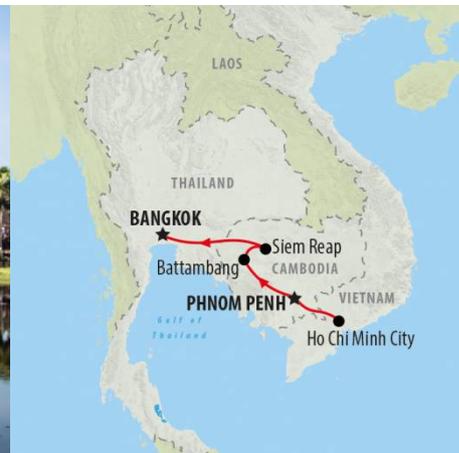


Cambodia Explorer

11 days | Ho Chi Minh City to Bangkok



Kicking off in Ho Chi Minh City, explore Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh, ride the bamboo train in Battambang and marvel at the magnificent Angkor Wat. Finish up with a visit to scenic Tonle Sap Lake and the buzzing capital of Bangkok.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Ho Chi Minh City - free time to explore the 'Pearl of the Orient' or join an optional city tour
- Phnom Penh - independently explore Cambodia's capital or take in the highlights on optional tours
- Battambang - enjoy a ride on the famous bamboo train, visit Phnom Sambov Mountain, Battambang Market and a local village
- Siem Reap - free time to shop at the central market and take in the nightlife of Siem Reap's famous 'Pub Street'
- The Angkor Complex - gaze in wonder at incredible Angkor Wat, visit the iconic Ta Prohm Temple and explore the ancient city of Angkor Thom
- Kampong Phluk - visit the floating villages of Kampong Phluk, built within the floodplain of the Tonle Sap Lake

- Bangkok - independently explore Thailand's vibrant capital

What's Included

- 10 breakfasts
- 10 nights 3 star hotels
- Private transportation in air-conditioned vehicles and public tourist bus from Ho Chi Minh City - Phnom Penh
- Bamboo train ride in Battambang
- Guided sightseeing in Battambang, the Temples of Angkor and Tonle Sap Lake
- Escorted by an English speaking local guide (days 1 - 9)

What's Not Included

- Tipping Kitty: USD\$10-20pp, paid in local currency
- Entrance Fees: USD\$45-55pp, paid in local currency
- International flights and visa
- Airport arrival and departure transfer
- Tip for your tour guide. We recommend you allow USD\$3 - 6 per day, per traveller. Tipping your guide is an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Days 1-2 : Ho Chi Minh City



Monday. Welcome to Vietnam and the start of your adventure! At 5pm your tour guide will host a welcome meeting in the hotel for you and your fellow travellers.

Day 2 is free for you to explore Ho Chi Minh City or there is an optional excursion to the famous Cu Chi Tunnels in the morning, a vast underground network of tunnels and hideouts used by Viet Cong guerrilla fighters in the Vietnam War. Returning to Ho Chi Minh City at lunch time, spend the rest of the day at leisure. Perhaps visit the sobering War Remnants Museum or the historic Reunification Palace, sample some of the city's famous street food or shop in the markets.

Optional activities:

Option 1 Cu Chi Tunnels Tour (day 2). Approx. price USD\$37 pp (based on 4 persons)

This morning we drive to the famous Cu Chi tunnels, a vast network of tunnels which stretched for over 200km and played a vital part in the Vietnam War. Often

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lead by a relative of a Viet Cong fighter in green fatigues you'll walk the bush trails discovering grass covered trapdoors, ingenious, yet gruesome booby traps and hidden underwater entrances in rivers. There is also an opportunity to go underground and pop off a few rounds at the firing range.

Overnight - Ho Chi Minh City (B:1)

Day 3 : Ho Chi Minh City to Phnom Penh

Ho Chi Minh City – Phnom Penh (Cambodia). This morning we travel by public tourist bus across the border into Cambodia and on to its capital Phnom Penh, stopping for a lunch break and customs clearance en route, **Journey time: 6-7 hours**. After hotel check-in, we meet our guide and travel by tuk tuk to the Mekong River for a scenic walk and drink at the famous Foreign Correspondents Club (at your own expense).

