

# Overseas Adventure Travel<sup>®</sup>

THE LEADER IN CUSTOMIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide<sup>®</sup>



Inside Vietnam

2026

# Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

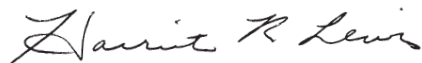
When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis  
Chair  
Overseas Adventure Travel

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Hoi An

## Inside Vietnam Small Group Adventure

**Vietnam:** Hanoi, Halong Bay, Huế, Hoi An, Dalat, Nha Trang, Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

**20 days starting from \$3,795**

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit [www.oattravel.com/svd2026pricing](http://www.oattravel.com/svd2026pricing)

Vietnam is a nation reborn, and we invite you to discover the depth of its beauty. Traversing the entire country from north to south, you'll journey from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City, stopping en route to explore the idyllic seaside retreat of Nha Trang, the French-flavored hilltop town of Dalat, and much more. We'll also enjoy 1 night aboard a privately chartered traditional sailboat in Halong Bay. Let Vietnam's warmth and beauty amaze you—in all its diversity.

### IT'S INCLUDED

- 18 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation and 3 internal flights
- 41 meals—18 breakfasts, 13 lunches, and 10 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner)
- 31 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, ship-crew, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

*Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.*





## ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1-2	Fly to Hanoi, Vietnam
3-6	Hanoi
7	Halong Bay
8-9	Fly to Hué
10-12	Hoi An
13-14	Fly to Dalat
15-16	Nha Trang
17-19	Fly to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)
20	Return to U.S.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

**Pacing:** 7 locations in 18 days with one 1-night stay aboard a traditional boat on Halong Bay

**Physical Requirements:** Travel over some bumpy unpaved roads, walk along city streets and ancient ruins, and visit monuments, often with uneven paths and walkways with no handrails

**Flight Time:** Travel time will be 25-30 hours and will most likely have two connections

View all physical requirements at [www.oattravel.com/svd](http://www.oattravel.com/svd)

## VIETNAM: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

**Unbeatable Value:** Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

**People-to-People Experiences:** Discover what daily life is like in Dalat when a local family invites you into their home for a traditional **Home-Hosted Dinner**, and meet with a nun in Hué for an insightful conversation about why she chose this path in life. Plus, spend **A Day in the Life** of Tho Ha Village, where you'll meet with the village chief and other residents to learn about rice paper production.

**O.A.T. Exclusives:** Throughout your adventure, you'll meet with locals to discuss **Controversial Topics** such as land reform. Plus, visit Phuoc Phuc Women's Shelter, supported in part by **Grand Circle Foundation**, to learn how this organization helps young mothers and their children.

## PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

### OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

**Hill Tribes of Vietnam: Journey into Ancient Cultures**

**PRE-TRIP:** 6 nights from **\$1,195**

**Cambodia: Angkor Wat & the Legacy of the Ancient Khmer Empire**

**POST-TRIP:** 5 nights from **\$1,495**

### ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Hanoi** before your Vietnam Hill Tribes pre-trip extension or before your main adventure from **\$100** per room, per night

# Inside Vietnam

## YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

### BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

#### 6 nights in *Hill Tribes of Vietnam: Journey into Ancient Cultures*

**Day 1** Depart U.S.

**Day 2** Arrive in Hanoi, Vietnam

**Day 3** Explore Hanoi

**Day 4** Overland to the Mai Chau Valley • Pom-Coong Village homestay

**Day 5** Mai Chau Valley trek • Overland to Hanoi

**Day 6** Overland to Sapa • Visit cinnamon farm • Explore Ta Phin

**Day 7** Trek to Lao Chai and Ta Van villages

**Day 8** Sapa • Sin Chai village • Transfer to Hanoi • Join main trip

#### **Day 1** Depart U.S.

**Activity Note:** Due to different air carriers and varied flight schedules, some travelers will fly from their home city to the domestic gateway city later today. Not all travelers will depart for a gateway city on Day 1. If you are already located in a gateway city, you will likely depart directly from that city on Day 2.

**Morning/Afternoon:** Depart today for Hanoi, Vietnam.

#### **Day 2** Arrive in Hanoi, Vietnam

- Destination: Hanoi
- Accommodations: May De Ville Trendy Hotel or similar

**Evening:** Arrive in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital and second-largest city. Transfer to your hotel, where you'll be joined by travelers who took our optional *Hill Tribes of Vietnam: Journey*

*into Ancient Cultures* extension and those who arrived early in Hanoi before the main adventure.

#### **Day 3** Explore Hanoi • Cyclo-rickshaw ride

- Destination: Hanoi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: May De Ville Trendy Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** This morning, we'll get our first taste of local life here during an orientation walk along the streets of Hanoi, a pulsing city of about seven million people. From 1883 to 1945, Hanoi was the heart of French Indochina, and the French influence is still clearly visible today. The Old Quarter is a dense collection of markets, cafés, and restaurants—many of which embrace an *al fresco* spirit. Tables and



people spill out onto the bustling, narrow streets, filling the area with the sounds of chatter, dining, and drinking.

**Lunch:** On your own. You are free to dine at the hotel restaurant, or you can ask your Trip Experience Leader for local dining recommendations.

**Afternoon:** You'll have time to relax or to set off and explore the Old Quarter on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations for galleries, cafés, and more.

Later, we'll meet with our Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Briefing at the hotel, during which we will review our itinerary in more detail (including any changes that may need to occur).

Next, we'll gather at the hotel, board cyclo-rickshaws, and ride through the Old Quarter to a local restaurant.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant. Tonight's Welcome Dinner will feature local cuisine.

**Evening:** We return to the hotel and the rest of the evening is on your own. Settle in with a drink at the bar, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations for entertainment or exploration.

#### **Day 4 Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum & One Pillar Pagoda • Water puppet demonstration at local puppet master's home**

- Destination: Hanoi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: May De Ville Trendy Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** The Ho Chi Minh mausoleum is closed every Monday and Friday (outside grounds and garden area will be open on these

days). The mausoleum is also normally closed from September 4 through October 5 for preservation and maintenance of the building.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Depart for Ba Dinh Square, a pivotal site in 20th-century Vietnamese history. It was here in September 1945 that Ho Chi Minh read Vietnam's Declaration of Independence, and it's here today that the national leader's body rests within a massive granite mausoleum. We'll take in the sight of guards and flowers, and we'll also behold the One Pillar Pagoda, widely considered one of Vietnam's most iconic Buddhist temples. Built of wood atop a single, four-foot-wide stone pillar and designed to resemble a lotus flower, the temple's origins date back to the year 1049.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** After returning to the hotel, you'll have time to rest in your room, or gather with fellow travelers in the hotel to reflect on the morning's discoveries. Perhaps you'll start exploring the Old Quarter on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations for galleries, cafés, and more.

Later, we'll head to the home of a local water puppet master. After watching traditional water puppets in action during a private show, we'll enjoy a hands-on demonstration on how to manipulate the puppets to make them move—an O.A.T.-exclusive experience. Then, we'll learn how these intricate puppets are made. In Vietnam, the art form of water puppetry continues to thrive at least 1,000 years after it originated with peasants in the Red River Delta of the north. Puppets are suspended over water and directed by puppet masters who must sit, semi-submerged, for hours at a time. The French used to call these puppets "the souls of the Vietnamese rice

fields”—made of lacquered, water-resistant fig wood, they depict villagers, farm animals, dragons, and more.

**Dinner:** On your own, with the freedom to seek out local cuisine or familiar American standards. In either case, your Trip Experience Leader will be ready with recommendations.

**Evening:** You’re free to turn in early for the night, or make the most of your time in Hanoi with extra exploration.

### **Day 5 Hanoi • *A Day in the Life of Tho Ha Village***

- Destination: Hanoi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: May De Ville Trendy Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We’ll begin our *A Day in the Life* discoveries of Tho Ha Village, where we’ll see what daily life is like in rural Vietnam. We’ll set off on a journey north, stopping along the way at a local market for ingredients we’ll enjoy at lunchtime.

We’ll then head to a nearby ferry station, where we’ll board a ferry and ride across the Nhu Nguyet River to reach our destination: Tho Ha. This quaint village showcases traditional architecture, winding streets, terracotta buildings, and an ancient community hall. Boasting a population of about 3,000 people, the main industry here is rice production, a business we’ll learn about in greater detail this morning.

Upon arrival, we’ll take a walk through the village, navigating small alleys and witnessing scenes of daily life as we explore. We’ll also make brief stops at an eastern medicine store

to learn about traditional healing, as well as a local restaurant to learn how to make *banh da*, a sesame rice cracker.

Then, we’ll be welcomed into the home of a village chief. A Vietnam War veteran, the chief fought with the Viet Cong along the Ho Chi Minh trail. After the war, he came back to Tho Ha, where he met his wife and started a family. Currently, he serves as the village chief, as well as the leader of a traditional music club.

After introductions, we’ll be joined by the chief’s wife and several local women who will guide us in making rice paper, an industry which supports most of the village. We’ll combine white rice flour, tapioca flour, salt, and water to conjure this staple ingredient commonly found in dishes like spring rolls, which we’ll also be making with our hosts.

Next, we’ll take a break in the kitchen and sit down to get to know our hosts and discuss various topics. We may be curious to learn how things have changed since the dissolution of the Indochinese Federation in 1954, or perhaps we’ll ask the chief about his experience fighting in the war. Take this opportunity to glean further insight into the daily lives of our hosts, and if you’d like, you can also use this time to share a little bit about yourself and what brought you to Vietnam.

**Lunch:** We’ll share a meal with the chief, his wife, and fellow villagers in his home that includes the fruits of our labor, as well as other traditional dishes.

**Afternoon:** We’ll make the return drive to the hotel. Upon arrival, you’re free to settle in with a book or explore. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide you with recommendations. Perhaps you’ll seek out a café in the Old Quarter, or discover the Temple of Literature, built in 1070 and home to Vietnam’s first national university. You



may visit the Hoa Lo Prison, also referred to as the “Hanoi Hilton.” Or, you can visit the Vietnamese Women’s Museum to discover the many contributions women have made in Vietnam throughout the country’s history.

**Dinner:** On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide some recommendations.

**Evening:** On your own with the freedom to turn in for the night or continue your independent exploration with tips from your Trip Experience Leader.

**Day 6 Hanoi • Visit Bat Trang ceramic village • Controversial Topic: Land reform in Vietnam • Optional Hanoi street food adventure**

- Destination: Hanoi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: May De Ville Trendy Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We’ll travel to Bat Trang, a small village located on the southeastern outskirts of Hanoi. Since the 14th century, Bat Trang has been known and celebrated for its signature ceramic pottery, crafted from rich white clay with precision and skill. Our small group size grants us access to a workshop, where generations of craftspeople have been perfecting their art for centuries. There, we will meet with an artist and their family. We’ll learn about the artist’s daily routine and the ceramics process, from forming the clay to painting the distinctive, intricate designs that have been coveted by customers for centuries. Then, we’ll have the chance to practice making ceramic pieces.

Next, we’ll walk to the historic, colonial-style home of a local family to discuss the **Controversial Topic** of land reform in Vietnam. From about 1954 to 1975, a highly divisive campaign was carried out by northern Vietnam’s communist forces, in which tens of thousands of people—including the family we meet today—were forcibly stripped of their land. The property seized was then divided and allocated amongst lower income populations in an effort to redistribute generational wealth. Today, we’ll hear a firsthand account of this reform, as well as come to understand its ramifications.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Hanoi.

**Afternoon:** You’ll have the remainder of the afternoon on your own. Perhaps you’ll embark on a photography tour with a local architecture student, visit one of Hanoi’s outstanding museums, or rest at the hotel.

Or, you might choose to join us on an optional street food adventure through the backstreets of Hanoi to discover the city’s cuisine. We’ll explore aboard a unique form of transportation as we ride a UAZ (a Russian military vehicle similar to a jeep) through the narrow lanes of Hanoi’s backstreets, viewing scenes of life in city neighborhoods that tourists rarely visit.

We’ll stop at a local market to see the wares on display, and witness locals carry out their daily routines, followed by a visit to Hanoi’s “Train Street”, where shops and homes closely flank a narrow (and active) train track. We’ll pause for refreshment, enjoying a drink as we observe the frantic rhythm of this neighborhood, where shoppers and diners sit a stone’s throw away from passing locomotives.

**Dinner:** Travelers on today’s optional tour will dine on a sampling of street food specialties, such as delectable noodle dishes, fresh local beer, and unique concoctions like cà phê

trúng—Vietnamese dessert coffee topped with a foam of egg yolk and condensed milk. Otherwise, dinner is on your own—your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

**Evening:** Today’s optional tour concludes with a night tour of the city’s highlights, including the historic French Quarter, the Presidential Palace, the Temple of Literature, Truc Bach Lake, and more.

