



# A MEKONG EXPERIENCE

2024 - Classic Tour | 14 Days | Physical Level 1

SIEM REAP – PHNOM PENH – VICTORIA MEKONG CRUISE – SAIGON – HOI AN  
– HANOI – HALONG BAY

With 4 nights onboard the Victoria Mekong, soaking up the sights and sounds of the river, this 2-week tour also showcases the beauty of southern Vietnam and Cambodia's magnificent temples of Angkor.

- Test your senses at NOIR in Saigon
- Spend 4 nights cruising the Mekong
- Explore bustling Phnom Penh by cyclo
- Drift along Angkor Thom's moat at sunset
- Cook authentic Cambodian dishes & Enjoy Cambodia's famous Phare Circus.

## TOUR MAP

---



### A MEKONG EXPERIENCE TOUR INCLUSIONS:

---

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escorts (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Cambodia & Vietnam visa fees for New Zealand passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with IATA

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

### CLASSIC TOURS:

---

See the classic sights in the company of expert guides so you can really understand the history and culture of the destination. On our classic tours we take care of everything, leaving you to sit back and enjoy the experience to the full. The tours are fully inclusive with all meals and a comprehensive touring programme.

### PHYSICAL LEVEL 1:

---

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

‘A Mekong Experience’ is rated as a physical level 1 tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it’s more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You’ll be getting on and off coaches, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time, often on uneven surfaces
- You will be required to get on and off small boats without assistance

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

### JOINING YOUR TOUR:

---

The tour is 14 days in duration including international flights. Please note that depending on flight schedules passengers may arrive/depart on Day 2.

Travellers booked on ‘Land Only, the price includes visa fees and your arrival/ departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to Reservations. Join the tour on Day One in Saigon and end the tour on Day 13 in Siem Reap. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

### ITINERARY CHANGES:

---

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

**DETAILED ITINERARY****Day 1-2: Arrive Saigon**

Meals: D

Fly overnight to Saigon, where you will be met in the arrivals hall by your Local Guide or National Escort. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer to your hotel and check in.



*Early check-in is not included. Additional nights before and after your tour can be arranged. Please contact our Reservations team to book.*

**Destination Information**

**Saigon** - Formally renamed Ho Chi Minh City, but still locally known by its older name of Saigon, this exuberant city is driving Vietnam forward into the modern world but is also a treasure trove of fascinating heritage. It was a major base of the American military during the Vietnam War and was the seat of the South Vietnam government until the events that led to the country's reunification. Today, the old mixes seamlessly with the new and you can wander through timeless alleys to incense-infused temples before catching up with the present in designer malls beneath sleek skyscrapers.

**Day 3: Saigon**

Meals: B, L, D

Confront the reality of guerrilla warfare at the Cu Chi Tunnels. The cramped tunnels were central to a few of the war's strategic operations, including the famous 1968 Tet Offensive, and they did not escape damage. American B52 bombers dropped hundreds of missiles leaving huge tell-tale craters behind.



The Cu Chi experience can be emotional for some visitors, but it offers a fascinating window into the hardship and traumas of war. Sightseeing here involves two hours on foot on uneven mud paths through the bush and, if you choose, crawling through some of the tunnels.

This afternoon explore modern day Saigon with its heady mix of local culture and colonial influences. See the Notre Dame Cathedral, the Central Post Office, and the chilling War Remnants Museum, stopping for a coffee break at one of the best coffee workshops on the way. Later, enjoy a dinner in the dark at NOIR.



### Destination Information

**Cu Chi** - the tunnels of Cu Chi are an immense network of connecting underground tunnels located in the Cu Chi district of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam, and are part of a much larger network of tunnels that underlie much of the country. The Cu Chi tunnels were the location of several military campaigns during the Vietnam War, and were the Viet Cong's base of operations for the Tet Offensive in 1968. The tunnels were used by Viet Cong soldiers as hiding spots during combat, as well as serving as communication and supply routes, hospitals, food and weapon caches and living quarters for numerous North Vietnamese fighters. The tunnel systems were of great importance to the Viet Cong in their resistance to American forces, and helped to counter the growing American military effort.

**NOIR Restaurant** – A unique culinary experience, Noir is a restaurant where you dine in the dark and experience your food in new ways. Waiters with visual impairments become your eyes and guide you through a delicious meal to challenge your other four senses.

---

#### Day 4: Saigon – Victoria Mekong Cruise

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast, transfer to the meeting hotel in Saigon where you will say goodbye to your National Escort and be picked up for your cruise by your local guide from Victoria Mekong. Drive to Can Tho, stopping en route for a delicious local lunch.



Board the Victoria Mekong which, after a welcome briefing, will cast off into the waters of the Mekong Delta. Relax with a sunlounger on deck and sit down to a welcome gala dinner whilst enjoying a performance of Đờn ca tài tử - traditional folk music of the Mekong. Drop anchor at Tiger Island.

### Destination Information

**Mekong River** – The 7th longest river in Asia and the heart of Southeast Asia civilisation, there is no tapestry of river life as fascinating and varied as the Mekong.

