

History Tour (12 days) Vietnam & Cambodia



This 12-day tour is designed for history enthusiasts, Australian Vietnam War veterans, and educators with an interest in the ancient and modern histories of Vietnam and Cambodia.

The journey begins in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital, where we explore key historical and cultural landmarks. From there, we travel to the central provinces to visit Hue, the former Imperial capital, and the historically significant Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Next, we fly to the vibrant city of Ho Chi Minh City, with a special excursion to the Long Tan Cross Memorial and Nui Dat, the site of Australia's main military base during the Vietnam War.

Leaving Vietnam, we continue to Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital, to delve into the history of the Khmer Rouge regime and the city's French colonial heritage. The tour concludes in Siem Reap with a visit to the awe-inspiring Temples of Angkor.

This itinerary showcases the unique cultures of Vietnam and Cambodia, offering access to lesser-known sites, rural attractions, and the warm hospitality of the local people.

Day 1

Arrive Hanoi (Vietnam)



Upon arrival at Hanoi International Airport, we are warmly welcomed and transferred to our hotel. There, our group leader provides an overview of the itinerary and addresses any questions.

Hanoi, often regarded as one of Southeast Asia's most picturesque cities, is a vibrant hub of culture and history. It offers countless opportunities to savour traditional Vietnamese cuisine and explore iconic landmarks that reflect the nation's rich past. After dinner, those who are interested can join a short guided walking tour to experience the city's dynamic atmosphere. *(meals: dinner)*

Day 2

Hanoi



We set out to explore Hanoi, beginning with a visit to the Temple of Literature, Vietnam's first university, founded in 1070. Here, we admire its classical architecture and gain insight into the city's 1,000-year history. Next, we experience the vibrant Old Quarter aboard electric carts, a perfect way to immerse ourselves in the sights, sounds, and aromas of bustling markets and daily life.

In the early afternoon, we visit the Hoa Lo Prison Museum. Originally built by the French in 1896 to detain political revolutionaries, it later became infamous as the 'Hanoi Hilton,' where American aviators, including notable

figures like Peter Peterson and John McCain, were held during the Vietnam War.

Our journey continues through the narrow laneways of Ngoc Ha commune, a once-rural area now transformed into a dense residential district. We arrive at B52 Lake, where the wreckage of an American B52 bomber, shot down in December 1972, serves as a poignant reminder of the war's final days.

The afternoon includes some free time for independent exploration. In the evening, we gather for dinner, followed by a captivating performance by Hanoi's renowned Water Puppet Troupe, where traditional folklore is brought to life on water. *(meals: breakfast, dinner)*

Day 3

Hanoi - Hue



No trip to Hanoi would be complete without a visit to the imposing Soviet-style Mausoleum, the final resting place of President Ho Chi Minh. Ho Chi Minh is credited with being the father of modern Vietnam. As a young man, 'Uncle Ho,' as he is affectionately referred to, grew up deeply resentful of the French colonists who had ruled Vietnam since the late 1890s. He subsequently became the country's key resistance leader, overseeing a period of conflict and turmoil that finally resulted in the expulsion of the French from Vietnam in 1954. Tragically, this event created the vacuum catalyst for American intervention in Vietnam,

leading to two decades of war. Ho Chi Minh was never to see his country free of foreign rule, passing away in 1969, six years before the American War ended. Following the war's conclusion in 1975, Ho Chi Minh's embalmed body was returned from the jungle and placed in this Mausoleum, his final resting place.

For our last activity in Hanoi, we saddle up as pillion passengers for a fun and eventful motorbike ride. Our experienced drivers take us around the city, cruising over the 100-year-old French Colonial Long Bien Bridge. Initially called the Paul Doumer Bridge after the French Governor-General at the time, the bridge was constructed using the cantilever method. We ride around Truc Bac Lake, West Lake and the beautiful tree-lined Thanh Nien Street, voted one of Vietnam's most beautiful streets. There is time to explore the city,

perhaps taking in an art gallery, meandering through the bustling alleyways, or sitting at a street-side café watching the residents go about their daily lives.

