

General Trip info

Map

Trip Code: ITTRDC

Trip Length: 35

Trip starts in: Bangkok

Trip ends in: Bangkok

Meals: 8 Breakfasts included
1 Lunches included
2 Dinners included

Accommodation: Guesthouse (11 nights), Homestay (1 night), Hotel (17 nights), Overnight boat (1 night), Overnight sleeper train (4 nights)

Transport: Boat, Cycle rickshaw, Overnight sleeper train, Private mini bus, Train, Local public bus, Tuk Tuk

Daily Itinerary

Day 1

Bangkok

Sa-wat dee! Welcome to Thailand. Your adventure begins with a welcome meeting at 6 pm on Day 1. Please look for a note in the hotel lobby or ask the hotel reception where it will take place. Bangkok has much to offer those with time to explore. You can take a riverboat to Chinatown to sample some world-class street food, visit the Grand Palace, wander down the bustling mecca of Khao San Road or indulge in a Thai massage.

Day 2

Bangkok / Overnight Train

Start the morning by jumping on a public ferry to Wat Kalayanamit and enjoy an included walking tour around the fascinating Thonburi area of Bangkok. See the mixture of cultures with Buddhist temples and Catholic Churches as you stroll around the Portuguese influenced Thonburi area. Often a spot away from the tourist trail you will experience untouched local villages living by the waterways and visit quaint local markets that have plenty of interesting snacks waiting for you to try. Finish the walking tour at Amulet market and be lured into a shopping frenzy. Enjoy free time in the afternoon for optional activities, you may want to relax with a Thai massage or visit the mysterious Jim Thompsons House. Board your overnight train this evening to Chiang Mai (approximately 13 hours). You will travel by 2nd class and your carriage is air-conditioned. Before you go, perhaps take a longtail boat trip down the Chao Phraya River to explore the famous 'khlongs' (canals) of Bangkok. Life along these canals seems a world away from the busy streets of the capital.

Day 3

Chiang Mai

Wake up on the train and glimpse the northern scenery as you arrive in Chiang Mai, then transfer to your hotel. Get out and explore this 'Rose of the North', which boasts spectacular temples, delicious food, an enormous night market, a picturesque river-front and excellent shopping. Hiring a bike to get around town is a great activity, or venturing to the Doi Suthep temple 15 km out of town. There is so much to do in Chiang Mai and you have 2 full free days to do as much or little as you like.

Day 4

Chiang Mai

Adventure seekers, ask your leader about white-water rafting or fly like a bird via the Flight of the Gibbon zipline. Today is a free day and there is many optional activities your leader can help you organise. You could participate in a Thai cooking course or see those amazing Asian Elephants in a visit to the Elephant Nature Park.

Day 5

Chiang Khong

Take a private minivan to Chiang Khong (approximately 5 hours). Explore this quiet town that sits on the Thai side of the Thai-Lao border. Wat Phra Kaew and Wat Luang are both well worth a visit while you are here. Perhaps rent a bicycle to explore the surrounding countryside and the banks of the Mekong. Your accommodation tonight is a basic guesthouse.

Day 6

Mekong River / Pak Beng

This morning you will complete border formalities at Huay Xai before boarding a private boat with your group to begin your two-day journey down the Mekong River (6–7 hours today). While the boat is basic, the journey is relaxed, a lovely way to experience the slow pace of village life and gorgeous scenery along the river. Dock at the small trading port of Pak Beng in the late afternoon and spend the night in a basic guesthouse. Notes: Prior to the boat's departure, ask your leader for help purchasing food and drinks for the journey if you need some. It can also be quite cold between November and February, so make sure you have some warm gear packed. Due to dam construction upstream, water levels are not as reliable as in previous years. When the river is at its lowest (February to April), groups may need to take a bus to Pak Beng instead of the boat. This is due to safety reasons and is advised by our local operators.

Day 7

Mekong River / Luang Prabang

Board the boat again and cruise downriver at a leisurely pace to Luang Prabang (6–7 hours). Arriving late afternoon, you'll have time to hit the highly recommended night market food stalls, a great place to mingle with the locals and enjoy a meal with fellow travellers. With temples and French colonial villas lining the Mekong under blazing orange skies, you can see why this city has a reputation for exotic beauty.