---

#### Day 5: Victoria Mekong Cruise

Meals: B, L, D

Tender ashore to visit Long Xuyen floating market and explore local cultures at the An Giang Traditions Museum in the morning. After lunch on board, tender ashore to Tiger Island, where you will enjoy an exploration of local industries such as net weaving, incense making and banh in (rice cakes) making. Sit down to dinner and evening entertainment before retiring to your cabin.



Tonight, the ship will drop anchor at Vam Nao.

**Day 6: Victoria Mekong Cruise**

Meals: B, L, D

Enjoy breakfast as the ship continues towards Tan Chau. On arrival, head to shore to visit a colourful Cao Dai temple before continuing by local rickshaw to a silk village, where you'll learn all about the traditional art of making and dyeing silk.



Return to the ship for lunch before more shore excursions around Tan Chau, such as floating fish farms and a Taoist temple. Alternatively, there is an option to take an exhilarating speedboat ride to Chau Doc to see the wildlife and mangroves of the submerged Tra Su Forest. This evening's onboard entertainment features a thrilling lion dance performance!

**Day 7: Victoria Mekong Cruise**

Meals: B, L, D

Today, the Victoria Mekong will pass over the border into Cambodia and sail towards Phnom Penh. Spend a relaxed day enjoying the passing scenery and a wealth of onboard activities, such as lectures and cocktail making.



In the late afternoon, dock in downtown Phnom Penh, where you will be entertained with a traditional Cambodian apsara performance by local children. Afterwards, enjoy a final gala dinner.

**Day 8: Victoria Mekong Cruise – Phnom Penh**

Meals: B, L, D

Enjoy breakfast on board before bidding farewell to the Victoria Mekong and meeting your new Cambodian National Escort. Board a cyclo and head from the pier into the heart of the city to visit the magnificent Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda before perusing the treasures of the National Museum. After a final stop at Wat Phnom, enjoy a cold glass of local beer with beautiful views over the riverfront.

**Destination Information**

**Phnom Penh** – The capital of the Kingdom of Cambodia is built around four river arms formed by a sharp curve in the Mekong River, near the junctions of the Bassac and the Tonle Sap tributaries. This charming city has a pleasant blend of oriental and colonial architecture, but reminders of a troubled past are also evident.

**The Royal Palace** – Built in 1866 by the French, these ornate buildings are the official residence of the reigning Cambodian royal family and King Sihamoni.

**Silver Pagoda** – This concrete and marble structure includes a floor with over 5,000 silver tiles, each a kilo in weight. Famous artefacts include a 90kg solid gold Buddha, made in 1907, and the Emerald Buddha; opinions differ as to whether the latter is made of emerald, jade, or French Baccarat Crystal.

---

**Day 9: Phnom Penh – Siem Reap**

Meals: B, L, D

Reflect on the history of the city with a visit to the Tuol Sleng Museum and Killing Fields. The visit to the Tuol Sleng Museum involves 1 hour on foot. This museum commemorates the atrocities that occurred during the regime of Pol Pot.



The transfer south-west to the Killing Fields will take 30 minutes, where you will spend an hour on foot for a harrowing insight into Cambodia's tumultuous past. Many people find it quite confronting and emotional, so you will be given time to explore on your own. Later on, transfer to the airport for your 45- minute flight to Siem Reap.

**Destination Information**

**Tuol Sleng Museum** - This former school was used by the Khmer Rouge as a detention and torture centre in the late 1970s. Today this building houses paintings and photographs of the victims. You can see the crude cells built in the classrooms and the torture devices used to extract confessions by the regime.

**Killing Fields** - The emotional Killing Fields of Cheung Ek, made famous by the film of the same name. More than 17,000 civilians were killed and buried in mass graves here making this place a chilling reminder of the brutalities of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime.

---

**Day 10: Siem Reap**

Meals: B, L, D

Spanning from the 9th to 15th century, the Angkor complex with over a thousand temples was the seat of the thriving Khmer Empire. The complex is now managed by UNESCO; to enter, your group will drive approximately 6km out of town to the main gate to get your entrance passes, which you must carry with you. If you choose to climb at any site, you must be able to climb and descend without assistance.



Begin at the city of Angkor Thom and the enigmatic Bayon, the Elephant Terrace and the Terrace of the Leper King before continuing to the temple of Ta Prohm,

enveloped in a labyrinth of jungle. This afternoon is devoted to the fascinating and awe-inspiring Angkor Wat. Later, relax onboard a boat and admire the sunset on Angkor Thom's moat.

*Please note: The Central Tower of the Angkor Wat complex is closed on Buddhist holidays, and on all other days has a limited number of visitors allowed at any given time, under regulations from UNESCO. If you wish to visit this tower, you will be required to wait in the queue alongside all other visitors. The ability to do this will be determined upon the group's' schedule.*

### Destination Information

**Angkor Wat** - Surrounded by a 190-metre moat and taking 30 years to build, Angkor Wat represents the Khmer civilisation at its grandest. With its fascinating decorative flourishes, extensive bas-relief and multiple tiers, it is the best-preserved temple within the complex.