### **Day 7 Overland to Halong Bay • Embark on overnight cruise**

- Destination: Halong Bay
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Traditional Vietnamese boat

**Activity Note:** Today, our transfer from Hanoi to Halong Bay will involve a 4-hour bus ride over roads that may be bumpy or uneven at times. We’ll be spending the rest of the day—and the night—aboard a wooden sailboat, except for a visit into a cave, which features uneven surfaces.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We’ll head east to Halong Bay, the “emerald bay of Vietnam” and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. With clear waters and mountains draped in velvety cloaks of vegetation, it’s little wonder that the bay has served as inspiration for generations of Vietnamese poets.

Upon our arrival, we’ll embark a traditional wooden sailboat. Thanks to our small group size, this boat will serve not only as our vessel for the afternoon, but also our accommodations for the night.

**Lunch:** Onboard the boat.

**Afternoon:** While relaxing on our boat’s sun deck, we are free to marvel at daily life on Halong Bay—whose name translates to “the bay of the descending dragon.” Resting peacefully across the Gulf of Tonkin near the Chinese border, the bay is dotted with more than 1,600 mountain islands, whose jagged profiles seem to rise out of nowhere. Against the backdrop of innumerable caves, beaches, soaring cliffs, and grottoes, the Vietnamese go about their daily lives: Harvesting and fishing, they reap the riches of the land and sea. Vietnamese fishermen nimbly navigate in lacquered and woven-wood *coracles*, lozenge-shaped and rudderless vessels that resemble oversized tubs. Flat-bottomed and oar-propelled fishing boats, or *sampans*, abound as well—many occupied by entire families.

Later this afternoon, we’ll stop to explore a cavernous grotto, and then drop anchor at an island pierced with surreal caves. The bay’s caves are popular among visitors and locals alike, as the stone formations seem to drip like candlewax from the ceiling or down the walls.

Following our discoveries, you may want to come and watch a cooking demonstration by our onboard chef.

**Dinner:** Onboard the boat.

**Evening:** On your own aboard our boat. You’re free to rest up before tomorrow’s discoveries, enjoy a book in the boat’s common spaces, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for even more insights into the history of life on the bay.



## Day 8 Halong Bay cruising • Fly to Hué

- Destination: Hué
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Cherish Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** Today will be a long travel day. Our transfer from Halong Bay to the airport in Hanoi will involve a bus ride of about 3.5 hours. The day also includes a flight of a little more than an hour.

**Early Morning:** For early risers interested in a healthy start to the day, join a session of *tai chi* on the sundeck, led by a certified instructor. *Tai chi* is a Chinese martial art practiced for self-defense, health benefits, and meditation.

**Breakfast:** Onboard the boat.

**Morning:** This morning, we can spend our last few hours here soaking up the scenery of Halong Bay while our boat cruises back to port. After disembarking the boat, we'll begin our transfer to Hanoi Airport.

**Lunch:** On your own. Our Trip Experience Leader will accompany us to a spot where you can grab snacks before we head to the airport, or you may wish to enjoy lunch at the airport after going through security.

**Afternoon:** Our flight south to Hué departs this afternoon. Upon landing, we'll transfer to our hotel.

**Dinner:** At the hotel.

**Evening:** On your own, with the freedom to kick off your discoveries before tomorrow's city tour.

## Day 9 Explore Hué • Meditation lunch with local nuns • Grand Circle Foundation visit: Minh Tu Orphanage

- Destination: Hué
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Cherish Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** Travelers will either visit the Minh Tu Orphanage on Day 9 *or* the Phuoc Phuc Shelter, our other Grand Circle Foundation site, on Day 14. Groups that do not visit the Minh Tu Orphanage today will have additional free time, and groups that do not visit the Phuoc Phuc Shelter on Day 14 will have additional free time on that day also.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll depart to explore Hué. The former imperial capital, Hué was built by the first king of the Nguyen Dynasty during a time recognized as the golden age of Vietnam. For centuries, the city has been a main cultural, religious, and educational center—and that reputation continues with the many students who live here today.

The older section of the city is a moated, walled citadel surrounded by eleven stone gates. Nguyen empires ruled from the citadel until 1945, although in a mostly symbolic form after the French established Indochina in the 19th century. As we tour the citadel—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—we'll find the Imperial Enclosure and see its inner Forbidden Purple City, a once-private area reserved for the emperor. During our explorations, we'll also learn about surprise attacks that were carried out here by the Viet Cong during the Tet Offensive. We then depart for a local Buddhist pagoda.

**Lunch:** At the Buddhist pagoda, featuring simple vegetarian fare enjoyed by the local monks and nuns. This meal will not only introduce us to the dishes that the nuns

are accustomed to, but also the manner in which the nuns dine—quietly, as this is a meditation lunch.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll enjoy an insightful conversation with one of the nuns that lives here. She'll tell us about why she decided to become a nun, how she is able to financially support herself, and what her family thinks of her decision. Afterward, we have the opportunity to ask our host any questions we may have.

Then, we'll regroup to visit Minh Tu Orphanage, supported in part by **Grand Circle Foundation**.

### **Grand Circle Foundation**

#### **Minh Tu Orphanage**

Total donated: **\$376,374**

Partner since: **2002**

Minh Tu Orphanage is run by 23 staff members and serves as the home for 167 orphan children whose ages range from just a few months to 17 years old. Their mission is to assist children in securing an education, as well as to provide a safe, healthy living environment.

During our visit, we'll witness the safe space here at Minh Tu and learn about the kinds of educational resources available to the young residents. We'll also interact with some of the children and have the opportunity to see the improvements the Foundation has made to the orphanage, including renovating the dining hall and providing computers.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** On your own. You're free to retire to your room, chat with your fellow travelers in the hotel's common spaces, or to ask your Trip Experience Leader where to find *me xung*, Hué's beloved sesame candy.

## **Day 10 Overland to Hoi An • Thien Mu Pagoda boat cruise**

- Destination: Hoi An
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hoi An Central Boutique Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's transfer to Hoi An includes a total of about three hours traveling by bus along roads that may be bumpy and uneven at times—including a winding mountain pass.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Drive to a nearby pier where we'll board a boat for a cruise to Thien Mu Pagoda. We'll discover this temple's history that dates back to the 17th century and the symbolism of its seven stories before saying goodbye to Hué and heading for the coastal village of Hoi An.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** We'll walk to nearby My Khe Beach, which is better known to Americans as China Beach. This is the setting for the eponymous TV show about a U.S. army base in Vietnam, and now a peaceful 18 miles of white sand and waves. Then, we'll finish our drive to Hoi An.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** You're free to explore Hoi An as you'd like, and your Trip Experience Leader will be ready with recommendations to help you make the most of your time here.



## **Day 11 Explore Hoi An • Countryside Cruise & Street Food Experience optional tour**

- Destination: Hoi An
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hoi An Central Boutique Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Drive to Hoi An's Old Town where we'll embark on a walking tour. A well-known feature in this port town is its Japanese covered bridge, complete with its own temple and statuary. We'll amble through Hoi An's historic streets and observe the city's mossy houses, including the Phuc Kien Congressional House. Most of Hoi An's historic houses have been maintained in their traditional design, with brick exteriors and wooden interiors. And after many centuries of maritime trade, the town boasts a multicultural air: Traders from Persia, Arabia, China, Japan, and India, as well as the first Christian missionaries to reach Vietnam, have all left their marks.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** You can enjoy the afternoon on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations on what to do and where to go during this free time.

Or, if you'd prefer, you can choose to join an optional tour that gives us the chance to view the area by land and water. We'll drive to the village of Cam Thanh—where we'll witness rural life, meet local families, and visit their farms—before continuing on to a nearby boat station for a cruise along the Thu Bon River. Apart from the stunning views, this optional tour also provides the opportunity to sample traditional street food as we explore a central market frequented by locals, followed by dinner.

**Dinner:** For those who did not join the optional tour, tonight's dinner is on your own. Perhaps you'll dine with fellow travelers in the hotel, or venture out for a meal at a local restaurant. Dinner will be at a local restaurant for those on the optional tour.

**Evening:** On your own, with freedom to discover more of the city as you'd like. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations.

## **Day 12 Hoi An • Explore Champa Ruins at My Son Sanctuary**

- Destination: Hoi An
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hoi An Central Boutique Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll drive to My Son Sanctuary. This is Vietnam's most significant ruin from the ancient Champa Kingdom, which prospered from the second to 15th centuries.

Nestled in an isolated valley overlooked by Hon Quap (Cat's Tooth Mountain), My Son was established as a religious center in the fourth century. We'll learn about the history of the complex and its surroundings during a guided tour, which gives us time to walk among the red-brick ruins and admire the delicate masonry.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Hoi An.

**Afternoon:** The rest of the day is on your own. You're free to take in the views along the riverbanks, or you may visit a local café. Later, you also have the option to gather with some of your fellow travelers for a round table conversation on the complex history and controversial topics our group has encountered during our time in Vietnam.

**Dinner:** On your own.

**Evening:** Tonight you are free to explore at your own pace, browse the local shops, or gather at the hotel with fellow travelers.

### **Day 13 Fly to Nha Trang**

- Destination: Nha Trang
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Em Oi Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We have time this morning to pack our bags or relax. After, we begin our travel day to Nha Trang, which includes a short flight.

**Lunch:** Our Trip Experience Leader will accompany us to a bakery before we leave for the airport. Here, you can grab a classic Vietnamese lunch like *bánh mì*, a sandwich that combines French and Vietnamese influence.

**Afternoon:** Upon arrival in Nha Trang, we'll transfer to our hotel. Enjoy free time to explore on your own. Perhaps you'll stroll along Nha Trang beach or rest after the flight.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** The rest of the evening is on your own. Consider asking your Trip Experience Leader for the best locales for whatever your preferences are.

### **Day 14 Nha Trang • Grand Circle Foundation visit: Phuoc Phuc Women's Shelter • Village visit • Community lunch**

- Destination: Nha Trang
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Em Oi Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** On select departures, our visit to Phuoc Phuc Shelter will be replaced with a visit to Minh Tu Orphanage on Day 9.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll depart for Phuoc Phuc Women's Shelter—supported in part by Grand Circle Foundation—to meet with the husband and wife co-founders, who will introduce us to their organization.

### **Grand Circle Foundation**

#### **Phuoc Phuc Women's Shelter**

Total donated: **\$5,194**

Partner since: **2020** Upon arrival, we'll be greeted by the co-founders, devoted Christians, parents, and philanthropists—in fact, the organization is primarily funded by income generated from their own clothing shop and farm. Since 2004, they've worked tirelessly to reduce the number of abortions in Vietnam, as well as support young girls through pregnancy and beyond. Nearly five hundred women have lived at the shelter since, and currently it is home to eleven mothers and forty children.

As we get acquainted with the organization, we'll have a chance to briefly tour the property, which consists of two homes: one for mothers with newborns and the other for families with older, more active children. We may meet some of these residents and learn about their daily lives as we explore. We'll also have a chance to see the bathroom and bedroom renovations made possible by donations from Grand Circle Foundation and our travelers.

Then, we'll depart for a nearby local market. During our time here, we'll have the opportunity to see locals going about their daily routines. We'll also enjoy a walk around the village, stopping along the way to say hello to local families.

Next, we'll continue to the home of a local, where we'll roll up our sleeves and begin preparing a traditional lunch.

**Lunch:** We'll sit down with the family for lunch and a conversation about life in the village.

**Afternoon:** We'll resume our walking exploration of the village and pass by local families making bamboo chopsticks. We may have the opportunity to stop and interact with several of them in order to learn more about their family-run business.

Upon returning to Nha Trang, the rest of the afternoon is yours, with the freedom to explore as you'd like. You may choose to visit the 19th-century Long Son Pagoda, which features one of the country's largest outdoor Buddha statues. Or, perhaps you'll visit the Dr. Yersin Museum to learn more about this revered bacteriologist.

**Dinner:** On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on some of the best places for local fare, like *bun bo nam bo*, a dry noodle dish that combines a symphony of flavors and textures.

**Evening:** Free for your own discoveries.

## **Day 15 Overland to Dalat • Home-Hosted Dinner**

- Destination: Dalat
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Dalat Du Parc Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's transfer to Dalat includes about four hours of bus travel, along roads that may be bumpy and uneven at times.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Journey to Dalat, nicknamed the "City of Eternal Spring." Along the way, we'll admire the region's rice paddies, vegetable patches, and gently sloping hills that grow into mountains. Nestled in the mountains, Dalat is prized by the Vietnamese for its mild climate—Bao Dai, Vietnam's last emperor, even had his summer residence here.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant. Here, we'll have the opportunity to meet members of a local hill tribe—the Montagnards—and hear some of their traditional music while we dine. The hill tribes in this area have inhabited these lands for centuries, roughly 150 years before the French settled here. Now, they live in areas outside the village, but are happy to commute into the city to share insight into their culture with us.

**Afternoon:** Following our meal, we'll depart for our hotel and check in. After settling in, you're welcome to join our Trip Experience Leader for a short orientation walk around the neighborhood. The rest of the afternoon is free for you to spend as you'd like, whether you wish to explore the hotel or begin your own discoveries in Dalat. You might be interested in taking a leisurely stroll around Xuan Huong Central Lake, or perhaps you'll ride a cable car up to Truc Lam Zen Monastery.