Late afternoon we fly to Hue City, located in Vietnam's central provinces, and enjoy a short time wandering the city's riverside esplanade. (meals: breakfast)

Day 4

Hue



We explore the tranquil city of Hue at a relaxed pace, starting with the iconic Thien Mu Pagoda and the moated ruins of the Imperial Citadel. As we navigate the Citadel's partially restored and partially ruined complex, our guide brings to life the royal traditions of the Nguyen Emperors, the pivotal Tet Offensive battle of 1969, and the story of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem. We also delve into Hue's significance during the early French Colonial period (1854–1883) and learn how the last Vietnamese monarch, King Bao Dai, abdicated in 1945 under the rising influence of the communist movement, marking the end of the Nguyen

Dynasty's 143-year rule.

Our journey continues into the countryside, where we visit local markets and remote villages. Along the way, we uncover Hue's hidden gems, including the charming Cau Ngoi Bridge and the Coliseum, once the site of dramatic elephant and tiger fights. We also stop to observe the traditional craft of incense making, where sandalwood and other fragrant ingredients are blended to create the sticks. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

Day 5

Hue - The Demilitarized Zone



We begin our day with an early departure, heading north through Quang Tri province toward the Khe Sanh Combat Base near the Laotian border. This site was the focus of the infamous Khe Sanh siege from January to July 1968, where American Marines and South Vietnamese ARVN forces faced off against North Vietnamese troops. After six months of intense combat, the base was evacuated, allowing the North Vietnamese to take control. Today, it features a museum and an open-air display of abandoned tanks, aircraft, and artillery pieces.

En route, we pass through the former Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), a 6-kilometre buffer zone along the 17th Parallel that once divided North and South Vietnam. We see remnants of key firebases such as A4, Doc Mieu, and the Razorback, before crossing the Ben Hai River into what was formerly North Vietnam.

We then continue to the Vinh Moc Tunnels, located in a remote coastal area. Here, our local guide explains the devastating effects of the heavy bombing campaigns in the region. This intricate, three-level tunnel system served as a shelter for North Vietnamese soldiers, a storage facility for weapons, and even a makeshift hospital where 16 children were born. We descend into the tunnels to experience the challenging conditions endured by its occupants.

On our return to Hue, we make a brief stop at a Catholic church bearing the scars of war, with bullet-pocked walls and a partially collapsed roof.

Note: The DMZ and Khe Sanh tour spans approximately 10 hours, including all stops and lunch. For those seeking a shorter experience, a 7-8 hour DMZ tour is available, covering the 17th Parallel, Doc Mieu Fire Support Base, and Vinh Moc Tunnels, omitting the Khe Sanh Combat Base. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

Day 6

Ho Chi Minh City



A short flight takes us to Ho Chi Minh City, the dynamic economic centre of southern Vietnam, known for its rich and layered history. In the afternoon, we set out on a walking tour to explore the city's bustling markets and vibrant streets. Still referred to by many as Saigon, the city is a sprawling urban landscape, marked by its dense population, unregulated development, and mix of residential and commercial districts. Our tour includes a visit to the War Remnants Museum, providing a poignant perspective on the Vietnam War. We then explore key French colonial landmarks, including the iconic City Post Office and Notre Dame Cathedral, before venturing into Chinatown to discover its unique blend of culture and history.

In the evening, we unwind with a drink at a rooftop bar, one of the historic haunts frequented by foreign journalists during the war, offering breathtaking views of the city's skyline. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

Day 7 – Option 1

Long Tan - Nui Dat



This morning, we travel to Vung Tau province on Vietnam's east coast, the former location of the Australian Task Force (1ATF) and 1st Australian Logistical and Support Group (1ASLG) during the Vietnam War. Upon arrival, we visit Nui Dat, once the site of Australia's largest operational base. Here, we have the opportunity to climb SAS Hill and walk along Luscombe Airfield, constructed by Australian engineers in 1966. We also explore other key sites of Australian operations, including the Horseshoe Fire Support Base and the Long Hai Hills.

Our journey continues to the Long Tan Cross Memorial, where we learn about the Battle of Long Tan—Australia's bloodiest engagement of the

war. During this conflict, 108 Australian soldiers faced an ambush by over 2,000 North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong troops.

