

## Mekong Jewel Cruise – 5 days

(Saigon – Phnom Penh)

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### Itinerary Overview

#### Upstream: Saigon – Phnom Penh

Day	Destination	Meals
Day 1	SAIGON – MY THO – CAI BE	L/D
Day 2	CAI BE – SA DEC	B/L/D
Day 3	MY AN HUNG – LONG KHANH ISLAND	B/L/D
Day 4	BORDER CROSSING	B/L/D
Day 5	DISEMBARKATION	B

#### Downstream: Phnom Penh – Saigon

Day	Destination	Meals
Day 1	PHNOM PENH – EMBARKATION	L/D
Day 2	BORDER CROSSING	B/L/D
Day 3	LONG KHANH ISLAND – MY AN HUNG	B/L/D
Day 4	CAI BE – SA DEC – MY THO	B/L/D
Day 5	DISEMBARKATION	B

**Note\*:** B: Breakfast / L: Lunch / D: Dinner

## Detailed Itinerary

### Upstream: Saigon – Phnom Penh

#### Day 1

#### SAIGON – MY THO – CAI BE

Depart Ho Chi Minh City in the afternoon on a scenic drive to the port of My Tho to embark the luxurious Mekong Jewel Cruise and settle into your elegant suite. As your upstream journey commences towards Cai Be, experience our cordial hospitality on the Sun Deck at a welcome reception and introduction to our friendly and professional crew who will present a safety briefing. In the evening a “Mekong Delta” themed dinner offers a cultural and innovative introduction to Vietnamese cuisine.

Dinner on overnight on Mekong Jewel Cruise

**Meals:** Lunch/Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Jewel Cruise

#### Day 2

#### CAI BE – SA DEC

After a short sail to Cai Be, the English-speaking guide will accompany you on the tapestry of waterways by sampan, passing a colourful collection of local boats from the delta provinces, larger boats selling their goods and the characterful stilted houses of Cai Be. Continuing into the narrower canals of Cai Be, a stop is made to visit Ba Duc House, a traditional Vietnamese home and garden. Back onboard the sampans, it's a short paddle through the canals to reach a traditional rice factory where industrious artisans produce rice paper, rice wine and popped rice. There's a selection of postcards, souvenirs, and beautiful oil paintings on sale. On return to the ship an elegant buffet lunch is served while sailing upstream through tranquil riverine scenery towards Sa Dec.

On arrival at Sa Dec port the traditional sampan is again used to navigate the tapestry of Mekong canals, giving guests the opportunity to observe traditional village life before arriving at the historic town of Sa Dec. A visit here would not be complete without a visit to the former home of Mr. Huynh Thuy Le, who was the inspiration for Marguerite Duras' famous novel, *L'Amant* (The Lover), as well as the Chinese Temple called Kien An Cung, built in honor of the Huynh Thuy Le Family. Guests return to the ship on foot through the town's market which is a bustling, extraordinary and colourful experience, providing many wonderful photo opportunities of the fresh and unusual produce of meat, live fish and seafood for sale.

**Meals:** Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Jewel Cruise

### Day 3

### MY AN HUNG – LONG KHANH ISLAND

This morning, we make a short journey from ship to shore by traditional sampan, visiting a typical evergreen farming village on the Mekong Delta, the My An Hung village. We walk through the verdant village, interact with villagers, enjoy fresh coconut in the garden... A local family would invite us for some honey tea and fruit while we enjoy the "don ca tai tu" folk music, followed by an impressive VOVINAM Vietnam Martial Arts performed by the teenagers of the village.

Mid-afternoon your sampans take you to the local island village of Hong Ngu in the Mekong Delta, close to the Vietnam-Cambodia border. Here, a large number of traditional Khmer scarves are woven in many village homes and exported to Cambodia. Guests have the opportunity to observe the weaving process passed down many generations. Some villagers are also embroidery artists and display their art for visitors to enjoy. The inhabitants of this rural area have only recently become familiar with western travellers and always offer a friendly welcome. Before returning to the sampans guests can enjoy a walk around the beautiful evergreen island, stopping for a visit at the home of a local war veteran.

