



Viking River Cruises

15 Days Magnificent Mekong

From Ho Chi Minh City to Hanoi



Explore the stunningly scenic and culturally distinctive lands that lie along the remarkable Mekong River. On this 15-day cruisetour, from Vietnam's bustling cities to the tranquility of Cambodia, discover two countries, two cultures and two ways of life linked by Indochina's most important river. Encounter ancient Khmer monuments at Angkor Wat and the elegant French colonial capital of Phnom Penh in Cambodia; in Vietnam, visit the floating markets of the Mekong Delta, experience the intimate charm of Hanoi's old quarter and tour dynamic Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon. Here you will find gracious hosts and some of the finest cuisine in the world, while enjoying the natural beauty and rich history just beyond the banks of the magnificent Mekong.

Day 01 Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Fly to Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon, then transfer to your hotel.* Check in for a 2-night stay and then relax or take a walk to stretch your legs and begin getting acquainted with the city.

Day 02 Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Begin your tour of this bustling metropolis in the Chinatown area of the city. Walk along Dong Khoi Street, the main shopping boulevard in the old colonial heart. See the grand City Hall, the old Opera House with its soaring arched entryway, the double spires of the Notre Dame Cathedral and the Central Post Office. This afternoon, head to Ben Thành Market for some handcrafted souvenirs and also visit a lacquer factory. Dine in a local restaurant this evening. (B, D)

Day 03 My Tho, Vietnam

After breakfast, check out of your hotel and proceed to Mỹ Tho to embark your ship. As you settle in to your stateroom, we begin sailing along the Mekong River. This afternoon we visit the floating markets of Cái Bè where you see local workers producing rice noodles, coconut candy and a host of other handmade products. This evening, meet the ship's officers over a welcome cocktail and enjoy a screening of the film *l'Amant (The Lover)* which will prepare you for tomorrow's visit to Sa Đéc. (B, L, D)

Day 04 Sa Dec, Vietnam

This morning, enjoy an exciting sampan excursion along the canals and backwaters of the Mekong Delta. Small factories line the river channels. During your excursion, get a glimpse of industry in the region with a visit to a brick factory. Stop in Sa Đéc to see the home of Mr. Huynh Thuy Le, the protagonist in Marguerite Duras's beloved autobiographic novel, *l'Amant (The Lover)*.

Set sail in the afternoon, observing local daily life on the river along the way. This evening, attend an onboard screening of the 2002 film *The Quiet American*, based on Graham Greene's novel set in 1952 Saigon. (B, L, D)

Day 05 Tan Chau, Vietnam

Today you will have a rare glimpse of rural life as it has been lived for ages. Begin your morning with a ride on a traditional rickshaw in Tân Châu. Observe the making of floor mats from sedge and slippers from uzu. Afterward, visit the floating fish farm by wooden sampan, then take a boat ride to Vinh Hoa, known as "Evergreen Island." Here you can take a short walk to see various methods of traditional Vietnamese farming and the crafts and other daily activities of local people firsthand.

Return aboard for lunch and scenic cruising along the Mekong; this afternoon we cross over into Cambodia. Onboard activities include a fruit-carving workshop and a presentation about the history of Vietnam. This evening we screen the 1984 film *The Killing Fields*. (B, L, D)

Day 06 Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Dock along the lovely waterfront of Cambodia's capital and explore the city in style, in a cyclo (the ubiquitous passenger bicycles of Southeast Asia). This mode of transportation provides many Cambodians with a source of income and visitors with a speedy and enjoyable way to move around. See the magnificent Royal Palace with the Silver Pagoda, built in the 19th century by the French but inspired by the centuries-old architecture of the Khmer. Then see the National Museum of Cambodia, which houses treasures of Khmer art and craftsmanship and also displays art that predates the mighty empire.

This afternoon, join an excursion to the sobering memorial in the Tuol Sleng detention center, a former high school in which thousands of victims of the Khmer Rouge died, and the Killing Fields of Choeung Ek, or explore the city's maze of small alleys, markets and busy streets on your own. Tonight's dinner is accompanied by a folkloric performance. (B, L, D)

Day 07 Phnom Penh, Cambodia

This morning's excursion takes you through a Cambodian village. After, take a short ride to Udon Monastery for a tour and to receive a blessing by the monks. Then continue to the next village, famous for its silversmiths. Rejoin your ship and have lunch as we cruise into Phnom Penh.

