

ANCIENT KINGDOMS OF *Vietnam* & *Cambodia*



TRAVEL CLUB
travel without judgement

17 DAYS - 16 NIGHTS

HI THERE CLUBBERS!

We are now entering our fourth season of G&T Travel Club Tours.

After a very successful introduction with tours to both India and Sri Lanka in our first season it was necessary due to popular demand to duplicate the same for our second season. Season three exploded with four fabulous African safaris to both Kenya and Tanzania. And now as many of you patiently await, we are about to launch our South East Asia Tours that will encompass Northern Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.

To date we can report that we now have had 179 clubbers who have experienced the G&T style of travel and we are delighted to add that some have already signed up for all three previous destinations.

The success of our club, is absolutely, due to the wonderful people who have travelled with us so far and we thank you all for your trust and loyalty. Great friendships have been made and it is truly awesome to see the genuine excitement in peoples faces when they meet up again with other clubbers that have shared a destination with them previously.

For those of you who have travelled with us already you can see how we do things a little different to the regular tour companies. For those of your family and friends who haven't they may be interested in reading what we see as our point of difference.

There are some good tour companies out there, but they all tend to follow the same path and the same style. We are not re-inventing the wheel but feel that our 'product' has some distinct differences and personal touches.

G&T Travel Club trips will always have Gools and Thommo on each and every departure.



VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA AWAITS WITH EXPERIENCES THAT WILL TANTALISE ALL YOUR SENSES

Our tour focuses on the full length of Vietnam including UNESCO World Heritage listed Halong Bay and the very best of Cambodia.

Vietnamese cuisine is about as fresh as you can get it. The amazing markets are overflowing with fresh produce and it seems to appear on every plate in every restaurant. Hanoi, Hue, Hoi An and Ho Chi Minh however all have a different spin on what they call traditional.

The people and the colour make Vietnam a wonderful destination and it's the simplicity of their life that lets us enjoy this destination. Landscapes will surprise you when you are least expecting it and the faces of the children will delight you at every turn.

The magic of the Mekong Delta comes to life as we walk, cycle and cruise through this spectacular window of Asia.

Cambodia will get under your skin due to the incredible spirit and progressive optimism of its people. They are the true treasure of this kingdom along with the ancient treasure of Angkor Wat. With the history of war, poverty and continued political unrest the country can still put on a smile. It is safe to say that Cambodia will cast a spell on anyone that visits.





HOW WE DIFFER

The following are some of the considerations we made while developing our tours.

A. We wanted to develop an **interesting itinerary** that will 'wow' you each day **with great value inclusions** that everyone would be interested in and **none of those 'kitch' touristy things** that just waste your time and patience. We will point out the different ways to enjoy your shopping and bargaining experiences. We will not take you to the Emporiums and Carpet sellers, but instead will show you how these businesses work and show you how to get a good deal on your own.

