

Indochina Explorer

Explore the natural wonders, historic treasures and cultural heritage of Three Indochina countries in Luang Prabang, Hanoi, Halong Bay, Hue, Hoi An, Saigon, and Siem Reap plus stopovers in Bangkok, Thailand

17 Days / 15 Nights

Departures: February 09-25, 2017 October 12-28, 2017 November 30-December 16, 2017



ACCESS CHINA TOURS



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Tour Program Summary

Indochina is composed of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia and it is a fascinating region to travel and to explore. **VIETNAM** is a country of natural beauty and charming cultures. It offers a unique blend of the East and West with plenty of sights, sounds and smell. Vietnam cuisine is a gourmet delight with a mixture of Chinese, French and a little Thai and is one of the most sophisticated cuisines in Asia. **CAMBODIA** is a small, unique kingdom with a rich history and fascinating heritage of Buddhist art and architecture. Common motifs in Khmer sculpture are apsaras (celestial nymphs), which have become a symbol of the Khmer culture. **LAOS** is a landlocked country, which comprises mostly of mountains and plateaus, thus offering visitors numerous opportunities to explore nature. With a much smaller population and less modernization, Laos is a great destination to feel the “otherworldliness”.

Your exploration starts in **Bangkok, Thailand** with tours to the national monuments and urban market. Take a hop north by air into Laos. Set between the Nam Khan and Mekong rivers, **Luang Prabang** is an enchanting town filled with historic temples and colonial style buildings. The atmosphere here is so tranquil and peaceful that many would contemplate staying on. The entire town was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995.

Travel eastward via flight to the modern-day capital of Vietnam. **Hanoi** still retains the mystery and charm of past centuries. Narrow lanes and traditional shop houses invite exploration by cyclo (pedi cab), while its many beautiful public spaces - lakes, parks, tree-lined boulevards and monuments - give the city an air of elegance and harmony with nature unique among Asian capitals. Legacies of Chinese and French influence are evident in many parts of the city.

Drive through the Red River Delta and travel from Hanoi to your boat in **Halong Bay**. A day spent cruising gently between the imposing limestone islets is hard to beat, but an evening spent watching the stars come out over the bay is a truly magical experience. You get both, plus kayaking and swimming in the turquoise water of Halong Bay.

A short flight takes you to **Da Nang**. Take a day excursion to **Hue**, the imperial city of Vietnam. The Imperial Citadel, a vast complex built in the early 19th century, was modeled after the Forbidden City in Beijing. The original walls stretched for 10 km and were surrounded by a wide moat. Most of the buildings were destroyed due to bombing during the war, but the monuments that remain provide a fascinating glimpse into the court life of the Nguyen Dynasty. Also explore the ancient merchant town of **Hoi An** and the charming countryside surrounding the city.

A vibrant metropolis, **Saigon** (Ho Chi Minh City) teems with energy, activity and motion. Everywhere you look, you see the meeting of traditional and modern life. The emerging modern skyline stands cheek by jowl with colonial buildings and traditional temples. Outside on the streets, young professionals zip by on motorcycles, chatting on cell phones; inside the quiet temple courtyards, worshippers pray amidst clouds of incense.

Wing on to **Siem Reap**, site of the crowning jewel of Khmer art and architecture – ANGKOR WAT. It is the national symbol and the highlight of any visit to Cambodia, or even Southeast Asia. The largest, best preserved, and most religiously significant of the Angkor temples, Angkor impresses visitors both by its sheer scale and beautifully proportioned layout, as well as the delicate artistry of its carvings.

Back to Bangkok by air and from where you will fly home or to your next destination.

