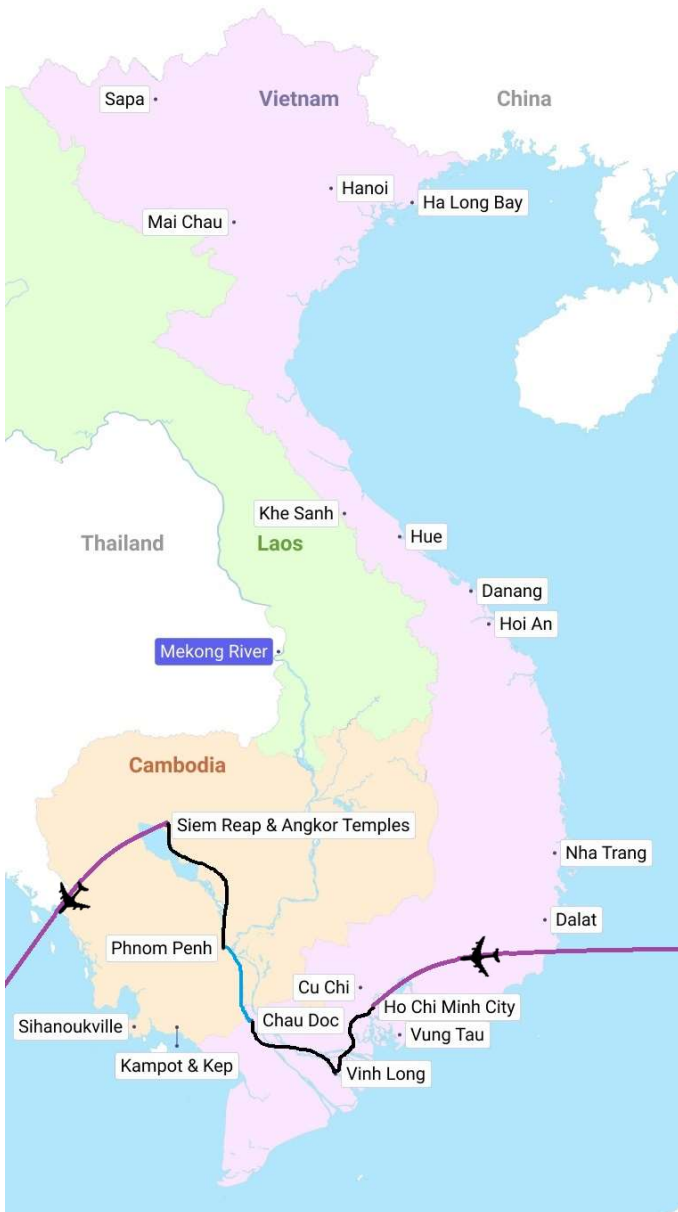


## Social Justice Journey (11 days)

### Vietnam & Cambodia



This social justice-focused journey begins in Vietnam, exploring the cultural and historical landmarks of the south before venturing into the Mekong Delta, known as the country's 'rice basket.' From there, students will take a less conventional route, crossing into Cambodia by boat to reach Phnom Penh, the nation's capital. Here, they will delve into Cambodia's compelling and often turbulent history, which is deeply intertwined with Vietnam's. The trip concludes in Siem Reap with a visit to the magnificent Temples of Angkor.

A key highlight of this tour is its strong service component. Students will collaborate with Loreto-sponsored charities through the Loreto Program in Vietnam (or similar non-profit organisations). This experience offers valuable insights into development challenges and the daily lives of disadvantaged communities in both rural and urban settings. Additionally, the itinerary includes visits to local schools and villages in Cambodia, fostering meaningful connections with the local community.

Guided by a professional tour leader, students will gain a deeper understanding of both countries. Beyond being an enjoyable adventure, this trip aims to enhance students' Asian literacy and cultural awareness, providing a rich and rewarding introduction to two of Southeast Asia's most captivating cultures.

## Day 1

### Arrive Ho Chi Minh City



Upon arrival in Vietnam, we are warmly welcomed by our tour leader and transferred to our hotel. After settling in, we receive a detailed briefing on the itinerary and then head out for an orientation walk. Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon, is Vietnam's largest and most vibrant metropolis, renowned for its energy and historical significance.

This afternoon, we begin our exploration with a visit to the iconic Central Post Office, a stunning example of French Colonial architecture, followed by Notre Dame Cathedral and a bustling local market. Our journey continues at the War Remnants Museum, where we gain a deeper understanding of the Vietnam War—referred to locally as the American War—and its profound

impact on the country.

In the evening, we enjoy a delicious meal at a lively open-air barbecue restaurant, soaking in the city's dynamic atmosphere. (meals: dinner)

## Days 2 & 3

### Ho Chi Minh City - Social service component



In the coming days, we will engage with children supported by the Loreto Program (or similar organisations) through a range of sponsored and associated projects. These activities may involve meaningful interactions with a school for the visually impaired and a centre for children with disabilities. Comprehensive details about these initiatives will be provided by the Loreto Foundation Vietnam staff, with the tour leader accompanying students and staff throughout the program.

