



## A Mekong Experience

### Classic Tour | 13 Days | Physical Level 1

Saigon – 4N Victoria Mekong Cruise – Phnom Penh – Siem Reap

With four nights to soak up the sights and sounds of the mighty Mekong on a relaxed cruise, on this tour you'll also discover the beauty of southern Vietnam. Packed with memorable moments and cultural experiences, discover vibrant Saigon, explore the lush waterways of the Mekong Delta and stand awestruck before the magnificent temples of Angkor in charming Cambodia.

- 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



#### 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 Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Cambodia & Vietnam visa fees for Australian passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

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

#### Classic Tours:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of South-east Asia on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

#### 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.

#### 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 maintaining the integrity of your trip.

- The Notre Dame Cathedral is currently undertaking restorations which will continue until 2023. During this time customers are unable to enter the Cathedral; however, they can view it from the outside.

## Itinerary – A Mekong Experience

### Day 1: Saigon

You will be met in Saigon in the arrivals hall by your Local Guide or National Escort from Wendy Wu Tours. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time travel to your hotel for check in.



#### Destination Information

**Saigon** - The exuberant city of Saigon is driving Vietnam forward into the modern world, but is also a treasure trove of fascinating heritage. During the 1960s and early 1970s, Saigon was the Pearl of the Orient, which flourished under the American occupation. In more recent times, it 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 2: Saigon

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 on, 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.

**Notre Dame Cathedral** - Influenced by French design and built between 1863 and 1880, the red brick exterior and 60-meter bell towers overlook downtown Saigon.

**Central Post Office** - Located next to the Notre-Dame Cathedral. The Central Post Office building was constructed in the late 19th century. It counts Gothic, Renaissance and French influences and was designed by Auguste Henri Vildieu and Alfred Foulhoux, but is often erroneously credited as being the work of Gustave Eiffel.

**War Remnants Museum** - Comprised of numerous buildings displaying military equipment, photographs and artefacts relating to the Vietnam War from 1961-1975. This museum illustrates a harrowing period in this nation's history.

**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 3: Saigon – Victoria Mekong Cruise

After breakfast, transfer to the meeting hotel in Saigon where you will say goodbye to your National Escort or local guide and be picked up for your cruise by your 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 sundowner on deck and sit down to a sumptuous gala dinner whilst enjoying a performance of *Đờn ca tài tử* - traditional music of the Mekong. Drop anchor at Tiger Island.



#### Destination Information

**Mekong River** – The 7<sup>th</sup> 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 4: Victoria Mekong Cruise

Enjoy an excursion on Tiger Island. Choose to explore by sampan or local rickshaw, visiting local industries such as net weaving, incense making and banh in (rice cakes) making. Continue upstream to Long Xuyen and disembark once more to visit the bustling floating market and a local museum. Sit down to dinner and evening entertainment before retiring to your cabin. Drop anchor at Vam Nao.

#### Day 5: Victoria Mekong Cruise

Cast off early to arrive in Tan Chau. On arrival, head to shore to visit a colourful Cao Dai temple and a silk village, where you'll learn all about the traditional silk making process, by xe loi (local rickshaw) or you can explore the town by electric bike. Eat lunch back on the ship before more shore excursions around Tan Chau, with the option to take an exhilarating speedboat ride to Tra Su Forest. This evening features a thrilling lion dance performance!

#### Day 6: Victoria Mekong Cruise

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 at Phnom Penh's Sisowath Quay where, this evening, you will be entertained with a traditional Cambodian apsara performance by local children. Sip a farewell cocktail before a final gala dinner.

#### Day 7: Victoria Mekong Cruise – Phnom Penh

Enjoy breakfast in the restaurant before disembarking and bidding farewell to the Victoria Mekong and meeting your new Cambodia 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**

**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 weighing 1kg. Famous artefacts include a 90kg solid gold Buddha made in 1907 and an Emerald Buddha said to be made of baccarat crystal.

**National Museum** - Housing the world's finest collection of Khmer pottery, bronzes and sculptures dating from the 4th century.

**Wat Phnom** - Home to a hilltop temple that carries the cities namesake. Locals flock here to pray for good luck and success.

#### Day 8: Phnom Penh – Siem Reap

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. You will spend about 1 hour

here on foot for a harrowing insight into Cambodia's tumultuous past. Most 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 9: Siem Reap

Spanning from the 9th to 15th century, the Angkor complex with over 1,000 temples was the seat of the thriving Khmer Empire. UNESCO manages the complex and, to enter, your group will drive approximately 6km out of town to the main entrance 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. In the evening, relax on-board a boat and view the sunset on Angkor'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 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.

**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.

#### Day 10: Siem Reap

In the high-water season, drive to Kampong Phluk is a cluster of three villages of stilts 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 11: Siem Reap

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.



#### Days 12-13: Depart Siem Reap

You will be transferred to the airport in time for your departing flight. Any time prior to departure today is free at your leisure. Fly home to Australia, arriving the same or the following day.

*Please note: Only breakfast is provided on the group's day of departure; no refund will be given for meals missed.*

## A Mekong Experience Travel Information

### Visas

Entry visas are required for visitors to Cambodia and Vietnam. Particularly when arriving by port into Cambodia, a physical visa is required and therefore must be applied for in advance of travel. Wendy Wu Tours' Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining one. We will supply you with all paperwork and submit the visa application on your behalf. Visas for Vietnam are issued with specific start and expiry dates which are based on the dates stated on the visa application form. Travel must be completed within those dates. Please be advised that your passport must have at least 6-months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia. Visa application forms and all relevant documentation are due in our office 60 days prior to departure; if received after this, urgent visa processing fees will apply.

To stay up to date with the latest visa requirements and travel advice visit [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au).

### Insurance

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your national escort should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

### Eating in South East Asia

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 Vietnam, dishes are normally placed in the centre and people serve food for themselves with their own chopsticks and bowl. In Thailand and some other countries 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.



Please refer to your travel guide for more information on Southeast Asian cuisine, including information for travellers with restricted diets.

### 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 Australia 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 needs.

**Solo travellers:** If you are a solo traveller and willing to share a room, you will not have to pay a single supplement for any hotel rooms. Willing to share single travellers booking within 75 days of the first day of a group tour will be subject to availability. If no suitable match is available at time of booking you will be required to pay all single supplements.

### 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, mini buses may be used for smaller groups (under 10 passengers). Roads in South East 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.

### Development in South East Asia

Although South East 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 Australia. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in Australia; 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 your National Escort or Local Guides.

### Cambodia and Vietnam public holidays

If you are travelling within the below Cambodian and Vietnamese Public Holidays please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Tourist attractions will be open, but may be crowded. In Vietnam Tet Holiday is between 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 2019, 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020, International Labour Day is on 1<sup>st</sup> May every year, Reunification Day is on 30<sup>th</sup> April every year and National Independence Day is on 2<sup>nd</sup> September every year. In Cambodia Khmer New Year is 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> April every year, the King's birthday is 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> May and the Water festival is between 21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> November.

### Group Size

Most of our tour departures consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 18 travellers in each 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 8 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.

### 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.

### After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation, which includes visa information (if applicable). Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to 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.

**Last updated: 12 September 2019**