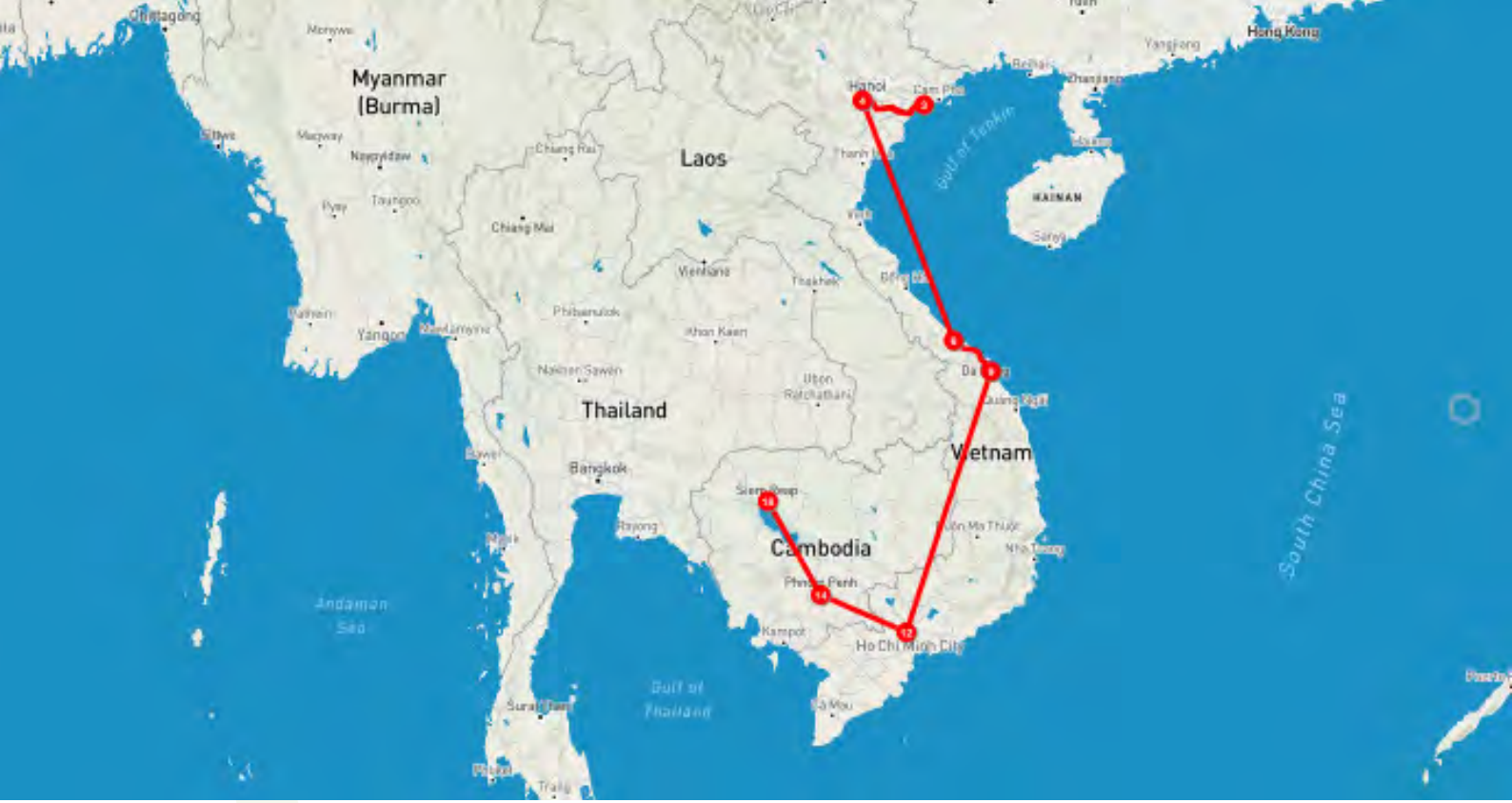
We will offer you the **freedom to do your own thing**. In fact, we will encourage you and help you to get the most out of your holiday by listening to what **your personal needs are**. You may want to go shopping for something unique or want to head out on your own or in a smaller group. Our coach is often bigger than our group size requires so there can be **spare seats to spread out**.

B. Accommodation selections are chosen for their **great location, view, style, feel and facilities**, not just to a Star Category or as suggested by our 'ground operators'. We make sure to use fantastic hotels that will add to your holiday experience. Some hotels are set inside a Colonial Residence and others are slick modern boutique style. **All are hand-picked and researched personally by us!** All the accommodation options include a great breakfast so you can start each day with a good healthy meal. Most breakfasts have both **western and Local foods** available to suit your taste.

C. You will have an option to eat at **some of our favourite restaurants** within close proximity to our accommodation. **You can choose** to join us and eat out or simply stay and eat in, it's up to you! Funnily enough some of the best restaurants are within our chosen accommodation anyway. We have also **personally checked many restaurant menus** to make sure that they can cater for most of the obvious dietary requirements. We also have a good variation between set menu, buffet and ordering from the menu with both western and local choices. The restaurants for our **Special Farewell Dinners** have both been chosen for the amazing food and the experience, which all adds to a night to remember.

D. **Having both Gools and Thommo along as hosts gives you something no one else can match.** We will be with you the whole time looking after you personally. On top of that we will also have **Local City Guides** throughout the tour. You are in a **small group environment** which is great and with so many support staff on hand you can create your own travel experience. You may have had a 'group tour' experience before where you felt rushed and dragged along by your guide. We make sure that everyone gets to **walk at a comfortable pace and have time to have a good look at things along the way**. If you are a keen photographer, then you will have time to get the shot without losing the group. If you need to buy something special while we are out and about then we can make this happen without making the group wait. In our opinion, this is really important in a group environment.

E. Most importantly we made sure we put together a **"Great Value"** product, not necessarily the cheapest but well worth the few extra dollars for an amazing experience! We have chosen our dates and itinerary for each country, with **consideration given to the best possible weather, the lesser crowds and special holiday dates**.



[CLICK HERE](#) to view an interactive version of the tour map online

Day 1 **ARRIVE HANOI** **OVERNIGHT: HANOI**

Welcome to **Vietnam!**

Upon arrival in Hanoi, please make your way to our start point hotel. *Airport to Hotel transfers are available upon request (extra charges apply)*

PLEASE NOTE: Taxis are easy to arrange at the airport and often cheaper

Vietnam's capital, Hanoi blends **old world charm with the dynamic hustle and bustle of a modern city**. It's French Colonial past is evident from the surrounding architecture and the coffee shop windows full of **freshly baked baguettes**. Beyond the enchanting central lake lays the great contrast of **thousands of motorbikes** traversing between the many cosmopolitan restaurants, cafes & boutiques.

