EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Mekong Delta and Angkor (CVE 2015)

CYCLING

TOURDURAT
13
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Type: Small Groups
Cycling Grade: Easy
tour Code: CVE

Tour Highlights - Mekong Delta and Angkor

- ✓ Saigon - Visit the infamous Cu Chi Tunnels by bike and explore bustling Saigon on foot
- ✓ Cycle the Mekong Delta - Boats and bikes along the mighty Mekong
- ✓ Phnom Penh - Explore Cambodia's enigmatic capital. Visit the emotive Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and the Killing Fields of Choeung Ek
- ✓ Kompong Thom - 100's of pre-Angkorian temples at Sambor Prei Kuk
- ✓ Siem Reap - The fabulous Angkor Temples. See Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom and view the stunning bas-reliefs of the Bayon and Banteay Srei

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	11 nights Standard Hotel 1 night Basic Homestay
Included Meals:	12 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 1 dinner
Start Point:	Join tour: Ho Chi Minh City
End Point:	Tour ends: Siem Reap
Included Bike:	18 gear Merida hybrid bikes with front suspension
Transport:	Bus, Boat, Bicycle
Countries:	Vietnam, Cambodia

Mekong Delta and Angkor

Join us on this classic cycle journey through the cities and rural landscapes of Vietnam and Cambodia. We travel past paddy fields and fruit orchards to remote villages where we experience the warm hospitality of local families. We cycle into the jungle to explore the ancient temple city Angkor and swap our bicycles for traditional boats to cruise the mighty Mekong River.

Why Book this tour

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

Cycling Information

On this tour we cycle 294 km over ten days (an average of 29 km per day). Our route mainly follows quiet and flat back-roads and paths with about 70% on tarmac and 30% on gravel and dirt tracks. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We have graded the route as easy.

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.

Tour Comfort: 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: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Cycling Grade: Easy

Suitable for cyclists who enjoy easy and relatively short rides on flat or gently undulating terrain. Ideal if you simply want to explore a region by bike at a relaxed pace.

Your tour 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

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Ho Chi Minh City; afternoon orientation walk

Arrive Ho Chi Minh City and check-in to our hotel. In the afternoon we'll take a short orientation walk in the city. Still unofficially referred to as 'Saigon', the city 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. Our walking tour takes in some of the central sights of the city, including the National Assembly, Hotel de Ville, Notre Dame Cathedral and the impressive French style edifice that is the GPO building. Later there will be time for you to explore at your leisure, perhaps to visit the Presidential Palace, or the War Crimes Museum, or even just take a gentle walk around this charming city.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Visit the Cu Chi tunnels, cycling around the countryside

After a chance to get properly aquainted with our two wheeled transport for the coming journey, we drive out of the city this morning to Trang Bang where we start our days cycling to the the infamous Cu Chi Tunnels at Ben Duoc. Originally started during the French occupation of the country, the tunnels went on to achieve notoriety during the Vietnam War, when they formed an amazing underground command base for 10,000 Viet Cong troops and played a major part of the Tet Offensive. After visiting the tunnels we continue our ride, through the villages and countryside that surrounds this unique place. This area was the centre of intense fighting during the war, much of it falling prey to the incessant carpet bombing, napalm and defoliants utilised by the Americans in an attempt to dislodge the Viet Cong from their underground shelters. There is little evidence of any of that now and the landscape has returned to something of its pre war beauty. Be warned, the tunnels are low and narrow and can be claustrophobic, so anyone wishing to opt out may do so. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 25 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Bike to the Mekong Delta then boat trip to islands