Included activities: Tuk tuk ride and scenic walk **Overnight - Phnom Penh (B)**

Day 4 : Phnom Penh



Today is a free day to either explore Phnom Penh at your leisure or choose from our optional excursions:

Option 1 Half Day Sightseeing in Phnom Penh Approx. price USD\$66 pp (based on 4 persons)

Spend the morning discovering the National Museum, Silver Pagoda and Central Market of Phnom Penh, with the chance to try some local specialities and get a taste of local life.

Option 2 Half Day Excursion to Toul Sleng and Killing Fields Approx. price USD\$41 pp (based on 4 persons)

Gain an insight into the horrors of the Pol Pot regime on this afternoon tour visiting Toul Sleng (Security Prison - S21) - a school that

was gruesomely transformed into a torture chamber under the Khmer Rouge, and the Killing Fields where over 10,000 people were executed.

Option 3 Cycling on Koh Dach Island Approx. price USD\$89 pp (based on 4 persons) Catch a ferry to Koh Dah Island and enjoy an easy 15km cycle through rustic villages, pagodas and silk-weaving workshops.

Optional activities: Sightseeing tour of Phnom Penh, Excursion to Toul Sleng and Killing Fields, Cycling on Koh Dach Island

Overnight - Phnom Penh (B)

Day 5 : Battambang

Phnom Penh – Battambang. This morning we journey to the agricultural province of Battambang (**Journey time: 5 hours**), considered the rice bowl of Cambodia, with a stop at a local pottery along the way. We then visit Phnom Sambov Mountain, a place steeped in legend, with Wat Sampeou at its peak and a group of caves used as 'killing caves' by the Khmer Rouge.

Included activities: Phnom Sambov Mountain and the killing caves

Overnight - Battambang (B)

Day 6 : Bamboo train and Wat Banan



Battambang – Siem Reap. After breakfast, we visit the lively Battambang Market and visit a local village which is renowned for its old wooden houses. Here we'll discover past and present Khmer architecture, look inside some of the local families' homes and gain an insight into the Cambodian way of life. We'll also learn about the process of producing rice paper, sticky rice and other Cambodian treats, as well as visiting a weaving and handicraft centre.

Next we enjoy a fun ride on Battambang's famous bamboo train, a raft-like device used by local villagers to transport their goods, before driving to Wat Banan, an 11th-century mountain-top temple. We climb to the top of the mountain to explore the temple and take in the fantastic views over the surrounding countryside. Bidding farewell to Battambang in the afternoon, we travel to Siem Reap (**Journey time: 3 hours**), where the evening is free to spend at your leisure.

Included activities: Battambang market, village visit, Bamboo train ride and Wat Banan **Overnight - Siem Reap (B)**

Day 7 : Angkor Temple Complex



We spend this morning exploring the magnificent Angkor Wat, easily the most famous and best-preserved of all the temples within the Angkor Complex. This afternoon we visit the ancient city of Angkor Thom, with the Bayon Temple at its centre. This 12th-century masterpiece is known for its Gothic towers decorated with smiling faces.

Our final stop is Ta Prohm temple, made famous by the Tomb Raider movie starring Angelina Jolie. Left just as it was discovered, the temple is slowly being overtaken by the surrounding jungle, with vast tree trunks growing amongst its ruins. Returning to our hotel, the rest of the day is free to spend at leisure.

Included activities: Angkor Temple Complex tour

Overnight - Siem Reap (B)

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Day 8 : Tonle Sap Lake



Siem Reap – Tonle Sap Lake. This morning we drive to Kampong Phluk, a cluster of three villages of stilt house built within the floodplain of Tonle Sap lake about 16 km southeast of Siem Reap. Boarding row boats we explore Kampong Phluk, passing houses, schools and local businesses built on stilts which hover above the surface of the Tonle Sap Lake, whilst nearby, the petrified trees of a flooded forest are revealed whenever the water level drops.

Returning to Siem Reap, this afternoon offers free time, perhaps shopping in the central market or discovering the buzzing atmosphere of Pub Street. This evening there's an optional dinner (with traditional Khmer cuisine) and Apsara dance show.

Included activities: Kampong Phluk excursion

Optional activities: Dinner and Apsara Dance Show - Approx. price USD\$16 pp

PLEASE NOTE: During the dry season (Mar - Sep), when the water level is low on Tonle Sap Lake we visit the Chong Kneas floating village instead of Kampong Phluk.