To the north of the central lake - Hoan Kiem, lies the **frenetic maze of narrow streets of the Old Quarter**, while to the south are the broad tree-lined boulevards and majestic buildings of the French Quarter.

Once you have checked into the hotel (any-time after 14:00hrs) the rest of the day is free until we have a **brief pre-departure meeting in the hotel lobby at 18:00hrs**. Please feel free to join us for dinner tonight at a local restaurant near by the hotel.

Meals Included: None, dinner at own expense.

Hotel: Silk Path Hotel (or similar)



Day 2 GOOD MORNING HANOI - STREET FOOD TOUR

OVERNIGHT: **HANOI**

Today's tour begins at 05:30hrs but the early start will be well worth while! We will head out to catch the first rays of sun and **witness Hanoi waking up.**

Firstly, we will head over to **Long Bien Market**, the **biggest fruit and vegetable wholesale market in North Vietnam. No other place in Hanoi exemplifies Vietnamese life better than Long Bien Market.**

Here we will witness buyers haggling for the very best and freshest goods from the women who squat at their individual stalls. The money counters will assist in changing the larger notes into smaller ones so the buyers can purchase with ease. The motorbikes delivering the goods will be weaving throughout the crowded aisles as they add to this dizzying scene of daily life.



Once we step outside of the market, we will **stroll around Hoan Kiem Lake, the true heart of Hanoi.** It's here that groups of Hanoians enjoy their daily **Tai Chi, gymnastics or martial arts.** Many do simply come to just enjoy the silent and fresh morning air before the chorus of bustling traffic starts. You will witness for yourself the change in atmosphere as the city gradually kicks into gear and the people start moving to a faster rhythm.

We will join in on a 45-minute Tai Chi class to learn some of this popular martial art. Discovering the slow and beneficial movements under the guidance of a local teacher will prepare us for the day ahead.

With an appetite to satisfy we will then make our way to a **local restaurant for the typical Vietnamese 'pho' breakfast.** This consists of noodle soup which is bursting with flavor and ingredients. For those who do need a morning lift we will find somewhere to sit and enjoy some **traditional Vietnamese coffee.**



In the mid-afternoon, we will rejoin with our guide to **sample the best food that Hanoi has to offer.** We start with a visit to a 'wet market' and here we browse the aisles of strange and exotic items such as edible live frogs. This market is always busy with shoppers buying their favourite ingredients for that day's meals.

Back onto the narrow streets and we'll be in search of some **delicious local snacks.** Tasting the well-known **fresh spring roll or a crispy pancake** before wandering further in search of the traditional '**bun cha**'. Bun Cha is a simple but tasty dish of fresh rice noodles with grilled pork.

It would be a shame not to finish off this amazing walking tour with a treat so a **traditional dessert** will leave you with a full understanding of Vietnamese gastronomy and an unforgettable impression of Hanoi street food, we will then return to the hotel.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Hotel: Silk Path Hotel (or similar)

Day 3 HANOI - HALONG BAY OVERNIGHT: HALONG BAY

Following breakfast, we depart Hanoi for a scenic drive to the spectacular Halong Bay. Halong Bay is a beautiful natural wonder in Northern Vietnam. The bay is dotted with up to **1600 limestone islands known as karst formations and covers an area of over 1500 Sq klm. It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994.**

We will arrive at Halong City around noon and proceed with check-in for our **2-day 1-night cruise.** After a warm welcome a delicious lunch will be served on-board while cruising out into the vast bay.

Once settled into your cabins you can return to the deck for the balance of the afternoon where you can enjoy some **breath-taking views** of this stunning waterway while sipping a chilled glass of your favourite beverage. Your cameras are sure to get a good workout this afternoon.

As the sun prepares to sink onto the turquoise water the boat will prepare to **set anchor for the night among this incredible site.** A gentle breeze will define the end of the day as you enjoy a delicious dinner together on the dining deck. While on the cruise you can experience the **amazing cave systems** that exist as well as the **local floating villages** that add to the colour and life to of this unique experience.



Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Cruise Boat: Bhaya Classic (or similar)

Distances and journey time: From the hotel in Hanoi to Halong Bay (160km): Approx. 4hrs



Day 4 HALONG BAY - HANOI/FLY TO HUE OVERNIGHT: HUE

This morning you can rise early if you like to **enjoy the sunrise from the open deck.** A great start to the day as you can experience the vastness and calmness of this area. While enjoying your breakfast/brunch spread and slowly cruising through the magnificent rock formations we'll make our way back towards the port.

Later, we disembark and transfer back to Hanoi airport for our **short flight to Hue.** Upon arrival in Hue, we will transfer to our hotel and check in.