Our group will reconvene this evening to learn about Dalat's local culture during a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with those who know it best: its residents. Your multi-generational host family might hail from a variety of different backgrounds, from teachers, to government officers, to retirees, and their home may be colonial-style or perhaps more modern.

**Dinner:** We'll enjoy dinner with our hosts. Here we'll see how residents go about their daily lives—where they live, what they cook, how they eat, and how they feel about their homeland. While we dine, we'll discuss Dalat's complex history, once a Montagnard territory and now a popular vacation spot.

**Evening:** The rest of the evening is on your own. You're free to gather with your fellow travelers to discuss our dinner in greater detail, or to ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on where to find the best *kem bo* (avocado ice cream).



## Day 16 Dalat • Optional Dalat Agricultural tour • University student discussion

- Destination: Dalat
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Dalat Du Parc Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** The morning is free to explore the city as you'd like. Perhaps you'll behold the "Crazy House," a guesthouse with a whimsical and abstract design. You may prefer more natural wonders, in which case you can stroll through the elaborate Dalat Flower Gardens. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations that suit your interests.

Or, you're welcome to join an optional tour focusing on Dalat's agricultural production and village life. We'll first visit a market garden, where we'll learn about the flowers grown in this region, before continuing on to a local coffee plantation. Here we'll get an introduction to weasel coffee—a close cousin to civet coffee, it's expensive, highly coveted, and somewhat controversial among Western coffee connoisseurs. We'll have a chance to sample this coffee before a local family invites us into their home to enjoy more weasel coffee. Next, we'll drive to the isolated, traditional village of Buon Chuoi (Banana Village). We'll arrive at the village and have some time to explore. We'll meet members of this hill tribe and learn about their subsistence farming practices, and they'll give us glimpses into their home lives. Then, we'll sit down with the chief to discuss the impacts government policies are having on local hill tribes.

**Lunch:** If you haven't joined today's optional tour, lunch is on your own. You're free to seek out a restaurant, or perhaps try one of Dalat's popular street foods, *bánh tráng kẹp* (grilled egg, pork, and shrimp on rice paper). Your

Trip Experience Leader can tell you where to find this "Vietnamese pizza." Travelers on our optional tour will enjoy lunch at a local restaurant in Dalat.

**Afternoon:** Those who joined our optional tour will continue their drive back to the hotel. Then, we'll gather as a group at the hotel for a short ride to Dalat University, where we'll have the chance to meet with some of its students. Admittance into one of Vietnam's colleges and universities requires successfully passing a prestigious entrance examination, and the pressure on students is high: On average, only one in five Vietnamese high school students passes the test. Our candid conversation will give us the chance to learn about Vietnam's next generation in their own words.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** On your own. You're free to return to the hotel to pack and rest up before tomorrow's travel to Ho Chi Minh City, or venture out for a last bit of exploration here in Dalat. Perhaps you'll go to Dalat Market to explore its vibrant night market scene, where street food stands beckon with a tantalizing assortment of scents, accompanied by the sound of sizzling pots and pans.

## Day 17 Fly to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

- Destination: Ho Chi Minh City
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Central Palace Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** We'll rise around 5am today so we have plenty of time to grab breakfast and finish packing before we transfer to the airport.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll head to the airport, and depart for our flight to the southernmost point of our adventure: Ho Chi Minh City. Upon landing, we'll dive into our explorations with an included city tour.

Formerly known as Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City is now a modern seaport and Vietnam's largest city. During our tour, we'll see the city's long and complex history on full display: Centuries' old Buddhist temples and buildings built by French colonists. Continuing on, we'll see the Catholic Cathedral of Notre Dame, completed in 1880 and said to stand on the site of an old pagoda. We'll then witness the majestic Post Office—also built in the late 19th century, it features a pair of enormous murals with maps of Vietnam as it was years ago. We will also drive by the former U.S. Embassy, an iconic Vietnam War site.

**Lunch:** At a local noodle soup restaurant. Rich and flavorful, *pho* (noodle soup) is Vietnam's national dish, having originated in the north and spread across the nation. It's considered a homey comfort food here, and locals note that different regions add their own nuances to the dish.

**Afternoon:** We'll drive to the hotel and check in. You'll have some time to explore on your own this afternoon—perhaps you'll venture out to the nearby Ben Thanh market. You may also visit the War Remnant Museum. The North Vietnamese captured this city on April 30, 1975, and as you explore the artillery and armor collection, you'll gain more northern insights into the "American War."

Later, we'll regroup for an orientation walk around the neighborhood.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the evening as you wish. You may choose to enjoy a beverage at the hotel's bar, retire to your

room, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on exploring Ho Chi Minh City independently.

### **Day 18 Mekong Delta experience • Sampan ride • Visit a coconut candy workshop**

- Destination: Ho Chi Minh City
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Central Palace Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll embark on a journey out of Ho Chi Minh City to discover Vietnam's famous Mekong Delta. Throughout the day, our Trip Experience Leader will facilitate interactions with many of the local people who earn their livelihood from the maze of rivers and islands of this fertile region often referred to as "Vietnam's rice bowl."

We'll begin by driving to a boat station, where we'll embark a motorized boat and cruise to the picturesque province of Ben Tre. Upon arrival, we'll disembark and walk to visit a local farmer. There, we'll meet some of his family members and have an opportunity to taste some of their produce, such as grapefruits.

Then, we'll board a *sampan*, a traditional flat-bottomed wooden boat, which we'll take on a canal cruise. After, we'll disembark and board another form of local transportation: a *Xe Lambro*. These three-wheeled vehicles are similar to auto rickshaws you find in India. They have no windows and seat between 4–6 people. Our destination is a local coconut candy workshop. There, a local villager will show us how to make *keo dua*, a type of coconut candy—a favorite treat in Vietnam. We'll have the opportunity to learn about the production process: first grating the fresh coconut flesh, then extracting the milk and cream. The next step is the addition of malt syrup and sugar,

followed by heating the mixture to a high temperature in large woks. The coconut candy eventually caramelizes, and then it's cooled and ready for consumption. Take the opportunity to ask the local villager any questions you have about this process.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** We'll board our motorized boat, and cruise back to the pier before driving back to Ho Chi Minh City. The rest of the afternoon is yours, with the freedom to enjoy the hotel's common areas, relax in your room, or venture out into the city. Perhaps you'll visit Reunification Palace, where the Vietnam War formally ended.

**Dinner:** On your own.

**Evening:** On your own. You're free to stay on the hotel grounds tonight, or you may choose to see a performance at the nearby Opera House, or even stroll along the expansive and popular Nguyen Hue Boulevard.

### **Day 19 Explore the Cu Chi Tunnels • Discussion about postwar life for Viet Cong veterans**

- Destination: Ho Chi Minh City
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Central Palace Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Depart for the village of Cu Chi—the namesake for a vast network of tunnels that stretch for more than 160 miles. During the Vietnam War, these tunnels allowed the Viet Cong to control a large area near the former Saigon. But they were so much more than a means of transport: Soldiers and local civilians alike took to the tunnels as aerial bombing raged overhead, and there they lived, with homes, kitchens, medical facilities, and more.

Upon arrival, we'll begin our guided tour of the tunnels. As we explore the rough-hewn passageways and see the community spaces, we'll gain invaluable insight into the war. Plus, thanks to our small group size, we'll benefit from a unique glimpse of the site, as we explore an area of the tunnels most American tourists don't typically visit.

**Lunch:** We'll share a meal with a local family in their home, providing an opportunity to discuss our experience this morning.

**Afternoon:** After we eat, we'll delve deeper into what life is like for former Viet Cong fighters during a conversation that will examine the Vietnam War—or “American War,” as it's referred to in Vietnam—and whether or not veterans are satisfied with the outcome.

Later, we'll return to Ho Chi Minh City. You're free to explore on your own, or continue exploring.

**Dinner:** We'll enjoy a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** On your own—with freedom for you to enjoy your final night in Ho Chi Minh City as you'd like.

### **Day 20 Return to the U.S. or begin post-trip extension**

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** A boxed breakfast will be provided.

**Early Morning:** Depart for the airport to catch your return flight to the U.S. or to begin your post-trip extension to *Cambodia: Angkor Wat & the Legacy of the Ancient Khmer Empire*.



## END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

### **5 nights in *Cambodia: Angkor Wat & the Legacy of the Ancient Khmer Empire***

**Day 1** Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam • Fly to Siem Reap, Cambodia • Visit Killing Fields

**Day 2** Angkor National Museum • Optional Banteay Srei tour

**Day 3** Explore Angkor and Angkor Wat • Home-Hosted Lunch

**Day 4** Cruise Tonle Sap Lake • Floating village visit • Angkor Wat sunset

**Day 5** Fly to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

**Day 6** Return to U.S.

## OPTIONAL TOURS

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During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

**Please note:** Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.

### Hanoi Street Food Adventure

(Day 6 \$70 per person)

Join us on an excursion through the backstreets of Hanoi to discover the city's cuisine. We'll explore aboard a unique form of transportation as we ride a UAZ (a Russian military vehicle similar to a jeep) through the narrow lanes of Hanoi's backstreets, viewing scenes of life in city neighborhoods that tourists rarely visit.

We'll stop at a local market to see the wares on display, and witness locals carry out their daily routines, followed by a visit to Hanoi's "Train Street", where shops and homes closely flank a narrow (and active) train track. We'll pause for refreshment, enjoying a drink as we observe the frantic rhythm of this neighborhood, where shoppers and diners sit a stone's throw away from passing locomotives.

Throughout our optional tour, we'll dine on a sampling of street food specialties, such as delectable noodle dishes, fresh local beer, and unique concoctions like cà phê trứng—Vietnamese dessert coffee topped with a foam of egg yolk and condensed milk.

After dinner, enjoy a night tour of the city's highlights, including the historic French Quarter, the Presidential Palace, the Temple of Literature, Truc Bach Lake, and more.

### Countryside Cruise & Street Food Experience

(Day 11 \$75 per person)

We'll travel by electric car to Cam Thanh village, visit local family farms, and witness Hoi An's historic cityscape from a different vantage point during a cruise along the lovely Thu Bon River. We'll also sample a slice of daily life at the central market, where we'll experience various street food delicacies. Later, we'll round out our discoveries with dinner at a nearby restaurant, the glowing lights of Hoi An reflected on the nearby river.

### Dalat Agricultural Tour

(Day 16 \$70 per person)

Dalat is an area of rich agricultural production in the central highlands. First, we'll visit a market garden, where we'll learn about the flowers grown in this region, before continuing on to a local coffee plantation. Here we'll get an

introduction to weasel coffee—a close cousin to civet coffee, it's expensive, highly coveted, and somewhat controversial among Western coffee connoisseurs. We'll have the opportunity to taste this traditional coffee. Then, we'll venture to the isolated traditional village of Buon Chuoi (Banana Village). The village chief will greet us and we'll have some time to explore. We'll meet members of this hill tribe and learn about their subsistence farming practices, and they'll give us glimpses into their home lives. Then, we'll sit down with the chief to discuss the impacts government policies are having on local hill tribes. We'll cap off our discoveries and head back to Dalat for an included lunch.



## PRE-TRIP

### Hill Tribes of Vietnam: Journey into Ancient Cultures

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| » All internal transportation   | » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader         |
| » 6 nights accommodation  | » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters |
| » 14 meals—6 breakfasts, 5 lunches, and 3 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch) | » All transfers   |
| » 8 small group activities  |   |

#### PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Discover the diverse ethnic groups of Vietnam's remote northern hill towns, where lush rice paddies and bamboo forests flourish in the shadow of Fan Si Pan Peak. Venturing where few Americans go, you'll stay with a local family in their stilt house and witness centuries-old traditions, from performance to handcrafts.*

##### Day 1 Depart U.S.

**Morning/Afternoon:** Depart today on your flight to Hanoi, Vietnam.

##### Day 2 Arrive in Hanoi, Vietnam

- Accommodations: May De Ville Trendy Hotel or similar

**Evening:** Arrive in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital and second-largest city. Upon arrival, transfer to your hotel, where you'll meet travelers who arrived early in Hanoi before the pre-trip extension.

##### Day 3 Explore Hanoi

- Destination: Hanoi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: May De Ville Trendy Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** This morning, we'll get our first taste of local life here during an orientation walk along the streets of Hanoi, a pulsing city of about seven million people. From 1883 to 1945, Hanoi was the heart of French Indochina, and the French influence is still clearly visible today. The Old Quarter is a dense collection of markets, cafés, and restaurants—many of which embrace an *al fresco* spirit. Tables and people spill out onto the bustling, narrow streets, filling the area with the sounds of chatter, dining, and drinking.

**Lunch:** On your own. You are free to dine at the hotel restaurant, or you can ask your Trip Experience Leader for local dining recommendations.

**Afternoon:** You'll have time to relax or to set off and explore the Old Quarter on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations for galleries, cafés, and more.

Later, we'll meet with our Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Briefing at the hotel. During this briefing, we will review our itinerary in more detail (including any changes that may need to occur).