Overnight - Siem Reap (B)

Day 9 : Journey overland to Bangkok

Siem Reap - Bangkok. It's a long journey today as we travel by road to Bangkok (**Journey time: 10 - 11 hours**). We journey from Siem Reap to the Poipet border and cross over into Thailand. Meeting our Thai guide at the border, we continue to the buzzing capital of Bangkok and check-in to our hotel.

Overnight - Bangkok (B)

Days 10-11 : Bangkok



Day 10 is free to independently explore Bangkok. You may decide to check out its colourful markets or visit top sights such as the ornate Grand Palace. The city is well-known for its thriving nightlife, with plenty of bars and clubs to choose from.

Our tour comes to an end on Day 11 (Thursday). Depart at any time or, if you would like to extend your stay in Thailand, we can arrange post-tour accommodation by request.

Overnight - Bangkok (1) (B:2)

HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard.

Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.

Sonnet Saigon Hotel

Just a short walk from the War Remnants Museum and the Reunification Palace, the Sonnet Saigon is a charming 3 star hotel which offers a convenient base for exploring the sights of Ho Chi Minh City. The comfortable guest rooms offer modern amenities, including LCD TVs with cable channels, WiFi, minibar, bathrobes and complimentary bottled water. The en suite bathrooms boast rainshowers and rooms feature floor-to-ceiling windows, with balconies to enjoy views of the city. Hotel facilities include a coffee shop with a terrace to soak up the sunshine and a restaurant serving a tasty buffet breakfast.



Ambassador Hotel

The Ambassador Saigon Hotel is ideally located in the heart of downtown Ho Chi Minh City, just a 10 minute stroll from the famous Ben Thanh Market and a 15 minute drive from Tan Son Nhat International Airport. The comfortable guest rooms offer modern amenities such as complimentary WiFi, air conditioning and satellite tv, and guests can enjoy panoramic views of the city from the Camellia Restaurant on the 12th floor which serves a range of international and Asian cuisine. Facilities also include a bar and a fitness centre.



Cardamom Hotel & Apartments

Offering views of the Tonle Sap River, this modern hotel has a pagoda-inspired facade and a great location, just minutes' walk from Phnom Penh's central market and Royal Palace. Its bright guestrooms feature free WiFi and tea and coffee making facilities, with room service available from 10:30am to 11pm. Enjoy all day dining at the Mimosa Restaurant, which serves both Asian and Western cuisine. Or, if you're looking to relax, head to the laid-back Poulowai Lobby Bar for a range of drinks and cocktails.



Khemara Battambang 1

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This contemporary hotel offers a great location, just a 10-minute drive from the Beoung Chhuok Market and tranquil Sangke Lake. Its comfortable and air-conditioned guestrooms feature poolside views, as well as tea and coffee making facilities and a minibar. Guests keen to get in a workout can head to the hotel's fitness centre or the spa offers a sauna, jacuzzi and rejuvenating massage treatments for those wanting to unwind. The restaurant serves Western and Asian dishes, however its specialty is traditional Khmer cuisine, which you can enjoy alfresco surrounded by a tropical garden.



Classy Hotel & Spa

The centrally located Classy Hotel offers a convenient base for exploring Battambang, just a short walk from the town's historic Colonial buildings and the Riverside Night Market. The comfortable en suite guest rooms feature WiFi, flat-screen cable TV, A/C and a minibar and a tasty buffet breakfast is served each day. You can enjoy a refreshing swim in the large outdoor pool and unwind at the Spa which features a sauna, jacuzzi and offers relaxing massages. In the evening dine on Khmer or Western cuisine at the hotel's rooftop restaurant and take in the wonderful panoramic views from its terrace.



New Riverside Hotel

The New Riverside Hotel is the perfect place to get away from the noise of the city and relax for a while. The spacious and beautifully decorated rooms line the outdoor pool that stretches through the middle of the property. The hotel is surrounded by a

range of lush, exotic plants that fill the air with their fragrances, blending perfectly with the scent of fresh Khmer and international dishes coming from the dining hall. The hotel is also well-located close to Pub Street and the famous Angkor Wat.