Day 8

Luang Prabang

Join your guide for a walk around the local area, learning more about Lao culture at the temple of Wat Pha Mahathat. Today and tomorrow are then yours to spend as you please. Today and tomorrow are then yours to spend as you please. Take the time to explore the local market by day, where the textiles made by local women will amaze. You can also make the steep climb up Mount Phousi, the spiritual and geographical heart of the city and a prime location to see the sunset over the Mekong.

Day 9

Luang Prabang

Your leader can help you organise many optional activities today. Kuang Si Falls, a spectacular spot to swim, is well worth a visit. Also at the gate entrance to the waterfalls you will have the chance to stop by the Tat Kuang Si Bear Rescue Centre where you can see the wonderful work this center is doing to rescue bears from poachers and provide them with a home. If you want to learn more about the local cuisine you can enjoy a cooking demonstration in the heart of town.

Day 10

Vang Vieng

Take a private mini bus through dusty villages and winding mountain roads to Vang Vieng (approximately 7 hours). The mountain scenery en route is as impressive as that of your destination. Situated on the Nam Song River, Vang Vieng is surrounded by towering limestone karsts. The standard of accommodation in Vang Vieng is basic but comfortable.

Day 11

Vang Vieng

Vang Vieng is known as an adventure town, thanks to its unique and varied surrounding country. Its many local caves are easily accessible and make for great day trips or half-day trips. Notably, Tham Chang, with its beautiful cavern fed by a natural spring, is an interesting swimming hole. Those looking to relax or perhaps learn more about local niche industry can visit the organic mulberry farm just outside town and enjoy a meal there (guided tours of the farm are available).

Day 12

Vientiane

Take a beautiful local bus ride through roadside villages to Vientiane (approximately 4 hours). Enjoy the slow pace of what is possibly Asia's most laid-back capital city. On a guided walk you will visit the key Buddhist sites Wat Si Saket and Haw Phra Kaew, and continue on to Patuxai (Victory Gate) for unsurpassed views over the city. You will also visit COPE, an Intrepid Foundation-sponsored organisation dedicated to assisting those who have been injured by the multitude of unexploded ordnance across the country.

Day 13

Vientiane

Today is a free day. Be sure to sample some of the top-quality cuisine on offer here, from French to Laotian and everything in between. Follow tracks along the river to find villages full of friendly children, dogs and chickens. Or perhaps hone your newfound Lao language skills at the morning market, which is in fact open all day and is full of local treasures. A further option is a tuk-tuk journey to Buddha Park.

Day 14

Hanoi

Take a flight from Vientiane to Hanoi (approx 1 hour) Please note you will be unaccompanied on this flight. In the arrivals hall of Hanoi Airport you will be met by an Intrepid representative, who will take you to your Hanoi hotel. The flight usually arrives into Hanoi in the late afternoon. As this is a combination trip, your group leader and the composition of your group may change at this location. There will be a group meeting to discuss the next stage of your itinerary and you're welcome to attend, as this is a great chance to meet your new fellow travellers.

Day 15

Halong Bay

Travel by private minibus for about four hours to the spectacular World Heritage site of Halong Bay. This is one of Vietnam's most beautiful places, a secluded bay of emerald waters flecked with sandstone islands and caves. Here you'll go on a cruise to explore the rock formations and caves and, in the warmer months, go for a swim from Ti Top Island Beach or perhaps go kayaking. You'll also enjoy a sumptuous lunch of fresh seafood. Spend a night onboard your boat in Halong Bay, with gentle waves rocking you to sleep.

Day 16

Hanoi - Overnight Train

Disembark from your boat in Halong Bay at around midday and take a three-and-a-half hour bus ride back to Vietnam's charming capital, Hanoi. Arrive back in Hanoi at around 4pm. Back among Hanoi's French provincial feel, left over from its colonial times, have some dinner with the group before boarding an overnight train for a twelve-hour journey to Hue around 6pm. Although conditions are basic, overnight trains are the best way to travel long distances and brush shoulders with the locals. Most trains have a dining carriage which serves simple food, but some travellers like to take some fresh bread, cheese and fruit for the journey.