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** We return to the hotel and the rest of the evening is on your own. Settle in with a drink at the bar, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations for entertainment or exploration.

#### **Day 4 Overland to the Mai Chau Valley • Pom-Coong Village homestay**

- Destination: Pom-Coong
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Village homestay

**Activity Note:** Today's transfer to Pom-Coong involves a 3.5-hour bus ride, over bumpy and uneven roads at times. We'll spend the night in the home of a multi-generational family, and our sleeping arrangements will be rustic—we'll each sleep on a futon-style floor mattress and share bath facilities.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll head into the rich agricultural territory of the Mai Chau Valley. Known for its terrace plots, rice paddies, and emerald mountains, Mai Chau is home to many of Vietnam's hill tribe cultures. Our small group size gives us a unique opportunity unavailable to most American travelers—the chance to stay with a hill tribe family for a night.

Our village homestay introduces us to one of the area's tribes, the White Thai people. Originally from China, the White Thai emigrated to Vietnam in the 7th century, and they are recognized by the color of their women's clothing. Today they're known for

their intricate woven goods, which we may notice as we gather as a group in the traditional thatch-roofed stilt home of a local family.

**Lunch:** At the family's home, featuring traditional village cuisine and locally grown ingredients.

**Afternoon:** You'll have some free time to get to know the village on your own. You may choose to settle in at the house and chat with members of our host family, or venture out into the village to explore and greet more of the locals. Your Trip Experience Leader is also happy to give you additional context on the relationship among hill tribes in this region of Vietnam, as well as their long and layered histories.

Later, we'll gather as a group to embark on a walking tour, during which we'll have a chance to meet and connect with more members of the local hill tribe community. Our walk will be followed by a cultural performance of folk music and dancing—a showcase of *Xoe* dances. Dancers utilize elegant and precise movements, brightly colored fans or props, and accompanying instruments to celebrate through song and dance the traditional staples of daily life: hunting, pounding rice, harvesting, and more.

**Dinner:** At our homestay.

**Evening:** On your own, with the freedom to relax with a book or take a stroll through the village. This is also a great chance to get to know the three generations of family hosting us in their home for the night. If you'd like, you are welcome to bring a token of appreciation with you and present it to the family.

## Day 5 Mai Chau Valley trek • Overland to Hanoi

- Destination: Hanoi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: May De Ville Trendy Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's hiking trek involves walking three miles, often along uneven pathways. The day also involves a 3.5-hour bus ride back to Hanoi, over bumpy and uneven roads at times.

**Breakfast:** At our homestay.

**Morning:** Our group will experience the “hills” element of the White Thai hill tribe during a visit to Hich Village on a walking trek. Led by villagers, we'll explore the Mai Chau Valley's vistas, where the terraced plots creep up hillsides like undulating staircases, well-trodden pathways cut through expansive rice paddies, and jagged mountains rise in the distance. As we journey along the bamboo-covered hillsides to Hich Village, we'll learn about the different layers of identity that exist here—of family, village, and tribe.

**Lunch:** At our homestay.

**Afternoon:** After, you'll have some free time—with the option to explore more of the village before we say goodbye to our hosts. Later, we'll head to Hanoi and check in to our hotel.

**Dinner:** On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for local dining options.

**Evening:** Enjoy the rest of the evening as you wish in Hanoi.

## Day 6 Overland to Sapa • Visit cinnamon farm • Explore Ta Phin

- Destination: Sapa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Sapa Charm Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's destination, Sapa, is located about a mile above sea level, which means you may notice mild side effects due to the higher altitude. Upon arrival, we recommend that you give yourself time to acclimate, and consider drinking more water than normal, as that helps bodies adjust more quickly.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll journey to Sapa with several stops along the way. First, we'll visit a cinnamon farm, where we'll have a chance to interact with the farmer and learn all about this indigenous Vietnamese spice that is harvested from the inner bark of an evergreen cassia tree. We'll then continue on to Lao Cai.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll continue our drive to Sapa, with another stop at Ta Phin village. Populated by members of the Red Dao, this village of about 20 homes welcomes in travelers to give us the chance to experience its agricultural and textile traditions. During our visit, we'll join locals in their home to learn about the Red Dao's traditional culture. We'll also note some of their distinctive traditional garb, capped by red hats for the men and headaddresses for the women.

Later, we'll depart Ta Phin village and continue on to Sapa. The landscape here is abundant with rice paddies, bamboo forests, and waterfalls. The heart of the timber industry, Sapa is also the place where members of many hill tribes gather to socialize, share their produce, and sell



their handcrafts. After checking in to the hotel, you'll have time to relax or begin exploring on your own, perhaps to check out Sapa's local market and the "Stone Church," built by the French in 1925.

**Dinner:** At the hotel.

**Evening:** On your own, whether you'd like to retire to your room, enjoy the hotel's common spaces, or explore Sapa independently.

## Day 7 Trek to Lao Chai and Ta Van villages

- Destination: Sapa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Sapa Charm Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's trek involves hiking downhill about two miles, and while we'll travel along the main road for most of the trek, some of the surfaces we traverse will be uneven or bumpy. If you have a walking stick for stability, today is a day you'll want to have it with you.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll begin our day with a hike down the main road of a nearby mountain slope. From this vantage point, we're treated to views of the villages below, mountains beyond, and the river that meanders through this scene. Our first trek takes us down into the village of Lao Chai, home to 100 Black Hmong people. Recognized by their embroidered indigo clothing, the Black Hmong work and live off the land. They're also known for their hemp and brocade skills, which we'll notice in many places in and around Sapa.

Continuing our trek, we'll hike past terraced corn and rice fields to meet the Giay people, the devoted farmers who call Ta Van home. The Giay are known for their love of folktales, fables, and humorous sayings, and we'll get a proper introduction to all of it during our visit.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Ta Van.

**Afternoon:** We'll return to Sapa. The rest of the afternoon is yours to spend as you'd like.

**Dinner:** On your own tonight. You're free to ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. You may seek out a restaurant that serves traditional dishes like *ga nuong*, chicken prepared with honey and grilled.

**Evening:** After the day's active trek, you may choose to retire early for extra rest or relaxation, or gather with some of your fellow travelers in the hotel's common areas to discuss the village visits in greater depth.

## Day 8 Sapa • Sin Chai village • Transfer to Hanoi • Join main trip

- Destination: Hanoi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

**Activity Note:** Today's activities include a 4-hour bus transfer.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll gather as a group and depart for the village of Sin Chai, located at the foot of Fan Si Pan Mountain, "the roof of Indochina." Sin Chai is home to an agricultural community of Black Hmong people, who preserve the practices of weaving and indigo-dyeing.

It's here that we'll meet some of the local children in the village school. The children speak little English, so you have an opportunity to get creative as you communicate. If you wish, you're welcome to bring along deflated soccer balls or basketballs, educational books, crayons, or postcards from your hometown to give to the students.

We'll return to Sapa and drive to Lao Cai for lunch.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll continue our drive back to Hanoi. Along the way, we'll make a brief stop to view the border with China, looking beyond the river to see the Chinese village of Ha Kou.

Upon arrival in Hanoi, you'll have the remainder of the day free.

**Dinner:** On your own. Return to a favorite restaurant or consult with your Trip Experience Leader for dining suggestions.

**Evening:** Spend the evening as you wish in Hanoi, or rest before you join Day 3 of your main adventure, *Inside Vietnam*.

## POST-TRIP

### *Cambodia: Angkor Wat & the Legacy of the Ancient Khmer Empire*

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- » Airfare between Ho Chi Minh City and Siem Reap
- » 5 nights accommodation
- » 10 meals—5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 2 dinner (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch)
- » 9 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

#### POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Delve into the ancient splendor of Cambodia's Khmer Empire at the haunting and spectacular ruins of its capital city of Angkor. Considered Southeast Asia's greatest artistic and spiritual center, Angkor is composed of a vast network of palaces, temples, and monuments.*

##### **Day 1 Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam • Fly to Siem Reap, Cambodia • Visit Killing Fields**

- Destination: Siem Reap
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Tara Angkor Hotel or similar

**Morning:** As our main adventure in Vietnam ends, we'll set our sights on Siem Reap, a town within the boundaries of the ancient city of Angkor, Cambodia. To get there, we'll transfer to the airport in Ho Chi Minh City and then check in for our flight.

**Lunch:** On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations on where within the airport you can dine.

**Afternoon:** Upon landing, we'll transfer to our hotel. You'll have time to settle in and explore the hotel before we resume our activities later in the afternoon. Check with your Trip Experience Leader should you want suggestions.

Later, we'll embark on our first in-depth Cambodian exploration: a visit to the Killing Fields Temple. It may feel almost inconceivable to imagine evil that occurred here, but this site, built in 1995, commemorates the thousands of victims who were executed under Pol Pot's regime. During our time here, we'll meet with a local monk who will share his personal experience from this dark period of history. Our visit ends with a blessing by the monk for our harmony, happiness and safety.

Upon returning to the hotel, we'll gather for a Welcome Briefing to discuss logistics and ask any questions we may have.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** On your own tonight, with the freedom to continue your discoveries as you'd like. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations on how to make the most of your time.

## **Day 2 Angkor National Museum • Optional Banteay Srei tour**

- Destination: Siem Reap
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Tara Angkor Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Depart for the Angkor National Museum. Here, we'll learn about the Khmer Kingdom and the cultural heritage of its golden age. Then, we'll visit the royal shrine where we'll meet with a local who will teach us how to fold lotus flowers in a traditional manner so that we can leave them at the shrine as offerings.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** You may choose to remain in Siem Reap, with the freedom to explore the city as you'd like. Or, you're welcome to join us for an optional tour of Banteay Srei, one of the oldest and most well-preserved temple sites in Cambodia. On our way to the temple, we'll first visit a local noodle workshop. Then, we'll continue on to Banteay Srei, built starting in AD 967 in a rugged jungle about 20 miles from Angkor. Its name means "Citadel of Women" and is recognized as a tribute to the beauty of women, who are featured in painstakingly carved sandstone bas-relief murals. The temple

is a favorite for its delicate designs, wonderful state of preservation, and relatively small size compared to other Angkor temples.

**Dinner:** If you chose not to join today's optional tour, dinner is on your own tonight. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations if you'd like to venture out for Cambodian favorites like *amok*, a thick and flavorful curry typically made with fish, garlic, coconut milk, and more. For those who do join today's optional tour, dinner is included at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** You're welcome to relax with a book this evening, or perhaps venture out to experience one of the area's bustling night markets. Your Trip Experience Leader can point you in the right direction.

## **Day 3 Explore Angkor and Angkor Wat • Home-Hosted Lunch**

- Destination: Siem Reap
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Tara Angkor Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll depart for a walking tour of Angkor, a holy city of breathtaking scale—it sprawls across an area of roughly six by 16 miles. The construction process was as lengthy as the site is expansive: Khmer aristocrats built temples and monuments here between AD 800–1200, motivated by their Hindu and Buddhist beliefs.

We'll begin our discoveries at Angkor Wat, whose name simply means "city temple." This large pyramid temple, built between 1113 and 1150, is surrounded by a great moat 570 feet wide. As we explore, note the bas-relief carvings throughout the temple, and take a moment to stand in the courtyard and observe the towers. The towers represent Mount Meru,



the center of all physical and spiritual universes and the home to many gods in Hindu and Buddhist mythologies.

**Lunch:** Our small group size gives us a special opportunity to dine with a local family in a nearby village. During our **Home-Hosted Lunch**, we'll get a personal perspective on Cambodian life, and enjoy local Khmer dishes served family-style.

**Afternoon:** Upon returning to the hotel, we'll have time to relax and refresh before departing for our Angkor tour. We'll head to the South Gate of Angkor Thom, the capital city of Khmer rulers. Here we'll see the Bayon, another iconic Khmer temple, known for the hundreds of gigantic stone-carved faces that adorn its many towers.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** On your own. You have the freedom to explore more of the city at your own pace, or rest in preparation for tomorrow's discoveries.

#### **Day 4 Cruise Tonle Sap Lake • Floating village visit • Angkor Wat sunset**

- Destination: Siem Reap
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Tara Angkor Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Head south to the shores of Tonle Sap Lake. Tonle Sap means "Great Freshwater Lake," and as the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia, this is indeed one of the world's geographical wonders. (If you are a birder, this is also a world-renowned habitat for shorebirds.)

We'll begin our day with a cruise, providing a glimpse into one aspect of Cambodian life—the Mechrey Floating Village. Life here is truly lived

on the water, and we'll glide by thatched-roof houses on hollow bamboo poles, small markets, jewelry shops, and perhaps even a floating beauty parlor. We'll witness women selling fruits and vegetables from a *sampan*, a skiff full of firewood, and fishermen selling their latest catch. The people who live on the water have tied their lives to the lake's cycles, and are constantly on the move as the water level rises or recedes throughout the year.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries. Later, we'll set off for Ta Prohm, another of Angkor's most notable features. Unlike most of its neighboring temples, Ta Prohm has been left the way it was found, covered by a dense jungle of trees and roots. This gives us the chance to behold this architectural treasure just as the French did when they found it in the mid-1800s.