Note: *This tour may be subject to change depending on weather conditions.*

Meals Included: Breakfast

Hotel: Indochine Palace (or similar)

Day 5

ENJOY THE HIGHLIGHTS OF HUE

OVERNIGHT: HUE

There is much to do around Hue. A City highlights tour may be your 'thing' or maybe you are interested in the history of the Vietnam War.

We have 2 options available to suit all interests. Please confirm your day tour choice at the time of booking (subject to availability)

Meals Included: Breakfast **Hotel:** Indochine Palace (or similar)



OPTION 1: HALF DAY HIGHLIGHTS OF HUE

Get an **introduction to Hue's remarkable history, culture and natural beauty.** Travel through hundreds of years of history at the Imperial Citadel, the tranquil 'old city' and the majestic tombs of emperors. Then get a dose of local life with a visit to a bustling marketplace.

This tour will begin at 08:00hrs.

After breakfast you will kick off this half-day tour in Hue with a visit to the **UNESCO-Heritage Imperial Citadel.** Roam the expansive grounds, admiring buildings that reflect the pomp and ceremony of the **once-mighty Nguyen Dynasty.** Hear the stories of the majestic buildings and intriguing former emperors. You will see areas damaged by **conflicts, both ancient and modern,** and learn of Hue's role in **Vietnam's military history.**

Continue by cyclo to get a closer look at the tranquil gardens and traditional buildings of the area. Arrive at **Tinh Tam Lake, a lake filled with beautiful lotus flowers.** Meaning 'Peace of Mind' the emperors used to relax along the water's edge and it is still a popular place for Hue residents to wind down at the end of the day.

You will then leave the city centre and travel through **Hue's beautiful countryside.** After a short drive you will arrive at **Khai Dinh's tomb** for a stroll. One of the Nguyen Dynasty's former emperors, this remarkable complex blends **traditional Vietnamese design with European touches** making it quite unique from the other tombs in Hue.

To complete the half day tour, you can take the time to browse the stalls at **Dong Ba Market.** This market is teeming with colour and a great place to catch a glimpse of everyday life in modern Hue.

After the market you can join G&T for lunch at Le Jardin restaurant if you wish (lunch not included) *Note: Your afternoon will then be free to explore Hue on foot.*



OPTION 2: FULL DAY EXCURSION TO DMZ THE DEMILITARISED ZONE - INCLUDING LUNCH

Delve into **Vietnam's military history** with an interesting Hue to DMZ day tour. You will travel north of Hue to visit the historic underground tunnels and bunkers, cross infamous battle sites, and discover war relics. You will hear the harrowing tales of the war and gain a new respect for the resilient spirit of the Vietnamese people.

This tour will begin at 07:30hrs.

After breakfast you will depart from Hue and head to Vietnam's **Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)** for an insightful tour of the country's wartime past. Along the way, make a stop at **La Vang Cathedral**, a site damaged by war but still an important pilgrimage site for Vietnam's Catholics. Carry on to what is left of **Quang Tri Citadel**, where in 1972 a fierce battle raged for 81 days. Then visit the museum where photographs, war remnants and artillery can be seen.

The journey will continue up Highway 1 across the **Hien Luong Bridge, and over the Ben Hai River** which demarcated North and South Vietnam. This area saw some of the heaviest fighting during the Vietnam -America war. Nearby is **Doc Mieu Firebase**, which lies just north of here. The base played a pivotal role in the South's defence and, for a while, was the command post for calling in airstrikes along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Journey off the main highway, pass through **quaint villages and skirt along Cua Tung Beach** on the way to **Vinh Moc**. The village found itself tragically positioned in one of the most heavily bombed areas of Vietnam. You will visit the **2.8 km network of underground tunnels** where more than three hundred people lived intermittently from 1966 to 1971.

Before departing the DMZ, make a final stop at **Truong Son National Cemetery**. Wander amid the tombstones marking the final resting place of some 15,000 Vietnamese soldiers and civilians who perished during the war.

Wrap up this sombre Hue to DMZ day tour driving back to **Hue by approximately 16.30hrs.**



Day 6 HUE-HOI AN

OVERNIGHT: HOI AN

Today, after a relaxing breakfast, we **leave Hue for Hoi An.**

A major Asian trading port in the 17th and 18th centuries, **Hoi An is famous for its architecture and relaxed lifestyle** that has changed little over the years.

Our scenic route passes through the wonderfully **photogenic fishing village of Lang Co** before climbing over the **Hai Van Pass**, located along the Hai Van mountains.

It is the highest and the most beautiful pass in Vietnam (about 500 meters above sea level).