Day 17

Hue

As the former imperial capital of Vietnam, Hue holds the treasures of Vietnam's royal past and is a curious mix of bustling streets and tranquil settings. Packed with historic monuments, Hue is also perfectly located to explore the surrounding countryside, which features stunning scenery, quaint villages and the peaceful Tam Giang Lagoon. Hue is Vietnam's former royal capital and its cuisine is considered by many Vietnamese as the best in the country. Hue's cuisine is influenced both by its imperial heritage (small dishes and a focus on aesthetic presentation) as well as its strong Buddhist heritage, reflected in the high proportion of vegetarian restaurants in the region. The bustling Dong Ba Market offers a plethora of goods and foods to see and sample, and it's a good place to try some of the specialities that graced the Nguyen emperors' banquet tables, such as the banh khoai, a royal rice cake. You have a free day to explore. You could also easily spend a couple of hours exploring Hue's massive walled citadel and the Forbidden Purple Palace enclosed within. Perhaps jump on board a 'Dragon Boat', and enjoy a cruise up the Perfume River to visit the Thien Mu pagoda. Or cycle out to one of the Royal tombs such as the tomb of Emperor Tu Duc, one of the best remaining examples of its kind. Alternatively, set off on an optional motorcycle tour of the sights in Hue and some surrounding villages.

Day 18

Hoi An

Continue on your journey to the World Heritage site of Hoi An, where your leader will take you on a walk around town. The city was a major trading port with the west from the 17th century onwards, and has a various architectural influences from Europe, China and Vietnam. Today the city is being restored and looks exactly like it did over a century ago. The rest of the day is free for you to do some optional activities or soak up the ambience of the place. You may like to wander Hoi An Market and the street stalls selling paintings, woodwork, ceramics, lanterns and much more. It's also famous for its talented tailors who can make beautiful items to order within a few hours.

Day 19

Hoi An

Enjoy a free day to further explore Hoi An. Perhaps take a cruise up the Thu Bon River or learn the secrets of cooking delicious Vietnamese dishes. Visit some of the man art galleries or simply wonder around the beautifully restored Chinese shop houses. There's also the option of cycling around the surrounding countryside, a truly unique way to get off the beaten track and see rural Vietnam up close. Your leader will be able to suggest activities to help you get the most out of your time.

Day 20

Hoi An / Overnight Train

Make the most out of your last free day in Hoi An. Perhaps do some of the activities you couldn't fit into your schedule over the past couple of days. There's Also Cua Dai Beach nearby, the perfect place to rest up before continuing on your way. This evening, board another overnight train to Nha Trang. The journey will take about eight hours.

Day 21

Nha Trang

Arrive in Nha Trang at around 7am and transfer to your hotel. Nha Trang is a charming town on Vietnam's southeast coast with pristine beaches, consistently good weather, a vibrant nightlife and excellent diving. You have two full days to catch some rays, swim, snorkel and indulge in fresh seafood.

Day 22

Nha Trang / Overnight Train

Enjoy your last free day in Nha Trang. In the evening, you'll get on another overnight train to Ho Chi Minh City (approximately 7 hours).

Day 23

Ho Chi Minh City

Arrive in Ho Chi Minh City very early this morning and transfer to your hotel. Today you'll have plenty of free time to explore Vietnam's largest city. Ho Chi Minh City has a busy atmosphere and a French influence. In your free time, we recommend visiting the Reunification Palace and the War Remnants Museum. There's also the historic Dong Khoi Street, and the chaotic markets of Ben Thanh and Cholon (Chinatown). Ho Chi Minh City has a different style of cuisine to its northern counterpart Hanoi, so be sure get out for restaurant meals and street food.

Day 24

Ho Chi Minh City

Today you may be required to move to a different hotel in Ho Chi Minh City, for the next section of your trip. Your leader will let you know if this is the case, and will help with the transfer to the next hotel. You have a free day to consider many optional activities. You also have the option today to take an Urban Adventures tour to the Cu Chi tunnels outside the city. This underground tunnel network in the middle of the jungle was used by the Viet Cong during the war. As this is a combination trip, your group leader and the composition of your group may change at this location. There will be a group meeting to discuss the next stage of your itinerary and you're welcome to attend, as this is a great chance to meet your new fellow travellers.

Day 25

Phnom Penh

Travel by public bus through rural Vietnam and Cambodia to Phnom Penh (approximately 6–7 hours). Cambodia's capital city is set on a major junction of the Mekong and Tonle Sap rivers and boasts some fine examples of French-inspired architecture. You may want to take a cyclo tour of the city's sights, including the central market, US Embassy, Wat Phnom, Mekong river front, independence monument and Royal Palace. If you're in the mood for shopping, stop in at the art-deco Psar Thmei (Central Market) or travel out to Psar Tuol Tom Pong (the Russian Market) for the best range of local souvenirs.

