

J Yang Tours Customized Group Travel Specialist to Asia

China • Vietnam • Cambodia • Thailand • Laos • Bhutan • Japan • Mongolia

Along the Mekong River – From Siem Reap to Saigon

Duration: 11 nights/12 days

We visit: Siem Reap, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Cham, Wat Hanchey, Phnom Penh, Chau Doc, Sa Dec, Cai Be, My Tho, Ho Chi Minh City

Linked by the mighty Mekong River, Vietnam and Cambodia abound with magnificent carved temples, lush landscapes, and cities where rich imperial and colonial legacies mingle. Encounter the incomparable treasures of Angkor, and then set off on a river voyage to Vietnam's Mekong Delta aboard the elegant Jayavarman. Explore traditional villages and gain insight into the daily lives of farmers, monks, and craftspeople.

Highlights:

- Siem Reap - Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom, Baphuon, Grand Elephant Terrace, Terrace of the Leper King
- Tonle Sap, Aundaung Russey Village, Kampong Chhnang Wetlands
- Wat Hanchey, Wat Nokor
- Phnom Penh - Phnom Penh's Royal Palace, Silver Pagoda, National Museum, Genocide Museum, the Killing Field
- Traditional Apsara dance performance
- Chau Doc local market, floating villages and catfish fames, My An Hung Village
- Binh Thanh Island, Cai Be's floating market
- Mekong Delta

Tour Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive Siem Reap

Arrive in Siem Reap, met and transferred to the hotel.

Day 2 Siem Reap

This morning visit the awe-inspiring Angkor Wat Temple, the largest religious monument ever built which is spectacular. Its five towers are recognized around the world. This afternoon you explore the vast archaeological treasure and wonder, the temple complex of Angkor. The South Gate of the royal city of Angkor Thom is your first stop. Inside Angkor Thom, you will visit Angkor Thom's Royal and then move on to Baphuon, a three-tiered temple mountain built as the state temple of Udayadityavarman II dedicated to the Hindu God Shiva. Also visit the Grand Elephant Terrace and terrace of the Leper King. Enjoy a special dinner tonight. (B/L/D)

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Day 3 **Siem Reap-Kampong Chhnang**

Today you transfer to Tonle Sap to board on the boutique ship and start our 8 days Mekong Cruise.

The Tonle Sap (The Great Lake) is the flowing heart of Cambodia, giving love and life to this nation. The Tonle Sap has more fish than any other lake in the world and is home to an incredible variety of birds, including rare and endangered feathered life.

A refreshing welcome drink awaits us followed by a sumptuous lunch on the ship. Then, it is a lazy afternoon as the ship glides along the water. Dinner is at Dining Hall. Enjoy a spectacular experience on the sun-deck as you bathe in the glow of the moon and the radiance of the stars.

The ship then moors overnight on The Great Lake. (B/L/D)

Day 4 **Kampong Chhnang-Kampong Cham**

The day starts with an invigorating Tai Chi lesson on the sundeck, just as the sun begins its slow rise. Coffee and tea awaits the early bird. Before dawn, the ship sets sail across the Tonle Sap Lake. As the ship is about to exit the lake, you see spectacular marshlands floating along the river banks of Kampong Chhnang province.

The afternoon cruise continues with a languid meander along the Tonle Sap, which narrows through leafy swaths of the Southeast Asian jungle. Here, the river is very narrow and you are greeted by kids waving enthusiastically at us from the banks.

Follow a short bus trip to the see the Khmer-styled pottery at the Aundaung Russey village. You then embark on a truly marvelous motorboat excursion from Kampong Chhnang to see the wetlands, floating houses and fish farms in the region before reaching Kampong Cham in the evening. Further down the river you take part in an ox cart rally before being introduced to the Heritage Line pro bono literacy project.

Overnight in Kampong Cham. (B/L/D)

Day 5 **Kampong Cham-Wat Hanchey**

You will wake up in the small hours of the morning, truly energized to embark on a land journey to the pre-Angkorian temple of Wat Hanchey. Travelers either take a motor-taxi or climb the 291 steps to the top. Located at the top of a hill overlooking the river, it offers one of the most breath-taking views in Cambodia. Built in the 8th century, this ancient structure, together with a bigger and newer addition underscores the superb architecture of the Chenla Empire which predates the mighty Angkor temple complex. You even get to engage in light banter with some of the monks in the area. You will return to the ship to witness a blessing ceremony performed by orange-clad local monks.

When the tide allows, you will enjoy a surprise sojourn in our zodiacs (inflatable boats) to the nearby bank to swim in the tea-colored Mekong River, an experience that will, no doubt, dominate dinner conversations in the weeks to come.

You will then cruise towards Kampong Cham to visit Wat Nokor, a wat built within the ruins of an ancient temple which holds a timeless story. On the way back to the ship, you will visit an orphanage. Along the way, you will have to maneuver a 1.2 miles rickety bamboo bridge. Our sense of balance lies in the balance!