On Day 3, we take part in an educational and enjoyable 'Great Race'-style activity. Divided into groups, students will navigate the city, completing tasks

that encourage urban exploration and deepen their understanding of local culture, food, and landscapes. This activity involves using public transport, gathering information, and working collaboratively, offering a dynamic and fun way to engage with the city. (meals: 2 breakfasts, 1 dinner)

## Day 4

### Cu Chi Tunnels – Mekong Delta



We explore the vast underground network of the Cu Chi Tunnels, a site of significant military activity during the Vietnam War, including the pivotal Tet Offensive in 1968. These tunnels served as vital hiding spots for Viet Cong guerrillas and functioned as communication and supply routes, storage facilities for food and weapons, and living quarters for up to 14,000 fighters. We'll walk and crawl through the tunnels, examine cleverly reconstructed booby traps, and watch a black-and-white propaganda film that delves into the tunnels' history and the experiences of the tunnel rats.

After lunch, we journey south to the waterways of the Mekong Delta and embark on a cruise along the Mekong River. Along the way, we visit various

cottage industries, such as blacksmithing, incense production, and rice paper making. For the adventurous, we'll stop at a pungent fish sauce factory to learn about the production of Vietnam's most iconic condiment.

Later, we enjoy a leisurely bicycle ride through local villages, gaining insight into daily life in the Delta. We then travel to our family homestay on a small island nestled in the heart of the Delta. This evening, our host family prepares a traditional meal, featuring local specialties like elephant ear fish, while sharing stories of life along the Mekong.

*Note: The homestay is a traditional longhouse overlooking the Mekong River, with separate sleeping areas for male and female students. Teachers will stay in nearby private rooms. Accommodations include stretcher-style beds, ceiling fans, electric lighting, mosquito nets, pillows, blankets, and western-style toilets. (meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)*

## Day 5

### Chau Doc (Border Town)



We leave our homestay and travel further south into the heart of the Mekong Delta. Our first stop is Can Tho, where we take a boat trip to explore one of the region's bustling floating markets, observing the vibrant trade of fresh produce from boat to boat.

Back on land, we continue by private bus to Chau Doc, a lively trading town near the Cambodian border. After checking into our hotel, we make our way to Sam Mountain, a short distance from Chau Doc. Here, we enjoy panoramic sunset views over the patchwork of rice fields and catch our first glimpse of Cambodia. From this vantage point, our guide shares the sobering history of Ba Chuc village, the site of a brutal Khmer Rouge massacre in 1978. We also

learn about Vietnam's subsequent invasion of Cambodia and the decade-long occupation from 1979 to 1989, a conflict that saw two communist regimes clash.

In the evening, we indulge in a dinner of southern Vietnamese dishes, renowned for their bold and spicy flavours, before exploring the town on an atmospheric rickshaw tour. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

## Day 6

### Chau Doc - Phnom Penh (Cambodia)



Our adventure begins with a fast boat ride across the Vietnam-Cambodia river border, heading towards Phnom Penh. As we cruise along the Mekong River, we pass by remote Cambodian communities, offering a glimpse into rural life. We arrive in Phnom Penh by mid-afternoon.

Returning to the buzz of urban life, we visit the Russian Market, known for its wide variety of crafts and souvenirs. Our local guides introduce us to different aspects of Cambodian society, blending insights into recent history with long-standing cultural traditions. After dinner, we head to the lively banks of the Tonle Sap River, where city youth often gather for spontaneous aerobics sessions and rap performances.

There may also be time for a swim in the hotel pool. Before the day ends, our local leader provides a briefing on tomorrow's itinerary. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

## Day 7

### Phnom Penh



Today we visit several of Phnom Penh's most important places of interest, including the infamous Tuol Sleng Prison and the 'Killing Fields' – both harsh reminders of Cambodia's tragic recent history during the Khmer Rouge reign from 1975 to 1979. During this brief period, a teacher called Pol Pot instituted a reign of terror over the country. Pol Pot later implemented a plan to turn Cambodia into an agriculture-based society, systematically emptying the cities and forcibly moving the people onto collective (state-owned) farms where they performed hard labour. As a result, it is estimated that over a fifth of the country's population perished through overwork, starvation, and execution during this time.

This afternoon we visit the Missionaries of Charity centre, which caters for children whose parents have developed terminal illnesses. We deliver bags of rice donated through our fundraising efforts and learn how the entity operates and the hurdles it faces. This evening, we dine at a popular restaurant, followed by a tuk-tuk ride around town to view the Independence Monument and Phnom Penh's vibrant nightlife. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

## Day 8

### Phnom Penh



This morning, we visit the Silver Pagoda, where we learn about Cambodia's royal family and the influence of French colonialism. Next, we head to the bustling Central Market to practice our bargaining skills while exploring its vibrant stalls.

From there, we make our way to the local port and board a private boat for a cruise along Phnom Penh's waterways. As we glide past riverside communities, including the Cham ethnic group and local fishermen, our guide provides insights into the city's recent urban developments, such as the reclaimed land on Diamond Island, and discusses the ecological challenges facing the Mekong River due to upstream damming.

