

## **Sample Itinerary: Laos, Cambodia & Vietnam**

**Luang Prabang \* Vientiane \* Hanoi \* Hoi An \* Hue \* Ho Chi Minh City \* Mekong Delta \* Siem Reap  
13 nights / 14 days**

### **Summary of itinerary:**

- Day 1: Welcome to Luang Prabang (no meal)**
- Day 2: Luang Prabang – Pak Ou – Luang Prabang (B, L)**
- Day 3: Luang Prabang – Vientiane (B)**
- Day 4: Vientiane – Hanoi (B)**
- Day 5: Hanoi City Tour (B)**
- Day 6: Hanoi – Flight to Danang – Transfer to Hoi An (B)**
- Day 7: Hoi An – Transfer to Hue (B)**
- Day 8: Hue City Tour (B)**
- Day 9: Hue – Flight to Ho Chi Minh City - City Tour (B)**
- Day 10: Introduction to Mekong Delta (B, L)**
- Day 11: Ho Chi Minh City – Flight to Siem Reap (B, L, D)**
- Day 12: Siem Reap – Temples of Angkor (B)**
- Day 13: Siem Reap – Temples of Angkor (B)**
- Day 14: Siem Reap Departure (B)**

### **Detailed itinerary:**

#### **Day 1: Welcome to Luang Prabang (no meal)**

Upon arrival, you will be greeted by your guide and transferred to your hotel.

At the end of the day, climb the 328 steps to the top of Mount Phousi to enjoy a panoramic view of the city and the surrounding countryside and get back to your hotel via the evening hilltribe market where you may find plenty of local souvenirs to buy such as handicraft, textile.

Overnight in Luang Prabang

#### **Day 2: Luang Prabang – Pak Ou – Luang Prabang (B, L)**

Start this morning with a visit to one of Lao's most picturesque temples, Wat Xieng Thong. Located at the end of the peninsula, close to the Mekong River, this temple was erected in 1560 by King Setthathirat and is deeply revered by the Lao people.

Walk to the boat pier, near the temple, to board the Nava Mekong, a beautiful wooden river boat for a cruise up the Mekong to the Pak Ou Caves. The journey takes around 2 hours and along the way you will be surrounded by spectacular views, pass by small villages on the riverbanks and witness fishermen out for their daily catch.

Upon reaching Pak Ou, disembark to explore the caves. Here you will see thousands of gold lacquered Buddha statues crammed into two caves carved out of a towering limestone cliff. The statues range in size from a few centimetres tall to the size of a human, and the view from the mouth of the cave provides sweeping views of the Mekong and Nam Ou rivers.

Back onboard the Nava Mekong, you will cruise around the waters to a quiet location set amid limestone cliffs where the boat will moor for lunch. A selection of freshly prepared Lao dishes will be served before returning downstream to Luang Prabang.

This afternoon, you will have a chance to learn more about this culturally rich and history city with a guided tour. The city tour begins with a visit to the former Royal Palace, now the National Museum, where you will explore the history of Laos. Continue on foot to Wat Mai, a temple renowned for its golden bas-relief, and Wat Sensoukarahm, which features a beautiful dazzling golden façade.

Overnight in Luang Prabang



### **Day 3: Luang Prabang – Vientiane (B)**

Morning transfer to Airport for your midday flight.

Upon arrival in Vientiane, set off to enjoy a guided tour to discover the hidden charms of Vientiane, whose name means ‘the city of sandal wood’.

Your tour begins at the serene Wat Sisaket, the only temple left intact after the Siamese (Thai) invasion in 1828. It is one of the most beautiful temples in the capital, and its breezy teak covered hallways are filled with thousands of miniature Buddha statues.

Continue to the nearby Wat Phra Keo. Used as a religious museum, Wat Phra Keo displays a collection of both Lao and Khmer works of art. Also, nearby, is the Presidential Palace. Although you are not allowed to visit inside, it is a good glimpse into the town’s colonial past as this building formerly served as the French governor’s palace.