Dinner on overnight on Mekong Jewel Cruise.

**Meals:** Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Jewel Cruise

### Day 4

### BORDER CROSSING

After border formalities, relax and enjoy leisure time on the sundeck, in the lounge, library or wonderful La Vie spa until mooring close to the city of Phnom Penh late evening. Guests observe a fascinating transformation in the riverfront architecture. Exciting cultural activities will take place on board.

Dinner on overnight on Mekong Jewel Cruise.

**Meals:** Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Jewel Cruise

### Day 5

### DISEMBARKATION

Following breakfast the crew bid farewell as guests are invited to disembark in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** n/a

## Downstream: Phnom Penh – Saigon

### Day 1

### PHNOM PENH – EMBARKATION

Guests embark the luxurious Mekong Jewel Cruise in the late morning and lunch onboard.

In the afternoon, guests are free to further explore Phnom Penh. Alternatively, guests can opt to go shopping or sample the city's vibrant restaurants and bars.

Pre-dinner cultural entertainment is provided on the Sun Deck as guests enjoy a performance by local children of Aspara, the Khmer national dance and other traditional folk dances.

Dinner on overnight on Mekong Jewel Cruise

**Meals:** Lunch/Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Jewel Cruise

### Day 2

### BORDER CROSSING

Relax and enjoy a morning of leisure on the sundeck, in the lounge, library or wonderful La Vie spa as the ship sails downstream towards the border. Guests observe a fascinating transformation in the riverfront architecture and landscape. Exciting cultural activities will take place on board.

Dinner on overnight on Mekong Jewel Cruise

**Meals:** Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Jewel Cruise

### Day 3

### LONG KHANH ISLAND – MY AN HUNG

In the morning you are taken by traditional sampans to the local island village of Hong Ngu in the Mekong Delta, close to the Vietnam-Cambodia border. Here, a large number of traditional Khmer scarves are woven in many village homes and exported to Cambodia. Guests have the opportunity to observe the weaving process passed down many generations. Some villagers are also embroidery artists and display their art for visitors to enjoy. The inhabitants of this rural area have only recently become familiar with western travellers and always offer a friendly welcome. Before returning to the sampans, guests can enjoy a walk around the beautiful evergreen island, stopping for a visit at the home of a local war veteran.

After lunch on board, guests make the short journey from ship to shore by sampan, landing on the charming evergreen village of My An Hung, visiting a typical farming village on the Mekong Delta, the My An Hung village. We walk through the verdant village, interact with villagers, enjoy fresh coconut in the garden... A local family would invite us for some honey tea and fruit while we enjoy the "don ca tai tu" folk music, followed by an impressive VOVINAM Vietnam Martial Arts performed by the teenagers of the village.

Dinner on overnight on Mekong Jewel Cruise

**Meals:** Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Jewel Cruise

## Day 4

## CAI BE – SA DEC – MY THO

On arrival at Sa Dec port the traditional sampan is again used to navigate the tapestry of Mekong canals, giving guests the opportunity to observe traditional village life before arriving at the historic town of Sa Dec. If water levels allow, a stop is planned at Cao Dai Temple. A visit to Sa Dec would not be complete without a visit to the former home of Mr. Huynh Thuy Le, who was the inspiration for Marguerite Duras' famous novel, *L'Amant (The Lover)*, as well as the Chinese Temple called Kien An Cung, built in honor of the Huynh Thuy Le Family. Guests return to the ship on foot through the town's market which is a bustling, extraordinary and colourful experience, providing many wonderful photo opportunities of the fresh and unusual produce of meat, live fish and seafood for sale.

After a short sail to Cai Be, the English-speaking guide will accompany you on the tapestry of waterways by sampan, passing a colourful collection of local boats from the delta provinces, larger boats selling their goods and the characterful stilted houses of Cai Be. Continuing into the narrower canals of Cai Be, a stop is made to visit Ba Duc House, a traditional Vietnamese home and garden. Back onboard the sampans, it's a short paddle through the canals to reach a traditional rice factory where industrious artisans produce rice paper, rice wine and popped rice. There's a selection of postcards, souvenirs, and beautiful oil paintings on sale.