In the evening, we immerse ourselves in Phnom Penh's contemporary culture with a visit to a local cinema, where we can catch a film ranging from B-grade horror to the latest blockbusters. Afterwards, we explore one of the city's modern shopping centres, experiencing the vibrant atmosphere of Cambodian youth culture. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

## Day 9

### Phnom Penh - Siem Reap



We begin our full day's drive to Siem Reap, travelling through the country's central region. We stop occasionally; however, our most anticipated is at a spider village where we see locals eating fried tarantula or crickets! While today's journey is a long one, it is a chance for us to gain an insight into the day-to-day life of most Khmer people.

We arrive in Siem Reap in the afternoon, settling into our hotel and swimming in the hotel pool before we head out to explore the bustling city. Our tour leader escorts us on a walking tour of this easy-going city before dinner at a social enterprise-run restaurant. Tonight, we discuss tourism's

positive and negative impacts in Siem Reap, thus understanding developing countries' issues and trade-offs when balancing sustainability with income. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

## Day 10

### Siem Reap (Temples of Angkor)



We embark on an exciting exploration of the magnificent Temples of Angkor, navigating this ancient city by mountain bike. The Angkor temple complex, consisting of over 100 main temples, began construction in the early to mid-12th century. While often referred to collectively as 'Angkor Wat,' this name technically applies only to the largest and most iconic temple.

Our adventure begins with a visit to Angkor Wat, an architectural masterpiece featuring a massive three-tiered pyramid crowned by five lotus-shaped towers. After lunch, we head to the jungle temple of Ta Prohm, famously featured in the Hollywood film Tomb Raider. This atmospheric site, partially reclaimed by nature, is interwoven with massive fig and silk-cotton

trees, creating stunning photo opportunities. Along the way, our guide explains how advanced water management systems, including reservoirs and canals, were crucial to the Khmer Empire's rise and sustained success.

We also visit the striking Bayon Temple, known for its stone faces, and explore other lesser-visited temples if time allows. In the evening, we enjoy dinner at a restaurant featuring a traditional Court Apsara dance performance. *Note: The bike ride is suitable for students with an average level of fitness and basic cycling ability, covering a total distance of 15 km. We use mountain bikes with helmets provided, and a support crew accompanies us to handle any necessary repairs.*

## Day 11

### Siem Reap Village Project – Departure Cambodia



We head into the hinterland of Siem Reap to spend the morning participating in an agricultural activity alongside local farmers, who work together to supplement their income. This involves purchasing and planting fruit trees suited to the local climate. Over time, the trees will provide fruit for the family's consumption, with any surplus sold to generate income. Alternatively, we may assist with building a greenhouse, planting and caring for crops designed to thrive in both wet and dry seasons, ensuring a steady income throughout the year.

This hands-on experience offers valuable insight into the daily lives and challenges of Cambodian farmers. With approximately 75% of the population

relying on agriculture for their livelihood, it provides a deeper understanding of the country's rural economy and community-based farming practices.

In the afternoon, there's time to pick up any last-minute gifts for family and friends before we head to the airport for our journey home. (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

School tours: Student accommodation is on a twin/triple share basis. Teacher accommodation is on a single room basis. Hotels usually hold a 3-star equivalent rating. Separate sleeping areas and bathrooms are provided for boys, girls, and staff members at homestays.

### 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

School tours: Minimum group size is 16 students with a minimum of 2 staff members.

There are no maximum participant numbers on any tour.

### Service-Learning Programs

The local community instigates all our service-learning programs in response to their genuine needs and goals. Every program is conducted *only* after careful consultation with local community leaders and authorities.

We assess each program during the consultation process to ensure that it's sustainable, ethical, and empowers local people. Each project is designed to have lasting economic benefits that build wealth within the community – we're not in the business of tokenistic hand-outs.

- **Environmental projects.** Our environmental projects are wide-ranging. They include activities such as:

constructing greenhouses with suitable plants, planting cash crop gardens, such as mango and dragon fruit trees; constructing small dams; restoring native vegetation and habitat; setting up solar panels, installing fish farms, and maintaining conservation huts and hiking trails.

By taking part in these projects, students will develop their environmental awareness. They'll learn about environmental impacts and discover ways to measure the lasting success of an environmental project. As with physical construction projects, fundraising is usually required for these projects.

- **Community engagement programs.** Through our strong relationships with local schools and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), students can help deliver social service and education initiatives within a community. Your students will work in government-run classrooms or vocational training programs to help teach English (by following a lesson plan prepared in advance), help implement health programs, or work alongside local students as they learn small business skills.

For more details about our service-learning programs, please refer to our website.

## Land Trip Cost and Details

Cost per traveller from A\$ 1,650

Based on a minimum of:  
16 students & 2 accompanying teachers/staff members.  
*\*Smaller or larger group sizes priced on application*

### Inclusions

- All accommodation, transport, activities, entrance costs and other programs as described in the itinerary
- Professional *Adventure 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/Cambodia
- Travel Visa costs (if required)
- Cost of Community projects/Service-learning programs \$2000
- Spending money
- Travel Insurance

### Contact details

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