

MEKONG CRUISE CAMBODIA TO VIETNAM

SIEM REAP – MEKONG CRUISE – SAIGON

10 Days / 9 Nights

Day 01: Welcome to Cambodia!

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Welcome to Siem Reap. Upon arrival, you will be met at the airport by your guide. The guide will assist you in transferring to your hotel for check-in. Please note that the standard check-in time is 14:00.

Lunch and dinner are on your own account.

Notice: Revealing clothes such as shorts and skirts above the knees and bare shoulders are prohibited in sacred places and temples. On religious Buddhist dates, the Top Tower (Level 3) of the Angkor Wat temple is closed.

SIEM REAP

Siem Reap is located in northwest Cambodia and is the closest city to the world-famous, must-see temples of Angkor. The provincial capital is also called Siem Reap and is located in the south of the province on the shores of Tonle Sap Lake, the greatest sweet water reserve in all of Southeast Asia. It's a laid-back, lovely place to stay while touring the temples and offers the best of both worlds between observing Cambodian life and enjoying the amenities of modern services and entertainment. Although the temples are the main 'draw' in this area, there is much more to experience by traveling a little further in this region.

Accommodation: As selected.

Day 02: Siem Reap

(B)



After breakfast at your hotel, we will visit the magnificent Angkor Wat Temple, Angkor Park's most revered temple and the largest religious monument in the world. Inside the temple, the walls are covered with stone carvings and bas-reliefs, which are absolutely breathtaking.

Your guide will explain the stories in exquisite detail and provide you with ample time to explore the inner and outer grounds of the temple.

Afternoon, enter the **South Gate** with its huge statues depicting the churning of the ocean of milk and see the ancient capital of **Angkor Thom**, built in the late 12th century, before we head onwards to **Bayon Temple**, which is unique for its 54 towers decorated with over 200 smiling faces of *Avolokitesvara*. If time permits, we will visit the Ta Prohm Temple.

Lunch and dinner are on your own account.

Accommodation: As selected

Day 03: Siem Reap – Mekong Cruise

(B/L/D)



At 8:00 a.m., pick up at your hotel and transfer to the check-in point of the Mekong cruise. The pier is subject to change according to the water level.

High Water Period: The pier is located at Tonle Sap Lake.

We gather in the morning at our welcome lounge in Siem Reap. Relax with a drink as our staff collects your details for the board. We bid farewell to the iconic sights of Angkor and travel a short distance to the pier at **Tonle Sap Lake**. By local boat, we transfer to our luxurious “home” for the next few days. While you check in to your prepared staterooms, the ship sets sail, and a fascinating journey on the *Mighty Mekong* begins. Have lunch on board while the vessel gently glides over the Tonle Sap Lake. The lake can only be crossed during the high water season (approximately from August to mid-November). Let your soul float and your eyes wander while the boat makes its way across.

In the afternoon, we serve a high tea at the bar. Enjoy your cruising day on board, relax on the balcony, or relish a spa treatment before dinner. The expert guide will also give a presentation about the “*geography of the Mekong and Tonle Sap Lakes*.” The boat moors on the Tonle River. You can join the evening cinema session (offered every night) featuring selected classic movies.

Low water period: the pier is located in Kampong Champ province.

We gather in the morning at our welcome lounge in Siem Reap. Relax with a drink as our staff collects your details for the board. Then, we bid farewell to the iconic sights of Angkor and travel over land south to the town of **Kampong Cham**, where our ship awaits us. The transfer takes about 4.5 hours, and snacks and water are provided during the trip. Upon arrival, you check in to your well-prepared staterooms. A lunch buffet is served in the dining hall. Make yourself familiar with all the facilities onboard and take some rest.

In the afternoon, we learn more about the education of the young **Cambodian generation** (an NGO project). The children join us on board, always excited to show their skills in music and art. Be sure to be bathed in smiles upon receiving your applause. After the performance, we leave the ship by bus for an afternoon excursion. During low water season, we have the chance to see a bamboo bridge that connects the mainland with an island. Local communities re-build the bridge every year when water levels drop. We continue our land journey to the enchanting pre-Angkorian temple of **Wat Hanchey** (7th century). This small complex sits on a hilltop on the shore with a breath-taking view over the Mekong. When returning to the ship, you can enjoy some private time until dinner is served in the dining hall. Our lounge cinema features selected classic movies every night.

