



The Ultimate Invitation:
The Mekong Delta, Saigon to Angkor
with Nick and Iris Van Gruisen
30th January – 12 February 2018

The Ultimate Travel Company
Escorted Tours



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Nick Van Gruisen

Raised in Northumberland, Nick spent five years as a professional guide in Botswana and southern Africa in the 1970s, before joining the Tiger Mountain group and pioneering cultural, trekking and wildlife holidays throughout the Indian Subcontinent. He then founded Worldwide Journeys & Expeditions in 1991, from which The Ultimate Travel Company emerged in 1998.

Detailed Itinerary

Nick and Iris Van Gruisen take a cruise along the mighty Mekong River from the dynamic Vietnamese capital of Saigon to Cambodia's Phnom Penh with an additional overland trip to the magical temples of Angkor.

Travel on board the brand new, all-suite river boat, the *Mekong Princess*, chartered exclusively for a 7-night cruise. Our party will be a maximum of 24 travellers in 12 exquisite suites. We will travel on this unique adventure through the Mekong Delta in luxury from our start in Saigon at the newly renovated Park Hyatt, to the culmination at the stylish Belmond La Residence d'Angkor, the undisputed best hotel in Siem Reap.

Highlights of the tour include the dynamic bustling life and colonial past of Saigon, taking a sampan through the floating markets of Can Tho and visiting the eccentric Cao Dai Temple. We will watch the sunrise over the famed Angkor Wat temple, see Ta Prohm, engulfed by tree roots as explorers found it, and ponder the enigmatic expression on the carved faces of Bayon temple.

Day 1: Tuesday, 30th January London / Bangkok

Depart London Heathrow on a Thai Airways overnight flight to Bangkok.

Day 2: Wednesday, 31st January Bangkok / Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

On arrival in Bangkok connect to an onward Thai Airways flight to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam. On arrival in Saigon transfer to the newly refurbished Park Hyatt hotel for a one night stay. Situated on Lam Son Square, the hotel is in an unbeatable location from which to explore the main attractions of the city.

Following lunch under own arrangements at the hotel, visit China Town, the Binh Tay Market and see Thien Hau, the 150 year old Chinese Temple or alternatively there will be a visit to the Cu Chi Tunnels. This network of tunnels, which stretched for over 200km, became legendary during the 1960s. The Cu Chi tunnels played a vital part in the Vietnam War in that they allowed the Viet Cong to control a large rural area only 30 to 40 km from Saigon. Welcome drinks and dinner at the hotel.



Hotel de Ville Saigon



Mekong River

Day 3: Thursday, 1st February

Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) / Embarkation

This morning explore the city's colonial past with its boulevards and mid-19th century buildings as well as the ornate Hotel de Ville, the Unification Palace, Notre Dame Cathedral and the historic Central Post Office.

Transfer to the Mekong Princess in time for lunch on board. During lunch begin to sail upstream of Saigon. Afternoon at leisure on board. Evening reception and dinner on board.

Day 4: Friday, 2nd February

Ben Tre / Tam Binh

This morning take a sampan along a channel of the river lined with mangroves. Visit a local coconut sweet producer, explore the family's farm on horse cart, before a boat trip in small local boats through the narrow creeks lined with Nipah palm.

Return to the ship for lunch on board. This afternoon sail through remote areas of the Mekong Delta. See Phuc Hau Pagoda, with the opportunity to speak to monks who fled to Vietnam during the Cambodian civil war. Dinner on board.

Day 5: Saturday, 3rd February

Can Tho / Thot Not

Before breakfast board the sampans for an early morning visit to the fascinating Cai Rang floating market near Can Tho. Visit the various boats selling produce, and see locals going about their daily lives. Continue to a local noodle factory to see production, followed by a visit to a fruit orchard to see the native fruits of Vietnam being grown. Return to the boat for breakfast and the rest of the morning at leisure.

Lunch on board. Late afternoon board the sampans to visit the village of Thot Not. Ride Vietnamese xe loi (motorised trishaw) to explore the village. En route visit a bird sanctuary with a spectacular viewing platform over the treetops to view the nesting area of a variety of protected birds. Return to the ship for dinner on board.



Cai Rang Floating Marke, Can Tho



Cao Dai Temple

Day 6: Sunday, 4th February

Gieng Island / Hong Ngu

This morning take sampans to Gieng Island. After a short walk around a local sampan village, where hundreds of sampans are produced daily by local families, continue to an untouched are of the island with duck farms, monkey bridges, and tropical orchards alongside the river. Take a xe loi through this island to visit a Catholic Church, which was built in the 1870s.