After exploring Ta Prohm, we'll head back to Angkor Wat, where we'll enjoy a rice wine toast as we wait for the sunset—the most opportune moment to see this masterpiece of Khmer architecture.

**Dinner:** On your own tonight. Your Trip Experience Leader will be ready with recommendations for you, should you like to venture out to a local restaurant. You may choose to seek out a traditional dish like Khmer red curry, a classic curry made with coconut milk.

**Evening:** You may choose to stay in tonight, venture out to stroll about Siem Reap, or ask your Trip Experience Leader where to sample *num chak kachan*, a traditional Khmer layer cake with coconut cream—a great way to end your time in Cambodia on a sweet note.

## Day 5 Fly to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

- Destination: Ho Chi Minh City
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Central Palace Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Most of your morning is free. You may choose to linger over your cup of coffee or take a stroll around town before we depart for the airport to catch our flight.

**Lunch:** On your own in the airport. Perhaps you'll find a restaurant that serves traditional cuisine like fish *amok*, a creamy fish mousse.

**Afternoon:** Upon arrival in Ho Chi Minh City, we'll transfer to our hotel. The rest of the day is free for your own discoveries.

**Dinner:** On your own—you may ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on where to dine during your final night in Vietnam.

**Evening:** You're free to rest up before tomorrow's travel day, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for one more can't-miss experience here in Ho Chi Minh City.

## Day 6 Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** Depending on your flight, you may receive a boxed breakfast, or you might enjoy breakfast at the hotel.

**Morning:** Depart for the airport and catch your return flight home.

## OPTIONAL TOUR

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### Banteay Srei

(Day 2 \$70 per person)

Banteay Srei is one of the oldest and most beautifully preserved temple sites in Cambodia. Built in AD 967, Banteay Srei means "Citadel of Women," and it is recognized as a tribute to the beauty of women. The structures here have been carved in painstaking detail out of sandstone. Amazingly, the detail is as intricate as a woven tapestry, a testament to the craft of the original artisans and to the devoted conservation of generations of Cambodians to this site. Set like a gem in a seemingly enchanted forest, about 20 miles from Angkor, it is famous for its delicate carvings, wonderful state of preservation and small size in relation to the other Angkor temples. This optional tour includes dinner at a local restaurant.

# TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

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## Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

## Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

## Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** If you are taking only the main trip, you will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension in Northern Vietnam:** No additional pages needed.
- **Post-trip extension to Angkor Wat, Cambodia:** You will need 2 more pages for a total of 4.
- **Both the pre-trip and post-trip extension:** You will need a total of 4 blank pages.
- **Stopover in Bangkok, Doha, Istanbul, or Singapore:** You will need to add 2 additional pages to the applicable total listed above.
- **Stopover in Denpasar, Dubai, Hong Kong, Seoul, Taipei, or Tokyo:** You will need to add an additional page to the applicable total listed above.

## Visas Required

**We’ll be sending you a detailed Visa Packet with instructions, application forms, and fees about 90 days prior to your departure.** In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This information is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Vietnam: Visa required. Can only be obtained in advance.** You must obtain your visa for Vietnam before you leave home; it cannot be obtained on arrival. Travelers taking the post-trip extension in Cambodia will need a multiple-entry visa for Vietnam.
- **Cambodia (optional post-trip extension): Visa required. We recommend you obtain it in advance.** Although this visa may be obtained upon your arrival, we recommend you obtain it in advance. Entry requirements can change at any time; obtaining your visa in advance decreases the likelihood that you will encounter problems at the border and may protect you if entry requirements subsequently change.
- **Qatar (optional stopover only): Visa required.** For U.S. citizens, a free visa waiver can be obtained at arrival for a stay of 30 days or less as long as your passport is valid for the next 6 months and you have proof of a return flight.
- **U.A.E (optional stopover only): Visa required. Currently, the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) allows U.S. citizens to get a tourist visa free of charge on arrival in Dubai.**
- **Turkey, Thailand, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, or Japan (optional stopovers only): No visa required.** A visa is not required for U.S. citizens for stays of up to 90 days.

### Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **[www.pvsinternational.org](http://www.pvsinternational.org)**.

### Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

### Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.



## Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

## RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

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### Is This Adventure Right for You?

**Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure.** We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

### PACING

- 7 locations in 18 days with one 1-night stay aboard a traditional boat on Halong Bay
- International flights from Los Angeles to Hanoi depart around midnight, crossing the International Date Line, and 3 internal flights, 2 of which require early wake-up
- Airport transfers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City take approximately 1 hour

### PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 2–3 miles unassisted and participate in 4–6 hours of physical activities each day
- Agility and balance are required for embarking riverboat, and wooden “drawing boats”
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group’s experience

### CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 80–90°F
- April–June are the hottest months, with high levels of humidity and heavy rains likely

### TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Travel over some bumpy unpaved roads, walk along city streets and ancient ruins, and visit monuments, often with uneven paths and walkways with no handrails
- Travel by 35-passenger coach, riverboat, and wooden “drawing boats”
- 3 internal flights, each about 1 hour

### FLIGHT INFORMATION

- Travel time will be 25–30 hours and will most likely have two connections

### ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Main trip: All accommodations feature private baths and Western-style toilet facilities

- Asian squat-style toilets must be used in some locations without other facilities
- Pre-trip extension: 1 night in a private village home, sleeping on futon-style floor mattresses in a shared space with shared bathrooms

## Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

## No Vaccines Required

### Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

## Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Prescription pain medication in the unlikely event of an injury in a remote location
- Optional: Anti-malarial medication for the Cambodia extension ONLY. At the time of writing, the CDC reported that the risk of malaria was low in Vietnam, but moderate in Cambodia. Anti-malarial medications can have strong side effects so be sure to discuss with your doctor.

## Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

## Staying Healthy on Your Trip

### Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don’t push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

### Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

### Water

- Tap water on this adventure is not safe to drink, so we recommend you use only bottled water for drinking and brushing your teeth.
- Avoid drinks with ice or salads/fruits unless you first confirm that the ice is made with safe water or the salad/fruit has been washed in safe water. (Fruit you peel yourself should be fine.)
- Hot drinks made with water are safe if they have been boiled.
- Bottled water is readily available for purchase; just be sure to check that the cap is sealed properly before buying.



## Food

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals. Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest restaurants for meals you take on your own.
- When dining on your own, keep in mind that meats sold by street vendors may not have had proper refrigeration.
- Be cautious with non-pasteurized milk products—they may or may not upset your stomach.

## Electricity Supply

**A constant electricity supply cannot be guaranteed during overnight stays.** Travelers dependent on electricity supply for health reasons (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) may want to consider a different O.A.T. adventure.

# MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

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## Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as U.S. dollars, local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card. Traveler's checks are not accepted in the countries you will be visiting.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and are rarely accepted in shops and restaurants.
- **U.S. dollars should be in excellent condition.** Torn, worn, dirty, or taped U.S. bills may not be accepted.

## Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like [www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter), your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

**Vietnam:** Vietnamese dong (₫)

**Cambodia:** Cambodian Riel (KHR)

## How to Exchange Money

You can change money when you arrive at banks, most hotels, and money exchange offices. In some countries you do not even need to exchange money at all—you can use U.S. dollars. For information on what type of currency can be used on this trip, see the “Currency” section.

You can also obtain local currency from an ATM. Using a local ATM on an international network will allow you to withdraw money from your U.S. account in local currency; your bank at home will calculate the conversion rate and charge you in U.S. dollars.

Throughout the trip, your Trip Experience Leader can advise you of ATM availability and warn you before you enter areas where there are no ATMs, but will not be able to guarantee which ATM will take your card.

## ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

**Vietnam:** ATMs are fairly common in Vietnam. Occasionally travelers report having to try more than one bank to find an ATM that works with their U.S.-based card.

**Cambodia:** ATMs are only somewhat available in Cambodia. You'll find them in large cities, but not out in rural areas or at archeological sites. Because U.S. dollars are in widespread use in Cambodia, most ATMs will give you dollars and not local currency.

## Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

**Vietnam:** Credit cards are commonly accepted. However, some businesses in Vietnam do not accept them, so you should carry some cash on you.

**Cambodia:** Credit cards are somewhat accepted—you'll be able to use them in nicer hotels, shops, and restaurants but not at small businesses.

## Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

## Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$8–\$12 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*

- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1-2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** If the service is excellent you may leave about 10% of the bill in appreciation. Your Trip Experience Leader will handle any tips, if appropriate, for included meals.
- **Taxi drivers:** If you are taking a taxi by yourself, keep in mind that tipping is not common practice, but many people simply let the driver keep the change by rounding up the fare to the next whole number.
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides, drivers, ship crew, and luggage porters on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

*Please note: For your convenience, tips to O.A.T. staff can be paid in U.S. dollars or local currency. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.*



## AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

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### Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

#### Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Customization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Customization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our customization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Customization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner) under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

### Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

### Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: [www.rome2rio.com](http://www.rome2rio.com)

## Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

## What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner)).

## Communicating with Home from Abroad

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

## Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

## Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype, FaceTime, or WhatsApp. We recommend you use WhatsApp to communicate with home while abroad and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

## Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

## Internet

Most hotels in Vietnam have Internet services available, some for free, some for an hourly charge. Most hotels will provide WiFi service in a common area, like the lobby or reception, or in the rooms. However, the WiFi connections in Vietnamese hotels can vary in quality from “good” to “not stable”. One place that Internet access is not available is on board the junk during the cruise of Halong Bay.

## How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

**Vietnam:** +84

**Cambodia:** +855

## PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

### Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Checked bag is limited to <b>44 lbs total</b> . Carry-on is limited to <b>15 lbs total</b> .
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+ width + depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Please do not bring a hard-sided (clamshell) suitcase.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
A small duffel bag is required for the pre-trip extension in Northern Vietnam. See note below for details.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p><b>Luggage rules:</b> Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p> <p><b>Reminder to bring a small additional bag:</b> All travelers should bring a small bag for the one-night stay on the <i>junk</i> in Halong Bay because there is no space for your suitcase on board. A waterproof bag is preferable, as is a bag that locks. Some previous travelers have suggested re-purposing your carry-on for this overnight cruise as a way to keep your luggage light.</p> <p>In addition, <b>any traveler taking the pre-trip extension in Northern Vietnam will need a small duffel bag</b> for the days we are in Sapa. We recommend something that can hold 4-5 days' worth of gear. (You can re-use this bag for the <i>junk</i> on the main trip.)</p> <p><b>Lastly, keep your luggage light as you may need to carry to the plane</b> on some internal flights if you are boarding from the tarmac.</p>	

## Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

## Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** One duffel bag or suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **A Small Additional Bag:** All travelers should bring a small bag for the one-night stay on the junk in Halong Bay because there is no space for your suitcase on board. A waterproof bag is preferable, as is a bag that locks. Some previous travelers have suggested re-purposing your carry-on for this overnight cruise as a way to keep your luggage light.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

## Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

Consider the heat and humidity when picking clothing for this trip. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet and walking a lot, sometimes over rough and slippery surfaces, so choose your footwear carefully. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction. You can find especially supportive shoes designed for walking. Light hiking boots might be useful for the ankle support, but they are optional. Other travelers suggested sports sandals as a way to combine comfort and function.



- **Winter Season (December–March):** If you are traveling during these months, a couple pieces of warm clothing are recommended, as nighttime lows drop into the 50s in Hanoi. Long underwear, sweatshirts, and long-sleeve shirts are highly recommended. Some restaurants, hotels and shops that you visit during your tour may not have heating, so warm clothing and/or clothing you can layer is a must.
- **Walking sticks:** Many past travelers have recommended bringing a folding walking stick, sold in most camping stores. An alternative is a folding ski pole. This is very useful when exploring ruins and trails that have no handrails.
- **Consider bringing less clothing** and paying for laundry along the way. Laundry services are readily available and less expensive than the U.S. However, most hotels do not have irons or ironing boards in the room.

### Style Hints and Dress Codes

- **Dress on our trip is functional and casual.** The most formal you might need for a city evening would be a sport jacket with no tie for men, a dress and dressy sandals for women—but this is not necessary on this trip—the decision is yours.
- **Wearing shorts and sleeveless shirts are acceptable in most places, except at some religious sites.** Specifically, shorts, knee-baring skirts, sleeveless shirts, and tank tops, are often forbidden in temples, so we suggest that you stick to trousers or a long skirt for temple visits. If you forget and wear shorts on a day that includes a temple visit, all is not lost—temples will generally loan cover-ups to visitors who are perceived as “too bare”—but you must cover up to go inside.
- **It is common practice to remove your shoes inside the temple,** so consider a pair that you can get on/off easily and perhaps a couple extra pairs of socks. (Use these to replace the ones that will get extra dirty in the temples. Or you could designate a couple pairs as your “temple socks” and wear them more than once.)
- **For travelers on the post-trip extension to Cambodia,** note that some of the Angkor temples are still active, so the no shorts/no sleeveless rule applies there too. (But you can leave your shoes on.)