In order to avoid the city traffic we drive to Tan An this morning, from where we cycle on towards My Tho, following a network of quiet roads and dirt tracks. Originally founded in the 17th Century by Chinese immigrants, My Tho is the launching site for our boat trip out onto the mighty Mekong. Cruising to Qui Island we stop for lunch, we then get back on our boat and cruise to the mainland where we have the opportunity for a post lunch walk. We continue by bike, through the flat, lush landscape of the Delta to the Phu Tuc Commune at Ben Tre, where we get the opportunity of meeting local families and enjoying a delicious dinner. The rich soil of the Mekong provides an abundant harvest, including coconut, fruits, rice and, of course fish. Doubtless we will enjoy some of this bounty tonight, before taking in a performance of traditional rural music at our homestay. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 43 kilometres

Overnight: **Basic Homestay**

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4 Cycle and drive via Vinh Long to Can Tho

Leaving Phu Tuc after breakfast we cycle, crossing the river and travelling along quiet backroads via the old church at Cai Mon. After lunch we continue by bike through this stunningly beautiful and incredibly fertile region to its largest city, Can Tho. Can Tho province is famous for its abundant rice fields and floating markets, which seem to take place at the intersections of most rivers and canals. Rice is an important cash crop for Vietnam and something like 70% of the population is involved in its production. Please note, should anyone wish to complete this 22km section of the journey by means of the support vehicle, then that is an option. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 60 kilometres of which the last 22 kilometers are optional

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5 Cruise the floating markets and explore villages

This morning we take to our bikes again, to meander our way down narrow lanes, following the river, to experience a little more of rural Vietnam. One of the most colourful attractions of the Mekong are the floating markets and this afternoon we will visit Cai Rang, the biggest in the Mekong Delta. We travel by sampan and spend some time paddling through the market, soaking up the atmosphere and enjoying the friendly attentions of the locals, before continuing along the river. Cruising through narrow creeks is by far the best way to see the delta, passing villages of stilted houses, abundant rice fields and a variety of cottage industries as we go gives us the opportunity to examine this timeless landscape at a relaxed pace, viewing river life in all its traditional and colourful glory. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 16 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Drive and cycle to Chau Doc

This morning we drive northeast, towards Chau Doc on the Cambodian border. Once past Long Xuyen we turn onto quieter back roads and begin cycling along a trail that loops around to Chau Doc. With a rich ethnic mix of Chinese, Cham and Khmer communities, Chau Doc is an interesting city, dotted with temples, churches and mosques. On arrival anyone may like to pay an optional visit to Sam Mountain, just a few kilometres south-west of the city. Riddled with temples and pagodas Sam Mountain has a strong Chinese influence and the views from the top, across into neighbouring Cambodia, are spectacular on a clear day. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 30 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Speedboat to Phnom Penh; afternoon city tour

This morning we head to Phnom Penh by speedboat, crossing the border at Vinh Xuong (Vietnam) and Kaam Samnor (Cambodia) before continuing our journey along the Mekong, as we head for the Cambodian capital. On arrival we transfer to our hotel and have some time to relax before an afternoon’s city tour. Phnom Penh is a pleasant and surprisingly quiet city with many French colonial buildings and plenty to see. Our tour includes the National Museum of Arts with its impressive collection of Angkor sculptures, the Royal Palace where we visit the Silver Pagoda, named because of the 5000 silver tiles that cover its floor and Wat Phnom where we can pray for good luck. According to legend the original pagoda was built on this site in the 14th Century, to house 4 statues of Buddha that had been washed up on the shores of the Mekong. The legend goes on to say that the statues were then found by a woman named Penh, from which the city is meant to have gotten its name.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 Morning cycle; visit Tuol Sleng and the 'Killing Fields'

This morning, after a short drive upriver we catch a Mekong ferry to peaceful Koh Dach Island which we explore by bike. Our route takes us through weaving villages and stilted houses. This charming, secluded and sleepy island is small at just 30 square kilometres in size and offers a peaceful contrast to the bustle of Phnom Penh. We later return to the capital in time for lunch. Our afternoon excursion is a stark reminder of the horrors endured by the Cambodian people under the tyranny of Pol Pot. The Tuol Sleng genocide museum and the 'Killing Fields' of Choeung Ek are a gruesome testament to life under the Khmer Rouge and you should be aware that many people find their visit quite distressing. Tuol Sleng genocide museum was once a high school which became the Khmer Rouge's main torture and interrogation centre, detaining and processing the unfortunate souls who were to end their days in the 'Killing Fields' of Choeung Ek. During the years 1975 to 1978 something in the region of 17,000 men, women and children were murdered here and the memorial stupa is a huge glass tower filled with human skulls - a sombre reminder of the scale of Pol Pot's atrocities. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 20 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 9 Cycle along Mekong River then drive to Kompong Thom