Day 26

Homestay

Travel by private bus (approximately 3 hours) into rural Cambodia to the region of Kampong Speu and village of Chambok. There's a lot of natural beauty to discover here, from waterfalls to swimming holes to bat caves nestled in the mountains. The Chambok community is renowned for its ecotourism. Tonight you'll join a local family in their home – a wonderful opportunity to participate in everyday Cambodian life. In the evening, enjoy a traditional Khmer dinner. You'll also be treated to a traditional dance performance while you're here. Notes: Facilities on this homestay are basic and multi-share. Mattresses, bedding and mosquito nets are provided.

Day 27

Sihanoukville

A private bus takes you to Sihanoukville today (approximately 4 hours). Named after the Cambodian royal family, this town has miles of lovely beaches and warm, welcoming people. It's also a jumping-off point to many beautiful islands. Settle in and perhaps take a refreshing swim.

Day 28

Sihanoukville

Enjoy a day of free time. There are a variety of exciting optional activities on offer. You can take a boat to one of the nearby islands, enjoy a barbecue lunch or simply relax among swaying palms, white sands and blue waters. Perhaps make the trip out to Ream National Park, which boasts 21 hectares of coastal mangrove forest and a great variety of animal and bird species. You may like to take a Khmer cooking class, or perhaps partake in some windsurfing or kitesurfing.

Day 29

Phnom Penh

Travel by private bus back to Phnom Penh (approximately 4 hours). Visiting the Choeung Ek Memorial is highly recommended. This is the site of the Killing Fields, the execution ground for the torture victims of Tuol Sleng. Alternatively, learn about a brighter period of Cambodian history by visiting the Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda. Wat Phnom, shrouded in myth, is equally worth a visit, as is the National Museum and its excellent Khmer collection. Perhaps indulge in a traditional massage at Seeing Hands massage parlours (a great social enterprise supporting the talents of visually impaired masseurs).

Day 30

Kompong Cham

Travel by private bus to the riverside town of Kompong Cham (approximately 3 hours). This peaceful town was once an important trading hub and is now a great opportunity to experience life in small-town Cambodia. You might like to explore the serene 11th-century Wat Nokor. Alternatively, hire a bike to explore the rural island of Koh Paen which is linked to Kompong Cham by an elaborate bamboo bridge (it's passable only in the dry season; you'll have to take a ferry across in the wet). The locals here make their living fishing, growing tobacco and sesame, so it's a good place to go for a closer look at some of Cambodia's cottage industries. A little further afield are the twin 'mountain temples' of Phnom Pros and Phnom Srei.

Day 31

Siem Reap

Take a public bus to Siem Reap (approximately 5 hours). Experience rural Cambodia along the way and take the opportunity to sample the local cuisine of Skun – deep fried spiders! The small but expanding town of Siem Reap is the gateway to Angkor. This is the most popular destination for travellers in all of Cambodia, perhaps even in South-East Asia. The markets are a great place to shop or to try some cheap, delicious street food.

Day 32

Siem Reap / Angkor Wat

Today you will visit the world-famous Angkor complex with your guide. These temples were built between the 9th and 13th centuries when the Khmer empire was the pre-eminent influence in South-East Asia. The temples were believed to represent the cosmic world and were set in perfect balance, symmetry and composition. The intricately carved bas-reliefs and architectural designs are mind-blowing and there are spectacular photographic opportunities at any time of day – seeing them at sunrise or sunset is a must. The ruins are scattered over an area of some 160 square kilometres, but the main cluster of temples is close to Siem Reap. You'll have plenty of time to fully appreciate the great archaeological sites of Angkor Wat, the Bayon and the jungle-covered Ta Prohm. Notes: A single-day Angkor Pass is included on this tour. If you'd like to return to Angkor outside of your included visit, you can buy a longer pass. Just ask your leader.

Day 33

Siem Reap

Today there may be a chance (depending on the season) to visit Tonle Sap Lake for a look at local life. If you feel like some adventure, another option is to do the Angkor zip-line course, which gives you a birds-eye view of the beautiful rainforest – and an adrenaline rush, of course. Another option is to visit the sobering Landmine Museum. It's located a little further afield, but is well worth the journey.

