

2023 - Charms of the Mekong

7-NIGHT CRUISE WITH 2 NIGHTS HO CHI MINH CITY PRE-CRUISE AND 2 NIGHTS SIEM REAP, 2 NIGHTS HANOI, 1 NIGHT HA LONG BAY, 1 NIGHT HANOI POST-CRUISE

Lively Ho Chi Minh City, once known as the “Pearl of the Orient,” offers a vibrant mix of old and new and provides the perfect start to your incredible journey through Vietnam and Cambodia. Cruise along the mighty Mekong, discovering a glimpse into another era; one where people still happily honor the timeless traditions passed down through the centuries from their ancestors. Throughout your trip, immerse yourself into the culture and heritage with visits to rural villages, historic pagodas and colorful markets. Be treated to a special blessing by monks in Buddhist monastery, and witness skilled artisans who create exquisite handicrafts and delicacies. Experience all this and more on this life-enriching cruise along the Mekong.

OVERVIEW:

<u>DAY</u>	<u>DESTINATION</u>	<u>ACTIVITIES</u>
1	HO CHI MINH CITY	Hotel check-in
2	HO CHI MINH CITY	Morning city tour and Cu Chi Tunnels Afternoon Cu Chi
3	HO CHI MINH CITY	Morning visit Ben Thanh Market Transfer to My Tho EMBARKATION Welcome Dinner
4	SA DEC	Local boat ride to Sa Dec Local boat ride Visit local workshops Historic Kiet Old House
5	TAN CHAU	Trishaw ride to craftsmen’s workshops OR Local village Border Crossing from Vietnam to Cambodia *You will need this information for your visa applications : Exit Point from Vietnam: Son Tien Landport Entry point to Cambodia: Kaoam Samnor
6	PHNOM PENH	Killing Fields and Genocide Museum Royal Palace and National Museum OR Royal Palace and Central Market
7	OU Dong	Buddhist Blessing Ceremony Oxcart ride Tuk tuk orientation tour
8	OKNHATEY VILLAGE	Visit a Silk Village and local school
9	ANKGOR BAN	Walking tour* Phnom Pros & Phnom Srei “Twin Mountain” visit
10	KAMPONG CHAM	DISSEMBARKATION Motor coach transfer to Siem Reap Hotel check-in

		Ta Prohm Temple
11	SIEM REAP	Angkor Wat and Banteay Srei
12	SIEM REAP	Angkor Thom
		Flight to Hanoi
		Hotel check-in
13	HANOI	City tour and rickshaw ride
		Water puppet show
14	HANOI	Motor coach transfer to Ha Long Bay
		Bay excursion
		Overnight cruise
15	HA LONG BAY	Transfer to Hanoi
		Hotel check-in
16	HANOI	Return flight home

ITINERARY DETAILS:

Day 1, HO CHI MINH CITY. Ho Chi Minh City, still affectionately referred to by locals as Saigon, is Vietnam’s former capital. Once known as the “Paris of the Orient,” it is now an industrial, cultural and educational hub.

Day 2, HO CHI MINH CITY. Always bustling, Ho Chi Minh City is a city of contrasts blending old and new, and east and west. In the morning, explore some of the city’s most famous landmarks, including the former Presidential Palace, the Central Post Office, Notre Dame Cathedral and the War Remnants Museum. In the afternoon, visit Cu Chi, an immense underground network built during the Vietnam War. (B,L)

Day 3, HO CHI MINH CITY - MY THO - EMBARKATION. In the morning, visit Ben Thanh Market—one of the oldest and most iconic structures in Ho Chi Minh City. Transfer via motorcoach from Ho Chi Minh City to AmaDara at My Tho Port for your river cruise and meet your fellow travelers at a Welcome Dinner as the ship cruises to Cai Be. (B,L,D)

Day 4, SA DEC - CAI BE. Take a local boat to Cai Be. You will have an opportunity to visit candy and rice paper making workshops, as well as the historic Kiet Old House. Later in the day, journey to Sa Dec, a sprawling town on the Mekong Delta, where French writer Marguerite Duras spent part of her youth. You will visit the colorful market, Cao Dai Temple and the house of Mr. Huynh Thuy Le, Duras’ Chinese paramour, which her prize-winning novel, “The Lover,” is said to be based on. (B,L,D)

Day 5, TAN CHAU - BORDER CROSSING. Enjoy a visit to Tan Chau, a small Mekong River town unspoiled by tourism. Be treated to an authentic experience on a traditional “xe-loi” (trishaw) ride around the town, with stops at silk-making and rattan mat workshops, followed by a boat ride through the narrow channels of the Mekong River to “Evergreen Island.” Alternatively, take a boat ride to Evergreen Island and return to Tan Chau, where you will visit a rattan mat workshop. Later in the day, cruise from Vietnam to the Cambodian border en route to Phnom Penh. (B,L,D)

