EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Mekong Delta and Angkor (CVE 2016)

CYCLING

TRIPDURATI
14
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Accommodation Grade: Standard

Tour Type: Small Groups
Cycling Grade: Easy

Trip Code: CVE

Trip 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

Trip Essentials

Accommodation:	11 nights Standard Hotel 1 night Simple Homestay
Included Meals:	12 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 1 dinner
Start Point:	Join trip: Ho Chi Minh City
End Point:	Trip ends: Siem Reap
Included Bike:	18 gear Giant or Merida mountain 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 trip

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). The terrain is flat and we cycle on a mixture of tarmac roads (70%) and tracks (30%). We mainly follow quiet backroads, however sometimes you have to travel on busier roads when leaving the larger towns and Vietnam is generally busier than Cambodia. 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.

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: 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 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

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 (Saigon) and check-in to our hotel. In the afternoon we will take a short orientation walk in the city. Still unofficially referred to as 'Saigon', the city is the largest in Vietnam with a population of around 8 million. You will find 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. In the evening you have the option to see a water puppet show.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

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

This morning after a chance to get properly acquainted with our two wheeled transport for the coming journey, we drive out of the city to Trang Bang (2 hrs) where we start our days cycling to the infamous Cu Chi Tunnels at Ben Duoc. En-route we will travel through Vietnamese countryside passing local farms and paddy fields. We may see people working in the fields or perhaps driving cattle along the road. We finish cycling at Cu Chi. 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. 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, while only short distances, 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 33 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 Saigon city traffic we drive to Tan An this morning (2 hrs), from where we cycle towards My Tho, following a network of quiet roads and narrow riverside dirt tracks. Originally founded in the 17th Century by Chinese immigrants, My Tho is the launching site for our private boat trip out onto the mighty Mekong river. Taking our bikes with us on the boat we cruise to Qui Island where we stop for a lunch of local produce, before returning to our boat and cruising to the other side of the river. We transfer to small sampans to explore up a tributary creek through the mangroves, before visiting a local community centre. Here we should be able to try honey tea and local fruits whilst listening to traditional rural singing and music. We should also have the chance to see local coconut candy production and try out the finished sweets. We then continue by bike through the flat, lush landscape of the Mekong Delta to our rural Homestay at Ben Tre. The rich soil of the Mekong provides an abundant harvest, including coconut, fruits, rice and of course fish. Our homestay is simple but comfortable, with communal sleeping arrangements in a barn with a few large rooms, next to the family home. Camp beds are provided with individual mosquito nets and blankets. There is electric lighting and shower facilities (cool water only) and the owners will provide a home cooked evening meal made with local produce for us to enjoy. A small selection of drinks is also available (pay locally). Please note due to the language barrier there is limited interaction with the homeowners and they do not host the group at dinner. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 43 kilometres (approx. 27 km in the morning and 16 km in the afternoon).

Overnight: **Simple 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 riding 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. We will likely see locals working in the rice paddies, or perhaps have the opportunity to visit a small business such as a fish factory or a market en-route. Please note, should anyone wish to complete this last 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 kilometres 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 morning we will visit Cai Rang, the biggest in the Mekong Delta. We travel by small private ferry up river to the market and spend some time exploring the floating stalls, soaking up the atmosphere and enjoying the friendly attentions of the locals, before continuing along the river. Travelling by boat 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. After the boat trip we will enjoy a cyle ride along narrow footpaths meandering alongside the river bank behind local homes, catching a glimpse of everyday life, perhaps seeing people catching fish from the river, or mending baskets and repairing tools by the river bank. The Vietnamese are renowned for their ingenuity and can create all sorts of new items from recycled products. 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

Today we drive (1.5 hrs) 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 for an optional excursion to Sam Mountain, just a few kilometres south-west of the city. This involves travelling by rickshaw and then boat up the Mekong to visit a floating fishery and local Cham village, before continuing on foot to Sam Mountain (actually no more than a hill) riddled with stunning colourful temples and pagodas with a strong Chinese influence and great views from the top on a clear day across into neighbouring Cambodia. 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 drive the short way to the Mekong river dock and journey to Phnom Penh by speedboat ferry, crossing the border at Vinh Xuong (Vietnam) and Kaam Samnor (Cambodia) before continuing along the Mekong, as we head for the Cambodian capital. The boat journey will take the whole morning (4 hrs) and allows us a relaxed and fascinating view of riverside life, businesses and countryside as we pass by. On arrival at Phnom Penh we transfer to our hotel and have some time to relax before an afternoon city tour. The capital is a pleasant and fascinating 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 four 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, after whom the city is supposedly named. Phnom means hill in Cambodian.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

