



**2018 Cambodia and Vietnam Itinerary**  
**January 10 - 30, 2018**  
**21 Days and 20 Overnights**

**Tuesday, January 9, 2018**

**Departure USA**

**Day 1 Wed. Jan.10, 2018**

**Arrival Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

After a long international flight you will be met at the airport and escorted to your lovely boutique hotel located on a quiet street in Phnom Penh. You can spend the remainder of the day relaxing by the pool or enjoying your complimentary 1-hour traditional Khmer massage. Your guide will join you for a Welcome Dinner and provide an initial orientation to Cambodia.

**Overnight Phnom Penh**

**D**

**Day 2 Thurs. Jan.11**

**Phnom Penh**

Today you begin your tour of Phnom Penh, a chaotic, energetic and always fascinating city. Graceful tree-lined boulevards and riverfront promenades are reminders of bygone eras. Today they teem with life and activity, as motorcycles weave in and out of traffic, vendors hawk their wares, and pedestrians go about their business. First up on your itinerary – a visit to the Royal Palace, still the official residence of King Norodom Sihamoi and the adjacent Silver Pagoda, also known as the Pagoda of the Emerald Buddha. You'll continue on to the elegant National Museum, which contains a comprehensive collection of Khmer Art. In the late afternoon head to one of Phnom Penh's two great markets - the Central Market, located in a distinctive domed Art Deco building - or the sprawling Russian Market, a labyrinth of stalls selling everything from DVD's to silks, crafts, jewelry and more.

**Overnight Phnom Penh**

**B,L,D**

**Day 3 Fri. Jan.12**

**Phnom Penh**

You cover a lot of territory today, starting with a visit to the Killing Fields and Tuol Sleng Museum, a former high school that the Khmer Rouge turned into a center for interrogation and torture. It was known as Security Prison 21 or just S-21. The Killing Fields of Choeung Ek are where many people who were tortured in the S-21 prison were brought to be executed and buried in mass graves. Although difficult to experience, the prison and adjacent fields are vivid reminders of the recent dark chapter of the Khmer Rouge regime.

On a much lighter note, you'll visit the Arts Training School to watch young dancers being trained in the ancient tradition of the Khmer Apsara Dance. Dancers must begin at an early age in order to master the flexibility, grace and discipline required by this demanding and beautiful art form.

**Overnight Phnom Penh**

**B,L,D**

**Day 4 Sat. Jan. 13****Phnom Penh to Siem Reap**

This morning, you'll make the short flight to Siem Reap home to the mystical Angkor Complex. The Angkor Archaeological Park is one of the most important archaeological sites in South-East Asia stretching over some 400 kilometers, including forested area. It contains the magnificent remains of the different capitals of the Khmer Empire from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Your first visit will be to the amazing Ta Prohm— one of the most popular sites at Angkor where much of the jungle has not been cleared and it looks as would have appeared when the European explorers first stumbled upon it.

**Overnight Siem Reap****B,L,D****Day 5 Sun. Jan.14****Siem Reap – Angkor Wat**

Your tour will start early this morning to allow you to catch the sunrise at the most famous Structure in Angkor –The Angkor Wat Temple. Dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu, it was constructed by King Suryavarman who reigned between 1131 and 1150. It reflects some of the most beautiful examples of Khmer and Hindu art and features the longest continuous bas-relief in the world, narrating stories from Hindu mythology.

After lunch poolside at your hotel, you'll visit the fortified city of Angkor Thom which covers an area of 10 square kilometers and is enclosed by a wall and wide moats. The South Gate entrance to the city is a causeway lined on both sides by statues of demons and gods. You'll visit the major highlights including the Terrace of the Elephants, the Terrace of the Leper Kings, the ruined Baphuon Royal Enclosure and the mysterious Bayon Temple with its countless sculptural decorations, beautifully preserved bas relief and central sanctuary where giant stone faces enigmatically smile down from every angle.