W22 Hotel

Located in one of Bangkok's most culturally dynamic districts, the W22 Hotel is surrounded by exotic markets, old-world shops and an array of street food. Its main feature is an airy seven-storey atrium, where you can relax on comfortable lounge seating with a coffee or cocktail. Guests can also head to the common room to play a game or two on the pool table or explore the Art Space, which contains regular exhibitions by local artists. Spacious, well-appointed guestrooms feature minimalist décor and high-speed WiFi, with the Fork & Cork Restaurant and Bar serving creative Thai cuisine.



Arrival Information

Airport transfers are not included on our Budget tours, so you will need to make your own way to our Arrival Hotel in Ho Chi Minh City which will be noted on your tour voucher.

Official metered taxis can be found in the 3rd lane outside Ho Chi Minh airport arrivals hall and taxi operating staff are there to arrange the transfer for you. The cost of the journey should be approximately VND150,000 - VND200,000 (USD\$7-10).

Avoid the taxi drivers looking for business inside the Arrival Hall, they are usually

freelance drivers and their taxi fares are not regulated.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Entrance Fees

Entrance fees to most sites are not included, although reasonably priced. The entrance fee amount is noted under exclusions on page one of this document and a breakdown of the entrance fees is provided upon arrival on the Welcome Letter.

For tours starting in Vietnam we collect entrance fees on Day 2 of the tour. All funds collected in Vietnam are payable in either US dollars (USD) or Vietnamese dong (VND).

Multi country tours starting in Laos - please note if you are travelling on our Laos to Vietnam, Inside Indochina or Indochina Discovery tour your entrance fees will be split into two separate payments. Entrance fees for Laos will be collected on day 2 of the tour in Vientiane and entrance fees for Vietnam/Cambodia/Thailand will be collected on day 8 in Hanoi.

Tipping Kitty

At the start of your tour, we take a small tipping kitty (the amount is noted under exclusions) from all tour participants to cover tips throughout your holiday. This saves you the hassle of knowing when and how much to tip bellhops, luggage handlers, bus drivers, train conductors and other support staff throughout the tour.

This amount does not include a tip for your tour guides. For a job well done, we would suggest USD \$3 - 6 per person per day. Tipping your guide is an entirely personal gesture and ultimately the amount is up to you.

Multi country tours starting in Laos - please note if you are travelling on our Laos to Vietnam, Inside Indochina or Indochina Discovery tour your tipping kitty will be split into two separate payments. Tips for Laos will be collected on day 2 of the tour in Vientiane and tips for Vietnam/Cambodia/Thailand will be collected on day 8 in Hanoi.

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Groups & Guides

The longest Signature Tour we offer in Southeast Asia is our Indochina Discovery 23 day tour. All other Signature Tours we offer (with the exception of the family tours) are sectors of this larger tour. The longest Budget Tour we offer in Southeast Asia is our Hanoi to Bangkok Tour 19 day tour, all other Budget Tours are sectors of this longer tour. As our tours are modular you may have travellers join you part way through your holiday (in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City or Phnom Penh on Signature Tours or in Ho Chi Minh City our Budget Tours). There will also be travellers who end their tour when you continue on.

Guides:

In Laos a Lao national guide escorts our tours from Vientiane through to Luang Prabang and in Vietnam a Vietnamese national guide escorts our tours from Hanoi through to Ho Chi Minh City.

In Cambodia our tours have two guides - a Cambodian national guide in Phnom Penh and a specialist regional guide in Siem Reap.

Our tours that end in Bangkok are not fully escorted for the Thailand sector. On our Signature Tours there is a local Thai guide for the Bangkok city tour. If you are travelling on a Budget Tour a local guide will meet you at the Cambodia border and escort you to our hotel, then you will be unescorted for the rest of your stay in Bangkok.

What to Pack

- Lightweight cotton garments. Ladies may need to have their shoulders and legs (to below the knee) covered when visiting certain sites, so please pack accordingly.
- Comfortable walking shoes in addition to flip flogs/ thongs
- DEET based mosquito repellent & antihistamine cream
- Electrical adaptors. A universal adaptor will cover all bases
- Lightweight, fold up raincoat/ poncho/ umbrella
- Two spare passport photos & a photocopy of your passport
- A small daypack for your day-to-day needs
- Sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, swimming costume and torch

- Sleep sheet if taking an overnight sleeper train in Vietnam. These also can be easily purchased in Hanoi at a cost of USD\$5

- An overnight bag, if your tour includes a night board a Junk boat in Halong Bay. As we will be returning to Hanoi it is not essential that you take your big bag/ suitcase with you.