Your afternoon is free to explore Phnom Penh's historic riverfront area with its restaurants, art galleries and silk shops, or perhaps visit the distinctive Central Market or the "Russian Market" where you can buy jewelry, curios, clothes and souvenirs. You might prefer to visit more of the city's wats (monastery temples): Wat Langka, Wat Botum, Wat Koh or Wat Ounalom, each with its own special character and purpose. Late this afternoon, there will be an onboard presentation about recent Cambodian history by a local expert. Dinner is served aboard the ship. (B, L, D)

Day 08 Mekong River

Today, enjoy scenic cruising along the Mekong, one of the world's great rivers. The Mekong is truly the "Mother River of Southeast Asia," sustaining civilizations through the centuries. Pass by some of the Mekong rice fields. The Khmer Empire was founded on a rice surplus, and rice is still the main staple of Vietnamese cuisine. We stop to visit a typical Khmer river community that is famous for its silk-weaving production. Return aboard for lunch. (B, L, D)

Day 09 Kampong Cham, Cambodia

Today's excursion takes you on a motorcoach ride to see Phnom Pros and Phnom Srei, the Twin Holy Mountains; then visit the nearby Buddhist temple and garden still used during traditional Khmer festivals. After, visit a Kampong Cham orphanage where students create beautiful paintings that are available to purchase. (B, L, D)

Day 10 Siem Reap, Cambodia

Bid farewell to your ship this morning as your cruise through Vietnam and Cambodia comes to an end. Disembark in Kampong Thom, then take a ride through the Cambodian countryside to Siem Reap. Check in to your hotel for a 3-night stay. Tonight's dinner is accompanied by a traditional Apsara dance show. (B, D)

Day 11 Angkor Wat, Cambodia

Siem Reap is the gateway to Angkor, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most important archaeological sites in the world. Begin your day with a visit to one of Angkor's largest Khmer temples, Angkor Wat, built for King Suryavarman II in the 12th century AD. With its beautiful proportions and extensive, intricate bas-relief stone carvings, it is one of the most spectacular sights in Southeast Asia. Explore the fortified city of Angkor Thom, which houses several of Angkor's most popular sights. You also visit the mysterious Bayon Temple, known for its giant, stone-carved faces with their enigmatic smiles. Relax this evening. (B, D)

Day 12 Siem Reap, Cambodia

Today, ride to the spectacular 10th-century Hindu temple Banteay Srei ("Citadel of Women") to see magnificent carvings of Shiva and Vishnu. Then, journey to Ta Prohm, one of the most popular of the Temples of Angkor. Unlike many other buildings, it has been left as it was discovered, with trees and large shrubs growing over the ruins. Return to your hotel before your final dinner in Siem Reap followed by a Cambodian Circus show which uniquely blends together theater, music, dance, acrobatics, juggling and aerial acts. (B, D)

Day 13 Hanoi, Vietnam

After breakfast, check out of your hotel, then visit a local village supported by Viking River Cruises. Spend time with the children at one of the village schools before proceeding to the airport for your short flight to Hanoi. After lunch in your hotel, enjoy free time to explore the city and have dinner on your own. (B, L)

Day 14 Hanoi, Vietnam

This morning, tour this unique Asian capital where old and new combine for an inviting blend in a lush setting of parks and lakes. Visit the Temple of Literature with its maze of courtyards and graceful gateways, an excellent example of traditional Vietnamese architecture. Proceed to the 11th-century One Pillar Pagoda, one of Vietnam's most iconic monuments, and the nearby Ho Chi Minh Memorial, a vast complex dedicated to the country's 20th-century Communist leader.

This afternoon, tour the notorious "Hanoi Hilton," the Hỏa Lò Prison where American POWs were held captive during the Vietnam War. Take a leisurely ride through the Old Quarter by "green" electric car, visit the Museum of Ethnology, which includes a number of fascinating exhibits that bring Vietnam's history and astonishingly diverse culture to life and then enjoy some free time to explore Hanoi on your own before gathering for a festive farewell dinner. (B, D)

Day 15 Hanoi, Vietnam

After breakfast, check out of your hotel and proceed to the airport for your return flight.* Or, continue your Southeast Asia adventure with a 2-night stay at Ha Long Bay, Vietnam. (B)

The following meals are included: B = Breakfast; L = Lunch; D = Dinner

* Airport meet & greet transfers included when air is purchased from Viking River Cruises

NOTE: Prices are per person, based on double occupancy, subject to change. Travel insurance is not included, we highly recommend you to purchase the insurance for cancellation and medical protection. Please ask for details.