**Overnight Siem Reap****B,L,D****Day 6 Mon. Jan. 15****Siem Reap to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)**

This morning you'll depart Cambodia and board your short flight to Saigon, Vietnam. Teeming with energy, activity and motion, the city is a convergence of traditional and modern life. The emerging modern skyline stands toe to toe with colonial buildings and traditional temples. On the streets, young professionals zip by on motorbikes, chatting on their cell phones while inside the quiet temple courtyards, worshippers pray amidst clouds of incense.

You'll begin your exploration of the city with a tour of the Reunification Palace to gain insight into Vietnam's modern history. Formerly the Independence Palace of the South Vietnamese president, this 60s style building was famously stormed by tanks on April 30, 1975 signifying the fall of South Vietnam. It has been preserved in its original state, and the invading tanks remain on display near the entrance gates. Afterwards you'll drive to the historic centre to visit Emperor of Jade Pagoda, one of Saigon's most interesting pagodas – followed by a quick visit to the neo-Romanesque Notre Dame Cathedral and the Central Post Office. Also of interest, you'll pass by classic European-style landmarks such as the ornate City Hall (Hotel De Ville) and the old Opera House - both of which may only be viewed from the outside.

You'll end the day at the central Ben Thanh Market, where vendors display a vast array of goods and handicrafts, appealing to every taste.

**Overnight Saigon****B,L,D**

**Day 7 Tues. Jan. 16****Saigon - Excursion to Cu Chi Tunnels**

Today, you'll explore the famous Cu Chi Tunnels. The Tunnels were an important Vietcong base during war with the U.S. Stretching over 200 km, this incredible underground network, dug by hand out of hard laterite, connected command posts, hospitals, shelter and weapons factories. Today, one can walk through the area, learn about the day to day life of the Vietcong and bear witness to the cleverly disguised entrances and elaborate booby-traps. If you choose, you can venture inside the tunnels, some of which have been modified to accommodate tourists.

In the afternoon you can continue to experience the war from a Vietcong perspective at the War Remnants Museum which depicts the atrocities committed by America and its allies. Although much of the exhibit is one-sided, some of the most disturbing photos and accounts are ones by western photojournalists.

Before dinner group members may want to enjoy a cocktail on the roof of the historic Rex Hotel – a spot where western journalists met daily during the war years to exchange notes.

**Overnight Saigon****B,L,D****Day 8 Wed. Jan. 17****Saigon to Hoi An**

Today you'll depart on a brief flight for Central Vietnam and the charming riverside city of Hoi An. Once one of South East Asia's major international ports during the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, this beautifully preserved historic and picturesque city is also home to some of the best shopping in Vietnam and provides the opportunity to order custom-made clothing. After lunch you have the afternoon to leisurely explore/shop on your own or enjoy the pool.

**Overnight Hoi An****B,L,D****Day 9 Thurs. Jan.18**

The best way to experience Hoi An is on foot, which is precisely what you will do today, starting with a stroll through the colorful early morning market and followed by:

The Japanese Covered Bridge Pagoda. The first bridge on this site was constructed in 1593 by the Japanese community of Hoi An linked the town with the Chinese quarters across the stream.

Sa Huynh Museum. Located near the Japanese Covered Bridge, the museum contains exhibitions from the earliest period of Hoi An's history.

Tran Family Chapel. This house, built for worshipping ancestors, was constructed about 200 years ago with donations from family members. The Tran family traces its origins to China and moved to Vietnam around 1700. The architecture of the building reflects the influence of Chinese and Japanese styles.

Phuoc Kien Assembly Hall. A Chinese pagoda built around 1690 and then restored and enlarged in 1900, it is typical of the Chinese clans that were established in the Hoi An area. The temple is dedicated to Thien Hau Thanh Mau (Goddess of the Sea and Protector of Sailors and Fishermen).

Lantern Making Workshop. You'll end your walking tour with a visit to one of the lantern workshops in Hoi An. The frames of lanterns are made beforehand and you can observe locals adorning silk cloth over the frame.