Today is a long travelling day, by both bicycle and bus. We leave Phnom Penh this morning, following the highway to Prae Toteung, before taking to the saddle again to follow the river to Kompong Cham (depending upon seasonal conditions we may have to take the highway). Cambodia's third largest city, Kompong Cham was an important French trading outpost and the colonial influence is still very much in evidence. Stopping first to visit Wat Nokor, an 11th century Mahayana Buddhist shrine, interesting for the fact that it houses a modern working wat inside the Khmer temple ruins, we then continue by bus again to Kompong Thom, close to the impressive collection of pre-Ankorian temples at Sambor Prei Kuk. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 40 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10 Early cycle to Sambor Prei Kuk temple; drive to Siem Reap

Sambor Prei Kuk was the capital during the Chenla period of the early 7th Century. Today the forests of the area are dotted with more than 100 temples, some of the oldest in the country. We have the opportunity this morning to make an early morning visit to some of them, before we continue along the road to Siem Reap. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 28 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11 Drive to Banteay Srei, then cycle to Siem Reap

The Angkor period covers some 600 years, from the 9th through to the 15th Centuries, although many of its more famous temples date from the Classical Age, from the 11th to 13th Centuries. This morning we cycle to Banteay Srei, with its stunningly preserved bas reliefs, before driving south, to visit the temples at Pre Rup and Ta Phrom, a wonderfully atmospheric collection of towers and courtyards set amidst tangled tree roots and lush jungle. From here we travel along a tarmac road to the awesome spectacle that is Angkor Wat, the best known and most breathtaking of all the sights and a highlight of any visit to Angkor. Originally built as a funerary temple for Suryavarman II, in honour of Vishnu, the temple is unique as it faces west - symbolically the direction of death. It is an immensely grand and imposing structure, its most stunning features, the extensive and intricately carved bas reliefs that stretch throughout the galleries and inner temples. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 25 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 12 Pedal from Siem Reap to Angkor temples

We continue our exploration today with a visit to the temples of King Jayavarman VII, reputedly Angkor's greatest king. The fortified city of Angkor Thom, built at the end of the 12th Century, is enclosed by a square wall 8 metres high with five 20 metre high monumental gates decorated with stone elephant trunks. Originally the moat surrounding the city was said to be filled with crocodiles and the huge statues of 54 different gods protected each gate. The city itself contains another of Angkor's true gems - the Bayon. Not nearly as impressive as Angkor Wat from a distance, the Bayon is nevertheless incredible for its maze of corridors, gothic style towers and magical central temples, with 1200 metres of the finest bas reliefs depicting scenes of every day life in 12th Century Cambodia. We also visit the temple of Preah Khan (sacred sword), a major centre of worship during the reign of Jayavarman VII, with 18 major festivals taking place each year. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 20 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 13 Tour ends Siem Reap

Our tour ends today in Siem Reap.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

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.
Basic - Our basic accommodation can offer the most rewarding and memorable places to stay. These are usually communal or camping style with shared facilities. Running hot and cold water may be unreliable and overall comfort levels are basic.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 12 breakfasts, 2 lunches,1 dinner included in the price of this tour. 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 Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour 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.

Vietnam

Lunch £: 4.00

Dinner £: 9.00

Cambodia

Lunch £: 6.00

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.