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

After a short drive up river we cycle to catch a Mekong ferry across to the peaceful Koh Dach Island which we will explore by bike. Our route takes us through weaving villages and past 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. Known locally as 'Silk Island' the ladies here weave silk scarves on wooden looms in their homes, for sale in the markets on the mainland. We will likely hear the clatter of looms and see children and animals by the side of these quiet roads as we cycle. 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 Kampong Thom

Today is a long travelling day, by both bicycle and bus. We leave Phnom Penh this morning, following the highway for 1 hr 30 mins to an interesting insect market. After visiting this, we contunue by bus (45 mins) to Prae Toteung, where we take to the saddle again to follow the river to Kampong Cham (depending upon seasonal conditions we may have to take the highway). Cambodia's third largest city, Kampong Cham was an important French trading outpost and the colonial influence is still very much in evidence. We finish our cycle ride at Kampong Cham. After lunch we stop 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 (3 hrs with rest break) to Kampong 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

This morning we head off early by bike directly from our hotel to explore the quiet country roads and tracks north of Kampong Thom to Sambor Preikuk. This 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 finish cycling at a classic ancient temple, which we spend time exploring on foot, before continuing along the road in our tour bus (3 hrs) to Siem Reap. This evening is free to explore the great shops and restaurants of this small, bustling town - the entry point to visit the spectacular temples of Angkor. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 28 kilometres.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11 Sunrise visit to Angkor Wat, cycle to Banteay Srei

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. We start early this morning (c. 5 am) to collect our Temple passes and have a sunrise visit 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 with its most stunning features, the extensive and intricately carved bas reliefs that stretch throughout the galleries and inner temples. After exploring the temple we take to our bikes and cycle to Banteay Srei, with its stunningly preserved bas reliefs. We spend time visiting the temple, before having lunch. In the afternoon we drive south to see Ta Phrom, a wonderfully atmospheric collection of towers and courtyards set amidst tangled tree roots and lush jungle. Then drive back to Siem Reap. This evening is free to relax and explore Siem Reap. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 25 kilometres.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 12 Cycle to Angkor Thom

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 take our bus (may be possible to cycle) from our accommodation to a market en-route to Angkor Thom and from here cycle the rest of the way to the temple. After visiting the ruins this morning we drive back to Siem Reap in time for lunch. This afternoon is free time. You may wish to make your own arrangements to take a tuc tuc back to Angkor to spend more time exploring the temples, or have the optional excursion (unguided) to visit Tonle Sap, about 30 mins drive south of Siem Reap. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 15 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.

Simple Homestay - The homestay is basic but comfortable with guest accommodation dorm style in a barn next to the family home. Where possible sexes are separated. You sleep on three foot wide trestle style cot beds. A small pillow, blanket, towel and mosquito net is provided. The rooms also have fans and a couple of electric sockets. There are shared toilet and shower rooms with cool water only (no hot water possible).

Food & Drink

Included meals: 12 breakfasts, 2 lunches,1 dinner 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.

Vietnam

Lunch £: 5.00 - 7.00

Dinner £: 9.00

Cambodia

Lunch £: 6.00

Dinner £: 10.00 - 12.00

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 £: 2.00 - 4.00

Water £: 0.50

Area Text: In modern-day Vietnam one thing in particular stands out. It is, quite simply, the remarkable speed at which the country is developing. High school children in Saigon vie for the trendiest motorbikes, mobile phones and trainers, while children in the northern highlands are happy with a pair of sandals. Youngsters in the Mekong Delta have email accounts yet 10 years ago they didn't have a telephone. And while staff in call centres gossip about the latest fashions, their parents harvest rice by hand. Vietnam has experienced war and bloody revolution in the past 100 years. But the revolution it is now undergoing is peaceful and prosperous. It is these changes that make Vietnam the absorbing and gripping place that it is. Among the country's many highlights is the hill station of Sapa known for its stunning scenery and ethnic minority villages. Getting off the beaten track in the north is recommended for the mountains and visiting other ethnic minority villages. The capital, Hanoi, historical, beautiful and cultured, lies at the heart of a vast range of architectural and scenic treasures such as Cat Ba Island and Halong Bay, famed for their magical coastal scenery. Moving south there is the imperial capital of Hué, whose palaces and mausoleums deserve at least two days. The wonderful coastal edge train journey from Hué to Danang should not be missed, nor should nearby Hoi An, an enchanting 17th-century mercantile town, and a nearby beach right on the Eastern (South China) Sea. Between here and Ho Chi Minh City the seaside town of Nha Trang is the main attraction but the smaller resort of Mui Ne is a more tranquil alternative. Energetic and exciting Ho Chi Minh City, although a city of seven million, is really a small town: not many will stray far from the historical core which, containing as it does all anyone could possibly need in the way of hedonistic pleasures (and with scarcely any intellectual or cultural distractions), is the most popular destination in the country. The Mekong Delta has plenty of attractions, but to see it at its best it is necessary to get into the depths of