**Overnight Hoi An****B,L,D**

**Day 10 Fri. Jan. 19****Hoi An - Excursion to My Son**

Once the most significant intellectual and religious center for the Champa Kingdom, My Son, is your destination today. Set in a lush jungle valley, all that is left of this once sophisticated civilization which held sway over the region from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries are five archaeological sites from different periods. They are well worth the journey. After a brief visit to the Visitor's Centre for an overview of Cham history and culture, you'll explore each ruin in turn, walking along forested path. And, as a bonus, enjoy an Apsara dance performance.

**Overnight Hoi An****B,L,D****Day 11 Sat. Jan.20****Hoi An – Danang to Hue**

You drive north today along scenic mountain roads with spectacular views over the coastline as you head to Hue. Along the way you'll stop to visit the Marble Mountains, five stone hillocks, once islands, that rise sharply from the surrounding rice fields. Riddled with caves, shrines, and fantastic rock carvings, they are said to each represent one of the five elements of the universe. Continuing on towards the coastal city of Danang you'll pass by Non Nuoc Beach (aka China Beach), a spot made famous by American soldiers during the Vietnam-American War.

You'll stop for lunch in Danang and visit the Cham Museum, an elegant colonial building which houses the finest collection of Cham sculpture in the world. North of Danang you'll drive over the dramatic Hai Van Pass- the high dividing line between the climate zones of North and South Vietnam.

**Overnight Hue****B,L,D****Day 12 Sun. Jan. 21****Hue**

The old capital city of Hue is a UNESCO World Heritage site where you can still imagine the majesty of imperial Vietnam despite the destruction wrought by the American war. Located in the heart of Hue is the Imperial Citadel, a vast complex built in the early 19th century and modeled after the Forbidden City of Peking. The original walls stretched for 10 km and were surrounded by a wide moat. Today, most of the buildings have been destroyed due to bombing but the monuments that remain provide a fascinating glimpse into the court life of the Nguyen Dynasty.

As you approach the Citadel you'll pass the striking Flag Tower where a giant Vietnamese flag waves proudly overhead. Upon entering the Imperial Enclosure you'll be in an area of spacious courtyards and serene lotus ponds. You'll visit DienTho Residence (Dien Tho Palace) where the Queen mother lived; the Thai Hoa Palace, the magnificently decorated reception hall, the Halls of the Mandarins, and the original Nine Dynastic Urns, among other sites.

**Overnight Hue****B,L,D****Day 13 Mon. Jan.22****Hue to Hanoi**

This morning you'll enjoy a leisurely boat ride down the Perfume River, stopping first at the iconic Thien Mu Pagoda, an elegant seven-tiered octagonal tower which has become Hue's most widely recognizable monument. Continuing on you'll cruise into the countryside to the Imperial Tomb of Emperor Minh Mang, a majestic complex of courtyards, pavilions and temples.

In the late afternoon you'll board your short flight to Hanoi.

**Overnight Hanoi****B,L,D**

**Day 14 Tues. Jan. 23****Hanoi**

Today is a full day of sightseeing in Vietnam's capital. The city is a fascinating blend of established traditions and the modern imprints of western colonization. You'll start your exploration with a visit to visit Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum where his embalmed body is kept for homage. From the Mausoleum you can take a walk through the park to see the former French Governor's Palace and the wooden cabin commonly known as Ho Chi Minh's House on Stilts where he lived from 1958 till his final days in 1969 and continue on to the miniature 11<sup>th</sup> century One Pillar Pagoda which was rebuilt after being destroyed by the French in 1954 and the Ho Chi Minh Museum which houses documents, objects and films about resident Ho Chi Minh's life and revolutionary work.