Then, continue your tour with a visit to the Patuxay monument, where you can climb the stairs to the roof for sweeping panoramic views of the city. Next, your tour takes you to That Luang, the holiest site in Laos. Constructed by King Setthethirat in the 16th century, the temple is resplendent as the sun shines upon its towering golden spire.

Overnight in Vientiane

### **Day 4: Vientiane – Hanoi (B)**

Your guide will pick you up at your hotel in Vientiane at 0800. Set off on the road to the Thai-Laos border to Buddha Park. This park is filled with over 200 Buddhist and Hindu statues. The quiet and tranquil setting along the Mekong River is a contrast to the slightly eccentric sculptures which were built in 1958 by a Laos shaman. Drive back to Vientiane. Visit COPE. This association is working to help landmines victims to rebuild a life.

This afternoon transfer to the airport for departure flight.

Arrive in Hanoi, welcome by your guide and transfer to hotel. The rest of the day is at your leisure.

Overnight in Hanoi

### **Day 5: Hanoi City Tour (B)**

A full day of sightseeing in Hanoi, with visits to the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and his former stilted residence, One Pillar Pagoda, Temple of Literature and the ancient Buddhist pagodas surrounding West Lake. Then explore the narrow Old Quarter. This afternoon you can choose to visit either the Ethnology, Army or National Fine Arts Museum.

Evening at leisure.

Overnight in Hanoi

### **Day 6: Hanoi – Flight to Danang – Transfer to Hoi An (B)**

This morning depart to Hanoi’s Noi Bai Airport for the short flight to Danang City.

On arrival your private vehicle will be waiting for you for the 40-minute drive to Hoi An. A destination with two faces – the charming, old-world trading port of narrow streets and traditional houses, and the beach with its new resorts and long stretch of clean white sand. In keeping with Hoi An’s heritage as a trading port, the town’s tiny shop houses now host a range of craft shops and

artisans including some of Asia's best bespoke tailors. Despite the passing of 200 years and the ravages of weather and war, the centre of Hoi An remains much the same as it was in its heyday. Take a walking tour of the ancient town centre to visit former merchants' houses, the 400-year-old Japanese Covered Bridge, a Chinese communal hall and the colourful market.

Rest of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Hoi An



### **Day 7: Hoi An – Transfer to Hue (B)**

Morning at leisure before leaving Hoi An for Hue, the former imperial capital of Vietnam.

Drive through Danang and visit the Cham Museum, which contains the finest collection of Cham sculptures in the world before climbing over the Pass of Ocean Clouds and dropping down to the wonderfully photogenic fishing village of Lang Co.

Overnight in Hue

### **Day 8: Hue City Tour (B)**

Start your day at the Imperial Citadel where the Nguyen Dynasty ruled between 1802 and 1945.

From here take a cyclo through the 'Old City' to Tinh Tam Lake where the emperors used to come to relax.

Continue to visit Thien Mu (Celestial Lady) Pagoda overlooking the Perfume River; constructed in 1601 the 21-meter-tall tower is the centrepiece of the pagoda and represents seven reincarnations of Buddha.

In the afternoon see the tomb of the former emperor Minh Mang which is in a tranquil setting of gardens and ponds.

Journey on to Khai Dinh's Tomb which is traditional Vietnamese in design with a European touch making it unique from the other tombs in Hue.

Finish the day at the Mausoleum of Tu Duc, built decades before its occupant's death the tomb was used as a palace retreat before the emperors resting place.

End the day with a visit to the city's vibrant Dong Ba Market to see the abundance of fresh produce.

Overnight in Hue

### **Day 9: Hue – Flight to Ho Chi Minh City - City Tour (B)**

Morning transfer to Hue Airport for a short flight to Ho Chi Minh City, still called Saigon by the locals. Take a full day tour of Ho Chi Minh City. Your tour includes the Reunification Hall, formerly known as the Presidential Palace, it was towards this modern building that North Vietnamese tanks seized on the morning of April 30, 1975, as Saigon fell. This fascinating building is filled with history still fresh in the minds of many.