the country beyond the main towns. The Central Highlands are slightly off the beaten track. The former hill station of Dalat is a cross between a French and a Home Counties town with old French villas, a central lake and a golf course. Further north, the real highlights once again are the ethnic minority villages around Buon Ma Thuot, Pleiku and Kontum.

Cambodia

Bottle of Beer £: 1.30

Water £: 0.60

Area Text: Cambodia is perhaps the most beguiling of all the countries of South-east Asia. Long associated with the brutal Khmer Rouge, the country has risen above its blood-tinted history to finally take its place as one of the region's pre-eminent tourist destinations. Home to a truly rich mix of travel experiences from ancient monuments and powdery beaches to remote ethnic minority villages and city life, Cambodia never fails to excite the senses. And, for most visitors, Cambodia's tranquil and, dare one say it, timeless way of life is its greatest appeal. Ancient Cambodia produced one of world's greatest civilizations at Angkor. Renowned Angkor Wat is the largest religious monument in the world but is merely one temple lying at the heart of a thousand others. An enormous and elaborately detailed complex, this ancient temple city has remained the heart and soul of Cambodia for almost two millennia. And, despite its popularity with ever-growing throngs of visitors, this is still a historical site that exceeds expectation. Included in the gargantuan complex lie legions of magical temples which attest to the ability of bygone artisans, from the intricate Banteay Srei, with its detailed carvings to the beaming faces of the Bayon. Visitors also flock to jungle-clad Ta Prohm, where tentacle-like foliage entwined around the temple provides an insight into how the whole site must have looked when it was first explored by Western adventurers in the 19th century. The town of Siem Reap has graduated from being Angkor's service centre to become an international hotspot, teeming with modern restaurants and upmarket hotels. Fortunately, the settlement still retains much of its original charm, with old colonial shop fronts, misty lamp-lit streets and a bustling market area. It also offers access to the floating villages on the Tonlé Sap, the largest freshwater lake in South-east Asia. In the south, Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, may not be the most sophisticated metropolis, but it is a charming, bustling town, with a good selection of early 20th-century modernist architecture, a strong sense of history and delightful restaurants and bars. What's more, it offers the sort of cityscape most travellers dream of: a skyline punctuated by royal and religious spires, turrets and pinnacles rather than by office blocks. The Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda are the highlights of the capital and provide a welcome counterpoint to unavoidable reminders of Khmer Rouge atrocities.

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 USD 8.45
Chau Doc - Rickshaw ride and visit to Sam Mountain USD 18
Siem Reap - Scenic helicopter flight over Agkor temples from USD 135-260; Tonle Sap optional from USD 15 dependent on group size.

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 recognised 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 approx USD 45 for gratuities for local staff.

Foreign Exchange

Vietnam

Major Language: Vietnamese

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

Major Language: Khmer

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 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.

EXPLORE!
The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE

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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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

Vietnam: Until 30th June 2016 British passport holders can visit Vietnam for up to 15 days without a visa. A visa will be required if you enter after this date, if you plan to stay for longer than 15 days or if you wish to re-enter within 30 days of your departure. Visas can be obtained through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Visaswift, at http://www.visaswift.com/explore.aspx To visit Vietnam, with or without a visa, your passport should be valid for a minimum of 6 months from the date of entry. 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 around 35USD, 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 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.

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 Trip

Bike Details

Your included bike is an 18 gear Giant or Merida mountain bike and will be the correct frame size for your height. A rear pannier bag 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 a swimming costume, cycle gloves, cycling shorts/trousers and quick drying cycle tops. Please note for the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh and Angkor Wat temple shorts are not permitted. Shoulders and knees must be covered and sarongs are not allowed.

Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. Since facilities are basic in rural Vietnam and Cambodia we recommend bringing antiseptic hand gel and tissue or toilet roll. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling.
Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage: On Tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Vietnam

Population: 90,549,390

Size of Country: 331,698 sq km

Major Language: Vietnamese

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

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

ATM Availability: There are ATMs in most towns and cities.

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, 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, 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 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 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

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 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: 2016 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2016. 2017/18 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2017.

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