Tour Daily Itinerary

- Day 01 → depart Fly from North America to Bangkok, Thailand
- Day 02 **Bangkok** Welcome to South East Asia! After a long flight, you arrive in Bangkok, Thailand and are met by ACT local representative at the airport. Transfer to your comfortable hotel for relaxation.
Enjoy an **Evening Reception** and tour briefing by your guide. Stay at [Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit Bangkok \(grande room\)](#). <Reception>
- Day 03 **Bangkok → Luang Prabang** Breakfast in the hotel. Enjoy leisure time this morning or your own exploration in Bangkok. Check out at noon and transfer to the Bangkok International Airport and fly from Bangkok to Luang Prabang. Upon arrival, met by your local tour guide and private transfer to hotel [Victoria Xiengthong Palace \(palace room\)](#). Enjoy **dinner** in the hotel. <B-D>



- Day 04 **Luang Prabang** Breakfast in hotel. Begin your tour in Luang Prabang with [Wat Visoun](#) – the oldest living temple in Luang Prabang.
Continuing to [Wat Xieng Thong](#), the crowning jewel of all the monasteries and temples in the city. Its many ornate buildings feature exquisite mosaic and gold-stenciled murals. Next, visit the [National Museum \(Royal Palace\)](#), a modest but graceful building which combines traditional Lao and French beaux-arts motifs.
Next, head to [Wat Mai](#), constructed in 1821 during the reign of King Manthatourath, it was once the residence of Phra Sangkharaj (the Patriarch of the Buddhist clergy). Return to hotel for your own lunch and rest.
Later in the afternoon, strolls down the [main street \(Wat Street\)](#) of Luang Prabang and stop at a few of the many temples that line its sides, such as [Wat Sibounheuang](#), [Wat Si Mounghoun](#), [Wat Sop](#) and [Wat Sene](#).
Visit [Mount Phousi](#) for beautiful sunset views over the temples and river followed by a **Laotian Cuisine Dinner**. <B-D>
- Day 05 **Luang Prabang** Get up early this morning and come to the streets to see Buddhist monks in saffron marching by. Join the locals and tourists to offer the monks a sticky rice ball – “[giving alms](#)” - from the rice serving basket you have prepared the night before. See the link for more details
After breakfast in the hotel, take an excursion to [Tham Pak Ou Cave](#). These extraordinary caves are filled with Buddha images of every style and material imaginable. Also stop at [Banxanghai Village](#), famous for the production of *Lao Lao*, the local rice wine.

In the afternoon, have an excursion by vehicle to Kuangsi Waterfalls, a multi-tiered waterfall tumbles over limestone formations into a series of turquoise pools. Visit a couple of ethnic minority villages along the way.

Return to Luang Prabang and balance of the day is for your own exploration or relaxation. Dinner is on your own. <B-L>

Day 06 **Luang Prabang** After breakfast in hotel, transfer to airport and fly to Hanoi, Vietnam.

→ **Hanoi** Upon arrival, met by your guide and transfer to hotel for check-in.

Afterwards, head to Hoan Kiem Lake, located in heart of Hanoi, which contains an islet with the tiny Tortoise Pagoda. From the lake, begin exploring the Old Quarter by Cyclo. This fascinating network of narrow alleys and shop houses is also known as 'The 36 Streets,' each street being named after the merchandise traditionally sold there, ranging from fabrics to crafts to medicines to tombstones. A handicraft-lover's paradise and an endlessly interesting place to explore local life.

Later on, you will pass by colonial landmarks such as the magnificent Opera House (may be seen from the outside only) and St. Joseph's Cathedral. Finally, go to see a Water Puppet Show, a fantastic art form originating in the northern Vietnam, best seen in Hanoi.

This evening, enjoy a Vietnamese Cuisine Dinner in an elite local restaurant. Stay at Hotel de L'Opera Hanoi (deluxe room). <B-L-D>



Day 07 **Hanoi**

After breakfast in hotel, start your tour at the miniature One Pillar Pagoda. Dating from the 11th century, this monument was rebuilt after being destroyed in 1954.

Next, visit the vast Ho Chi Minh Memorial Complex, a lovely park setting which is home to Ho Chi Minh's final resting place, as well as a museum and other memorials.

Begin at the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, where visitors can pay respects to the embalmed body of Ho Chi Minh. Continue through the park to Ho Chi Minh's Stilt House, the simple two-room dwelling where Ho Chi Minh lived from 1948 until his final days.

Then, visit the Temple of Literature, a peaceful series of walled courtyards and graceful gateways, and one of the best surviving examples of traditional Vietnamese architecture.