Accommodation: On Board (Superior Cabin).

Day 04: Kompong Chhnang - Kamp Tralach - Kampong Cham

(B/L/D)



High water period:

Wake up early to witness the spectacular scenery at the break of dawn. Our morning *Tai Chi class* offers the perfect start to the day. Afterwards, the breakfast buffet is served in the dining hall. We are at **Kampong Chhnang**, Cambodia's "*water world*", where everything is on sticks balanced on water-rich soil. It's perhaps the most fascinating cruising spot in Cambodia. We take a local boat to the shore. By minibus, we head to a rural village nearby for a walking tour. Our guides introduce us to the village specialties: *Khmer-style pottery* and the *making of palm sugar*. You should definitely bring some home. Before returning to the boat, we explore the floating villages and wetlands of the region.

Back on board, lunch is served while we continue cruising with a languid meander along the Tonle River towards Kampong Tralach. A monk's blessing ceremony on board delivers spirits and wishes for health and prosperity for all. Gliding through leafy swaths of this jungle-like landscape, we reach Kampong Tralach. Cacophonous children wave enthusiastically while bringing their livestock for a bath in the meandering river. We will stop at the "Green School," which is partly supported by Heritage Line. See all of the river life, which is so different than ours, on a local ox cart ride. Back on board, we sail downstream, passing the confluence of the Tonle and Mekong Rivers. The boat cruises overnight while you enjoy dinner in the dining hall.

Low water period:

Every morning, our Tai Chi class on the sun deck will give you energy for the day ahead. Breakfast is served in the dining hall. The ship sails up towards the small Angkor Ban village on the Mekong River. The Angkor Ban village is famous for its unspoiled community and beautiful, traditional houses. It feels like being transported back a hundred years, into an era unaffected by modernity. Villagers are characterized by their unbridled warmth. Back on board, a monk's blessing ceremony will deliver spirits and wishes for health and prosperity for all. Enjoy your lunch as we set sail downstream on the Mekong.

In the afternoon, a high tea is offered, and our staff is keen to show you *the variety of traditional Khmer fashion*. We arrive at the island of Koh Oknha Tey. This spot in the middle of the Mekong is famous for manufacturing *high-class silk products*. By tuk tuk, we explore the island with its workshops and learn how silk is processed from its source, provided by little silkworms, to a final top-quality product made of original Cambodian silk. After some additional cruising time, passing the confluence of the Mekong and Tonle Rivers, the boat anchors near Kampong Chhnang. Have a fresh drink before dinner and marvel at the amazing marshlands of this beautiful area.

Accommodation: On Board (Superior Cabin).

Day 05: Kampong Cham – Oknha Tey – Phnom Penh

(B/L/D)



High water period:

After breakfast, we stay on board to learn more about the education of the young Cambodian generation (an NGO project). The children will join us on board, excited to show their skills in music and art. Be sure to be bathed in smiles upon receiving your applause.

We leave the boat around 09:30 am for the enchanting pre-Angkorian temple of Wat Hanchey (7th century). This small complex sits on a hilltop right on the shore with breath-taking views over the Mekong. After some refreshment back on the ship, lunch will be served. Our staff is keen on showing you the variety of *traditional Khmer fashion* in the afternoon. Watch the riverbanks' life along the Mekong during our high tea as the ship proceeds to its next stop. We arrive at the island of Koh Oknha Tey. This spot in the middle of the Mekong is famous for manufacturing *high-class silk products*. By tuk tuk, we explore the island with its workshops and learn how silk is processed from its source, provided by little silkworms, to a final top-quality product made of original Cambodian silk. After some additional cruising time, the boat arrives and docks at the pier in Phnom Penh. Feel free to do your first exploration by yourself after dinner. Stroll along the river promenade and watch the locals chit-chatting, selling odds and ends, or have a drink in one of the numerous bars (kindly inform our crew once you are leaving the ship on your own).