Before dinner guests gather on the Sun Deck as the ship sets sail for My Tho to enjoy a farewell reception with all the crew, followed by a Vietnamese Farewell Dinner in Le Marche Dining Room.

Dinner on overnight on Mekong Jewel Cruise

**Meals:** Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mekong Jewel Cruise

## Day 5

## DISEMBARKATION

Following breakfast the crew bid farewell as guests are invited to disembark for transfer to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** n/a

## Inclusions & Exclusions

### ***Inclusions:***

- o 4 nights onboard the luxurious Mekong Navigator
- o Full board including themed dinners, welcome and farewell reception.
- o Complimentary house wine for lunch and dinner.
- o Complimentary local coffee and fine tea selection, soft-drinks, local beer and local spirits
- o Complimentary water bottle for excursions
- o Complimentary wifi in-room and public areas
- o Lotus Cruises exclusive's series of cultural performances, educational talks, food demonstration classes
- o English speaking crew and English expert local guides
- o All entrance fees, transportation as mentioned in the shore excursion program
- o Deluxe Sampans with cold towel service, fresh fruit and tea/coffee service (where applicable)
- o Individual VOX listening devices throughout cruise shore excursion program
- o Shoe cleaning after excursion
- o Welcome drink and cold towel service following excursions
- o Transfers from Siem Reap to Kampong Cham and from My Tho to Ho Chi Minh City (Coach transfers)

### ***Exclusions:***

- o Overseas flights
- o Beverages other than those mentioned above
- o Tipping/gratuities for land services
- o Visa arrangements
- o Premium wine and spirits
- o Spa treatments, on-board laundry and gift shop items
- o Port tax

## Important note\*:

- PROGRAMS & SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE DUE TO THE WATER LEVEL. WE WILL KEEP YOU UPDATED 2 WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE
- For overnight registration, we will need passport information (Full name, sex, Nationality, passport number, date of birth) of passengers at least four weeks prior to cruise date
- The price would vary depending on your departures, number of passengers and cabin type. Please book the tour or contact us for best rate of your itinerary

## Important Information

### River Conditions Warning

The rivers you will sail on are subject to seasonal rises and falls of water level, in some places as much as 30 metres. Water levels can change dramatically overnight and a sudden rise can impede our progress upstream considerably and even prevent us from passing under certain bridges. A sudden fall can result in our being unable to get into certain places or go as far upstream as we would hope. Groundings on sandbars are not infrequent and are part of the excitement of any expedition. Published itineraries are indicational only and subject to sudden change. In such events alternative itineraries will be provided and we do our best to ensure that if a stop is missed we make up for it with another stop.

Passengers are thus forewarned and expected to be flexible and patient. River cruising in Asia can be a dramatic and adventurous experience – not like cruising the controlled waterways of Europe or America. Note also that we operate in areas with little or no developed infrastructure and subject to the strictures of local officialdom. Be prepared for this and it is all more the fun!

For itineraries that include flights in the price of the ticket it should be noted that regional airlines can change departure times or cancel flights at very short notice. In such an event we endeavour to arrange alternative flights but note that this can result in delays often resulting in embarking or disembarking on a different day to that indicated in the itinerary. In such an event the company will cover the cost of hotel accommodation and main meals only, but will not be liable for any claims for compensation for missed days on board a ship, drinks or curtailment of the said itinerary.

### Clothes

We recommend wearing loose and comfortable clothing made of cotton or modern material that can readily cool off sweat and body heat. The type of shoes will depend on the excursion types so best to have both light, open toed shoes as well as good walking/hiking shoes with you. A sun hat is always a good idea to bring along.

Southern Vietnam and Cambodia are warm all year-round, but our other cruise destinations can get chilly during the winter months (Laos, Myanmar or northern Vietnam). Therefore, it is always recommended to bring a pullover or a warm jacket with you during this period.