Return to the boat for lunch on board, followed by an afternoon at leisure. Dinner on board.

Day 7: Monday, 5th February

Hong Ngu / Border Crossing

Visit the local island village of Hong Ngu, not far from the Vietnam-Cambodian border. The village is famous for the production of the Khmer scarves which they export to Cambodia. See the weaving process and embroidery artists. Continue to the local temple dedicated to the unique religion of the area, Hòa Hảo.

Return to the boat for lunch on board. Cross the border into Cambodia and continue up the Mekong to the area near Phnom Penh. Dinner on board.

Day 8: Tuesday, 6th February

Tonle Sap / Kampong Chhnang

This morning sail for Angkor Ban.

Lunch on board. On arrival visit a Cambodian family home and hear about daily life. Continue to the local school for a visit followed by a visit to the local monastery. Return to the boat and sail back towards Phnom Penh. Dinner on board.

Day 9: Wednesday, 7th February

Phnom Penh

This morning take a cyclo tour of Phnom Penh. Visit the Royal Palace to see the Throne Hall and Moonlight Pavilion, followed by the famous Silver Pagoda. Continue to the National Museum, which houses the largest collection of pre-Angkorian and Angkorian artefacts in Cambodia. Time to visit the markets and shops.

Lunch on board. This afternoon there will be the option to visit Choeung Ek, the killing fields, the center of the darkest days of Cambodian history. On the return to Phnom Penh visit Tuol Sleng (infamously known as S-21) which was converted by the Khmer Rouge from a school to prison. Return to the ship. This evening there will be an Apsara dance performance, the national dance, before dinner on board.



Tonle Sap Lake



Royal Palace Complex, Phnom Penh

Day 10: Thursday, 8th February

Phnom Penh / Siem Reap

Following breakfast disembark the Mekong Princess. Transfer to Phnom Penh for a morning domestic flight to Siem Reap. On arrival in Siem Reap as an introduction to Angkor's history, visit a private area of the Angkor Conservation Museum. In a conservation depot are safely stored a vast collection of irreplaceable carvings from the temples you will visit over the following days. Only a fraction of statues are on display at the National Museums in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap and during this private visit you will see where the majority of the collection is held and artefacts undergoing restoration work. Transfer to the Belmond La Residence D'Angkor Hotel where three nights are spent. An intimate luxury hotel near Angkor Wat, set

within a leafy walled garden. From here you are ideally placed to explore Siem Reap and visit the temples of Angkor Wat, one of the man-made wonders of the world.

Lunch at the hotel on arrival. Following lunch, check into your room. This afternoon start exploring Asia's most magnificent archaeological ruins, the Khmer Temples of Angkor. Built between the 7th and 11th centuries, some 70 ruins cover an area of 200 sq. km, starting with the magnificent Banteay Srei. This small complex was built in the 10th century by the spiritual mentor of King Jayavarman V and is dedicated to the Hindu deity Shiva. It was the birthplace of Khmer classical style architecture and the bas-relief work is the best remaining example of Khmer classical art. Uniquely Banteay Srei is built of rare pink sandstone with a series of striking and beautiful sculptures, lintels, pediments and friezes featuring exquisite ornamental carvings of gods, demons, coiling serpents and floral garlands. Continue to the Landmine Museum. Return to the hotel. Evening Lecture by Dr Damien Evans, Director of the University of Sydney, who has worked closely with the various conservation and research authorities at Angkor. He is an expert in the collapse of Angkor, the urban and social context of its temples and remote sensing and archaeological exploration. Dinner at the hotel.

Day 11: Friday, 9th February

Siem Reap

This morning visit Ta Prohm, built by King Jayavarman VII in 1186 as a shrine for his Queen Mother. The temple complex is overgrown with gigantic fig trees and is considered the best example of how Angkor may have looked when it was discovered by the modern world. Continue to Sala Kdei a traditional Cambodian house for refreshments before visiting Banteay Kdei, or 'citadel of the cells', which was used as a Buddhist monastic complex until the mid-20th century.

Return to the hotel for lunch under own arrangements. Afternoon at leisure. Early buffet dinner at the hotel before a performance at the Phare Circus.



