam War, Hué was the site of some of the most destructive fighting of the Tet Offensive, most of the Inner City being totally destroyed during the month-long battle in 1968. The vast outer walls and the West Wing remain though and provide an eloquent reminder of the palace's former glory. Farther afield, amongst the forested landscapes of the Perfume Valley, you can find the Royal Tombs of the Nguyen kings, the unique mausoleums of the emperors that provide an ideal destination to explore by bicycle. Later this afternoon we will then head for the railway station to board the overnight train north to Hanoi, Vietnam's vibrant and historic capital.

Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 17 Arrive Hanoi; drive to Halong Bay and explore by junk

Arriving in Hanoi in the early hours of this morning we disembark the train and transfer by road towards the Bay of Tonkin on Vietnam's northeast coast. Our destination is the breathtaking setting of Halong Bay one of Vietnam's, and indeed Southeast Asia's, most spectacular natural attractions, whose staggering beauty has seen it listed as one of the eight natural wonders of the world. A UNESCO World Heritage site, Halong Bay presents a quite extraordinary vista of hundreds of limestone islands (over 1600 at 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 tell 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 junk 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. The plan for today is to sail through this stunning seascape, stopping off to swim and visit some of the limestone caverns that pepper the landscape. Later this evening we disembark from our boat and transfer to our hotel in the Bay.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Lunch

DAY 18 Return to Hanoi; orientation walk of Old City

Returning back to Hanoi your tour leader will then take those that wish on a short orientation tour of the city, wandering the streets of the city's Old Quarter, whose narrow streets are named after the various crafts and specialities of the city's artisans: Paper Street, Silk Street, Basket Street etc. This practice dates back to the 13th century, when the city's original 36 guilds established themselves here, adopting a street each to differentiate them from their neighbours. The maze of alleys and streets present a fascinating venue to explore on foot and the area is known for its interesting 'tube' houses, where the narrow frontages give way to long rooms that stretch back from streets, whose pavements are littered with food sellers tempting passers by with all manner of noodles, snacks and stir-fried delights from shoulder panniers. Later today there may be a chance to witness a remarkable performance of traditional water puppetry, a practice that dates back to the 15th century and is deeply ingrained into the cultural lives of the peoples of the Red River Delta. 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.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 19 In Hanoi; free time

Architecturally styled like a French provincial town, with tree-lined boulevards and substantial low-built houses, Hanoi is a wonderfully nostalgic city to enjoy and amongst its more interesting sights are the charming One-Pillar Pagoda, the Temple of Literature and the Presidential Palace. Ho Chi Minh was a spartan-living and scholarly man, who chose not to live in the Presidential Palace itself, but instead preferred a simple teak 2-storied stilt-house specially built for him in the grounds. You can visit his museum and this austere mausoleum, said to resemble that of Lenin in Moscow, or perhaps taking another walk through the engaging streets of its Old Quarter. The city's French Quarter is a great place to explore by bicycle, its grandiose colonial architecture offering up a rich contrast to the

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more frenetic pace of the old city, whilst those looking to discover something more of the colonial wars might like to pay a visit to the Museum of Vietnamese Revolution or the Military History Museum.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available



Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY **20** Tour ends Hanoi

Tour ends after breakfast. If you have time you may wish to take another wander through the fascinating Old Quarter or stroll along the shore of Hoan Kiem Lake.



Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Notes

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.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 12 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 0 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

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.

Thailand

Lunch £: 3.00 - 5.00

Dinner £: 4.00 - 8.00

Cambodia

Lunch £: 6.00

Dinner £: 10.00 - 12.00

Vietnam

Lunch £: 5.00 - 7.00

Dinner £: 9.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Thailand

Bottle of Beer £: 1.50

Water £: 0.50

Cambodia

Bottle of Beer £: 1.30

Water £: 0.60

Vietnam

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00 - 4.00

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Water £: 0.50

Other Sightseeing & 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.

