
GEEO ITINERARY

VIETNAM and CAMBODIA – Summer

Day 1: Hanoi Arrive in Hanoi at any time.

Arrive in bustling Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. As passengers will be arriving at various times today, there are no planned activities. If you arrive early, you might consider taking a walk through Hanoi's Old Quarter and its maze of streets, each one traditionally devoted to a different product or industry. Alternatively, you could visit Tran Quoc Pagoda, the Temple of Literature (Van Mieu), or Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum and Museum. The Mausoleum houses the remains of Ho Chi Minh, the founding father of the unified Vietnam. You will have a scheduled group meeting in the evening around 6:00 p.m. Please check at the reception desk or look for a G Adventures notice board with details of the actual meeting time. After your meeting, you may consider heading out for dinner to further get to know your tour leader and fellow group members. We overnight in the city center of Hanoi.

Day 2: Hanoi/Halong Bay (B,L,D) Enjoy a Ha Long Bay cruise on a junk boat with visits to a cave and an island lookout. Savor a seafood lunch and dinner.

A 4-hour drive takes us to Bai Chay harbor, our entry point to Halong Bay. Thousands of islands rise dramatically from the waters of Halong Bay and, to further their beauty, intricate cave systems naturally exist throughout these limestone karst formations. We board a traditional junk boat at Ha Long Bay harbor and cruise out onto serene waters, where we can marvel at massive limestone karst mountains jutting out of the sea, creating unforgettable spectacular scenery. Swim, kayak, or go cave exploring on one of the islands, if conditions are right. We will also indulge in fresh seafood meals with a variety of dishes to sample before drifting to sleep in a cozy cabin on board. On rare occasions, Halong Bay is closed to tourist vessels by the government authorities due to extreme weather conditions. Should this occur, an alternate activity will be provided. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by private bus

Day 3: Halong Bay/Hue (B,L) Cruise back to the port and take a private van to Hanoi. Enjoy more time in the city before an overnight train to Hue.

Today, we enjoy breakfast on board the junk boat before a morning sail back to the port. Back at port, we hop in a private vehicle for the drive back to Hanoi for a little more free time to enjoy the city. You will have enough time for shopping or further sightseeing before we catch our overnight train to Hue. Train travel in Vietnam is very basic, and train cleanliness is often not a priority for train staff. Sleeper trains normally have 4 seats per compartment, which convert into sleeping bunks (two upper and two lower). A sheet, pillow, and blanket are provided, although many people prefer to bring their own sleeping sheet. At times, passengers of different genders may be required to share a sleeper train berth and/or share a compartment with people not traveling in your group. Simple food is available on the train, but many people like to stock up on freshly baked bread, cheese, and fruit prior to departure. Water should also be bought before the journey. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by private bus (Halong Bay to Hanoi); 14 hrs by overnight sleeper train (Hanoi to Hue)

Day 4: Hué Guided tour of the Imperial Citadel, Royal Tomb, and Tien Mu Pagoda. Opt to take a countryside motorbike tour.

We arrive in Hue, once the imperial capital of Vietnam, in the early morning. We start our visit with an Imperial Citadel tour of the UNESCO World Heritage site. We will see the walled fortress and former palace, which has many palaces, gateways, courtyards, and gardens to explore. The Forbidden Purple City, modeled on China's Forbidden City, inside the citadel was once home to the imperial family and was significantly damaged during the Vietnam War.

Day 5: Hue/Hoi An (B) Drive the Hai Van pass. Take advantage of Hoi An's many options over the 2.5 days in town. Opt for a cooking class, riverboat trip, bike

ride, beach time, tailor visit, or My Son ruins.

This morning, we depart for Hoi An. We will cross through the Hai Van Pass, weather permitting, with its fantastic views in all directions. We arrive in Hoi An in the afternoon for a 3-night stay. Once known as Faifo, Hoi An was an important trading town with strong south Chinese influence and connections. You can take a walking tour of this living museum, which includes the Museum of History and Culture, the Tan Ky house, the Japanese bridge, the Fujian Assembly Hall, and lunch at a riverside restaurant to sample some of the local delicacies. Hoi An is also a shopping mecca for tourists in the region. Tailors can produce virtually anything overnight. Clothing, silk lanterns, lacquerware, and many other crafts abound. For sun worshipers, Cua Dai Beach, 4 km from town, makes for a great, flat bike ride. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by private minivan

Day 6: Hoi An (B, L) Spend 2 full days exploring all Hoi An has to offer. Dive into the culture, hang out on the beach, or buy tailor-made clothes. Enjoy a noodle-making demonstration and lunch at Oodles of Noodles, a G Adventures-supported project.