Many of our cruises include visits to local temples or pagodas. When visiting these holy sites, make sure to wear appropriate clothing which covers your shoulders and knees.

## **Sea sickness**

Generally speaking, the rivers we are cruising on in Southeast Asia are very calm and there is hardly any motion on any of our ships. A bit of motion can occur during monsoon rains with stormy winds, but the amount of motion is much less than one would feel during bad weather on the open ocean.

Sea cruises as we offer in Halong Bay or Lan Ha Bay can sometimes encounter heavier waters and ship motion, although this happens very rarely and port authorities will most likely not allow sailing under any such circumstances anyway.

If you are new to cruising or prone to motion sickness, it does not hurt to bring along some motion sickness medication. Drinking a nice hot fresh ginger tea is a natural remedy and tasty alternative our staff is always happy to make for you.

## **Food and Beverage**

All food and beverage on board is completely safe to eat and enjoy, including the ice cubes you enjoy in your chilled drinks. We do not recommend drinking water straight from the tap anywhere, including onboard. We provide you with complimentary clean drinking water throughout your cruise.

You may want to be bit careful with local dishes as they can be spicier than you are used to from home. Approach new dishes slowly and carefully. If you have a sensitive stomach, then you may like to double check with our chef or onboard managers about specific dishes or meals.

On excursions, it may be a good idea to avoid local foods and snacks unless offered by our tour guides. Besides the above, in general we recommend the following motto for your pre- and post-cruise travelling in the Southeast Asian tropics: boil it, peel it, cook it, wash it or forget it!

## **Health risks**

The most effective protection from personal contamination is ensuring strict attention to personal hygiene and in particular, frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water and refraining from hand-to-mouth contact. Colds and other viruses can spread quickly in an enclosed area such as a ship. Continue to practice common-sense hygiene and respiratory courtesy. Wash your hands often and cover your coughs and sneeze. It is recommended that passengers carry anti-bacterial hand sanitizer, which does not require rinsing with water. Use sanitizer frequently and throughout the day, particularly after shore excursions and prior to meals. If you have any questions regarding your health or safety, please do not hesitate to ask your cruise director.

Motion sickness can be a problem for some people when cruising, flying or travelling on coaches and trains and it is a good idea to take precautionary measures. Over-the-counter drugs for treating motion sickness can be purchased at pharmacies in most countries, though a side effect can be drowsiness.



Alternatives such as ginger tablets and acupressure wristbands are also available and work well for some people.

## **Visa requirements for Cambodia**

Cambodia visas are easily obtained for most travelers on arrival. Note that passports must have a validity of at least 6 months after your last date of travel in Cambodia.

Because travel restrictions across Southeast Asia are constantly changing, we recommend checking with the Cambodia embassy/consulate in your home country for the latest information.

## **Visa requirements for Vietnam**

With the exception of visa exemptions, all travelers must arrange their visa prior to arrival in Vietnam. Passports must also have a validity of at least 6 months after your last date of travel in Vietnam.

Because travel restrictions across Southeast Asia are constantly changing, we recommend checking with the Vietnam embassy/consulate in your home country for the latest information.

## **Insurance**

We recommend at least purchasing travel health insurance which covers both in- & outpatient visits and medical repatriation. Buying additional trip cancellation and interruption coverage may also be beneficial in case you have to cancel your travel plans due to unforeseen circumstances.

## **Electrical adapters**

We always recommend bringing a travel adapter as a standard item in your travel kit. You can borrow an adapter on board, but these may be limited.

## **Tipping**

It is customary in Asia to tip service providers such as waiters, at approximately 10%, depending on the service. Tipping is expected - though not compulsory - and shows an expression of satisfaction with the people who have assisted you on your tour. Although it may not be customary to you, it is of considerable significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels. There are several times during the trip where there is opportunity to tip the local guides or drivers we use. Recommendations for tipping drivers and local guides would range from \$3-\$5 USD per person per day depending on the quality and length of the service.

## **Electricity**

Indochina Countries use 220V, and a mixture of flat 2-pin, round 2-pin or 3 pin plugs. It is recommended to bring a universal plug adapter.