In the afternoon, visit one of Hanoi's museums, either the History Museum or the Museum of Ethnology. The History Museum is housed in an elegant building from the 1930s and includes exhibits spanning the entirety of Vietnam's history including prehistory, proto-Vietnamese civilizations, the Dong Son Culture, the Oc-Eo Culture and the Khmer Kingdoms.

The alternative to the visit of History Museum is the Museum of

Ethnology (close on Monday), which brings to life the astonishing ethnic diversity in Vietnam, with art and artifacts from the 54 different ethnic groups that inhabit the country.

Return to the hotel and dinner is on your own. <B-L>



- Day 08 **Hanoi** 🚗 ➔ **Halong Bay** Breakfast in the hotel; met by your guide in the hotel lobby and travel to Halong Bay by a private vehicle; you will be welcomed aboard a luxury small cruise ship and set sail through the bay while **lunch** is served, passing through the magical bay, where thousands of sculpted limestone islands rise from the waves like dragons' teeth.
- After lunch on board, you will take a short trek to a nearby summit for a panoramic view of the bay dotted with golden sails, and then go swimming on a quiet beach or sunbathing; return to the ship for a rest before enjoying **cocktails** on the deck while watching the sunset.
- In the evening, unwind at a lavish **dinner** and enjoy the night stars atop the deck or on your private balcony. Stay overnight aboard [Paradise Luxury Cruise Ship \(deluxe balcony cabin\)](#). <B-L-D>

- Day 09 **Halong Bay** ➔ **Hanoi** ➔ **Da Nang** Begin your day with a morning Tai Chi Session, with an opportunity to view the sunrise over the bay; after an early light breakfast, you will visit an amazing limestone cave in a beautiful limestone grotto. Then return to the boat for a final glimpse of Halong Bay while cruising back to the dock.
- Check out of your cruise ship and return to shore by noon; enjoy **lunch** at a local restaurant near the harbor; drive back to Hanoi Noi Bai International Airport for a flight to Da Nang.
- Met upon arrival by your private guide and transfer to the super enchanting [Naman Retreat Da Nang \(babylon room\)](#); evening is free at for your own leisure and dinner is on your own. <B-L>



- Day 10 **Da Nang** ➔ ➔ **Hue** Breakfast in resort; met by your guide in the hotel lobby and begin a full-day sightseeing excursion (*approx. 2 hrs drive*) to Hue, ancient capital of Vietnam.
- Start the tour at the Imperial Citadel, a vast complex built in the early 19th century and modeled after the Forbidden City of Beijing. In the compound, attractive structures include the striking Flag Tower, the

imposing Ngo Mon Gate, Dien Tho Residence (Dien Tho Palace), Thai Hoa Palace, the magnificently decorated reception hall, the Halls of the Mandarins, and the original Nine Dynastic Urns, among other sites.

In the afternoon, embark on a local boat and cruise down the Perfume River to the iconic Thien Mu Pagoda, an elegant seven-tiered octagonal tower that has become Hue's most widely recognizable monument. Have a **Vietnamese Cuisine Lunch** in a local restaurant.

Travel back to your Da Nang resort in the late afternoon and evening is free for your won relaxation. <B-L>

- Day 11 **Da Nang** 🚗 ➔ **Hoi An** 🚗 Breakfast in your resort; met by your guide in the hotel lobby; take a half-day excursion to Hoi An today. The colorful store-front houses and temples reflect a diverse heritage, dating back to the 16th and 17th century, when it was a major port for Western, Chinese and Japanese traders. Today it is a thriving center of traditional crafts and a shopper's paradise, best explored on walking tour through the narrow winding streets of the old quarter. Visit the Chua Ong Pagoda, Chinese Assembly Hall, the 200-year-old Tam Ky Ancestral House, and the well-known Japanese Bridge. Also explore the market street and the small harbor where colorful boats are moored. Have **lunch** in a local restaurant.

Transfer back to the resort in Da Nang and remainder of the day is free for your own relaxation; dinner is on your own. <B-L>



- Day 12 ➔ **Saigon** Enjoy breakfast hotel; met and transfer to Da Nang Airport and fly to Saigon. Met upon arrival and transfer to Caravelle Hotel Saigon (deluxe room).