Low water period:

Wake up early to witness this spectacular scenery at the break of dawn. Our morning Tai Chi class offers the perfect scenery today. A breakfast buffet is served in the dining hall. We are now in **Kampong Chhnang**, Cambodia's "*water world*", where everything is on sticks balanced on water-rich soil. We take a local boat to the shore. By minibus, we head to a rural village nearby and go on a walking tour. Our guides introduce you to the village specialties: *Khmer-style pottery* and *the making of palm sugar*. You should definitely bring some home. Before returning to the boat, we explore the floating villages and wetlands of the region. Back on board, lunch is served while the cruise continues with a languid meander along the Tonle River towards **Kampong Tralach**. Gliding through leafy swaths of this jungle-like landscape, we reach Kampong Tralach. Cacophonous children wave enthusiastically while bringing their livestock for a bath in the meandering river. We will stop at the "**Green School**," which is partly supported by Heritage Line. See all this river life, which is so different than ours, on a local ox cart ride. After some additional cruising time, the boat arrives at the pier in Phnom Penh. Feel free to have your first exploration by yourself after dinner. Stroll along the river promenade and watch the locals chit-chatting, selling odds and ends, or have a drink in one of the numerous bars (kindly inform our crew once you are leaving the ship on your own).

Accommodation: On Board (Superior Cabin)

Day 06: Phnom Penh (B/L/D)



We start with a full sight-seeing tour right after breakfast. By bus, we visit the Killing Fields outside of the city and, afterwards, the centrally located prison "S21". Both historic sites display the sad and cruel chapter of Khmer history when the Khmer Rouge ruled the country with terror and suppression. Those places have not changed much since this horrific time back in the early seventies, and it can be quite heartbreaking. Alternatively, you can explore the city in the morning on your own before re-joining the group. We take lunch at a fine restaurant in town. Our exploration of Phnom Penh continues with the fascinating cultural heritage of Phnom Penh. The golden edifice of the Royal Palace with its silver pagoda and the exceptional Khmer crafts at the National Museum are our afternoon highlights. The day trip ends with a "Cyclo" ride back to the ship through the bustling streets of downtown Phnom Penh. Take some rest in your spacious cabin or join other fellow passengers at the bar for refreshing drinks before our captivating evening activities start. In the early evening, a barbecue dinner on the sun deck commences. The dinner is accompanied by an *Apsara dance performance*. You have to witness the brilliance and richness of this dance, along with the soothing sounds of the traditional music. As the evening unwinds, enjoy your supper with a good glass of wine and marvel at the skyline of Phnom Penh and the calming flow of the Tonle River.

Accommodation: On Board (Superior Cabin).

Day 07: Phnom Penh – Border Crossing – Chau Doc

(B/L/D)



The lounge is set up for a captivating lecture about Cambodian modern history, held by a professor of the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Definitely a highlight of this cruise was receiving knowledge firsthand, as our lecturer has studied the subject extensively and personally. The whole afternoon is at your own expense. From now on, even the last passenger will turn on his cruise mode and hopefully experience the therapeutic influence that this mighty river radiates. It is time for massages, relaxation on the sunbed, and private balcony kick-backs—it's time to merge with the river. Some may like to visit the bridge, as the captain always has a little story to share about "his" river. Float into a state of mild bliss. Before totally drifting away, do not forget lunchtime around noon. A culinary class is offered in the afternoon to sharpen your knowledge and skills of the local cuisine. Before slumbering in a nap, join our high tea with coffee and snacks if you like to. We reach the border and finally arrive in Vietnam. From here, it is just a short distance to Chau Doc, a pleasant, slow-paced border town with a sizeable Chinese, Kinh, and Khmer community. We moor near the city with views of the riverbanks. Dinner will be served soon, and you can join our evening cinema with another selected classic movie afterwards.

Because of Tan An Bridge construction, we will temporarily change the program to visit Tan Chau (instead of Chau Doc). Tan Chau is a very similar destination, and in fact, we have visited there in our previous programs. Tan Chau is a remote town and cultural melting point where we offer guests a cyclo ride to the bustling central market, then another trip by local boat to a typical floating fish farm on the Mekong Delta. At the moment, we are so sorry that we don't have any clue when the bridge construction can be completed.