Day 34

Bangkok

It's a long drive from Siem Reap to Bangkok (approximately 8–9 hours including border crossing and lunch). You'll be travelling by private minivan. Embrace Thailand's bustling capital, a world of tuk tuks, khlong (canal) boats and street vendors serving up delicious Thai food. Head out with your new found friends for a last optional group dinner and find out why this city never sleeps.

Day 35

Bangkok

There are no activities planned for the final day and you are able to depart the accommodation at any time. If you are wanting to stay longer in Bangkok check out one of our many Urban Adventure tours.

Additional Information

Included Activities

Bangkok - Thonburi tour
Luang Prabang - Walking tour
Vientiane - COPE visit
Vientiane - Walking tour
Halong Bay - Overnight boat cruise
Hoi An - Old Town walking tour
Ho Chi Minh City - Orientation Walk
Chambok - Traditional Dancing
Siem Reap - 1 day Angkor Pass
Siem Reap - Angkor Temples Guided Tour

Optional Activities

Bangkok - Tuk Tuk Experience Urban Adventure
Bangkok - Temple & River of Kings Urban Adventure
Bangkok - Bangkok by Bike Urban Adventure
Bangkok - Thai Massage
Bangkok - Jim Thompson's House
Chiang Mai - Bicycle tour
Chiang Mai - Doi Suthep temple
Chiang Mai - Doi Suthep transport (minivan for group)
Chiang Mai - Thai cooking course
Chiang Mai - Urban Adventures - Mind & Soul
Chiang Mai - Whitewater rafting
Chiang Mai - Flight of the Gibbon zipline
Chiang Mai - Elephant Nature Park
Luang Prabang - National Museum
Luang Prabang - Wat Xieng Thong
Luang Prabang - Royal Theatre
Luang Prabang - Kuang Si Waterfalls
Luang Prabang - Cooking demonstration
Vang Vieng - Bicycle hire
Vientiane - Vientiane temples
Vientiane - Tuk Tuk to Buddha Park
Bien Ngoc boat, Ha Long, Kayaking(on sharing kayak)
Hue - Perfume River cruise & Thien Mu Pagoda
Hue - Royal tomb
Hue - Imperial Citadel
Hue - Motorbike trip including lunch
Hue - Hue Royal Street Eat by Cyclo Urban Adventure
Hoi An - Hoi An Boat & Bike Urban Adventure
Hoi An - Hoi An Walking & Cooking Class Urban Adventure
Hoi An - My Son Cham day trip
Nha Trang - Full day boat trip to Hon Mun Island
Nha Trang - Mud baths
Phnom Penh - Cyclo tour
Phnom Penh - Traditional Khmer massage

Sihanoukville - Island Boat Trip & Snorkelling
Sihanoukville - Ream National Park entry fee
Phnom Penh - Wat Phnom
Phnom Penh - National Museum
Phnom Penh - Royal Palace & Silver Pagoda
Phnom Penh - Tuol Sleng Prison Museum (S21)
Phnom Penh - Choeung Ek (Killing Fields)
Kompong Cham - Wat Nokor
Kompong Cham - Bicycle hire
Kompong Cham - Phnom Pros and Phnom Srei
Siem Reap - Remork transport to Tonle Sap Lake
Siem Reap - Tonle Sap Lake Boat Trip
Siem Reap - Angkor Zipline
Siem Reap - Khmer Cooking Class
Siem Reap - Three Day Angkor Pass
Siem Reap - Remork transport to Angkor complex
Bangkok - Chinatown Food Discovery Urban Adventure
Bangkok - Bangkok by Bike Urban Adventure
Bangkok - Tuk Tuk Experience Urban Adventure
Bangkok - Temple & River of Kings Urban Adventure

Notes for Cambodia

Experience some of the most inspiring and incredible sights in South East Asia on a tour of Cambodia. So much more than just a holiday, a visit to Cambodia will not only bring you to some of the world's best ancient sites, but will envelop you in a warm and welcoming atmosphere, a fascinating culture and a slice of real South East Asian life. The country's most famous attraction is Angkor Wat, the largest religious complex ever built and ancient capital of the Khmer empire. Built in the 12th Century CE it is one of the most awe-inspiring ancient sites on Earth. Meanwhile its lively capital, Phnom Penh, is the perfect introduction to this captivating country, where you can choose to stroll its bustling streets or learn about Cambodia's tragic recent history at the nearby Tuol Sleng Museum and Killing Fields memorial.