Begin your tour of this exciting city with a stroll along Dong Khoi Street in the historic center, formerly known as the Rue Catinat, the main shopping thoroughfare and heart of old colonial Saigon. Pass by classic European-style landmarks such as the ornate City Hall (Hotel De Ville), the old Opera House (both may only be viewed from the outside), and pay a quick visit to the neo-Romanesque Notre Dame Cathedral and the Central Post Office. Enjoy **lunch** at a local restaurant.

Afterwards, dive into modern history with a tour of the Reunification Palace. Formerly the Independence Palace of the South Vietnamese president, this 60s style building was famously stormed by tanks on April 30, 1975 signifying the fall of South Vietnam.

Continue to the sad and harrowing War Remnants Museum, which comprehensively documents the travails of the long Vietnam- American War. Tonight, enjoy a wonderful **Vietnamese Cuisine Dinner**. <B-L-D>

- Day 13 **Saigon** Breakfast in hotel. Today's excursion is to visit Cai Be Floating Market.

From Saigon, drive into the heart of the Mekong Delta to Cai Be, and embark on one of the local boats to explore Cai Be Floating Market, a lively market of fruit and vegetable barges with a picturesque Catholic cathedral on the river banks.

Continue along smaller waterways and canals, stopping at the Mekong River Islands to visit orchards and local cottage industries. Enjoy watching how the delta residents make traditional treats such as dried longyans, rice pancakes and puffed rice candies, with the chance to sample the local delicacies. Enjoy **lunch** at a local restaurant.

Disembark in Vinh Long and drive back to Saigon. Visit Cao Dai Temple at Ben Luc on the way. The unique Cao Dai religion represents a fusion of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity, Islam and native Vietnamese spiritual beliefs.

Late afternoon transfer back to Saigon and rest of the day is free for your own relaxation; dinner is on your own. <B-L>



- Day 14 **Saigon → Siem Reap** Breakfast in the hotel. Morning transfer to airport and fly to Siem Reap, Cambodia. Met upon arrival and transfer to Victoria Angkor Resort & Spa (deluxe room) for check-in and relaxation.
Enjoy a late afternoon city tour and a **Cambodian Cuisine Dinner** in a local restaurant. Evening is free for your own relaxation. <B-D>
- Day 15 **Siem Reap** Early breakfast in the hotel. Meet your guide in hotel lobby and enjoy a full-day (with noon break) of exploration at the magnificent Angkor Wat.
Preah Khan: a temple built by King Jayavarman VII with towered enclosures and shoulder-hugging corridors in a jungle setting. Preah Khan covers a very large area but the temple itself is enclosed within a rectangular wall of around 700 by 800 meters. Enjoy **lunch** at a local restaurant.
Seemingly miniature in comparison to the other Angkor temples, Banteay Srei is considered to be the jewel of classical Khmer art. Built in pink sandstone, the walls are covered in exquisitely preserved carvings of unusual delicacy. Because of its small size, fairy-like atmosphere and extraordinary examples of Khmer sculpture, this temple is often a favorite with visitors.
Watch the sunset over the Cambodian countryside from the upper terraces of an ancient Angkorian temple. Tonight, enjoy some free time for your own leisure and dinner is on your own. <B-L>
- Day 16 **Siem Reap** Breakfast in the hotel. Enjoy another day of sightseeing and exploration at Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom.
The fortified city of Angkor Thom covers an area of 10 square km.

Enclosed by a wall and wide moats, the city includes many of Angkor's most popular sights. Enter by the monumental South Gate over a causeway lined on either side by statues of demons and gods, each carrying a giant naga.

Continue to the Terrace of the Elephants and the Terrace of the Leper Kings, former spaces for public ceremonies, both adorned with dramatic reliefs.

Visit the ruined Baphuon, Royal Enclosure, and Phimeanakas before continuing to the mysterious Bayon Temple. In this temple, you can explore the galleries of beautifully preserved bas reliefs and ascend narrow stairs to reach the central sanctuary.