Today is the first of two full days for you to explore all that Hoi An has to offer. You can choose to immerse yourself in the culture, bike to the beach for some quality sun time, or get custom-made clothes by one of the many tailor shops around town. We get together as a group for an included cooking class and lunch. Try some of the oodles of noodles (more than 26 types!) available in the city in this tasty cooking class. Run by a Planeterra Foundation partner, STREETS International, the class was developed exclusively for G Adventures. Former street youth that are part of this hospitality training program will help you prepare and cook a number of different types of noodles. The program helps these youth practice their English, increasing their skill set and opportunities available to them in the tourism industry. You may want to continue your culinary education in the evening and take an optional cooking class to learn even more about Vietnamese food and its distinct flavors. Tour the local market to buy fresh ingredients before preparing some popular regional dishes. You get to enjoy your creations when you're done!

Day 7: Hoi An (B) Spend another free day exploring Hoi An.

Today, you spend a second free day exploring all Hoi An has to offer. You might consider a day trip visit to My Son. Travel approximately 1 hour from Hoi An to arrive at My Son, with its Hindu temples built between the fourth and 14th centuries. The site is widely accepted as one of the most important Hindu temple complexes in Southeast Asia. Learn about the architectural style and history of a site that's often compared to Angkor Wat in Cambodia and Bagan in Burma. Another option is a lantern-making class. Add a little light to your life! Visit Lifestart Foundation and learn how to make a traditional lantern from area residents. See how this project, supported by G Adventures, helps local Vietnamese with chronic disabilities gain sustainable employment.

Day 8: Hoi An/Ho Chi Minh City (B) Fly from Hoi An to Ho Chi Minh City. Enjoy free time in this hectic city.

This morning, we drive to Danang for the flight to Ho Chi Minh City, the sprawling metropolis that was once the capital of South Vietnam and remains the country's commercial center. Start by exploring the small alleys and busy streets, keeping an eye out for lacquerware shops and delicious local food stalls. Approximate travel time: 45 mins by private bus (Hoi An to Danang); 1 hr by plane (Danang to Ho Chi Minh City)

Day 9: Ho Chi Minh City (B) Take a guided tour of Cu Chi Tunnels in the morning. Enjoy more free time in the afternoon.

In the morning, we drive 1.5 hours to the Cu Chi Tunnels, where we will get a guided tour of this complex network of tunnels that the Viet Cong lived in to protect themselves from opposing forces during the Vietnam War. Try crawling through some of the tunnels, if you're not claustrophobic. These tunnels

stored ammunition, had underground hospitals, and served as a hidden base for attacking allied forces. Afterward, we drive back to Ho Chi Minh City. The afternoon is more free time for you, possibly to visit the Thien Hau and Giac Vien pagodas and stroll through the immense Ben Than Market. There is also the Reunification Palace, the residence of the presidents of South Vietnam before 1975, Cholon ("big market"), the Chinese quarter, and the War Remnants Museum. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by private bus

Day 10: Mekong Delta (B) Enjoy a boat cruise through the villages, islands, and markets of the Mekong Delta. Visit traditional candy factories.

Today, we travel to where the mighty Mekong River approaches and empties into the South China Sea. We board a small boat and navigate through the narrow canals, witnessing local lifestyle, floating vendors, and small industrial boats. You will notice that many of the Vietnamese boats have eyes painted on the front to ward off evil spirits and to help guide the boat and crew safely back to land. We disembark our boat to visit some cottage industries for which the area is famous, such as delicious and chewy coconut candy, rice cakes, Vietnamese popcorn, and pottery. Don't miss the chance to try the unique regional "elephant fish" at a local restaurant during our lunch break. After a day of touring this unique region, we return to Ho Chi Minh City in time for dinner. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by private bus

Day 11: Ho Chi Minh City/Phnom Penh (B) Travel day with border crossing from Vietnam to Cambodia. Enjoy a cyclo tour through Phnom Penh.