Angkor Wat, Angkor



Angkor Thom, Angkor

Day 12: Saturday, 10th February

Siem Reap

This morning leave the hotel to watch sunrise at Angkor Wat. Continue to the fortified Royal city of Angkor Thom. The city has five monumental decorated gates, with the Bayon located in the middle of the former Khmer capital. Other important sights within the complex are the pyramidal Baphuon, the Terrace of the Leper Kings and the Terrace of Elephants. Supported by sculpted stone elephants, the terrace served as a giant viewing platform for royal ceremonies. Return to the hotel for breakfast, the rest of the morning at leisure.

This afternoon return to Angkor Wat, the largest religious monument in the world. The god-king Suryavarman II ordered the construction in the 12th century and dedicated the temple to the Hindu deity with which he identified – Vishnu. In the outer galleries are some of the finest and best-preserved bas-reliefs of the Khmer Art. Private drinks reception at the home-atelier of the Cambodian artist and designer Lim Muy Theam. Spend time in the tropical garden admiring a unique private art collection alongside works conceived and created on site. Farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

Day 13: Sunday, 11th February

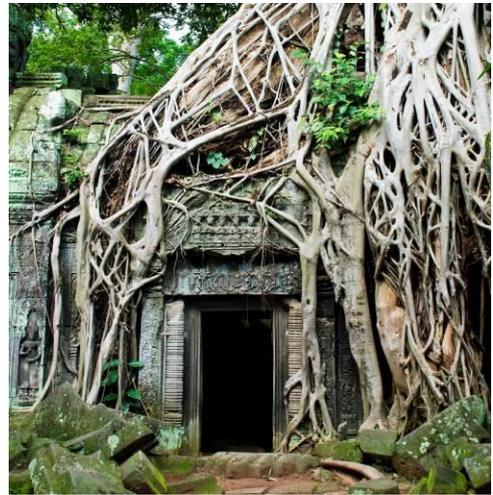
Siem Reap / Bangkok

Breakfast at the hotel. This morning there will be an optional visit to nearby Tonle Sap Lake to visit one of its floating villages.

Lunch under own arrangements. Opportunity to visit the Artisan d'Angkor and the markets. Remainder of the day at leisure. Lunch under own arrangements. Following late check out of the hotel, transfer to the airport to take a Thai Airways evening flight to Bangkok. Dinner under own arrangements at the airport.



Bayon, Angkor



Ta Phrom, Angkor

Day 14: Monday, 12th February

Bangkok / London

Just after midnight take a Thai Airways flight from Bangkok to London Heathrow arriving early this morning.

Mekong Princess

The intimate and luxurious 12-suite Mekong Princess will welcome you aboard to never before experienced level of gracious service, personal space, and unparalleled comfort as your floating home for seven captivating nights. With better than one-to-one, guest-to-staff member ratio, it will redefine every concept of small luxury river cruising.



Mekong Princess



Indoor Lounge

Facilities on board the ship include a Ship's Office, the indoor Ramvong Lounge and outdoor Observation Deck, a Library & Internet Lounge (equipped with WiFi), a Fitness Centre and a Spa. Daily yoga, Tai Chi, and meditation classes are offered either in the gym or on the Bassac Deck. Each guest aboard the RV Mekong Princess receives one free, one-hour spa treatment during the cruise.

In the Indochine Dining Room, Culinary Director Jorg Penneke, a member of the Slow Food Movement, takes the concept of spa cuisine a step further with his innovative fusion of traditional SE Asian cuisine and traditional, Western, spa-style gastronomy. Using locally-sourced, fresh herbs, fruits, and vegetables, some of which are rarely seen elsewhere, Chef Penneke's culinary team will ensure each meal is an experience to delight all of your senses. Breakfast and lunch are served buffet-style, with a variety of Asian and Western dishes. The multi-course dinners are paired with wine, and offer a selection of healthy, local dishes, as well as Western favourites.



Dining Room



Outdoor Lounge

Suites

The 12 exclusive suites aboard the RV Mekong Princess combine the elegance of French-colonial style with the tranquility and comfort of an exclusive Southeast Asian spa. With modern conveniences and luxuries that rival the finest hotels, the spacious, well-appointed suites include individual climate control, daily butler service and housekeeping with nightly turndown, premium mattresses, duvets, bed linens, and your choice of pillows. Spa robes, slippers, and specially-selected, spa bathroom amenities are provided for your comfort and convenience. A flat-screen television with on-demand system in each suite offers popular, classic, and destination-related movies. Daily and international print news is delivered daily.