Prasat Kravan: the five brick towers were built for Hindu worship in 921 and are notable for the bas-reliefs cut into the bricks on the interior walls. A massive Buddhist temple dating from the second half of the 12th century, Banteay Kdei is surrounded by four concentric walls, the outer walls measuring 500 by 700 meters. Enjoy **lunch** at a local restaurant.

Sras Srang: a basin opposite of Banteay Kdei measuring 800 by 400 meters with a tiny island in the middle where only the stone base remains of what was once a wooden temple.

Ta Prohm: one of the most popular attractions of Angkor as much of the jungle has not been cleared and it looks very much as most of the Angkor monuments would have appeared when European explorers first stumbled across them.

You will also visit Ta Keo, Thommanon, Chau Say Tevoda, and other temples and halls. Balance of the day is free for your own relaxation. This evening, enjoy a **Farewell Dinner** featuring Cambodian Cuisine. **<B-L-D>**



Day 17 **→ Bangkok** Enjoy breakfast in the hotel. Transfer to the airport and **fly** from Siem Reap to Bangkok, Thailand. Upon arrival, connect your own homebound flight.
→ return Service ends. ****

Changes to Itinerary: Access China Tours has made all possible attempts to ensure the accuracy of tour itineraries. Circumstances beyond our control may occur. We reserve the right to change itineraries, sightseeing activities, and common carriers, and to substitute hotels when necessary. Service of a similar category and standard will be maintained if such changes are made. The Service Voucher in your last pre-departure packet will provide the operational itinerary summary, final transport and hotel information.

