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## GEEO ITINERARY

Vietnam and Cambodia for Families

### **Day 1: Hanoi Arrive in Hanoi at any time. Meet your group for a welcome meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.**

Arrive in Hanoi at any time. Due to the potential for flight delays or cancellations, we recommend that you plan to arrive in Hanoi at least a day in advance. This will also give you time to adjust to the time difference and overcome any jetlag. We can book extra hotel nights for you in Hanoi before the trip. If you arrive early, you might consider walking 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. Please note that check-in at the hotel is usually around 2:00-3:00 p.m. There are no planned activities until an intro meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., usually in the hotel lobby. Check for a sign or ask at the reception desk about the exact time and location of the group meeting. Please make every effort to arrive in time for this meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up tomorrow. After the meeting, you might choose to get dinner at a nearby restaurant with your traveling companions and your tour leader to further get to know one another.

### **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 3-hour drive takes us to Bai Chay harbor, our entry point to Halong Bay. Thousands of islands rise dramatically from the serene waters of Halong Bay. The massive limestone karst formations contain intricate cave systems and make for spectacular scenery. We board a traditional junk boat at Ha Long Bay harbor and cruise out among the isles. 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: 3 hrs by shared van

### **Day 3: Halong Bay/Huế (B,L) Cruise back to the port and drive to Hanoi. Enjoy more time in the city before an overnight train to Huế**

Today, we enjoy breakfast and lunch on board the junk boat before sailing 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 Huế. 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 vehicle (Halong Bay to Hanoi); 14 hrs by overnight sleeper train (Hanoi to Huế)

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

We arrive in Huế, once the imperial capital of Vietnam, in the early morning. We start the day with a tour of the Imperial Citadel, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where we will see the walled fortress and former palace, which has many gateways, courtyards, and gardens to explore. Inside the citadel, the Forbidden

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Purple City, modeled on China's Forbidden City, was once home to the imperial family and was significantly damaged during the Vietnam War. Next, we visit to the Tien Mu Pagoda, one of the most elegant and tallest pagodas in Vietnam at seven stories high. Built more than 400 years ago along the north shore of the Perfume River, the pagoda has been the site of many political protests. We also visit the Royal Tombs along the Perfume River in Hue. Embracing the concept of Feng Shui, these tombs are extremely ornate and provide fantastic insight into the lives of the former rulers. While in the city, try some local Hue specialties such as banh khoai (Hue savoury pancakes), and banh bot loc boc tom thit (thin rice paper filled with meat and shrimp).

**Day 5: Huế/Hoi An (B) Drive the Hai Van pass. Take advantage of Hoi An's many options over your two and a half days there. Opt for a cooking class, riverboat trip, lantern making class, bike ride, beach time, tailor visit, or Mỹ Sơn ruins.**

This morning, we depart for Hoi An. We will cross through the Hai Van Pass, weather permitting, with fantastic views all around. 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 worshippers, Cua Dai Beach, 4 km from town, makes for a great, flat bike ride. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by private vehicle

**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, when you can try some of the oodles of noodles (more than 26 types!) available in the city. 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 Mỹ Sơn. Travel approximately one hour from Hoi An to arrive at Mỹ Sơn, 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. You can also opt for a boat trip on the Thu Bon River, which plays an important part in Hoi An's history and culture.

**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 vehicle (Hoi An to Danang); 1 hr by plane (Danang to Ho Chi Minh City)

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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 a 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, contained underground hospitals, and served as a hidden base for attacking allied forces. Afterward, we drive back to Ho Chi Minh City. Enjoy free time in the afternoon, 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. Or, you can take in the busy rhythm of daily life in Cholon ("big market"), the Chinese quarter full of teahouses and pagodas. The War Remnants Museum is a gut-wrenching but worthwhile experience that includes three stories of exhibits. Learn about the devastation that occurred in Saigon during the Vietnam War, a period that greatly contrasts with the joy and liveliness of the Vietnamese people today. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by private vehicle

**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: 4.5-5 hrs by private vehicle

**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 private vehicle 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: 2 hrs by public bus, 3 hrs by private vehicle, 1 hr on cyclo tour

**Day 12: Phnom Penh (B) Guided tour of Tuol Sleng Museum (S-21 Prison) and Choeng 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 Choeng Ek, the somber yet serene site of the infamous Killing Fields. The grounds now stand as a powerful memorial filled with victims' skulls and mass graves. 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, you will have a free afternoon to explore the cities many sights: the Royal Palace, the Silver Pagoda, and/or the National Museum. You might choose to visit the 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

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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. For a fitting finale to the day, sip a drink in one of the many riverside café's watching the sun set.

**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. You can pre-book the Phase Circus with us for this day. For \$18, enjoy a stellar performance by Phare, a unique and socially-conscious circus that injects Cambodian culture and history into its inspiring shows. See acrobatics, contortion, and aerial arts melded with theatre, modern dance, and more. Take in stories of war, relationships, and discrimination, inspired by the real-life experiences of Phare's creators and performers. Approximate travel time: 6 hrs by private vehicle.

**Day 14: Siem Reap (B, D) 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 watch the sun rise over the massive Angkor temple complex during a guided tour. You might opt to visit the Tonlé Sap floating village, where you can see what life is like living on a lake; rice planting, pig farming, even attending churches and school are all done on top of water. If you choose to visit the interactive Angkor National Museum, you will learn about the story of Angkor and the Khmer empire. The museum's inspiring galleries and interactive technology bring Angkor's past to life. We will enjoy a traditional meal of Khmer food at a local home in a village outside the city or at a G Adventures-supported project, New Hope, depending on the day or the week.

**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 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. You can also book a Siem Reap Quad Biking tour with us. After a safety briefing and test drive, hop on a quad bike and follow your guide through the scenic countryside surrounding Siem Reap. Pass rice fields, buffalo, temples, and small villages bathed in dusk light as you ride, and be sure to wave hello to friendly locals. Cap off your ride with a stop at a viewpoint to enjoy a memorable Cambodian sunset.

**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 vehicle 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. When we arrive in Bangkok, we will 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 vehicle, including border crossing

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

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart Bangkok at any time. If you wish to extend your stay in Bangkok, consider booking post-tour accommodation with us. Please note that check-out time from the hotel is usually mid-morning, but luggage storage services are available at the reception

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desk. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO programs in the same school year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs per year). If you would like to extend your time abroad but don't see another GEEO program that interests you, let us know. We can work with you to find a trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Their tours are open to the general public and not designed specifically for educators, but we can still offer you and your travel companions a discounted educator price on any additional tours that you book.