In the afternoon, we visit the Long Phuoc Tunnels, where we gain insight into the experiences of former soldiers who once used these tunnels to evade Australian patrols. Enlarged historic photos and maps throughout the day provide a vivid portrayal of Australian military operations and daily life at Nui Dat. We return to Ho Chi Minh City in the evening. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

Day 7 – Option 2

Cu Chi Tunnels



We depart our hotel and head to the Cu Chi Tunnels, once a crucial stronghold for communist guerrillas during their resistance against the French and later, the Americans. Here, we have the chance to descend into the tunnels and experience the harsh conditions endured by the Viet Cong fighters. This area witnessed intense combat during the Vietnam War and was heavily targeted by air defoliation campaigns, the effects of which remain evident today.

Our knowledgeable local guide provides a detailed tour, showcasing the resourceful booby traps crafted from local materials and explaining the guerrillas' innovative survival strategies. These include smokeless cooking methods, camouflaged tunnel entrances, and termite nest escape hatches. We also watch a 30-minute propaganda film, highlighting the Viet Cong's tactics in outwitting American forces.

On our return to Ho Chi Minh City, we stop in Chinatown, where there is time to explore its bustling wholesale markets, historic pagodas, and traditional Chinese medicine shops, offering a glimpse into this vibrant cultural

enclave. (meals: breakfast, lunch) (A few months prior to travel, the group must unanimously decide on Option 1 or 2)

Day 8

Ho Chi Minh City - Phnom Penh



We visit the Reunification Palace, the former headquarters of South Vietnam's government during the war against the North Vietnamese communists. We explore the underground map room and control centre, as well as the rooftop helipad. Outside, we see the original tanks that famously crashed through the Palace gates on 30 April 1975, marking the end of the war.

We transfer to the airport with our tour leader for a short flight to Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Phnom Penh's skyline was transformed during the French Colonial period, replacing riverside pagodas and wooden structures with elegant colonial buildings. Once hailed as the most

beautiful city in French Indochina, much of its charm was lost during the war years.

This afternoon, we visit Wat Phnom, where we learn how the city got its name. If time permits, we also explore the bustling Central Market for a glimpse into the daily lives of Phnom Penh's residents.

After dinner, we take a lively tuk-tuk ride through the city's neon-lit streets, passing historical landmarks, the Prime Minister's residence, and the vibrant entertainment district of Diamond Island. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

Day 9

Phnom Penh



This morning, we visit the haunting Tuol Sleng Prison and the 'Killing Fields,' two sites that serve as sobering reminders of Cambodia's dark history under the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979. During this period, Pol Pot, a former teacher, led a brutal campaign to transform Cambodia into an agrarian society. Cities were forcibly emptied, and the population was sent to collective farms to perform gruelling labour. It is estimated that over a fifth of Cambodia's population perished due to overwork, starvation, and execution.

Our first stop is the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, once known as S21, where approximately 14,000 individuals were imprisoned, tortured, and forced to confess to crimes they often didn't commit. The prison operated under strict, fear-inducing rules, affecting both inmates and staff. Tuol Sleng was a key component of the Khmer Rouge's plan to dismantle modern society and eradicate perceived enemies of the state, including intellectuals and professionals.

Next, we visit Choeung Ek, the 'Killing Fields,' located 14 kilometres outside Phnom Penh. This mass burial site was where prisoners, once deemed traitors, were transported at night, blindfolded, and executed. Our guide provides detailed insights into the atrocities committed here. We also discuss Cambodia's relationship with Vietnam, including Vietnam's role in overthrowing the Khmer Rouge and the subsequent decade-long occupation of Cambodia (1979–1989).

In the late afternoon, we enjoy a private boat cruise along the Mekong River, taking in panoramic views of Phnom Penh's skyline. The Mekong is a lifeline for Southeast Asia, supporting Cambodia's fishing industry and the economies of Laos and Vietnam. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

Day 10

Phnom Penh - Siem Reap



We visit the Silver Pagoda and Royal Palace, where we learn about French colonial influences, the Cambodian Royal Family, and the cremation of King Sihanouk, which took place in front of the Palace in February 2013. After our tour, we transfer to the airport for a short flight to Siem Reap, the gateway to the magnificent temples of Angkor.

In the afternoon, we visit an artisan village, where craftsmen use traditional techniques to create beautiful works in sandstone, lacquer, and wood. Following this, we have time to unwind by the hotel pool before heading to the vibrant Night Market.