When we arrive in Hoi An and settle into our hotel, you are **free to wander the streets of this incredible town.**

Meals Included: Breakfast

Hotel: Almanity Wellness Resort (or similar)

Distances and journey time:

Hue to Hoi An (140km): 3 hours



Day 7

CHARMING HOI AN OVERNIGHT: HOI AN

Be enchanted by the historical wonders and sleepy charm of **UNESCO-heritage listed Hoi An**. Spend a half day with an expert local guide, exploring the ancient town. Explore former merchants' homes, colourful communal halls, narrow lanes lined with traditional houses and the iconic Japanese Covered Bridge.

Today's tour will begin at 6:00hrs. Yes, it's early but trust us! Be charmed by Hoi An, one of Vietnam's most **colourful and picturesque towns**. This morning we will learn all about Hoi An and its illustrious past as a trading port.

We will take a gentle walk through town in the cool of the morning. We will see some remarkably **well-preserved traditional houses that have withstood 200 years** of weather and war. Here we will learn about the prosperous merchants who used to live in these homes and who traded with buyers from all over the world.

We will make a stop at the **Japanese Covered Bridge**, one of two such bridges in Vietnam. The bridge spans a small waterway and was built more than 400 years ago to connect the Japanese community with the Chinese who lived on the other side of the water. Admire the carvings and paintings inside the bridge, learning about their symbolism and cultural significance.

We will continue to the **Chinese communal hall**, a spectacular collection of bright gates, dragon statues and elaborate rooftops.

Here we get an introduction to **ancestor worship** while visiting the family altar and observing local devotees making their offerings. Additionally, we will visit the **bustling Hoi An market in the Old Town** which is visually stunning place, especially in the morning!

Once we have enjoyed seeing Hoi An 'wake up' we will **return to the hotel for our breakfast**. (approx. 08:30hrs) After breakfast you will have some **free time to explore** the narrow lanes of the shopping district. You may want to explore the idea of **getting some clothes tailored to suit**.

Early afternoon we will visit a **local artisans house** to learn how to **make the iconic Hoi An lantern**. Hoi An is renowned for its beautiful old town, decorated by a colourful array of hanging lanterns. A rich history as a trading port makes Hoi An, a **mecca for all kinds of traditional Vietnamese handicrafts** and manufacturing, none more so than lantern making.

In a cozy workshop with guidance from one of the city's most respected lantern makers, try your hand at crafting a lantern to form your own unique design. **Bring home your own version** of the colorful hand-crafted lanterns that decorate the streets of Hoi An at night.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Hotel: Almanity Wellness Resort (or similar)



Day 8 HOI AN CYCLING, EXPLORE LOCAL LIFE ALONG THE THU BON RIVER

OVERNIGHT: HOI AN

After breakfast we head off on a **cycling tour**.

Today's tour begins at 08:00hrs with a 15 minute drive from Hoi An to Cua Dai Estuary.

Upon arrival at **Duy Hai Fishing Village**, we will visit a family-run **'fish sauce' workshop** under the guidance of the owner to learn about this essential ingredient in Vietnamese cuisine.

We then board a boat and head upstream on the 'Mother River' **Thu Bon river to Duy Vinh village**, well-known for traditional weaving of sedge mats. During our journey, we will pass by a shrimp and duck farm to get a glimpse of agricultural river life.

As we travel along the river, we may see some golden paddy fields during harvest season or green groves of jute along the banks of the Thu Bon river. Upon arrival at **Ban Thach Mat Village**, we will find that an abundant resource of raw rush is used to weave mats. This has allowed the villagers to develop this handicraft which has improved their lives for over 400 years.

We will **learn the full process of sedge mat weaving** from cutting the sedge in the field, right through to a finished mat following their traditional methods. We will see the way the locals manage to keep their traditional occupation in a modern and constantly evolving time.

Later we will share a simple yet friendly **home-hosted lunch** and return to Hoi An by bicycle across the **Cam Kim Bridge**. If you do not wish to ride a bicycle, we can make alternative arrangements.

Meals Included: Breakfast and Lunch

Hotel: Almanity Wellness Resort (or similar)

Tour Timings approx: 08:00hrs – 15:00hrs

Cycling distance: 8 km



Day 9 HOI AN - DANANG

FLY TO HO CHI MINH

OVERNIGHT: HO CHI MINH

Today we have a **free morning in Hoi An** before our transfer to Danang airport for our **short flight to Ho Chi Minh city**. Upon arrival in Ho Chi Minh, we will be transferred to our hotel.

Situated on the banks of the Saigon River and still commonly referred to as Saigon, **Ho Chi Minh City is Vietnam's largest metropolis and undisputed commercial capital**. A seemingly chaotic whirl of motorbikes flow through the busy city streets, above which soar glistening skyscrapers and lavish hotels, while style-conscious locals flock to the city's newest restaurants, designer malls and chic nightspots.