### Recommended Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. Each travelers packing list may be different depending on the climate you are used to. We recommend using **www.weather.com** and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don’t forget a reusable water bottle—you’ll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

## Recommended Clothing

*Reminder: Laundry services are readily available on this trip, so you can pack light by bringing less clothing and having laundry done part-way through.*

- ☐ **Shirts:** A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts. Sleeveless shirts are OK in most situations, but not at temples or religious sites (including some of the Angkor temples on the post-trip extension in Cambodia).
- ☐ **Trousers and/or jeans**
- ☐ **Walking shorts:** A longer cut shows the more sensitivity to the local culture, which tends to be modest. Shorts are viewed as inappropriate for visiting a temple, so we suggest you stick to trousers or a long skirt (below the knee or longer) for temple visits. In a pinch you could wear one of the temple's cover-ups.
- ☐ **Shoes and socks:** Shoes should be comfortable walking/ running shoes or low-cut hiking shoes, with arch support. A pair of sport sandals with secure ankle strap (such as Tevas) are recommended; flip-flops are not. Because it is common to remove your shoes inside the temples and local homes, bring at least one pair of shoes that you can get on/off easily. You might want a couple extra pairs of socks.
- ☐ **Light cotton or wool sweater:** Because motor coach air conditioning can be cold.
- ☐ **Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood**
- ☐ **Wide-brim sun hat**
- ☐ **Underwear and sleepwear**
- ☐ **Swimsuit**

## Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

### **For winter (December–March):**

- ☐ A couple pieces of warm clothing are recommended for the main trip, as nighttime lows drop into the 50s in Hanoi.
- ☐ Long underwear, sweatshirts, and long-sleeve shirts are highly recommended.
- ☐ If you are taking the extension in Northern Vietnam during these months, then warm clothing and/or clothing you can layer is a must—the nighttime lows can be in the 40s and the daytime high might only be in the 50s. This is especially true since some restaurants, hotels and shops that you visit during your tour may not have heating.

## Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses
- ☐ Sunglasses, 100% UV block
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 30 or stronger
- ☐ Insect repellent with DEET (30–35% strength)
- ☐ Hand-wash laundry soap and possibly plastic clothespins
- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Packets of pocket-size tissues or small roll of toilet paper
- ☐ Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- ☐ Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Flashlight or headlamp, extra batteries/bulb
- ☐ Electrical converter & plug adapters
- ☐ Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger
- ☐ Optional: Washcloth, and small thin towel. Hotels will provide towels, but not washcloths. Having your own small towel can be useful on extremely hot/humid days.

## Medicines

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- ☐ An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- ☐ Optional: A strong prescription pain medication for rare emergency purposes
- ☐ Optional: Motion sickness medicine if you are susceptible

- ❑ Optional: Anti-malarial medication for the Cambodia extension ONLY. At the time of writing, the CDC reported that the risk of malaria was low in Vietnam, but moderate in Cambodia. Anti-malarial medications can have strong side effects so be sure to discuss with your doctor.

## Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

## Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

### Voltage

Electricity in Vietnam and Cambodia is 220–230 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner's guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

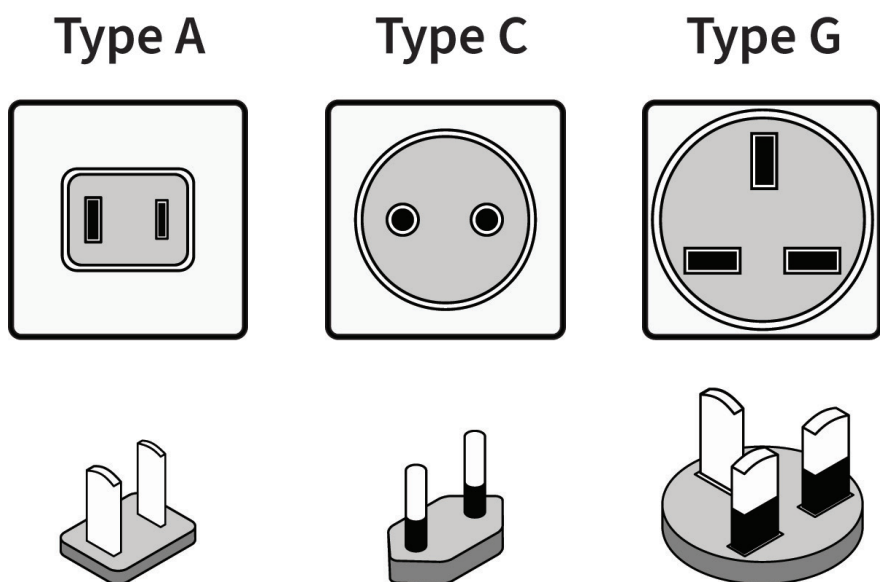
### Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because there are many different types of plugs in this region, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

**Vietnam:** A (same as the U.S.), C, or G

**Cambodia:** A (same as the U.S.), C, or G



### Availability

**A constant electricity supply cannot be guaranteed during overnight stays.** In some places, the electricity may be supplied by a generator, and lighting may not be as bright as you are used to. Travelers dependent on electricity supply (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) should consider a different adventure or ensure their apparatus has back-up battery power.



## CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

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**Northern Vietnam:** The climate in this region is cooler than the rest of the country. Summertime highs are usually in the 70s, although it can get hotter. But it's winter that surprises most travelers. From December–March the low temperatures can be in the 40s and the daytime high might only be in the 50s. So if you're traveling during these months, be sure to bring some warm clothing and/or clothing you can layer.

**Vietnam:** Vietnam lies entirely within the tropics. It has wet and dry seasons, which vary from north to south and with elevation changes. In the south, temperatures are fairly constant throughout the year, ranging between 75° and 85° F. The dry season runs from November to April and the wet season from May to October. The hottest period is during April to August, before the rains have broken. In the north, there's also a short “winter” season, which runs from December to February. At this time, temperatures can drop to the 50s, with some drizzle. Typhoons are quite common in coastal areas between September and January.

**Cambodia:** Cambodia's climate can generally be described as tropical with seasonal monsoons. There are two distinct seasons, the rainy and dry. Temperatures during the rainy season, between June and October, average 80–95°F. The dry season is characterized by cool months, November to February, with temperatures averaging 80–95°F and hot months, from March till May, which sees temperature range between 84–100°F.

**NOTE:** If you are taking one of our optional stopovers before or after your OAT adventure, please be aware the climate and temperatures might be different from what you experienced during your tour. To prepare for weather differences and pack appropriate clothing, we recommend the following world weather sites:

- [www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)
- [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)
- [www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

### Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

## Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	HANOI, VIETNAM			HUE, VIETNAM		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	69-59	85	0.8	74 to 63	87	7.1
FEB	71-62	85	1.1	76 to 65	87	3.7
MAR	76-67	90	1.8	81 to 68	84	2.6
APR	83-72	90	3.6	87 to 72	79	2.4
MAY	91-77	85	7.2	92 to 75	74	3.3
JUN	94-81	85	9.0	94 to 77	69	3.8
JUL	93-80	85	10.1	94 to 77	67	2.0
AUG	91-79	90	11.7	94 to 76	70	5.4
SEP	90-78	85	9.9	88 to 74	79	19.8
OCT	85-73	80	5.8	83 to 72	84	27.1
NOV	80-68	80	1.8	79 to 69	84	25.5
DEC	71-59	80	0.5	75 to 65	86	14.8

MONTH	HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM			SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	90-71	87 to 51	0.6	88 to 67	71	0.1
FEB	92-73	85 to 50	0.1	90 to 70	70	0.5
MAR	94-76	83 to 52	0.4	93 to 74	69	1.0
APR	95-79	83 to 56	2.0	94 to 76	68	2.5
MAY	94-78	86 to 65	8.4	93 to 76	75	5.9
JUN	91-77	89 to 71	12.2	91 to 76	79	7.0
JUL	90-76	90 to 70	11.6	89 to 75	81	7.9
AUG	90-76	91 to 71	10.7	89 to 75	82	7.9
SEP	89-76	92 to 72	13.5	87 to 75	84	10.6
OCT	89-75	92 to 73	10.3	87 to 73	84	9.3
NOV	87 to 74	89-74	4.7	87 to 71	80	3.4
DEC	89-72	87 to 58	1.8	86 to 67	75	0.6

## ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

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### O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

### The Culture of Vietnam

Vietnamese culture has been shaped by a variety of outside influences, including China, which colonized the region for a thousand years; and a period of French colonization that began in the 19th century. Chinese Influences are reflected in Vietnamese values like Confucianism teachings while French influences show up in the cuisine and architecture. Vietnam was also exposed to Western cultural Influences, of course, during America's Involvement In the war.

There are 54 different ethnic groups and almost as many different languages among the 100 million or so people living in the long, slender country of Vietnam. There are also 11 recognized religions In Vietnam, with most of them rooted In Buddhism. But rather than being strict adherents of one religion, most Vietnamese practice what amounts to a harmonic fusion of animistic beliefs with the teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and even Christianity. Family is the glue that holds It all together. If there Is any guiding principle of Vietnamese society, it would be a respect of age and status. It's why the oldest member of a family or any group is greeted first or served first at a meal. And the wisdom of elders is always sought in important family or community matters. Ancestor worship, respect for elders, and strong family values are long-held traditions In Vietnamese society. While the trend is beginning to change, It Is still not unusual for three or even four generations of the same family to be living together.

Along with a respect for elders, many Vietnamese customs and etiquettes are informed by the teachings of Confucianism, which places a strong emphasis on traits like duty, honor, loyalty and sincerity. So exhibiting selfish or aggressive behavior or taking any action that could potentially damage a person's dignity or reputation Is highly frowned upon. Like in some other Southeast Asian countries, things like dressing conservatively, removing shoes when entering homes and temples, bringing small gifts, or trying to finish all of your meal will always make a better Impression.

Animism is more significant among the indigenous communities in the highlands, especially in people whose lives revolve around agriculture, where yearly or even monthly rituals take place to request blessings from the gods. But even In Vietnam's major cities, small altars are placed outside homes, shops, and businesses to bring fortune. And before each spring, Vietnamese throughout the country head to pagodas and temples to pray for health, peace, and happiness.

Vietnamese people welcome visitors with a kindness and warmth that is genuine. And foreigners who transgress local cultural norms are easily forgiven. One area you may wish to exercise caution is bringing up the topic of the “American War” with a local, which is still a sensitive issue; and one area not to exercise caution is when you are crossing a busy street—it’s not for the timid. As a guest in any foreign country, showing respect for local traditions deepens our cultural understanding and enriches our travel experience.

## **Flights in Vietnam**

Domestic air travel in Vietnam is frequently subject to flight delays and schedule changes on short notice. Your Trip Experience Leader will do everything possible to keep your trip running smoothly, but your own acceptance that some unpredictability is part of the adventure will help.

## **Our Vehicles**

We use a variety of transportation, making our travel between destinations part of the fun. We cruise Halong Bay on a traditional wooden junk, and we cruise the Mekong Delta in a wooden sampan boat. When traveling overland from city to city, we’ll use a comfortable full-size coach. We take three fairly short flights within this trip, the longest taking two hours. Domestic air scheduling in Vietnam is not as reliable as in the U.S., and delays and routing changes are often part of the picture here. Our Trip Experience Leader will do everything possible to make the appropriate adjustments to our itinerary. We hope, that like most of our travelers, you take it in stride and develop an accepting and even lighthearted attitude. It’s part of the adventure.

## **Your International Flight: A Reminder**

The “rule of thumb” is to check in for international flights about three hours before departure. But because many flights to Asia leave just after midnight or in the early morning hours (one and two a.m.), you could be checking in before midnight, which is technically the day before. For example: If the flight to Asia leaves at 12:05 a.m. on May 2nd, you would want to arrive for check-in at 9 p.m. on May 1st. You can confirm the date and time of your international flight by referring to your preliminary air itinerary.

## **Taking Photographs**

When taking photos of people in most countries, be polite and ask permission to take a close-up. In many countries, you should not be taking photos of children or older women without permission. Do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

Please obey any signs regarding photos at museum or sites; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

## Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room – use a room safe as needed. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt.

## Vietnamese Cuisine

Vietnam cuisine was shaped by myriad influences including France, China, India and Thailand, all of which combined to make a truly unique food scene. One of the key building blocks of Vietnamese cuisine—and of Vietnamese culture in general—is rice. Many kinds of meat, most commonly pork and fish, are also heavily featured. Dishes are flavored with basil, parsley, coriander, chilies, lemon grass, lime, and laksa leaf, meaning they can range from mild to very spicy. Peanuts are a common topping. Some typical dishes are:

- **Pho:** Pronounced “fuh,” this iconic soup is typically made with rice noodles and thinly sliced beef in a bone broth
- **Banh mi:** Vietnam's version of the sub sandwich, with meat (usually pork) and veggies served on crusty French-style bread. They are popular all over the country, but many say the best ones are found in Ho Chi Minh City and Hoi An.
- **Bun bo hue:** Similar to pho, but with flat vermicelli-like noodles instead of cylindrical noodles.
- **Vietnamese coffee:** Vietnam is also the second-largest producer of coffee beans worldwide, with as many coffee shops as that suggests. Try the *ca phe nau* (also called *ca phe sua*) which is a strong dark brew cut with sweet condensed milk.
- **Nuoc mam:** Vietnam's national condiment is a fermented fish sauce that is served with every meal.
- **Snacks:** Rice cakes and spring rolls are typical snacks, as is fruit. The Vietnamese grow and consume a variety of tropical fruits, including coconuts, bananas, melons, pineapples, lychees, mandarin oranges, and exotic items such as the green dragon fruit and the three-seeded cherry. Remember to stick to fruit with a peel or rind and avoid fruit washed in local tap water.