Day 6, PHNOM PENH. This morning’s excursion takes you to Cambodia’s infamous Killing Fields and the Khmer Rouge’s grim Tuol Sleng S21 detention center (Genocide Museum). After lunch on board, you will explore the highlights of the city, followed by a visit to the Royal Palace, the spectacular Silver Pagoda and the National Museum, which has an outstanding collection of Khmer crafts. Alternatively, you may wish to shop for unique treasures at the bustling, yellow-colored Central Market after your visit to Royal Place. After returning to the ship, enjoy Khmer folk dancing performed by local children in the Saigon Lounge. (B,L,D)

Day 7, OUDONG - KAMPONG-TRALACH - PHNOM PENH. Visit Oudong, Cambodia’s former royal capital from the early 17th century until 1866. Today, Oudong is a place of pilgrimage for Cambodians. While here, be treated to a memorable Buddhist Blessing Ceremony at a monastery. You may walk around Oudong’s monastery or take an active walking tour to see panoramic views of the Oudong plain. In Kampong Tralach, you will have a truly authentic excursion – an oxcart ride through a local village. Later in the day, experience Phnom Penh via a tuk ride and be enchanted by the city’s French Colonial architecture and tree-lined boulevards set amidst monumental Angkorian (B,L,D)

Day 8, OKNHATEY VILLAGE. In the morning, set sail for Oknhatey Village. Oknhatey is the “Silk Island,” located on the lush banks of the Mekong River and known for its rich tradition of silk weaving. While here, you will visit a local elementary school and observe the traditional silk weaving, an art that has been preserved for centuries. Your cruise continues to sail to Angkor Ban. (B,L,D)

Day 9, ANKGOR BAN - KAMPONG CHAM.

Go on a walking tour of Angkor Ban, one of the few villages in Cambodia that was not destroyed under the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s. Here people still live in

their traditional wooden abodes and keep their old cultural traditions alive. Hundreds of wooden houses stand intact on stilts, shaded with banana trees, among the hustle and bustle of the daily agricultural on-going of the local villagers. After visiting here, the ship sets sail for Kampong Cham, where you will go on an afternoon excursion via motorcoach to the Twin Mountains, known as Phnom Pros and Phnom Srei (male and female mountains). In the annals of Khmer legend, the twin mountains were formed as the result of a competition between the men and women of an ancient Cambodian kingdom to resolve which gender would be responsible for wedding proposals. Cap the day off with a festive Farewell Dinner on board. (B,L,D)

**Based on seasonality, the port of Angkor Ban may be inaccessible from August - September. During this time, Wat Hanchey will replace Angkor Ban as the port of call.*

Day 10, KAMPONG CHAM - SIEM REAP - DISEMBARKATION. Disembark in Kampong Cham and transfer by motorcoach to Siem Reap, gateway to the Angkor Archaeological Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the former capital of the Khmer empire. You'll visit nearby Ta Prohm, known as the "Kingdom of the Trees," for the way in which the temple stones have become intertwined with thick forest vegetation. (B,D)

Day 11, SIEM REAP. Begin your morning exploration of the temple complex at Angkor Wat, the most iconic of all Angkorian temples, built by King Suryavarman II in the early 12th century to honor the Hindu god, Vishnu. An afternoon excursion takes you to see the fascinating jewel in the crown of Angkorian art, Banteay Srei, which means "Citadel of Women," as it has been said that the carving is too fine to have been done by the hand of man. During the evening, be treated to a special "Apsara Dancing Show" at your hotel, featuring local Cambodian/Khmer folk dancers. (B,D)

Day 12, SIEM REAP - HANOI. After breakfast, you will have a guided sightseeing tour of Angkor Thom meaning "the great city" and the last capital of the Khmer Empire. This is home to Bayon Temple, best known for its gigantic smiling stone faces, as well as the Terrace of the Elephants and the Terrace of the Leper King. Later in the day, take a short flight to Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam. (B)

Day 13, HANOI. From ancient temples to French Colonial architecture and modern-day skyscrapers, along with beautiful parks and lakes, Hanoi is an eclectic and lively city. A morning sightseeing tour will showcase some of Hanoi's most famous historic and cultural sites, including Ba Dinh Square and The Temple of Literature. You will also visit the infamous prison that American POWs sarcastically dubbed the "Hanoi Hilton" during the Vietnam War. In the afternoon, experience an authentic rickshaw ride (known as a "cyclo") in the Old Quarter, followed by a traditional Water Puppet Show. (B)

Day 14, HANOI - HA LONG BAY. Take a scenic drive from Hanoi to one of Vietnam's most renowned locations, Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Board an elegantly appointed ship designed with all the modern conveniences to ensure smooth sailing for an incredible once-in-a-lifetime experience. The backdrop of the bay's magnificent scenery and dramatic limestone cliffs and rock formations provide you with the perfect setting for a memorable sojourn. (B,L,D)

Day 15, HA LONG BAY - HANOI. Spend the morning sailing across the emerald waters of Ha Long Bay with more than 2,000 small islands rising from the water like a dragon's back. Later in the morning, disembark the ship and transfer back to Hanoi where you can enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure. (B,L)

Day 16, DEPART HANOI. Bid farewell to Vietnam and prepare for your homeward flight (B)