The spirit of the old city however does live on in its colonial architecture, ancient pagodas, bustling markets and ubiquitous street food stalls. This is modern Vietnam at its most vibrant.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Hotel: The Grand Hotel (or similar)



Day 10 **HALF DAY CU CHI TUNNELS BY SPEEDBOAT AND CITY TOUR**

OVERNIGHT: HO CHI MINH

This morning after breakfast we will depart the hotel at 07:30hrs. Our morning begins with a **short drive to the banks of the Saigon River**. Here we board a private speed boat for this scenic **Cu Chi tunnels adventure**. Gaze upon the modern skyline of the city as the boat cruises along the river. Slowly the scenery changes as we pass through urban neighborhoods and then the rural countryside.

After approximately **90 minutes on the river**, we arrive at Cu Chi and explore part of the incredible network of over 200 km of underground tunnels. For those that wish to, we can **crawl underground** and get a better sense for what life was like living and fighting in the labyrinth of caves and tunnels. We will **hear remarkable stories** of the resident's resilience and see relics of the wartime weapons.

Following the visit to the tunnels, we return to the boat & **relax while cruising** back to the heart of Ho Chi Minh City.



Upon arrival in Ho Chi Minh City we will take a closer look at the city itself, starting at **Reunification Hall**. This fascinating building, once known as the Presidential Palace, is filled with history. We will hear the story of how, on 30 April 1975, North Vietnamese tanks seized the building as Saigon fell. We then continue to the **colonial-style Old Post Office**.

The final stop of the day is **War Remnants Museum**. Here we gain an insight into Vietnam's military history. We will see exhibitions displaying imagery from the **French and American wars**, learning more about the country's struggle for independence and hearing more tales of the resilience of the Vietnamese people. Later we return to the hotel where we can reflect upon this **incredible day of history**.

Meals Included: Breakfast and Lunch

Hotel: The Grand Hotel (or similar)



Day 11

A DAY IN BEN TRE

OVERNIGHT: HO CHI MINH

Explore the **back roads and intriguing waterways of Ben Tre Province**, deep in the heart of the Mekong Delta. We will witness authentic cottage industries, meet friendly locals and taste traditional cuisine to gain an insight into the authentic **way of life on the Mekong Delta**.

Today's tour will begin at 08:00hrs. After breakfast we will leave the buzz of Ho Chi Minh City behind and drive through the countryside for this great day tour to Ben Tre. Situated at the edge of the Mekong Delta, Ben Tre is the perfect starting point for this day long excursion.

The adventure begins with a **ride on the back of a xe loi, a local motorized cart**. We will travel along the small back paths through coconut groves, lush rice paddies and fruit farms. We then step aboard the **'Mango Cruise' boat and cast off for a glimpse of Delta scenery**.

While on board we can sip a freshly picked coconut as the boat makes its way up the river.

We will stop at a **small brick workshop** where locals still use centuries-old traditional methods to make the bricks by hand. We observe this labour intensive process, then return to the boat and cross the **An Hoa River** where we hop onto a bicycle for a short ride through **Phong Nam, a typical delta village**.

Along the way we will stop off at a local house to see **coconut processing by hand** and learn how every part of the coconut is used. We then continue cycling through gardens and stop to visit a **ruou dua factory**, where we observe the process of making the **local coconut spirit**.

We then move on to get a closer look at delta life with a **visit to a family home**. Here we enjoy some tropical fruits and honey tea in the garden and hear how the family relies on fishing and farming to make a living. After this unique and immersive visit, we climb into a **sampan boat** and row through a hidden maze of small, sun-dappled canals gaining an insider's perspective on daily river life.

Having worked up an appetite during the morning's tour, we will then take a break at **Mango Home Stay restaurant to enjoy a delicious Vietnamese lunch**.

Afterwards, we take a leisurely walk past green gardens to the house of Mr Sau Tuong.

Here we will have a chat with Mr Sau Tuong and watch as his wife makes **crispy rice paper**, the most famous speciality of this village.

Armed with a camera-full of amazing images and unforgettable memories, we will return to Ho Chi Minh City.

Note: *For those who may not wish to cycle, we can make alternative arrangements.*

Meals Included: Breakfast and Lunch

Hotel: The Grand Hotel (or similar)

Distances and journey time:

HCMC to Ben Tre (108km): 2hrs



Day 12 HO CHI MINH / FLY TO PHNOM PENH OVERNIGHT: PHNOM PENH

After breakfast you will have some **free time before we fly to Cambodia**. Maybe find somewhere fun to sit and watch the city come to life, or head out for a bit of shopping. Later, we will transfer to Ho Chi Minh airport for our **short flight to Phnom Penh**. Upon arrival in Phnom Penh airport, we will then transfer to our hotel and check in. After check in we will enjoy a **tasty lunch at a local restaurant**.