To get the most enjoyment from your trip, be open-minded about sampling different dishes and even using chopsticks. While we will make every effort to accommodate dietary restrictions, please note that choices may be limited and that special requests are not guaranteed.



## Cambodian Cuisine

Cambodian or Khmer cuisine features a lot of pickled and tangy flavors. Rice is served with most meals, as with many other Asian countries. However, it is less spicy than the cuisines of nearby Asian countries like Thailand. The typical Cambodian meal often features several small dishes alongside the main dish, served with rice and soup. **Hot chili** is usually served on the side, so the added spiciness is at the discretion of the diner. Here are some other dishes to try:

- **Fish amok:** This is one of the most popular dishes in Cambodia. It is fresh fish cooked in a rich, creamy curry-like sauce that mixes lemongrass, turmeric and coconut milk. It's often served wrapped in a banana leaf.
- **Banana blossom salad:** This light refreshing meal is made with stir-fried banana blossom with garlic, fried shallots, nuts, and herbs.
- **Red tree ants with beef:** This dish is just as it sounds—actual ants mixed with beef and served on a bowl of white rice topped with chili.
- **Nom banh chok:** This is a popular street food often eaten at breakfast consisting of thin rice noodles bathed in a green fish gravy, mixed with various fresh vegetables.
- **Bai sach chrouk:** This street food is grilled pork marinated in coconut milk and garlic.
- **Num kachay:** A snack made with rice flour and chopped chives and served with a sweet and spicy fish sauce.

## Etiquette

Don't let the fine points of local customs worry you; locals know that visitors can't be expected to know every detail. Much of what is considered polite in this region is similar to what's polite in the U.S. But as a matter of interest, here are a few "finer points" that might surprise you:

- Body posture is important. Sprawling, resting your feet on furniture or chairs, or pointing your feet at someone are seen as impolite.
- In temples you may notice locals sitting on the floor with their feet tucked under them or in a cross-legged position. This is to avoid pointing their feet at the Buddha, which is rude.
- A woman may speak to a Buddhist monk, and a man may speak with a Buddhist nun, but generally the correct thing is to let them approach you.
- You may see people greeting one another with a bow of the head, and in some countries this will be accompanied with hands pressed together as in prayer. Traditionally, the deeper the bow, the more respect one is showing, with the greatest respect being towards elders and clergy. For you, a gentle western-style handshake is an acceptable greeting, but if you wish to try the more traditional head bow, that's OK too.
- Avoid wearing clothing imprinted with a Buddha logo or image as this may offend some of the locals.

## Language Barrier

You can have some great ‘conversations’ with local people who do not speak English, even if you don’t speak a word of the local language. Indeed, this non-verbal communication can be a highly rewarding part of travel. To break the ice, bring along some family photographs, or a few postcards of your hometown. If you want to meet kids, bring a puppet or other interactive toy. Your Trip Experience Leader can help get the ball rolling.

## Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor’s terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

## Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop’s contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don’t assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

## Crafts & Souvenirs

### Vietnam

Vietnam offers many fine craft items at good prices. Traditional souvenirs include silk, precious stones, hilltribe handicrafts, including elaborate jewelry, colorful textiles, and opium pipes, bronzeware cutlery, nielloware silver inlaid items, and lacquerware. Local products include hand-woven cottons, decorative items made of silver, teakwood carvings, and gems. The best bargains in gems are jade, rubies, and sapphires, but buy from reputable dealers only.

Merchants enjoy negotiating prices almost everywhere but if you make an offer you should be prepared to buy at that price. It is not unusual for the clerks in some stores in Vietnam to follow, assist, and advise you throughout the store—much as a personal shopper would do in the U.S. This is meant to be polite rather than pestering.

*Note about antiquities:* Think carefully before purchasing an expensive “antiquity.” It is illegal to remove antique furniture or ceramics from Vietnam. To complicate matters further, any item that looks old can only be exported with the written permission of the Antique Art Business Division of the government Fine Arts Department. Some stores will offer to arrange this for you, but this may be unreliable.

## Cambodia

In popular tourist locations (like Siem Reap and Phnom Penh), and particular towns with handicraft specialties, handmade crafts such as silk clothing, stone or wood carvings, and silver jewelry are considered to be high-quality, traditional souvenirs. Many shops in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh are connected with organizations invested in reviving traditional Cambodian crafts and supporting disadvantaged or disabled locals. Other notable traditional souvenirs include hand-woven cotton, batik fabrics, woven mats, Mekong quilts, rice-paper prints, and betel nut boxes. For the food-lovers, Kampot pepper, pepper grown in Kampot and used by top chefs around the world, is a must have, available near everywhere in Cambodia. With the risk of fake Kampot pepper high due to its popularity, we recommend buying this souvenir straight from the source, at one of the many local farms.

## U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov) has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

## DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

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### Vietnam

#### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 127,800 square miles
- **Capital:** Hanoi
- **Languages:** Vietnamese (official), English (increasingly favored as a second language), some French, Chinese, and Khmer; mountain area languages (Mon-Khmer and Malayo-Polynesian)
- **Ethnicities:** Kinh (Viet) 85.7%, Tay 1.9%, Thai 1.8%, Muong 1.5%, Khmer 1.5%, Mong 1.2%, Nung 1.1%, other 5.3%
- **Location:** Vietnam is bordered by the South China Sea (“the East Sea”), China, Laos, and Cambodia.
- **Geography:** It is about a thousand miles long and ranges in width from 30 miles in the central region to 400 miles in the north. There are five principle geographic areas. There are two mountainous areas, covered largely by forests or jungles: the Northern Highlands, located in the northwest, and the Annamite Range that extends from it down the western portion of the country towards Ho Chi Minh City. The two delta areas—the Red River Delta in the north and the Mekong Delta in the south—hold most of the country’s population and also provide the majority of the country’s farmland. The Coastal Lowlands, which lie between the delta areas, are also heavily populated.
- **Population:** 97,205,000 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Buddhist 9.3%, Catholic 6.7%, Hoa Hao 1.5%, Cao Dai 1.1%, Protestant 0.5%, Muslim 0.1%, none 80.8%. (Although Communists have discouraged the practice of religion, those who do practice are generally Buddhists.)
- **Time zone:** Vietnam is twelve hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 6pm in Hanoi.

## National Holidays: Vietnam

In addition to the holidays listed below, Vietnam celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

February Tet Lunar New Year (moves each year; see note above)

April Hung Kings Commemoration Day (moves each year; see note above)

04/30 Reunification Day

05/01 Labor Day

09/02 Independence Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas Day

12/31 New Year's Eve

## Vietnam: A Brief History

Vietnam's earliest known residents were hunters and farmers who migrated into the area from the north and south. In 111 B.C., armies of China's Han dynasty conquered the region of present-day Vietnam and would go on to rule the region for more than a thousand years. It was not until A.D. 939 when the Vietnamese were finally able to oust the Chinese to begin self-rule while renaming the country Dai Co Viet. Powerful family dynasties went on to rule Vietnam for the next 900 years. Power struggles among feuding families in the north and south persisted until 1802, when Nguyen Anh unified the country and named it Vietnam, giving himself the title Emperor Gia Long.

After stiff resistance, Vietnam would finally fall to French colonial rule in 1884. Now part of French Indochina, Vietnam remained under French domination until 1940, when Germany occupied France during World War II and Germany's ally Japan took control of Vietnam. After Japan's defeat, in September 1945, the communist Vietminh led by Ho Chi Minh gained control of many regions of the country. Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam an independent nation—the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. France re-asserted its claim on the region, and French forces regained control in the south. However, resistance from the Vietminh continued, and the Communists still controlled the north. By late 1946, the Indochina War was in full progress, continuing until 1954, when the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu. In 1954, delegates to an international conference in Geneva agreed to a temporary division of Vietnam into two separate countries—North and South Vietnam. In 1955, elections were held in South Vietnam, and Ngo Dinh Diem was chosen leader. By 1957, the Vietminh in the south, now called the Viet Cong, had begun an armed revolt against Diem's government, supported by North Vietnam. More countries were drawn in as the fighting continued, including the U.S., which became deeply embroiled in the conflict by the late 1960s. The U.S.S.R. and China supported North Vietnam. In South Vietnam, a series of coups eventually brought army general Nguyen Van Thieu to power; he was then elected president in 1967. In North Vietnam, the Communist Party Politburo took over following Ho Chi Minh's death in 1969. The war ended in 1975 with the withdrawal of American troops. In 1976, the country was unified under the Communists as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City.



More than three million Vietnamese had been killed in the decades of war, and the country's economy had been devastated. Many Vietnamese emigrated to the U.S. and other countries. In 1978, Vietnam severed its ties with China and aligned itself more closely with the Soviet Union. That same year, Vietnam drew China's wrath by invading Cambodia, an incursion that lasted into the 1980s. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the loss of its economic support, Vietnam began to liberalize its trade policies, allow private enterprise, and encourage foreign trade. From 1990 to 1997, Vietnam's economy grew rapidly. In 1994, the U.S. lifted its trade embargo, and in 1995, full diplomatic relations were restored.

## Cambodia

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 69,898 square miles
- **Capital:** Phnom Penh
- **Languages:** Khmer is the official language; English and French are also spoken.
- **Location:** Cambodia is bordered by Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- **Geography:** The ancient Khmer kingdom we now call Cambodia is a nation of 16.2 million people in a country about the size of Missouri. This is a country of geographical contrasts—the borders of Cambodia are mountainous and rugged, but a rich, alluvial plain dominates the center of the country. Here the Mekong River, the Tonle Sap River, and the Tonle Sap Lake create a prosperous farming and fishing region full of rice fields and fishing villages.
- **Population:** 16,915,269 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Buddhist 96.9%, Muslim 1.9%, other 0.4%, unspecified 0.8%
- **Time Zone:** Cambodia is on Indochina Time, twelve hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 6pm in Phnom Penh.

## National Holidays: Cambodia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Cambodia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

01/07 Victory over Genocide Day

February (moves each year; see note above)  
Meak Bochea

03/08 International Women Day

04/14–04/16 Khmer New Year

05/01 Labor Day

5/20 Day of Remembrance

09/24 Constitutional Day

10/15 Commemoration Day of King's Father

10/29 King's Coronation Day

November Water Festival (moves each year)

11/09 Independence Day

12/10 International Human Rights Day

## Cambodia: A Brief History

Cambodia's historic roots were established between the 1st to the 6th centuries, when an India-influenced state called Funan ruled the landscapes. With the rise of King Jayavarman at the beginning of the 9th century, Funan gave way to the Angkor Empire, whose kings would dominate much of present-day Southeast Asia for the next 600 years.

Jayavarman and a succession of Khmer kings were responsible for building the Angkor temple complex, the most extensive concentration of religious temples in the world. Through the centuries, the almost constant state of war with Thailand and Vietnam would see the mighty Khmer empire slip into a steady decline. And by the mid-1800s, Cambodia, like most of Southeast Asia, came under the thumb of European colonial powers.

In 1863, Cambodia's King Norodom signed a Protectorate Treaty with France, who would go on to rule Cambodia until 1941 when the Japanese army expelled the French and instilled their own brand of terror to the populace. With the defeat of Japan and the end of World War II, the French returned to Cambodia. But by 1953 a strong local leader, King Sihanouk, had risen to power with the Khmer and sought independence for his country. King Sihanouk, who also established the People's Socialist Party, became the country's first prime minister. Sihanouk kept Cambodia neutral in the Vietnam War until 1965, when he broke with the U.S. and allowed North Vietnam and the Vietcong to use Cambodian territory.

In 1970, Sihanouk was deposed by one of his generals, Lon Nol, who established a government in exile in China that supported the Cambodian revolutionary movement known as the Khmer Rouge—just as U.S. and South Vietnamese forces entered Cambodia to flush out Vietcong forces hiding there. For the next five years, as savage fighting spread throughout Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge gained land and power. In 1975 the capital at Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge, and their leader, Pol Pot, became the leader of Cambodia.

Three years of horror ensued as Pol Pot and his followers began a campaign of systematic genocide against the Cambodian people, with the aim of returning the country to the agrarian society of centuries before. In 1979, the Khmer Rouge were overthrown, and the Vietnamese-backed People's Republic of Kampuchea was established. The Vietnamese withdrew the last of their troops by 1989. Entering the 1990s U.N. peacekeeping efforts helped stabilize Cambodia, and in 1993 a constitution was adopted, general elections were held, and King Norodom Sihanouk returned to the throne. In 2004, ill health forced him to abdicate in favor of his son, Norodom Sihamoni, who currently reigns as a constitutional monarch not very different from the parliamentary system of Great Britain.