Cambodia Country Guide

Visas

British, Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, South African and USA passport holders are able to obtain a 30 day tourist visa upon arrival to Cambodia when entering via Pochentong International Airport in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap International Airport (in the Angkor Wat Region) and at the Moc Bai (Vietnam) and Bavet (Cambodia) land border. We use the Moc Bai/Bavet land border crossing for all our group tours that travelling from Vietnam to Cambodia.

At each of these entry points you must submit a photocopy of your passport (identification page) and one passport size photograph. The cost of the visa is currently USD30. Note: at the land border sometimes immigration will ask for more. In this situation point to the sign above the ticket window indicating that the cost is actually USD30 (subject to change). Further, you are best to give the exact amount i.e. USD30 as often if you give more you will not receive change.

Alternatively, it is now also possible to obtain an e-visa in advance of travel. The e-visa allows for a length of stay up till 30 days. The e-visa is valid for 3 months from date of issue, not date of arrival, so please ensure that you do not obtain this visa too far in advance. Online processing time for this visa is 3 days. The e-visa is valid for entry via Pochentong International Airport in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap International Airport (in the Angkor Wat Region) and at the Moc Bai (Vietnam) and Bavet (Cambodia) land border. It is not valid at any other land or water border. To obtain an e-visa for Cambodia go to: <https://www.evisa.gov.kh/Default.aspx>

It is also possible to obtain a 30 day tourist visa prior to arrival via the Cambodian Embassy in your home port, though please note tourist

visas arranged with the embassy are valid for one month from date of issue, not date of arrival.

PLEASE NOTE: Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after your departure date, if it is not you may be refused entry into the country. Visa requirements are subject to change and visa procurement is solely the responsibility of the traveller and not of On The Go Tours.

Health Requirements

You should seek medical advice before travelling to Cambodia from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide Tetanus, Typhoid, Hep A, Diphtheria and Polio are recommended.

There is the risk of malaria in parts of Cambodia so it is very important to check with your doctor before you go, to see whether malarial medication is required for the areas you are visiting. Yellow fever is not present in Cambodia but a yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from those travelling from an infected region.

Water

Tap water in Cambodia is not considered safe to drink. It's recommended to only drink bottled mineral water, which is readily available in hotels, shops and restaurants.

Climate

Cambodia has a tropical monsoon climate with two seasons; Rainy season from May to November, when the countryside is lush and green, and dry season from late November to April, when there are long days of glorious sunshine and clear skies. Temperatures in Cambodia remain fairly constant and warm throughout the year, apart from in the north, when winters (December to March) are generally colder.

Time & Voltage

Cambodia is 7 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT).

The voltage in Cambodia is 230v. In Cambodia 3 types of plugs are commonly accepted: 2 flat prong plugs (type A), the 2

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round pin european plug (type C) and many of the new 4 and 5 star hotels use the British standard 3-pin plug (type G). To cover all bases, it is best to pack an international travel adaptor!

Currency

The official currency of Cambodia is the Cambodia Riel but USD is also widely accepted and sometimes preferred in larger stores and supermarkets.

Pound Sterling, US Dollars, Euro and other major currencies can be exchanged in Cambodia at various bureau de changes in major cities and towns. However foreign currency is also widely accepted and often desired more so it can give the shopper more buying power. ATMs can be found in all larger towns and cities and some five star hotels. We recommend you take a mixture of cash (preferably USD) and credit/ debit cards for ATMs. It's advisable to request bank notes in smaller denominations, as it can sometimes be hard to get change from large notes and smaller notes are handy for smaller purchases and gratuities.

Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

Airline Luggage Allowance

If your tour includes international or domestic flights within the region please be mindful that the free baggage allowance for Economy class travel is strictly 20kg and 1 piece of hand luggage up to 6kg. Any additional weight is charged at a per kilo rate. You may wish to bear this in mind whilst shopping.