Next up – a visit to the not-to-be-missed Ethnology Museum which brings to life the astonishing ethnic diversity in Vietnam, with art and artifacts from the 54 different ethnic groups that call Vietnam home. The exhibits include detailed descriptions of minority groups, with examples of their traditional clothing and lifestyles. Outside the museum there are reconstructions of traditional longhouses, cemeteries and other distinctive ethnic buildings.

To truly experience the Old Quarter of Hanoi, also known as the 36 Streets, you'll take a cyclo ride in the late afternoon through its network of narrow alleys, ending at the Ngoc Son temple and Hoan Kiem Lake.

**Overnight Hanoi**

**B,L,D**

**Day 15 Wed. Jan. 24****Halong Bay Excursion**

You get an early start today and drive from Hanoi to Halong Bay to board your charming traditional wooden junk for cruising through the Bay. Designated a World Heritage site in 1994, Halong Bay –part of the Gulf of Tonkin - is a mystical landscape of 2000 islands, karsts and caves, with names such as Stone Dog, Incense Burner (Dinh Huong) and Fighting Cock (Ga Choi). At the core of the islets, you'll visit Surprising Cave (Sung Sot) and stop at Titov island. Throughout the cruise, you'll pass floating villages, fishermen casting their nets and pearl fisheries. As sunset approaches you'll enjoy cocktails on your junk before dining in her elegant restaurant and retiring to her simple, yet elegant cabins for the night.

**Overnight on a Junk**

**B,L,D**

**Day 16 Thurs. Jan. 25****Hanoi**

Today you'll continue your cruise in Halong Bay and enjoy a buffet brunch before returning to Hanoi. In the late afternoon you'll visit additional city highlights and in the evening you'll visit a Water Puppet Show – a cultural experience unique to Vietnam.

**Overnight Hanoi**

**B,L,D**

**Day 17 Fri. Jan. 26****Excursion to Sa Pa, including Cat Cat and Ta Phin**

It will be a 5 hour drive north today to reach Sa Pa established by the French as a hill station in 1922. In addition to its spectacular views of the surrounding countryside, Sa Pa is an intriguing destination as it is home to a number of different ethnic groups. You'll travel down winding roads to the Black H'mong village of Cat Cat, and enjoy wandering through the village visiting the traditional houses. Afterwards, you'll continue to the handicraft village of Ta Phin, inhabited by the Red Dzao, known for their distinctive red headscarves.

**Overnight Sa Pa**

**B,L,D**

**Day 18 Sat. Jan. 27**

**Sa Pa**

Continuing your exploration of the hill country, today you'll travel to the village of Lao Chai and then on to Ta Van to visit the Hmong, Dzay and Dzao people and Giang Ta Chai, another village populated by Hmong and Dzay. The journey on foot takes about 3 hours and you'll walk through the spectacular scenery of terraced rice paddies, waterfalls and small bamboo forests that are unique to this northern region.

**Overnight Sa Pa**

**B,L,D**

**Day 19 Sun. Jan. 28**

**Lao Cai and Bac Ha**

Sunday is market day and you'll visit the colorful market at Bac Ha, where ethnic minorities from around the region gather to trade water buffalo, livestock and handicrafts. The people inhabiting the area are mainly Flower H'mong, but there are also Dzao, Nung, Xa Fang, Phu La, Thai and many more ethnicities as well. Late in the day you'll catch the overnight Victoria Express train back to Hanoi for a unique experience aboard a luxury train equipped with a dining carriage and sleeping carriages.

**Overnight Victoria Express Train**

**B, L, D**

**Day 20 Mon. Jan. 29**

**Hanoi**

Arriving back early in Hanoi, today will be a leisurely one with a visit to The Temple of Literature. Built in 1070, it is one of several temples dedicated to Confucius and scholars in general. The remainder of the day is at your leisure to do some last minute shopping and prepare for departure tomorrow.

This evening your guide will host your Farewell Dinner at a lovely historic Hanoi restaurant.

**Overnight Hanoi**

**B,L,D**

**Day 21 Tues. Jan. 30**

Departure Day

**B**