Overnight midstream near Phnom Penh. (B/L/D)

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Day 6

Phnom Penh

Phnom Penh was once the Paris of the East. Despite its rapid development, it has retained a lot of its rustic charm and elegance. After breakfast, you will be captivated by a comprehensive lecture on Cambodia's modern history. This will be followed by a city tour of this dynamic, historical capital city of Cambodia which has managed to preserve huge slices of its French colonial allure. Sightseeing in the morning will include visiting the dazzling white and gold edifice of the Royal Palace and the Silver Pagoda, and witnessing exceptionally beautiful Khmer craft at the National Museum.

After lunch at a local restaurant, you will visit the Genocide museum and the Killing Field in town. Be prepared to be heart wrenched by this stark reminder of the genocide that transpired during Cambodia's Khmer Rouge regime.

You go back to the ship after our museum visit. A variety of cocktails will be served followed by a traditional Apsara dance performance onboard. Experience the brilliance and richness of this culture, the soothing sounds of traditional music, the calming scent of incense sticks and a barbeque on the sundeck. It is indeed a truly marvelous experience, dining in the open with the stars and the moon as our companions.

Overnight in Phnom Penh. (B/L/D)

Day 7

Phnom Penh-border crossing

The cruise liner then sets sail for a lazy day of cruising along the main Mekong Channel. As this is an international shipping route, you will witness large commercial ships plying this route. Later, in the afternoon, you set off to the Vietnamese border for the requisite cross border paperwork. As the process tends to take some time, you bask in the glow of the afternoon sun on the Sun Deck, pamper ourselves silly at the Spa, or sharpen our culinary skills with the Heritage Line's Cambodian and Vietnamese cuisine cooking class. The ship moors midstream overnight. (B/L/D)

Day 8

Chau Doc-Sa Dec

Welcome to the fish sanctuary of Vietnam. You begin our day with a hearty breakfast at the Indochine Dining Hall or in the quiet sanctuary of your balcony. You will brace ourselves for a short excursion in Chau Doc, a pleasant town near the Cambodian border with sizeable Chinese, Kinh and Khmer communities. You will also visit the colorful local market near an ancient temple. This is followed by a trip to the quay, where you will be feted to a boat excursion to the floating villages and rustic catfish farms.

You will certainly enjoy watching schools of Basa fish being fed by hand. Then, it is back to the ship for a lunch. In the midafternoon, you will set off for My An Hung Village. Passengers walk to the family house through the vegetable garden to see the boat building yard, canals. You will cross a monkey bridge and see chili, corn and beetle nut plantations amongst other vegetable fields. Then gather at the the family's house to taste tea with honey with local delicacies and fruits before back to the ship to set off for Sa Dec.

Overnight in Sa Dec. (B/L/D)

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Day 9 **Sa Dec-Cai Be-My Tho**

In the morning you embark a traditional sampan(a flat bottomed traditional Vietnamese wooden boat) to tour Binh Thanh Island and its man-made canals. Here, every villager is involved in the process of growing and processing water hyacinths into natural fiber floor mats and rattan baskets.

After lunch onboard, the ship arrives in Cai Be. The tour starts with a visit to Cai Be's boisterous and colorful floating market where traders gather in a cacophonous congregation. During the languid ride, you discover breathtaking landscapes along the river and quaff the rustic life on the Mekong Delta. The evergreen islands along the Mekong River remains unknown to many people. The cruise will halt intermittently to allow us to observe how rice paste, rice cookies and coconut candies are made, along with the Longan fruit drying process. After touring the canals, you head to an ancient house surrounded by fruit orchards before heading to the ship for dinner. You then board the ship for a tranquil evening cruise towards My Tho. A wonderful farewell party awaits us on the terrace deck. Overnight in My Tho. (B/L/D)

Day 10 **My Tho-Ho Chi Minh City**

Our cruise on the magnificent cruiser comes to an end as the ship winds its way to My Tho, approximately 70km south of Saigon on the upper Mekong River in Vietnam. You disembark at around 8:30 am and transfer to madding crowd of Saigon. Check into hotel. (B)

Day 11 **Ho Chi Minh City**

HO Chi Minh City, called "The Pearl of the Sea" by locals, still has its French charms, even as it embraces twenty first century commercialism. This frenetic metropolis is crowded with bikes and motorbikes, with bustling shopping areas and sidewalk cafes.

Our city tour today includes visit to the Notre Dame Cathedral, the grandest expression of French Catholic architecture in the country; the Old Saigon Post Office, designed by Gustav Eiffel's firm; Saigon Opera House, the French Colonial Hotel d'Ville (City Hall) and the Cho Lon, Saigon's Chinatown, which is packed with sacred temples and mysterious, narrow lanes. Also visit the bustling wholesale quarter of Ho Chi Minh City.

Enjoy a farewell dinner. (B/L/D)

Day 12 **Depart Ho Chi Minh City**

You will be transferred to the airport for your flight home. (B)

For tour price or customize this itinerary, please contact us

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