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries will need a visa to enter Cambodia as a tourist for up to 30 days. The easiest way to get a visa is to obtain it on arrival. This is available for almost all nationalities at all land borders and airports into Cambodia. At the time of writing (2015), the cost of a single-entry visa is USD25 for all nationalities, and you will need 1 passport photo. Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required, and whether it will be necessary to obtain it in advance (only a small number of nationalities need to obtain visas in advance). A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from areas with risk of yellow fever transmission (including transiting through an airport in an area of risk).

Notes for Laos

For a small country, Laos is one of the most diverse places in South East Asia. Laos is graced with many serene and relaxed towns, a product of the country's Buddhist traditions of peace and respect. The wonderful city of Luang Prabang is no exception, with its vibrant market, ornate monasteries and the nearby Kuang Si waterfalls, it's a place most visitors spend at least a few days. Other highlights include the peaceful northern village of Luang Namtha, the base for some incredible treks and optional adventure activities in the forests and rivers of Nam Ha National Park. Vang Vieng, in the heart of the country, is another incredible town and known for its outdoor activities such as trekking, cycling and rock climbing!

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and most EU countries will need a visa to enter Laos as a tourist for up to 30 days. Citizens of Switzerland, Luxembourg, Russia South Korea and Japan will not need a visa. The easiest way to get a visa is to obtain it on arrival. This is available for almost all nationalities at most land borders and airports into Laos - the cost varies according to nationality, and you will need 1 passport photo. Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required, and whether it will be necessary to obtain a Letter of Invitation (only a small number of nationalities need to obtain a Letter of Invitation). A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from areas with risk of yellow fever transmission (including transiting through an airport in an area of risk).

Notes for Thailand

Lying deep in the heart of South East Asia, Thailand is a country brimming with culture. A firm favourite with travellers for many years thanks to the welcoming nature of its people, the country boasts a wonderful blend of the exotic and the familiar. Visit incredible Buddhist temples, atmospheric markets and buzzing cities, perfectly juxtaposed with rural villages, forests, jungles and the beautiful islands of the Gulf of Thailand. Enjoy the perfect amalgamation of ancient and modern as you experience the wealth of activities on offer throughout this fascinating 'land of smiles'.

Citizens of the UK, USA, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia will not require a visa to enter Thailand as a tourist for up to 30 days. Citizens of Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and most 'western' EU countries will not require a visa to enter as a tourist for up to 30 days if arriving by air, or up to 15 days if arriving through a land border. In all cases, this may be extended for 30 days at the immigration department in Bangkok once in the country. Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. Please note that certain Eastern European nationalities (whether members of the EU or not) will need a visa, but some nationalities can obtain the visa on arrival while others will need to obtain it in advance – please check carefully what the situation is for your nationality. A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from areas with risk of yellow fever transmission (including transiting through an airport in an area of risk).

Notes for Vietnam

Tracing a curve down the eastern edge of South East Asia - Vietnam is a long, thin land of extraordinary natural beauty. Marvel at its beautiful deserted beaches, magical rock formations in Halong Bay, the lush, steamy waterways of the Mekong Delta and dramatic mountain ranges. Ho Chi Minh City is a place that crackles with energy 24 hours a day, and the capital of Hanoi has a distinct charm where old colonial buildings overlook avenues buzzing with motorbikes. Vietnam was once in the headlines for all the wrong reasons, but today you'll discover incredible scenery, technicolour sunsets, fascinating cultures, incredible food, and charming locals.

Citizens of the UK, Germany, France, Denmark, Italy, Norway, Spain and Sweden will not need a visa to enter Vietnam as a tourist for up to 15 days. Citizens of the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and all other European countries will need a visa, and this will need to be obtained in advance. Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a visa is required, it will need to be obtained in advance.

Important Notes

The routes, activities and places visited as described in these trip notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only.

These trip notes have been compiled to help you prepare for your journey once you have booked. They include the full itinerary and dates, and information about kit lists, meeting hotels, insurance, vaccinations, visas, and other information that will help you get ready for your trip.

These notes are updated regularly, so please ensure you have an up-to-date version of these trip notes.