At around 14:00hrs we will start our **Phnom Penh tour**. Phnom Penh has been the capital of Cambodia since 1866 and although it suffered extensive damage during the Khmer Rouge era, the city still retains a rustic charm.

During this tour we will discover Phnom Penh's ancient and recent past. We begin our tour at **Cambodia's Royal Palace**, which stands majestically in the city centre, just off the riverfront area. Several buildings are open to visitors including the **'Silver Pagoda'** whose floor is lined with solid silver tiles.

Later we will continue to the **National Museum**. Located in a fabulous old building, the Museum is filled with art and artifacts dating back to the **pre-Angkorian era**. At the north end of the city is the hilltop pagoda of **Wat Phnom**, for which the capital was named. Climb the stairs to the top of the hill for fabulous views of the city below.

Meals Included: Breakfast and Lunch

Hotel: Palace Gate Hotel (or similar)



Day 13 PHNOM PENH OVERNIGHT: PHNOM PENH

This morning we will take a look into the country's **tragic more recent history**. Be prepared for a somber experience as we visit **Tuol Sleng Prison (S-21)** and the **Killing Fields at Choeng Ek**. Here we will learn about the evils of the Khmer Rouge regime. Although not a joyful tour, visiting these monuments unlocks keys to understanding the development of this still developing country.

Later we return to our hotel where we have the balance of the day **free to enjoy Phnom Penh**.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Hotel: Palace Gate Hotel (or similar)



Day 14 PHNOM PENH - SIEM REAP OVERNIGHT: SIEM REAP

After breakfast we have a **free morning at leisure** until we transfer to the airport for our flight to Siem Reap.

Upon arrival in Siem Reap, we will then transfer to our hotel and check in and relax. The balance of the day is **free to explore the town on foot or simply sit by the pool**. Many small restaurants and shops along with some great markets are nice and close to our hotel.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Hotel: Victoria Angkor (or similar)

Day 15

SIEM REAP

OVERNIGHT: SIEM REAP

After enjoying a delicious breakfast, we will head out to see the most **spectacular temples of the ancient city of Angkor Thom**, the last capital of the Great Khmer Empire under the reign of Jayavarman VII.

This city is surrounded by an 8m high wall, drawing a perfect square. We will enter the city through the ancient South Gate, an impressive stone gate carved with Elephants and four giant faces. On each side of the entrance path a row of 54 gods (or demons) are holding the sacred Naga snake.

From here, we continue to the **Bayon Temple**, which is located, in the center of the city. This 12th century masterpiece is renowned for its 54 towers with enigmatic faces representing the 54 provinces of the Great Khmer Empire. **The Terrace of the Elephants and the Terrace of the Leper King** are also must-visits as they are both known for their intricate bas-reliefs.

Later we will take a break for a **local lunch** (not included), before we continue to Ta Prohm.

Ta Prohm is unique in that it has been left largely as it was found, overgrown by jungle trees and vines, with many parts of the temple crumbling to the ground. This makes the 'Tomb Raider Temple' one of the **most picturesque and memorable of the Angkor temples.**



Now you are ready for the highlight: **The magnificent Angkor Wat.**

Built during the reign of King Suryavarman II in the early 12th century, Angkor Wat was constructed following the model of the temple mountain symbolizing Mount Meru, the home of the gods.

Inside the temple, the walls are **covered with stone carvings and bas-reliefs** depicting Hindu mythology and the wars that Suryavarman II fought during his reign.

Angkor Wat is well known for the more than **2,000 'Apsara' dancers decorating the temple.** Construction is thought to have taken around thirty years of intensive labor. Today, **Angkor Wat is figured on Cambodia's national flag** as the temple that symbolizes the soul of the Khmer people.

We hope to be there around sunset time, when Angkor Wat is less visited and the Apsaras will shine in the beautiful light.

We will return to Siem Reap around 18:00hrs.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Hotel: Victoria Angkor (or similar)

Day 16

SIEM REAP

OVERNIGHT: SIEM REAP

This morning after breakfast at around **08:00hrs**, we will head out of Siem Reap approximately 55kms to **Lake Tonlé Sap**, where you will have the opportunity to learn about life on the lake.

Tonle Sap is the **largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia** and officially designated as a **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve**, covering an area of around 250,000 hectares in the dry season.

Due to a unique phenomenon, when the monsoon begins, the swollen waters of the Mekong River force the Tonle Sap River to reverse its flow northwards, feeding the Great Lake and spreading over the surrounding flood plain.

We will board a local boat and visit the village of **Kompong Khleang**, where only few tourists venture. We will continue on our boat ride through the village where the fisherman and their families live in stilted houses among the petrified mangrove forests and waterways.