Accommodation: On Board (Superior Cabin).

Day 08: Tan Chau – My An Hung – Sa Dec

(B/L/D)



Brace yourself for a tour around **Chau Doc**, a pleasant, slow-paced town near the Cambodian border with a sizeable *Chinese, Kinh, and Khmer community*. Once we arrive onshore, we hop to explore Chau Doc. A “*xeloi*” is a local vehicle that is still used as a taxi in this region. We slowly move around the streets to see all the workshops, houses, and domiciles. Get to feel the laid-back vibes of this place. We stop at the colorful, local market near one of the town's temples. This is the best time to interact with the vendors in this friendly town and make your own bargain experience. We board our local boats and cruise along floating houses until we finally reach a floating fish farm. This region is the source of fish production that is sold all over the world. We get an exclusive insight into how fish farming works. Back on board before lunch is served, you may like to pamper yourself with some spa treatments or take a dip into the pool on the sun deck. Our expert guides offer a presentation on “*Life on the Mekong Delta*” as the ship continues to **My An Hung** near the Sa Dec province. Before we arrive, we mingle with fellow passengers and share some stories. We will set off for the My An Hung Village. In the village, we receive wonderful insights into the private household of a local family. We are allowed to visit their vegetable garden and access the seasonal vegetable fields via a monkey bridge. We are also invited to their house for a Vietnamese tea tasting. Vietnamese tea is often bitter, and the locals sweeten it with honey. The honey is produced by the family, a true delicacy in this region. We are offered fruits—juicy, fresh, and right from the tree. A local artist group performs a typical traditional dragon dance while we munch on those natural “*vitamin bombs*”. As the sun sets and the light bathes everything golden, we settle on a riverbank gathering with cocktails to recap the day. Back on the ship, we cruise downstream to the Mekong. Refresh yourself and get ready for dinner. The ship moors mid-river near Sa Dec.

Accommodation: On Board (Superior Cabin).

Day 09: Binh Thanh Island – Cai Be – My Tho

(B/L/D)



In the morning, we arrive at the island of **Binh Thanh**. We embark on a local boat and head towards Binh Thanh Island. Binh Thanh is one of the larger islands in the vast stream of the Mekong. Some communities have settled here and make their living by growing water hyacinths. We exclusively visit one of those untouched areas. By wandering through the village, we get a deep understanding of the native life. But moreover, we can follow the whole process of their *traditional mat-making*. You can try weaving yourself, which is still done manually. We will also meet an old local couple who share their story on this island. They are happy for any chit-chat with you. Back onboard, lunch is served, and you have some time to leisurely spend onboard while we cruise along the Mekong. In the early afternoon, we arrive in **Cai Be**, a charming town that is famous for its Catholic French church and the manufacturing of traditional crafts and food products. The floating market of Cai Be is getting smaller every year since trading on the water is shifting more and more to the modern central markets. We can still see some boat-to-boat trading of local goods, such as fruits and agricultural products. Our guide will explain all the particulars of this long-lasting trading culture. Each boat has a special marker that lets buyers know what goods they are selling. Afterwards, we go on-shore to visit a workshop where we learn how rice paste, rice paper, rice cookies, and rice wine are manufactured. Cai Be and its surrounding areas are covered by palm trees, and hence the region is also famous for the production of coconut candies. The city is crisscrossed by many water canals. By local boat, we will explore the lush and green canal network and observe the farmers working in the fields. As the sun sets, our crew invites you to a farewell event. Before dinner, you can enjoy dances and music with the crew. The ships moor at **My Tho**.

Accommodation: On Board (Superior Cabin).

Day 10: My Tho – Saigon

(B)

Enjoy your last breakfast aboard your floating home. We will disembark the ship after breakfast and take a bus transfer from My Tho to the drop-off point in Saigon. It is only around 70 kilometers on the highway. You will arrive in Saigon by mid-morning. We hope you enjoyed this fascinating river cruise, just as our crew does every single time. Moreover, take the enchanting memories and friendships along with you that will linger on with the stories of this amazing river.

End of Service.