The planned route and itinerary is the intention, but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed. It occasionally happens that there must be a change to our planned itinerary - this may be for a variety of reasons, such as climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions. By their very nature, adventure travel needs to be approached flexibly and some regions can be unpredictable. Some Imaginative Traveller journeys go through off the beaten track areas, which often have poor infrastructure and less stringent safety standards than we are used to at home.

Our Groups

Our groups are made up of people from around the world and are usually an interesting mix of nationalities and ages. On average there is a pretty even split, males to females and between solo travellers, couples and small groups of friends. We believe that adventure travel should be open to as many people as possible and so although some trips have a minimum age limit, as long as you are fit, healthy and passionate about travel, we are happy to take you. One of the highlights of group travel is the camaraderie and friendships that are formed along the way, and as well as the variety of people that you will meet.

The maximum group size depends on the operator and the style of transport, but will usually be a maximum of 15-16 or up to 21-22 on our overland journeys.

Accommodation

Imaginative Traveller trips are designed for shared accommodation, whether staying in hotels, hostels, homestays or campsites, and therefore do not involve a single supplement. Single travellers will share with people of the same sex for the duration of the trip and those that book together will usually be able to share accommodation.

The type, variety and standard of accommodation will vary greatly depending on what options are available in the region you are travelling; hotels can vary from very basic rooms without electricity or running water to high standard hotels with good facilities! Generally in hotels most rooms will be twin-share. Hostels, gers and yurts are nearly always multi-share.

Many trips will feature a stay in a local homestay or community tourism initiative, allowing us to experience a slice of local life in the areas we travel through. On our overland trips, we will sometimes camp in campsites ranging from rather basic or even wild camps to those with excellent facilities, including swimming pools, restaurants and bars.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any dietary requirements please tell us at the time of booking and also remind your leader at your welcome meeting. Our crew will try to cater for any particular dietary requirement or food intolerance whenever possible.

Health

You need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in our trips. When selecting your trip

please make sure you have read through the itinerary carefully and assessed your ability to cope with the style of travel on that trip. We are always happy to give extra advice if you have additional concerns. Please note that if, in the opinion of our leader, you are unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to yourself and/or the rest of the group, Imaginative Traveller or our partner operators reserve the right to exclude you from all or part of the trip.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information prior to travel, particularly if you have a pre-existing medical condition. We also advise you to declare any pre-existing medical conditions to your travel insurers upon purchase.

Altitude

Imaginative Traveller offers some trips that travel to above 2,800m altitude above sea level - it is imperative at high altitudes to drink lots of water to stay hydrated, be careful not to get burned by the sun, and try not to exert yourself too much. Some pre-existing medical conditions are known to severely worsen at high altitude and be difficult to adequately treat on the ground, leading to more serious consequences. It is imperative that you discuss your pre-existing medical condition/s with your doctor. We understand certain medications are reported to aid acclimatising to high altitude; please discuss these options with your doctor.

Yellow Fever

A valid international certificate of vaccination against Yellow Fever is required in many countries. You may need to present this on arrival at the airport or border crossing. Some countries will refuse entry if you are unable to present your certificate - please see each country's note above for details. It's also quite common for your home country to request a Yellow Fever certificate on your arrival back home.

It is your responsibility to check with your doctor well in advance of leaving home about the Yellow Fever requirements for the countries you'll be visiting.

Malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases

Some areas we travel to have the risk of contracting malaria. If this applies to your trip, please get expert advice before travelling about types of malaria pills and take them as instructed. Recommended types do change from time to time and from area to area. Consult your GP / travel clinic for the most up-to-date requirements and to find the right option for you. If advised by your doctor to take a course of anti-malarial tablets, please complete the course as instructed as malaria can often manifest itself upon your return home if the course is not followed.

Other mosquito-borne diseases such as Dengue Fever, Chikungunya and Zika are continuing to spread and becoming a bigger problem around the world. Bite prevention is vital to avoid contracting any of these diseases as there are no vaccines or specific treatments available. Health professionals have issued warnings for pregnant women travelling to areas affected by the Zika virus.

The mosquito usually bites between the hours of dusk and dawn and so covering up by wearing long-legged and long-sleeved clothing, preferably light coloured and buttoned at the wrists, can help. Do not sleep without closing windows, use a mosquito net where possible and use mosquito repellent applied directly to your skin or soaked into your clothing.