Relax and enjoy the fascinating scenery of Southeast Asia's largest freshwater lake and it's surrounds. (**Note:** during the months Apr-Sep the water level may be too low for a visit by boat. However, the village is still fascinating and can be visited by car. It's quite dramatic to see how the stilted houses are exposed from the lake when water levels are low!)

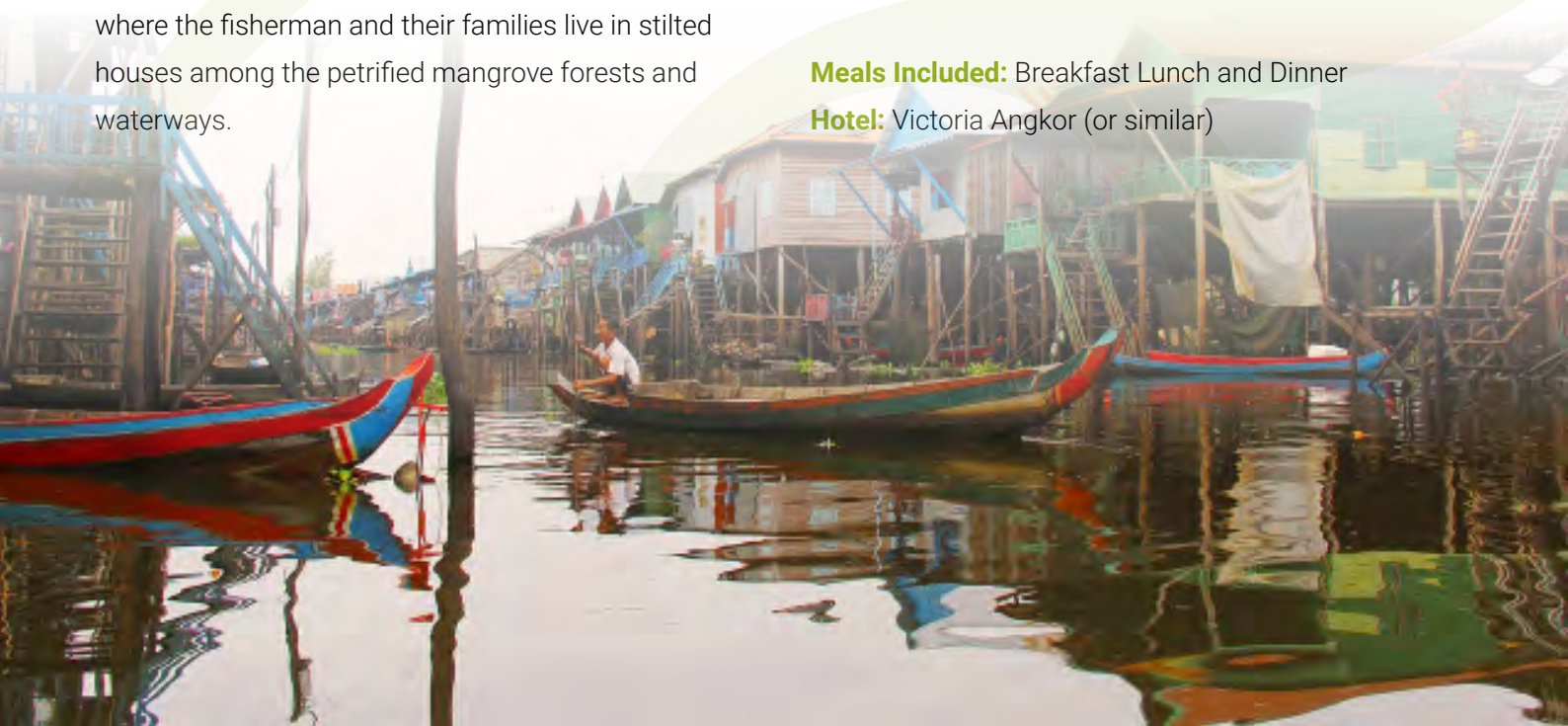
On our return trip we will disembark the boat and enjoy a **walk through the local village**. Later we will visit a small restaurant and **enjoy a packed lunch** as we watch the everyday life at the village. After lunch, at around 14:00hrs we will head back to Siem Reap.

Upon arrival the **rest of the afternoon is free**.

This evening we will head out to a **fantastic local restaurant for our final night farewell dinner** where we can relax and enjoy the company of new friends!

Meals Included: Breakfast Lunch and Dinner

Hotel: Victoria Angkor (or similar)



Day 17

SIEM REAP - DEPARTURE

After a delicious breakfast you are **free to depart at any time**.

Hotel to airport transfers are available upon request (extra charges apply) **PLEASE NOTE:** Taxis are easy to arrange to the airport and often cheaper.

Meals Included: Breakfast