**Angkor Thom** - This fortified city is flanked by a row of 54 stone figures on each side, which leads you through a 23-metre imposing stone entrance gate to the various temples inside.

**Bayon** - Beautifully crafted central towers, decorated with four opposing faces representing King Jayavarman VII. Bayon's stone galleries display extraordinary bas-reliefs incorporating over 11,000 figures.

**Elephant Terrace and Terrace of the Leper King** - Giant viewing platforms used for public ceremonies, which served as a base for the King's grand audience hall.

**Ta Prohm** - Swallowed by the jungle where Strangler Figs and Kapok Trees have entwined themselves around the ruins. Undoubtedly, the most atmospheric ruin at Angkor with several towers, closed courtyards and narrow corridors to explore.

**Day 11: Siem Reap**

Meals: B, L, D

In the high-water season, drive to Kampong Phluk, a cluster of three villages of stilt houses built within the floodplain of the Tonle Sap lake. In the lower water season, you will visit Chong Kneas floating village.

Get a glimpse into local life at the home of a Khmer family. Return to Siem Reap to enjoy a performance by the PHARE Cambodian Circus, an NGO which teaches street children to become internationally renowned circus artists.





**Day 12: Siem Reap**

Meals: B, L, D

Today, travel by tuk-tuk to a shared cooking lesson, where you will learn to prepare traditional Khmer dishes. The chef will teach you all about what goes into the local cuisine, as you create a delicious meal! Spend your afternoon at leisure before a farewell dinner.

**Day 13 - 14: Depart Siem Reap**

Meals: B

Fly home to the New Zealand

## A MEKONG EXPERIENCE TRAVEL INFORMATION

### VISAS:

---

Entry visas are required by all visitors to Cambodia and Vietnam. Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. We will supply you with all paperwork if applicable and submit the visa application on your behalf. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it from the date of entry into Cambodia and Vietnam.

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate; Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa. Currently a visa is required for New Zealand Passport holders. Your travel consultant will inform you if any changes are applicable prior to your departure.

### INSURANCE:

---

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original.

### EATING IN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM:

---

Southeast Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in most local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region actually has its own distinct characteristics. Vietnam, for example, is perhaps best known for its fresh and aromatic dishes – relying heavily on flavours from fresh herbs such as mint, basil and dill.

Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from dinner on the day of your groups' arrival until breakfast on your day of departure. When dining in Southeast Asia, although some restaurants have adopted a western approach to dining, expect some restaurants to follow the traditional communal style of eating. Typically, this will mean each diner has their own small bowl and may serve themselves from a variety of shared dishes. At some local restaurants, appetizers and main courses might be served when they are ready instead of following a particular order.

Determining when it's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. In Southeast Asia, fork and spoon are used for most dishes and chopsticks are typically provided to eat noodles. Usually chopsticks or other utensils are provided to scoop the food into your bowl to prevent your own chopsticks from touching the food that remains on the table. Dining in Southeast Asia is fairly casual with not too many rules. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Those with dietary requirements - just make sure to inform your booking agent of any specific requirements well in advance of your trip.

Please read your travel guide, which you will receive with your final documents for more information about eating in Southeast Asia. We recommend that when it comes to Asia food, you stay open minded and try to be adventurous!

### GROUP SIZE:

---

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a national escort. There will usually be no more than 24 travellers in a Victoria Mekong group, although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 10 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only.

### ACCOMMODATION:

---

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities.

Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between New Zealand and Southeast Asia.

All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your need.

### TRANSPORT:

---

**Coaches:** Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary.

**However, minibuses may be used for smaller groups (under 10 passengers).** Roads in Southeast Asia have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

**Planes:** Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

### TIPPING POLICY:

---

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and Southeast Asia is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed to local guides and drivers throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the national escort.

If you are travelling in a smaller group with local guides only, then tipping is paid in each destination. To be fair to the guides we ask for slightly higher amounts per traveller with small groups.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

### PORTERAGE:

---

Please be aware that portorage is not included on our tours in Vietnam and Cambodia. You will therefore need to be able to handle your own luggage within the hotel and when using transportation like trains and coaches.

### DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA:

---

Although Southeast Asia is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities.

Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in New Zealand. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in New Zealand; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum.

We want you to have an enjoyable holiday, so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from you National Escort or Local Guides.



### **SOUVENIRS:**

---

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs, so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone, so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

### **LUGGAGE:**

---

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable.

### **PERSONAL EXPENSES AND OPTIONAL TOURINGS:**

---

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you.

Optional Tours - May be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available.

Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

### **CLIMBING STEPS:**

---

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps.

These palaces were built to provide defence against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside.

The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

### VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

---

We recommend that you contact either your doctor or local Health Centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Safe Travel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)

### BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

---

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz) as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.

Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements.

You can also access the New Zealand Government's travel advisory service for up-to-date information about your destination on the same website.

### AFTER YOUR BOOKING:

---

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice including a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

Update May 2024