Thailand Country Guide

Visa Requirements

Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States and most EU passport holders are not required to obtain a visa when entering Thailand for tourist purposes for a stay of up to 30 days.

Visitors may be required to prove that they possess adequate finances for the duration of stay in Thailand (i.e., cash 10,000THB/ USD400 per person and 20,000THB/

USD800 per family). Evidence can be shown in the form of cash or credit cards.

Please be advised that visa requirements are subject to change and that visa procurement is the responsibility of the traveller and not On The Go Tours. You can visit Thailand's Foreign Affairs website for the most up to date information. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of departure from Thailand.

After booking your holiday, please provide us with your passport details as soon as possible so that we can proceed to book trains and flights tickets on your behalf, if included within your holiday.

Voltage & Time

The voltage in Thailand is 220v. In Thailand there are 2 types of plugs are commonly accepted: 2 flat prong plugs (type A), the 2 round pin plug (type C). To cover all bases, it is best to pack an international travel adaptor! Thailand is 7 hours ahead of GMT and does not observe daylight saving.

Climate

The best time to travel to Thailand – central and north including Bangkok, Kanchanaburi and Sukhothai is from November to April, with little rain, if any expected throughout this time. After the cooler winter months, from mid January temperatures start to rise reaching 30°C and more between March – May. Between May and July the south west monsoons arrive, travel during this time can still be pleasant with the rain coming in the form of short downpours, lasting an hour or two, clearing the way for warm, clear skies.

In August and September the rain continues to fall and temperatures remain high, though by October the mercury has fallen and November marks the start of the dry season in the central and north once again.

The far north and Chiang Rai are generally cooler than the surrounding regions with an annual average temperature of 25o C and with a lower humidity. The best time to travel is either the 'cool' season from Oct – Feb or the wet season (Jun - Sept) when aside from the rain, conditions are mild with temperatures

around 25oC. March – May is warmer with temperatures rising to 36oC.

The Gulf of Thailand, including the Hua Hin coastal region has three defined seasons. From December to February you can expect blue skies, plenty of sunshine with refreshing sea breezes to keep temperatures at bay. From March – June there is still plenty of blue sky and temperatures will rise above 30°C. Rain is unlikely till the end of June when it comes in the form of hour-long afternoon downpours, clearing the way for more blue skies and bright sunshine. In late-August/September the monsoon arrives and you can expect sunny spells interspersed with rainy periods. Rainfall usually peaks between October and November.

Currency

The official currency in Thailand is the Baht.

Euro, British Pounds, US Dollars and other major currencies can be exchanged at banks or at any one on of the numerous exchange booths that line the streets of the big cities. You may also choose to purchase currency in advance, though its possibly not necessary as ATMs can be found everywhere with the exception of the hill tribe areas of Chiang Rai and if enroute between Chiang Rai and Chiang Khong border if crossing to Laos. It is not common to pay with a credit card at restaurants, cafes or shops for small purchases and if you do often there will be a surcharge applied or minimum charge required. It's advisable to request bank notes in smaller denominations, as it can sometimes be hard to get change from large notes and smaller notes are handy for smaller purchases and gratuities.

Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

Health Requirements

You should seek medical advice before travelling to Thailand from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide Hepatitis A, Typhoid and Tetanus are strongly recommended. If travelling to remote areas, further vaccinations including TB, Hepatitis B,

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Rabies, Diphtheria and Japanese encephalitis may also be necessary.

Malaria

Areas with Malaria: Rural only. Including forested areas that border Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia and Laos, and rural, forested areas in the districts of Phang Nga and Phuket. Malaria is not found in the cities of Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Koh Phangan, Koh Samui, Pattaya, Phang Nga and Phuket. The risk of contracting Malaria in Thailand is low.

Bilharzia

May be present in some rivers and lakes and we recommend it best to avoid swimming in untested waterways.

Water

The tap water in Thailand is not safe to drink, only drink bottled mineral water, which is readily available from shops, hotels and restaurants.

Shopping

Bangkok is rapidly gaining a reputation as a key shopping destination in Asia, with visitors being drawn by the variety of products and shopping environments, as well as the great prices. Chatuchak, is a market that gains momentum over the weekend to become arguably the largest in Southeast Asia, everything can be found here, from hand made jewellery to the latest fashions.