Vietnam

Bottle of Beer £: 1.50

Water £: 0.50

Cambodia

Bottle of Beer £: 1.30

Water £: 0.60

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

Saigon - Water Puppet Show from US$6
Siem Reap - Scenic helicopter flight over Agkor temples from US$135-260; Tonle Sap optional from US$16.

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

Local Staff: Although entirely voluntary, tipping is recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff look to members of the group for personal recogntion of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow approx US$45 for gratities for local staff.

Foreign Exchange

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.

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.

Joining your Tour

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.

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.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

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 joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited. who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

Visa Information

Vietnam: Visas are required by UK, New Zealand, Australian, US & Canadian citizens and must be obtained prior to departure. Visas can be obtained through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK; Visaswift, at http://www.visaswift.com/explore.aspx. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

Cambodia: A single entry visa is required by UK, New Zealand, Australian, USA & Canadian citizens and can be obtained upon arrival at Kaam Samnor. The current cost is 30USD, a passport sized photograph for immigration will also be required.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

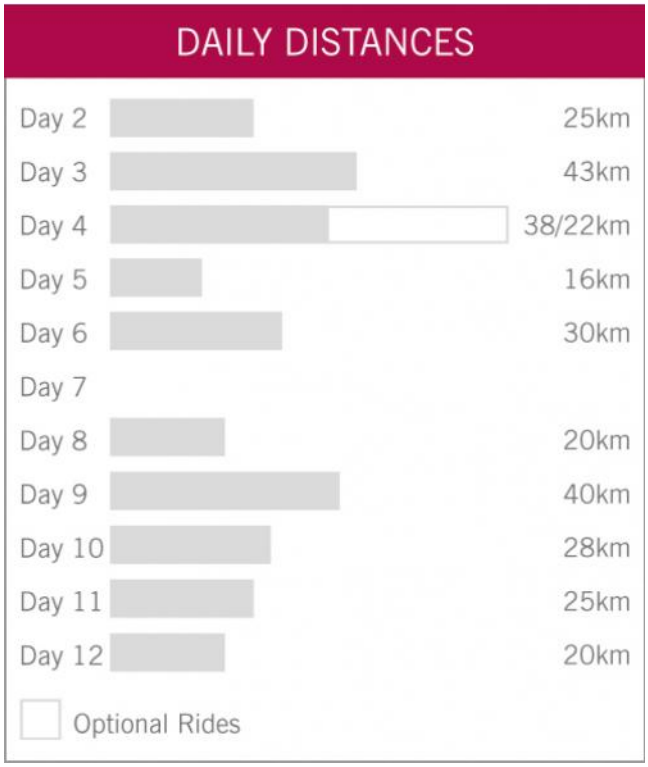
Vietnam

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Although not compulsory travellers may 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.

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.

Preparing for your Tour



Bike Details

Your included bike is an 18 gear Merida hybrid and will be the correct frame size for your height. A handlebar bag or pannier and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

Climate

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.

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.

Clothing

Bear in mind that the area is tropical with high humidity. Lightweight clothing are needed all year round. Other additions that you may find useful are swimming costumes, cycle gloves, cycling shorts/trousers and quick drying cycle tops. Please note shorts are not permitted in certain temples.

Equipment

Take a cycle helmet, cycle water bottle, torch, sunglasses, sunhat, sunscreen, insect repellent. You may wish to bring a gel seat cover for your saddle and ear plugs may come in handy in general. Please consider carrying all or some of your cycling equipment, e.g. helmet, as part of your hand luggage.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes/sandals for sightseeing, trainers for cycling.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysac. Total allowance 44lbs/20kgs.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

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

Cambodia

Population: 14.805,358

Size of Country: 181,035 sq km

Major Language: Khmer

Religion: Buddhism

Time Difference to GMT: +7

Electric Supply & Plugs

Vietnam

2 Pin Round

Cambodia

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 & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one 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, elephant, 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.

Our commitment to the environment

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 and traditional, 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), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

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

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety andÂ security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. ForÂ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link atÂ http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

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 LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â 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 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour 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: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

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