Vaccinations

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection vary according to different regions and recent bulletins issued by health authorities. It is essential to get the latest advice on the region(s) you are planning to travel in so please check with either your doctor or travel clinic in good time before you travel.

We also recommend you check out any specific health advice for the country you are travelling to either via your GP or the following websites: www.nathnac.org or www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

In the UK, we have been working with Nomad Travel for many years and their website has comprehensive,

up-to-date vaccination and health information. You will receive a 10% discount off all vaccinations given at Nomad Travel clinics.

Activities

Included activities are listed in the day-to-day itinerary, all other activities are optional and at your own expense. If you choose not to participate in the included activities on this itinerary, the cost will not necessarily be refunded; this is something you will need to check with your leader.

A selection of optional activities is listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This list is designed to be a helpful guide as to what is commonly available in each location, and is neither an exhaustive list, a guarantee that the activity is available, or an endorsement or recommendation. Please note that certain activities may not be available on your particular visit if they are overbooked, underbooked, out of season, or for any other reason - the list of activities is made according to our latest information and in the best faith, but please be aware that things may change between our last visit and your arrival. Please also note that it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination, and it is recommended to give yourself extra time in your joining or ending city if you would like to participate in some optional activities there.

If you do any optional activities, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Dragoman. You may be required to sign/complete a waiver form or optional activity form for some optional activities.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have comprehensive travel insurance. Without evidence of valid travel insurance you will not be allowed to start the trip. This can be arranged by Imaginative Traveller through our website or by contacting our team of travel consultants.

If you prefer to arrange your insurance independently, it should have a minimum medical (including repatriation) cover of £2,000,000. We recommend that any policy also has a minimum level of cover for Personal Liability of £2,000,000 and for Cancellation and Curtailment of £5,000. Cover for loss of baggage, personal effects, money and other inclusions are down to personal choice although please bear in mind that personal effects are more likely to go missing whilst travelling and you should ensure that your policy is adequate to cover the value of your personal effects e.g. cameras, tablets, phones etc. Please note that Imaginative Traveller and our partner operators are not responsible for your personal effects and are not insured for their loss.

If you prefer to arrange your insurance independently, it should cover you for any activities that you may wish to participate in, such as white-water rafting, trekking, horse-riding, etc. and the 24-hour Emergency Assistance Company must be experienced in handling situations in developing countries if applicable (e.g. they have the ability to arrange repatriation from remote areas such as the Sahara or trekking in the Andes). If you are travelling to high altitude (such as embarking on a trek to the summit of Kilimanjaro), please make sure that this is also covered.

Please double check if you have annual travel and/or credit card policies to ensure they have the cover you require, as many of these policies are not suitable with adventure travel to remote areas. Many credit card medical insurance policies are not valid for travelling outside your country of residence or outside the EU.

Please also check the age limits on any policy you wish to take out and make sure that you thoroughly inform the insurance company of any pre-existing conditions.

Passports

Check that your passport will still be valid for 6 months after the end of the trip - this is important as some countries WILL refuse entry to anyone whose passport is due to expire. A temporary or emergency passport is not valid on our trips. You will need to provide us with your passport details prior to departing for your trip. If you change your passport please remember to inform us.

Pre and Post Trip Accommodation and Transfers

At Imaginative Traveller we believe you should make the most of the places you visit, so if you would like to see more of the joining or finishing point cities, why not book additional accommodation to extend your stay? We can take away the hassle of time zones and language barriers by making the booking for you. This accommodation is only available at the joining or finishing city of your trip, immediately before or after the trip you are travelling on. Please note our rates do not reflect last minute walk-in rates or internet specials.

We can also book arrival airport transfers for you as long as we have your flight arrival details. These are normally payable in cash upon arrival; however we do have pre paid transfers in a few destinations.

Please contact our reservations team for details of the accommodation and transfers that we can offer, as not all hotels offer this service.

Responsible Tourism

Imaginative Traveller is committed to ensuring that we have a positive impact on local communities and that we implement policies to minimise any negative impact on the local environment. We recognise that we are guests of local communities and strive to make them benefit directly from our visit. You can find full details of Imaginative Traveller's responsible tourism policy on our website.

Issues on the trip

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on

customer-relations@imtrav.net

You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip, but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

Feedback

After your travels, we want to hear from you! We rely on your feedback. We read it carefully. Feedback helps us to understand what we are doing well and what we could be doing better, and it allows us to make improvements for future travellers.