Optional Excursions

Bangkok - Long tailed klong boat trip including Royal Barge museum and Wat Arun US\$ 20; Grand Palace (entrance fee only) US\$17; Wat Po (entrance fee only) US\$3.50

Siem Reap - One day Angkor Temples pass US\$ 20; Bicycle/rickshaw hire approximately US\$ 15-20 per day; Land Mines Museum US\$ 5; Banteay Srei and Banteay Sunrise visit to Angkor US\$ 48; Half day cruise on Tonle Sap Lake US\$ 30; Blessing ceremony at local monastery US\$33

Phnom Penh - Royal Palace US\$ 7; National Museum US\$ 3; Visit to Tuol Sleng & the Killing Fields US\$ 15; Private blessing US\$34; Private cooking class US\$36; Koh Dach Island US\$78

Ho Chi Minh City - Half day Cu Chi tunnels (includes transport) US\$ 30; Half day city tour US\$18; Cu Chi and half day city tour US\$ 43; Mekong Delta day trip to Ben Tre US\$ 55; Reunification Palace US\$ 2

Nha Trang - Half day boat trip US\$ 40; full day city tour and boat trip US\$52; Bike hire approx. US\$ 5; Mud Baths from US\$ 16

Hoi An - Marble Mountain entrance fees US\$ 3; Bicycle hire US\$ 5; Entrance to Hoi An Old Town US\$ 7; Half day cooking class US\$ 52; Half day walking tour US\$24; Full day walking tour and boat trip US\$35; Martial arts show US\$70

Hue - Entrance fees for Royal Tombs US\$ 5; Citadel visit US\$ 6; Full day Perfume River cruise, Imperial Citadel, Dong Ba market and Emperor's tombs US\$ 38; Half day Perfume River cruise, Imperial Citadel and Dong Ba Market US\$ 18; Half day Emperors tombs US\$ 22; Traditional kite making US\$30

Hanoi - Water Puppets show from US\$ 6; Cyclo tour of Old Quarter US\$ 6; Ho Chi Minh's Stilt House US\$ 1.50; Museums US\$ 1.50; Half day Hanoi city tour US\$ 18; Full day Hanoi city tour US\$43; Half day cooking class US\$74

The prices stated are based on a minimum of 5-6 participants. 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. In Vietnam 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.

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - 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\$60 for tips.

Foreign Exchange

Thailand

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.

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.

Cambodia

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.

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.



Vietnam

ATM Availability: There are ATMs virtually everywhere in Vietnam and in Cambodia, though we also recommend bringing cash.

Credit Card Acceptance: Some shops in Hanoi, and Hoi An. The occasional restaurant.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers cheques can usually be changed in the towns, but only during bank opening hours.

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.

Joining your Trip

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 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 on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

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, 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 please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

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.

Important Information

Travel 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. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

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Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

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Travel Aware

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 follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

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.

Visa Information

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.

Cambodia: A single visa is required by UK, New Zealand, Australian, US & Canadian citizens and can be obtained on arrival. The current cost is 30USD, 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. Please note: There are rogues operating at the entry border to Cambodia border who encourage people to pay double the cost to get visas faster. Explore does not condone such illegal methods and hence we highly recommend for you to obtain a visa in your home country prior to travel.

Vietnam: Until 30th June 2018 '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.

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 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.

Vaccinations & Protection

Thailand

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. 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 <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Cambodia

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. 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 <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Vietnam

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. 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 <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Trip

Climate

Thailand

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>.

Cambodia

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.

Vietnam

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.

Clothing

Pack essentially for hot weather. Bear in mind that the region is tropical (humid) and that days can be very hot. Lightweight rainwear or an umbrella is advisable at any time of the year, but especially between May and October. Casual clothes are the most practical (something with long sleeves, and long trousers for evenings). Bear in mind that 'short' shorts are generally unacceptable and a sunhat is essential. Shorts, vests, revealing or casual clothes and open backed sandals are not permitted in the Grand Palace in Bangkok.

Equipment

A torch, water bottle, insect repellent and high factor suncream are all essential, as are good quality sunglasses and a lip salve with sun protection. Don't forget your swim wear!

Footwear

Comfortable shoes and sandals/trainers for relaxing.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece and a daypack. Remember - you are expected to carry your own luggage and as we use local buses throughout this tour you might have to carry your baggage quite a distance in bus stations. Please also be aware that temperatures may be tropical.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Thailand

Population: 67,000,000

Size of Country: 514,000 sq km

Major Language: Thai

Religion: Buddhism

Time Difference to GMT: +7

Cambodia

Population: 14,805,358

Size of Country: 181,035 sq km

Major Language: Khmer

Religion: Buddhism

Time Difference to GMT: +7

Vietnam

Population: 90,549,390

Size of Country: 331,698 sq km

Major Language: Vietnamese

Religion: Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism

Time Difference to GMT: +7

Electric Supply & Plugs

Thailand

2 Pin Round

Cambodia

2 Pin Round

Vietnam

2 Pin Round



Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to - and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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