Luxury & Deluxe Hotels/Resorts Selected for This Tour



Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit Bangkok



Victoria Xiangthong Palace Luang Prabang



Hotel de l'Opera Hanoi



Paradise Luxury Cruise Halong Bay



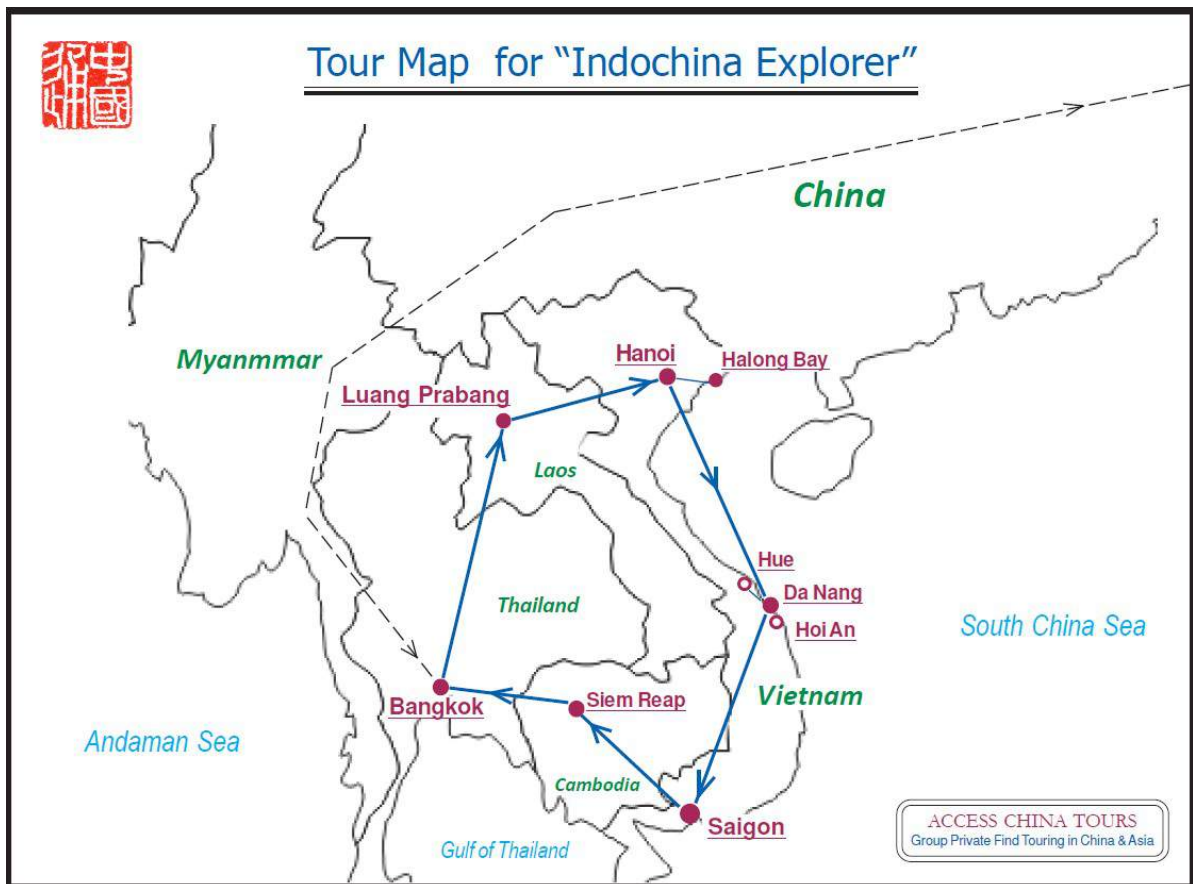
Naman Retreat Da Nang



Caravelle Hotel Saigon



Victoria Angkor Resort & Spa Siem Reap



Tour Land Price Inclusions & Exclusions

- Tour Land Prices:**
- \$6,530 USD** per person, double occupancy (for a group of 2-5 travelers)
 - \$6,240 USD** per person, double occupancy (for a group of 6-9 travelers)
 - \$5,950 USD** per person, double occupancy (for a group of 10-16 travelers)
- Single Supplement Cost:** **\$2,160 USD** for single occupancy in hotels throughout the tour

What's Included in 'Tour Land Prices'

- Luxury and deluxe category hotel/boat double occupancy accommodations with breakfast
- Coach class intra region air tickets
- Air-conditioned motor coach ground transportation
- All tour related domestic taxes in the destination countries
- Arrival and departure transfers on tour dates
- Transfers and luggage (1 piece of 45 pounds per person for domestic flights) handling
- Pre-departure information packets
- All sightseeing, visits, cultural events, and activities listed in the itinerary
- All meals as specified in the itinerary
- Service of a private English-speaking Tour Manager/Escort (*for a group of 10 or more travelers*)
- Service of a private English-speaking local guide in each city
- Private, clean, and newer motor coach with air-conditioning and a professional driver
- Gratuities to local guides, drivers, and porters (*for a group of 6 or more travelers*)

What's Not Included in 'Tour Land Prices'

- International air tickets (*will quote separately if requested*)
- Tourist visa processing fee
- Trip cancellation, baggage, accident, and medical insurance
- Meals not indicated as included and optional activities and events
- Gratuities to your Tour Manager/Escort; tipping for local guides and drivers (*for 2-5 travelers*)
- Items not listed and/or specified as included in the itinerary

Cancellation Policy: **\$600 USD pp deposit is required at sign up.** All cancellation notices must be received in writing and will become effective as of the date of receipt by *Access China Tours*. We assess cancellation fees of all tours according to the following schedule:

90 days or more prior to departure	\$300 per person *
89 to 60 days prior to departure	\$600 per person *
59 to 30 days prior to departure	\$900 per person *
29 to 15 days prior to departure	\$1200 per person *

* Plus any charges assessed by government agencies, land suppliers, cruise companies and airlines.

Within 14 days of departure100% forfeiture of the tour price per person

Access China Tours will not grant partial refunds for any unused trip arrangements after the trip has commenced or any refunds to participants who do not complete any portion of the itinerary. Any airline tickets issued are subject to the carrier's refund and cancellation policy. **We strongly recommend you purchase trip cancellation/interruption insurance to protect your travel investment.** If a tour is forced to be cancelled due to government's travel warnings, declared or undeclared wars, hostilities, civil disturbances, strike, riot, epidemic, and quarantines, *Access China Tours* will refund all participants' payment less any irretrievable expenses and loss (visa fees, airline penalties, communication cost, and non-refundable booking cost, etc.). However, *Access China Tours* will not be responsible for any expenses incurred by tour participants (e.g., non-refundable "advance purchase" air tickets, insurance & medical expenses, passport and visa expenses, etc.).