## RESOURCES

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### Suggested Reading

#### General Southeast Asia

***A Traveller's History of Southeast Asia*** by J.M. Barwise and Nicholas J. White (2002, History) As compact history of a diverse region, this book packs a wealth of information into its well-written and well-organized pages. (And yes, the title has two "L"s; the series is British).

***The River's Tale, A Year on the Mekong*** by Edward Gargan (2002, Travel Narrative) Describes in beautiful detail a year spend on the Mekong River during a 3,000-mile journey from its source in China through Tibet, Burma, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

***What the Buddha Taught*** by Walpola Sri Rahula (1959, Religion) A useful overview of Buddhism as it is practiced in Southeast Asia by an internationally recognized authority who just happens to also be a Buddhist monk.

#### Vietnam

***The Sympathizer*** by Viet Thanh Nguyen (2016, Fiction) The taut story of a double agent who secretly sympathizes with the Communist forces during the fall of the South Vietnamese government in 1975. A brilliant page-turner of a novel that won numerous awards including the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

***Communion: A Culinary Journey Through Vietnam*** by Kim Fay (2012, Food). Part cookbook and part travelogue, this book follows Seattle native Kim Fay, who had lived in Vietnam for four years in the '90s, as she returns to Vietnam for a 5-week culinary safari from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City. Beautiful, bold photographs and stories about the chefs accompany authentic recipes.

***Last Night I Dreamed of Peace: The Diary of Dang Thuy Tram*** by Dang Thuy Tram (2008, Diary) As a young doctor working for the North Vietnamese Army, Dang Thuy Tram kept a diary of her experiences between the years 1968 and 1970 until she was killed by American forces near where she worked. Found by an American soldier, the diary was returned to her family and published for the first time almost 30 years later.

***When Heaven and Earth Changed Places: A Vietnamese Woman's Journey from War to Peace*** by Le Ly Hayslip (1989, Memoir) The true-life story of a Vietnamese girl forced into the war (on both sides), where she faced constant danger, near starvation, and torture. A riveting, emotional, and brutally honest look at what it takes to survive a war. The sequel, ***Child of War, Woman of Peace*** describes the author's life in America after the war's end.

***The Quiet American*** by Graham Greene (1956, Literature) Quite possibly the most famous novel set in Vietnam, and a classic love triangle too. A knowing British war correspondent and a hopeful American are caught up in both revolutionary politics and whirlwind romance in 1950s Saigon. Unfortunately, they both fall for the same Vietnamese woman.

## Cambodia

***A History of Cambodia*** by David Chandler (2018 4th Ed., History) A bit dry perhaps, but this acclaimed work is considered one of the best accounts of Cambodia's modern history, beginning in 1953 to the rise and fall of the Khmer Rouge, the death of the noxious Pol Pot in the late 1990s, and the return of peace to this lovely land.

***Golden Bones, An Extraordinary Journey from Hell in Cambodia to a New Life in America*** by Sichan Siv (2009, Memoir) Deputy Ambassador to the UN during the Bush administration, Siv looks back on a remarkable life, from his privileged childhood in Pochentong to the murderous reign of Pol Pot, his escape from a work camp to freedom and, eventually, life in America.

***First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers*** by Loung Ung (2000, Memoir) A personal account of Ung's experiences throughout the Khmer Rouge years as a survivor of the Pol Pot regime. At times an uncomfortable read, but very worthwhile and her story will stay with you for a long time. Ung's award-winning memoir was followed up by two more: *Lucky Child: A Daughter of Cambodia Reunites with the Sister She Left Behind* and *Lulu in the Sky: A Daughter of Cambodia Finds Love, Healing, and Double Happiness*.

***Angkor, Cambodia's Wondrous Khmer Temples*** by Dawn Rooney (first published 1994 by Odyssey Books & Guides) This beautifully illustrated volume is considered by many as the indispensable guide to Khmer culture and history.

## Suggested Films & Videos

### Vietnam

***Anthony Bordain: No Reservations—Vietnam*** (2009, Travel/Food) Three episodes of the popular series were filmed in Vietnam and offer rich insights about life in modern-day Vietnam and regional cuisine from bustling Saigon to the countryside of Da Lat. Also worth viewing is Bordain's ***Parts Unknown: Hanoi*** (2016) the classic episode featuring former U.S. President Barack Obama and Bordain sitting down together at a small restaurant in Hanoi enjoying beers and bun cha, a local specialty.

***Good Morning Vietnam*** (1987, Comedy) While the irreverent humor of Armed Forces Radio Service host Adrian Cronauer (played by Robin Williams) amuses the troops stuck in 1965-era Vietnam, he clashes with the Army brass who try to censor his show.

***Hearts and Minds*** (1974, Documentary) This landmark documentary offers an unflinching portrait of America's involvement in the Vietnam War using newsreel footage and interviews. Many consider it the most important film ever made about this period.

***Apocalypse Now*** (1979, Drama) Francis Ford Coppola's surreal Vietnam War epic was inspired by Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and stars Martin Sheen as an Army captain on a secret mission to track down a renegade Special Services colonel played by Marlon Brando.

***The Quiet American*** (1958, Classic) A love triangle between a British journalist, a young Vietnamese woman, and a U.S. official, based on the Graham Greene novel—although Greene would disavow the film for flipping the book’s message. Instead of a cautionary tale about foreign intervention, the film’s focus is anticommunist advocacy of American power (Audie Murphy, the film’s star, reportedly said he wouldn’t have done the movie if it stuck to Greene’s anti-American message). The 2002 remake starring Michael Caine and Brendan Fraser sticks much closer to Greene’s novel and received widespread acclaim. It suffered bad timing though—Its “unpatriotic” message did not go over well with audiences after 9/11.

## Cambodia

***Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*** (2001, Action/Adventure) This fanciful romp was filmed at several locations around the temple complex of Siem Reap, including Angkor Wat. Angelina Jolie was good in the role, but the real star of the film was the jungle temple of Ta Prohm, which tuk-tuk drivers and guidebooks alike just call it “Tomb Raider temple.” Significant parts of *Lord Jim*, the 1995 film starring Peter O’Toole, were also shot at Angkor Wat.

***The Killing Fields*** (1984, Drama) Based on the work of New York Times reporter Sydney Schanberg (played by Sam Waterston) and his translator Dith Pran (played by Haing Ngor), this war drama explores the tragic rise of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Ngor, who won Best Supporting Actor for his performance (the first and only Asian man thus far) and managed to survive three terms in Cambodian prison camps, was fatally shot in Los Angeles in 1996.



## Useful Websites

### **Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions**

[www.oattravel.com/faq](http://www.oattravel.com/faq)

### **International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)**

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

### **Electricity & Plugs**

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/  
plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

### **Foreign Exchange Rates**

[www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter)  
[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

### **ATM Locators**

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm)  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator)

### **World Weather**

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
[www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

### **Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)**

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

### **Packing Tips**

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

### **U.S. Customs & Border Protection**

[www.cbp.gov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/travel)

### **Transportation Security**

#### **Administration (TSA)**

[www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)

### **National Passport Information Center**

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### **Holidays Worldwide**

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)

## Useful Apps

### **Flight Stats**

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

### **LoungeBuddy**

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

### **Timeshifter**

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

### **GoogleMaps or Maps.me**

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

### **Triposo**

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

### **Rome2rio**

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

### **Flush or Sit or Squat**

Find a clean toilet anywhere

### **Uber or Bolt or Grab**

Ride sharing around the world

### **Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus**

#### **ATM locations**

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

### **TunnelBear**

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

### **What's App or Skype or Signal**

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

### **Duolingo or FLuentU or Babbel**

Learn dozens of foreign languages

### **Google Translate**

Fast and simple translations

### **XE**

Currency conversions

### **SizeGuide**

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

### **Best Units Converter**

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

### **Tourlina**

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

### **Happy Cow**

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

### **Eatwith**

Dine with locals all over the world

### **Meetup**

Connects you with locals who share your interests

### **Skyview**

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

### **Travello**

Find travel friends on the road

### **ALIX for One**

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

### **TripWhistle**

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

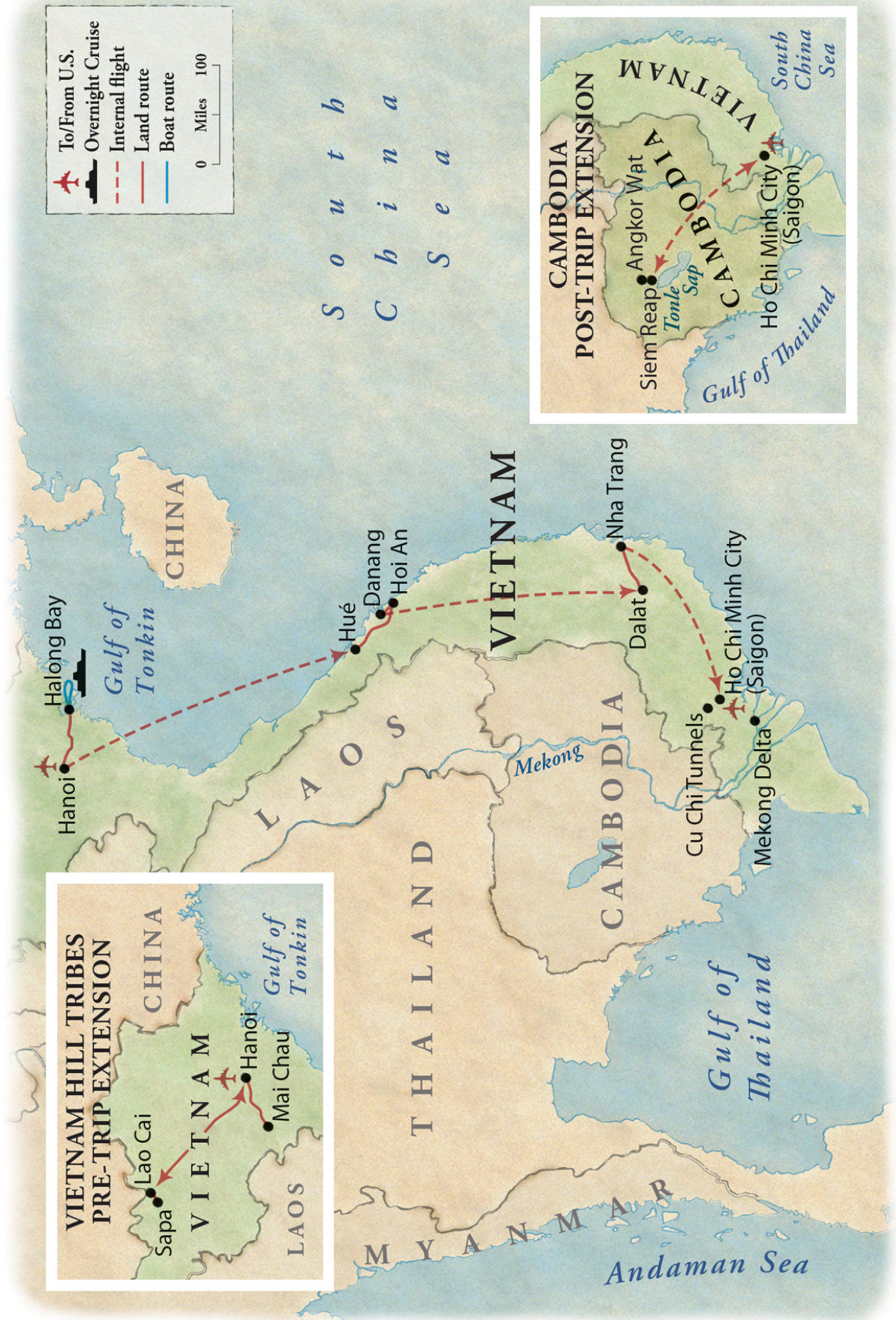
### **GeoSure**

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### **Chirpey**

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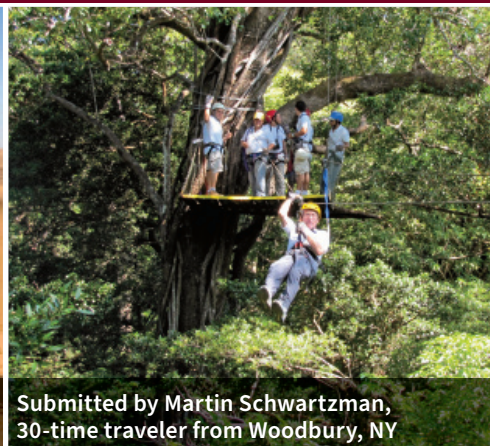
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8-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



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5-time traveler from Pinellas Park, FL



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30-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



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from Edina, MN



Submitted by David Fong, 16-time traveler  
from Foster City, CA



Submitted by Steven dos Remedios,  
23-time traveler from Oakland, CA



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