From there stroll (your vehicle will be available at all times) to the major sights of colonial Ho Chi Minh City: The Old Saigon Post Office, Dong Khoi Street (formerly Rue Catinat), Continental Hotel, Opera House and City Hall. After this historical visit continue to the War Remnants Museum where exhibition halls display imagery of both the French and 'American' wars.

Continue to the Jade Emperor Pagoda located on the fringes of district 1. Dating from 1909 and built by Cantonese Buddhists this quiet oasis was designed using feng shui principals showcasing ornate statues and effigies.

Following your tour head back to your hotel.

Overnight in Ho Chi Minh City

### **Day 10: Introduction to Mekong Delta (B, L)**

The colourful floating market, vast emerald rice fields and lush back waterways; these are the things that make Cai Be such a desired destination. This morning leave bustling Ho Chi Minh for the 2-hour drive to the delta town of Cai Be.

On arrival board your boat for a cruise of Cai Be floating market. Traders work the river, and some have been living on these waters for generations. Produce at the market are hung on a pole in front of boats to attract customers and make it easier for people to see from afar what is on offer. After visiting the market continue to a cottage factory where 'pop-rice', rice paper and coconut candies are made. Return to the boat for the cruise to Dong Hoa Hiep Island. Lunch will be local Mekong style serving specialties of the area. Following your cruise drive back to Ho Chi Minh City.

Overnight in Ho Chi Minh City



### **Day 11: Ho Chi Minh City – Flight to Siem Reap (B, L, D)**

Located in suburban Ho Chi Minh City away from the well-trodden tourist path, this is not just a cooking class but a genuine insight into a Vietnamese kitchen. Start early from your hotel for a local suburban Ho Chi Minh City market (whilst it's still busy) with your host, to shop for ingredients. You'll then head back to the house to start your cooking, where you'll eventually devour the results for lunch! A selection of 5 dishes can be made from a menu, rather than having a set cooking class menu see what tickles your fancy.

Return to Ho Chi Minh City for flight to Siem Reap, the ancient capital of the Khmer empire. Arrive in Siem Reap, welcome by your guide and transfer to hotel. The rest of the day is at your leisure.

Enjoy a delicious Khmer welcome dinner at The Sugar Palm.

Overnight in Siem Reap

### **Day 12: Siem Reap – Temples of Angkor (B)**

Probably the best time to visit Angkor Wat, the largest and most famous of the Angkor temples, is early in the morning, when the light is good, and it is relatively quiet. Angkor Wat is visually, architecturally, and artistically breath-taking. It is a massive three-tiered pyramid crowned by five beehive-like towers rising 65 metres from ground level. At the apex of Khmer political and military dominance in the region.

The day ends at the fairly large temple of Ta Prohm. This site is hugely atmospheric due to the fact that the temples have been left untouched rather than being restored. The jungle has reclaimed the temple, with huge tree trunks and vines snaking around the centuries-old stonework. Here you can get a feeling of how the first European explorers would have found the ruins.

Overnight in Siem Reap

### **Day 13: Siem Reap – Temples of Angkor (B)**

This morning visit the beautiful pink sandstone temple of Banteay Srei, famous for its intricate and delicate carvings. Then continue to Banteay Samre, another Hindu temple, this time dedicated to Vishnu. After a rest, you will return to the site later in the day to explore Angkor Thom with the enigmatic Bayon temple, the Terrace of Elephants and the Terrace of the Leper King.

Overnight in Siem Reap



### **Day 14: Siem Reap Departure (B)**

On your last day in Siem Reap, embark on an interesting boat trip on the Tonlé Sap Lake, where you will have the opportunity to learn about life on the lake. Tonlé Sap is South East Asia's largest freshwater lake with its size varying greatly depending on the season.

Visit the workshops of Artisans d'Angkor where traditional techniques like wood and stone carving are being taught to locals.

Your tour ends with a transfer to the airport for your onward flight.

**Service ends**

Price on request: [res2@bltrips.co.za](mailto:res2@bltrips.co.za)