Today, we cross into Cambodia by public bus. The drive to the Vietnam-Cambodia border takes around 2 hours. After completing the border formalities, we continue by bus another 3 hours to Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital, arriving mid-afternoon. After years of civil strife and political turmoil, Cambodia is open to visitors. In the late afternoon, we each get in traditional cyclos and depart from Wat Phnom. Tour busy streets to soak up the real vibe of the city. Pass the post office and Van's restaurant, both stunning colonial buildings, and make your way to the Royal Palace and National Museum. Go along the riverside road and take in the atmospheric cafes that line the street. Approximate travel time: 5 hrs by public bus, including a short lunch at a restaurant and border crossing

Day 12: Phnom Penh (B) Guided tour of Tuol Sleng Museum (S-21 Prison) and Choeung Ek (Killing Fields). Opt to visit the Royal Palace, the National Museum, or the Central Market.

This morning, a local guide will teach us more about the dark side of Cambodian history. We will visit to Choeung Ek, the site of the infamous Killing Fields. The grounds now stand as a powerful memorial filled with victims' skulls and mass graves. Tour this somber, yet serene, site with a guide. Afterward, we visit the Tuol Sleng Museum, where we will learn about the dark history and devastation that occurred when the museum operated instead as Security Prison 21 (S-21) under the Khmer Rouge. We will take a guided tour to hear the stories behind the somber photos lining the museum walls. Afterward, continue sightseeing on your own. You might want to explore the city's many sights: the Royal Palace, the Silver Pagoda, and/or the National Museum. There is time to visit the huge Russian Market, packed with souvenirs and all the necessities of daily life. Late afternoon is a great time to visit Wat Phnom: the sanctuary where the city's namesake once stood. It is a Buddhist shrine, although a Taoist goddess and numerous monkeys also reside here. Wat Phnom is a popular hangout for residents of the city in the afternoon heat. A drink in one of the many riverside cafés watching the sunset is a fitting finale to the day.

Day 13: Phnom Penh/Siem Reap (B) Drive from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap, the home base for exploring incredible Angkor Wat.

Today, we drive from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap, the home base from which we will explore the incredible Angkor Wat tomorrow. Approximate travel time: 6-8 hrs by private bus.

Day 14: Siem Reap (B) Enjoy a guided tour of the Angkor Wat temple complex. Opt to visit the Tonlé Sap floating village and the Angkor National Museum. Enjoy a traditional meal of Khmer food at a local home in a village outside the city.

Today, we start with a guided tour of the Angkor Wat temple complex. You might opt to visit the Tonlé Sap floating village and the Angkor National Museum as well or enjoy a traditional meal of Khmer food at a local home in a village outside the city. You will have two days to explore Siem Reap and Angkor, the former capital of the Khmer kingdom and one of the wonders of the archaeological world. See some of the highlights of this ancient capital, like sunrise at the magnificent temple of Angkor Wat, the enigmatic Bayon within the walled city of Angkor Thom, and Ta Prohm, also known as the "Tomb Raider" temple.

Day 15: Siem Reap (B) Spend another day in Siem Reap, exploring more temples of Angkor or going further afield.

Today, you have another free day to explore more temples of Angkor, Siem Reap, or go further afield. You might want to take a tour of the floating villages of Tonlé Sap to see what life is like living on a lake – rice planting, pig farming, and even church meetings and school classes are all done on top of the water! You may also consider taking in Phare, a unique circus that injects Cambodian culture and history in its inspiring shows. See acrobatics, contortion, and aerial arts melded with theatre, modern dance, and more. Performers train for up to 10 years to master their art. Arrive before 20:00 (entrance closes at 20:05). Come early if you wish – the cafe opens at 18:00 and there is an option to enjoy dinner with the show. You can also learn about the story of Angkor and the Khmer empire at the interactive Angkor Museum. Explore the museum's inspiring galleries and interactive technology, which bring Angkor's past to life.

Day 16: Bangkok (B) Cross into Thailand on this long travel day. Spend an evening exploring Bangkok.

It's a long travel day today as a private bus ride takes us from the countryside of Cambodia to the modern kingdom of Thailand. The drive from Siem Reap to the border is around 3 hours. Please be aware that the border crossing formalities can take up to an hour. Upon entering Thailand, we continue our journey to Bangkok. We have time to check into our centrally located hotel and head out for an evening meal to celebrate the end of a wonderful journey. Approximate travel time: 8 hrs by private bus, including border crossing

Day 17: Bangkok Depart at any time. We highly recommend booking post-accommodation to experience this lively city fully.

You are free to depart at any time today, or we can book you extra hotel nights so you can spend more time in Bangkok. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO trips in the same year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs). If you don't see a program that interests you that pairs with this trip, but still would like to extend your time abroad, let us know. We will work with you to find a non-teacher trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Even better, if you are an educator, we can still offer you a discounted price on the trip you choose!