This city is blessed with a number of top quality shopping malls, perhaps the most popular for visitors is MBK. This 8 floor monstrosity offers everything from telephones to sushi, designer labels to unique designs. It is safe to assume that anything with a brand that is being sold out of a store bearing the same brand may not necessarily be the 'real deal'. There is something here for everyone, including a multi screen cinema showing the latest movies in English for those who would like to rest their weary feet whilst others continue on their spending spree.

Another wonderful feature of Bangkok are her nightmarkets. It seems that once the sun goes down, the temporary stalls come out, everywhere. Patpong is famous for its genuine fakes, Sukhumvit Road boats a

similar reputation. The mixture of bargains, street food and general vibe of the city make these markets a highlight to explore by foot. Remember to haggle, and if you think something is over priced then walk away. They will not sell to you at a loss, so if they can make some money on the deal they will call you back.

Caveat emptor - Let the buyer beware! It is always safe to assume that anything with a brand on it is a copy and should be treated as such. Some of these copies can be incredibly good, leaving the untrained eye incapable of telling the difference. It is therefore always best to assume it is a copy unless you really know what you are looking at. The city is also well known for its scams. Some tailors will drastically overcharge for shoddy workmanship that is delivered minutes before you leave on your return flight so you can't get it changed. Some jewellers have been known to sell fake or greatly over priced products. If the jewellers or tailors does not come highly recommended, a large amount of caution should be used.

IMPORTANT: Any purchases made whilst travelling are at your own discretion. Make sure you are completely happy at the product you are purchasing. on the go will not become involved at any time, at a later date or once you return home should your purchase not live up to your expectations. Proceed with caution.

Airline Luggage Allowance

If your tour includes international or domestic flights please be mindful that the free baggage allowance for Economy class travel within the region is strictly 20kg and 1 piece of hand luggage up to 6kg. Any additional weight is charged at a per kilo rate. You may wish to keep this in mind whilst shopping.

It's not like home

Travel to far - flung corners of the earth involves lifestyles and conditions that are sometimes very different from what you are used to back home. You must come prepared to cope with unusual situations, local inadequacies and unpredictable events as and when they occur. Foreign travel is

definitely not suitable for people who expect or demand everything to go exactly as planned. With the greatest respect and in the interest of your ultimate enjoyment you must understand this. Things can and do change in foreign countries.

Vietnam Country Guide

[new point]

Vietnam Arrival Transfers

An airport arrival transfer is provided on all Signature Tours, Private Tours and Short Stays if you are arriving on day 1 or you have booked pre tour accommodation with us.

Arrival Procedure for Hanoi - Noi Bai International Airport and Ho Chi Minh City - Tan Son Nhat International Airport. Upon arrival proceed to the immigration counter and pay the visa stamping fee of USD\$25 (if applicable). After collecting your luggage proceed to the arrival hall and go to the meeting point detailed on your tour voucher.

If, for any reason you have trouble locating our representative (after waiting 20 minutes) or your flight is delayed please call the emergency contact number as stated on your tour voucher.

Please note: If arriving prior to 9am on day 1 (essentially on a flight that arrives very, very early in the morning) you will need to purchase a night of pre-tour accommodation to save you waiting until standard hotel check in time, which is generally 2pm.

Budget Tours - please note airport transfers are NOT included on our Budget Tours, please make your own way to the start hotel noted on your tour voucher. Transfers can be booked upon request for an additional fee, please contact us for rates.

Visas

UK passport holders do not need a visa to visit Vietnam for up to 15 days. At customs you will need show your return airline ticket/ E ticket as proof of your date of departure. If you're exiting Vietnam via a land border we will provide UK passport holders with a transfer voucher which can be presented

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at the airport, along with your tour voucher and tour itinerary (Trip Notes) so please have these available to show to border police if requested. A visa is required for stays of 16 days or longer and if you are planning to return to Vietnam within 30 days of your last departure you will also need a visa.

Most other nationalities including Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, South African and USA passport holders require a tourist visa to visit Vietnam. Travellers can apply for a 30 day tourist visa (single or multiple entry) from the nearest Vietnamese Embassy or via the more convenient method of applying online for an E Visa. The cost is approx USD\$20. After submitting an application you will receive a confirmation number, then upon arrival into Vietnam you will receive the actual visa and have to pay an additional stamping fee of USD\$25. The stamping fee for a multiple entry visa, for entries within one month is approximately USD\$50.