To wrap up the evening, we take a tuk-tuk orientation tour of the town, ending at a popular picnic spot where local street vendors offer an array of delicacies and snacks, providing a true taste of Cambodian street food culture. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

Day 11

Siem Reap



We set out to explore the awe-inspiring temples of Angkor, constructed by the Khmer civilisation between 802 and 1431 AD. From this grand capital, Khmer kings ruled an expansive empire stretching from Vietnam to China and the Bay of Bengal. The temples we see today are the enduring remnants of a once-thriving metropolis, where wooden palaces, public buildings, and homes have long since decayed. The empire's growth was largely due to its advanced water management system, which supported year-round agriculture. This economic stability provided the resources and military strength needed to construct these monumental temples over

centuries.

Our journey begins with a visit to Angkor Thom, followed by the iconic Bayon Temple, renowned for its massive stone faces believed to represent a former king. We then explore the most celebrated temple of all—Angkor Wat. If time allows, we'll also visit the enchanting Ta Prohm Temple, known for its atmospheric corridors where ancient trees intertwine with the stone structures.

In the evening, we enjoy a traditional Apsara dance performance during dinner, a perfect way to immerse ourselves in Cambodia's cultural heritage. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

Day 12

Tonle Sap Lake - Depart Siem Reap



This morning, we begin early to experience the tranquility of Tonle Sap Lake, one of Cambodia's largest and most vital freshwater resources. We explore the unique floating villages inhabited by Cambodian and Vietnamese fishing communities, gaining a glimpse into their daily lives. These communities, many of whom rarely set foot on land, settled in this remote region after the war, adapting to life on the water to sustain their livelihoods.

In the afternoon, there is free time to unwind by the pool, indulge in some shopping, or explore Siem Reap's attractions at your own pace.

Later, our tour leader accompanies us to the airport, bidding us a warm farewell as we prepare for our onward journey. (meals: breakfast)

Summary

Grading

Moderate; To get the most out of this trip, you need to be in good health. However, anyone with a good level of fitness will be able to take part. Some outdoor activities include physical exertion, and there may be long periods of exposure to the elements. You will be expected to walk every day and carry your luggage for short distances. The itinerary may include bike riding, climbing steps and trekking. If your itinerary includes community service work of any description, you will be expected to work diligently during this component. Conditions here may be basic with simple accommodation and bathroom facilities. Suitable packing lists will be provided to match the content of the itinerary.

Accommodation

Private tours/family tours: Accommodation is based on a double/twin share arrangement. If you are travelling alone, you will be paired up with someone of the same gender. If you choose not to share or are the odd numbered person on tour, a single supplement is payable.

For children under 12 years of age, it may be possible for one child to share with parents (depending on hotel regulations and availability of extra beds/rollaway beds)

Transport

Depending on the tour, modes of transport may include modern air-conditioned private coach, boat, train, plane.

Your Tour Leader

A tour leader accompanies all group tours. Your tour leader is the person who most influences the success of your trip. They have been meticulously trained and are very experienced in running tours. Every tour leader is locally employed, therefore they are the best person to showcase their country and culture. Their expertise and knowledge creates an insightful and authentic experience of the region. They are with you throughout your trip from breakfast time until the group returns to the hotel in the evening. They are contactable 24/7.

For more information on the role of the tour leader, local guides and accompanying teachers, please refer to our website.

Group Size

Private tours/family tours: Minimum group size is 12. There are no maximum participant numbers on any tour.

Land Trip Cost and Details

Cost per traveller from A\$ 1,950

Based on a minimum of 12 travellers

**Smaller or larger group sizes priced on application*

Inclusions

- All accommodation, transport, activities, entrance costs and other programs as described in the itinerary
- Professional Edventure Travel tour leader throughout the trip & additional specialist guides
- Extensive destination-specific risk management and assessment
- Meals (and drinking water) as listed in the itinerary
- 24-hour **IN COUNTRY** support
- Pre-departure support, briefings and planning meetings
- Tips for tour leaders, local guides & drivers

Exclusions

- International flights to/from Vietnam
- International flights to/from Travel Visa costs (if required)
- Spending money
- Travel insurance

Contact details

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