Applying in advance and then collecting your tourist visa upon arrival is available to all travellers entering the country via Hanoi - Noi Bai International Airport, Ho Chi Minh City - Tan Son Nhat International Airport and Danang International Airport.

PLEASE NOTE: Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after your departure date, if it is not you may be refused entry into the country.

Health Requirements

You should seek medical advice before travelling to Vietnam from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Typhoid and Tetanus are strongly recommended.

Malaria in Vietnam

Areas with malaria: Rural only, except none in the Red River Delta and the coast north of Nha Trang. Rare cases in the Mekong Delta. None in Da Nang, Haiphong, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Nha Trang, and Qui Nhon. Estimated relative risk of malaria for travellers: Low

Water

The tap water in Vietnam is generally considered safe to drink, but as a precaution against stomach upsets you may want to drink bottled mineral water, which is readily available from shops, hotels and restaurants.

Climate

Vietnam has a varied climate due to its geography. The south is hot year round and has two seasons: The wet season lasts from May to October, with brief, daily showers. The dry season from November to April is generally sunny and humid. In the north, the summer months (May to October) are hot and there is the occasional burst of heavy rain. In the winter (December to February) temperatures drop in the north and it can be damp. The coastal region of central Vietnam is blessed with long months of sunshine, although there is rainfall in November and December. At this time there can also be some typhoon activity in the central coastal region.

Time & Voltage

The voltage in Vietnam is 220v. In Vietnam 3 types of plugs are commonly accepted: 2 flat prong plugs (type A), the 2 round pin plug (type C) and many of the new 4 and 5 star hotels use the British standard 3-pin plug (type G). To cover all bases, it is best to pack an international travel adaptor!

Vietnam is 7 hours ahead of GMT and does not observe daylight saving.

Currency

The official currency in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Dong.

Euro, British Pounds, US Dollars and other major currencies can be exchanged locally at the airport, bureau de changes or banks. US Dollar notes are widely accepted and shopkeepers use both currencies interchangeably. You can often pay for items in USD and receive your change in USD notes and coins in VND. Make sure that your USD bills are crisp and clean and you will have no problem using or exchanging these throughout your stay. ATM machines can be found in all major cities though it is not common to pay with credit card in restaurants, cafes or shops for purchases. It's advisable to

request bank notes in smaller denominations, as it can sometimes be hard to get change from large notes and smaller notes are handy for smaller purchases and gratuities.

Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

Airline Luggage Allowance

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Trains in Vietnam

It's not the Orient Express, but Vietnam's Reunification Express. On a number of our group tours we include an overnight train journey on the Reunification Express Railway Line between Hanoi and Hue and on our Budget Tours we include a second overnight train journey from Danang to Mui Ne. The particular SE series train that we use is the highest class of train available in Vietnam. It's titled as being the nation's fastest train; though by international standards it's quite the opposite. Never the less, our journey between Hanoi and Hue takes approximately 14 hours and travellers are accommodated in 4 berth 'Soft Sleeper' cabins.

Aboard each wagon are 9 compartments that comprise of 4 bunks per compartment. 4 persons of mixed sex share one compartment. You may be sharing with people from your tour group, other tourists or Vietnamese people. Who you will share your cabin with is ultimately dependent upon how the Vietnamese Railways Corporation configures the bookings.

Cabins onboard are comfortable though not comparable to European standards. A western style toilet (with a varying degree of cleanliness) is located at either end of the wagon. Air-conditioning (not always operational in the summer) and lighting are controlled from inside the cabin, which is also lockable. Luggage can be stored in a compartment under the bottom bunk. Linen

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and a pillow are provided though we strongly recommend that you bring your own sleep sheet (easily purchased in Hanoi at a cost of USD\$5). The cleanliness of the train varies according to wagons assigned to the journey for that particular day. Some wagons are spotlessly clean whilst others can be unclean and should have been decommissioned long ago. Irrespective of the particular train you take, they all have large clear glass windows that allow for uninterrupted views of stunning landscapes and never ending rice paddy fields.

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