Angkor Suite

Located in the bow of the ship on the Upper Deck, these two suites offer the largest, most luxurious suites on the Princess. With 496 square feet, including a large, private balcony, Angkor Suites offer panoramic views of the landscape through floor to ceiling glass windows, a private verandah with seating area, a fully stocked minibar, and complimentary laundry service. The bathroom offers a large, soaking tub and glass, rain shower. Angkor Suites are outfitted with one king bed. (496 square feet / 46 square meters)

Tonle Suite

Located forward on the Upper Deck, Tonle Suites provide guests with 306 square feet of living space. The two Tonle Suites include a bathroom with large, soaking tub and glass, rain shower. Floor-to-ceiling sliding doors open onto a French balcony, offering panoramic views of the passing landscape. Tonle Suites are outfitted with one king bed. (306 square feet / 46 square meters)



Angkor Suite



Tonle Suite

Apsara Suite

The four Apsara Suites are located mid-ship on the Upper Deck, and include 234 square feet of living space, floor-to ceiling sliding doors and a French balcony. The suite's bathroom offers a glass, rain shower. Guests choosing an Apsara Suite may request two twin beds or one queen bed. (234 square feet / 22 square meters)

Saigon Suite

The four Saigon Suites are located forward on the Main Deck, and include 234 square feet of living space, floor-to ceiling sliding doors and a French balcony. The suite's bathroom offers a glass, rain shower. Guests choosing a Saigon Suite may request two twin beds or one queen bed. (234 square feet / 22 square meters)

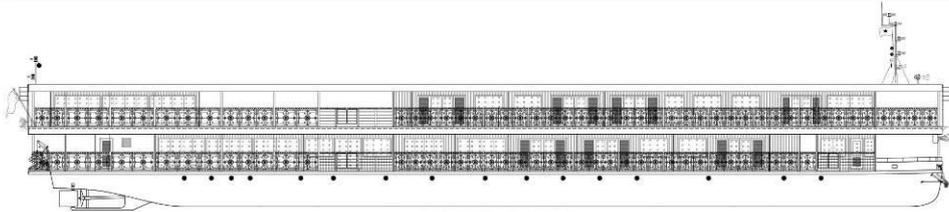


Apsara Suite

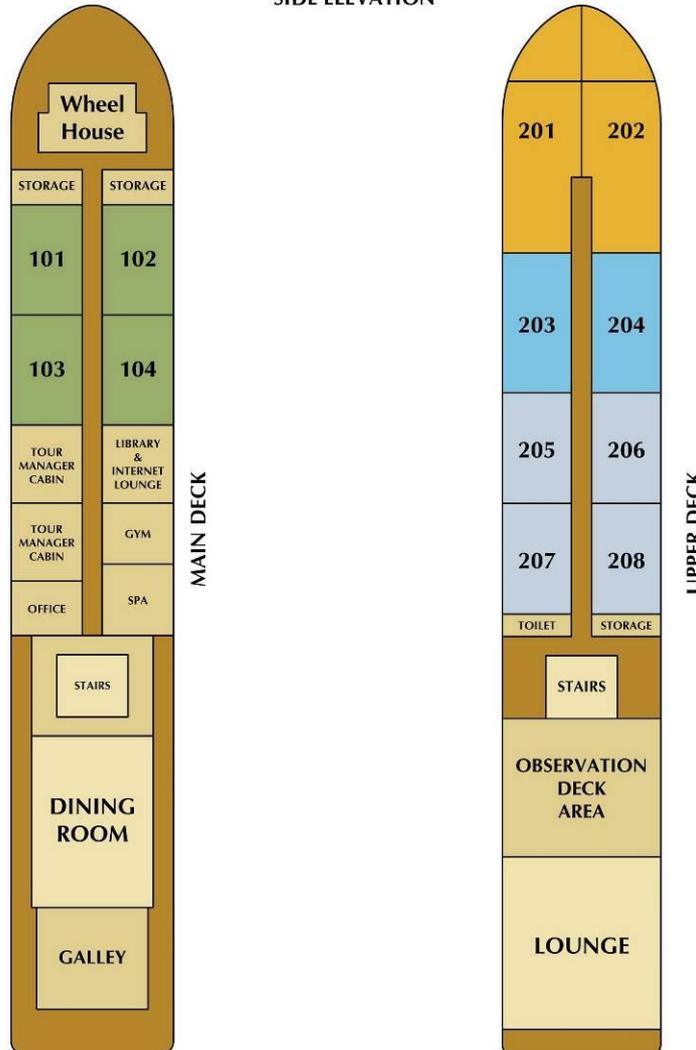


Saigon Suite

MEKONG PRINCESS



SIDE ELEVATION



SHIP SPECIFICATIONS:

LOA: 201.78 Feet | 61.50 Meters
 Beam: 31.17 Feet | 9.50 Meters
 Draft: 5.25 Feet | 1.60 Meters
 Capacity: 12 Staterooms | 24 Passengers

CATEGORIES:

- Angkor Suite: Upper Deck | 2 Suites | Balcony | 495.68 sq. feet/46.05 sq. meters
- Tonle Suite: Upper Deck | 2 Suites | French Balcony | 305.70 sq. feet/28.40 sq. meters
- Apsara Suite: Upper Deck | 4 Suites | French Balcony | 234.01 sq. feet/21.74 sq. meters
- Saigon Suite: Main Deck | 4 Suites | French Balcony | 234.01 sq. feet/21.74 sq. meters

Tour Price

Cost in a Saigon Suite:	£6,495 per person
Cost in an Apsara Suite:	£6,695 per person
Cost in a Tonle Suite:	£7,030 per person
Cost in an Angkor Suite:	£7,630 per person

Single supplement in a Saigon Suite:	£2,460
Single supplement in a Apsara Suite:	£2,595
Business Class Upgrade Supplement:	from £1990 (subject to availability)
Visa fees:	TBA

A fee of £95 per person will be charged for those who would like to travel out or back separately from the main group.

The tour cost includes:

- economy class scheduled flights
- air passenger duty, passenger service charge, airline security charges, airport taxes and fuel surcharges where applicable – currently £350 (liable to change without notice)
- accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- breakfast daily; all lunches (apart from 4); all dinners (apart from dinner at the airport on final day)
- on board the Mekong Princess: complimentary local mineral water, soft drinks, select local spirits, local beer, tea and coffee are available throughout the day. House wines are included during dinner
- in Saigon and Siem Reap: house wine, local beer, mineral water, tea and coffee are included during lunch and dinner
- all visits and excursions as per the itinerary
- all transportation as detailed in the itinerary
- all entrance fees
- local English-speaking guide/s
- gratuities in restaurants; gratuities to driver/s; portorage
- the services of your tour leaders throughout

The tour cost does NOT include:

- travel insurance
- items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls / laundry etc.)
- Visa
- gratuities to guide/s

- on board the Mekong Princess: premium spirits, imported beers, premium wines and house wines (except at dinner)
- in Saigon and Siem Reap: premium spirits, imported beers, premium wines
- Shipboard staff and shore excursion gratuities
- government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 03/03/17

Changes to the Itinerary

Please note, that certain elements of this itinerary, and/or the order of events, may well be subject to alteration due to circumstances beyond our control.

Fitness to travel

Whilst we do not impose any age limitations on joining a tour, participants must be reasonably fit. The very nature of the sightseeing involved in our tours (and the difficulties of direct access by coach in various places) means that a considerable amount of walking and standing is unavoidable on almost all tours. We regret that our tours are not suitable for people who have difficulty in walking, may require wheelchair assistance at any time, or are unable to keep pace with the group. If you are in any doubt as to the suitability of a tour, please make this known to us before you book and we will advise you accordingly. The Ultimate Travel Company reserves the right to decline a reservation without necessarily giving a reason. Your tour leader may also refuse to take participants on particular excursions if they feel that the rest of the group will be held up.

Airline Tickets

As a tour operator we have access to special airfares. While these offer good value, they do carry certain restrictions applied by the airline. Please ask us for details.

Note: If you are thinking about using air miles to upgrade to a premium cabin on the flights, please check with us first as fare restrictions might not permit this.

Health Requirements

No vaccinations are required for entry into Vietnam. The following inoculations are recommended: Typhoid, Hepatitis A and B, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Cholera, Japanese Encephalitis and Rabies. Malaria is present in Vietnam to in some of the areas you are visiting so anti-malaria prophylactics are advised. Please check recommended practice with your GP, practice nurse or travel health clinic. Detailed advice can be found on: www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations.

Passport and Visa Information

Vietnam: Vietnamese electronic visas are now available to the citizens of 40 countries, including the UK, France, Germany, Italy, and the US. After travellers upload passport photos and personal details to the Vietnamese government website, the electronic visa system will send a response within three (3) business days. The electronic visas are valid for 30 days, are single-entry, and there is a non-refundable \$25 fee which must be paid in advance.; we will send you further details in due course. Passengers should hold a full passport, which should be valid for six months after you return to the UK. Nationals of other countries should consult their local Vietnam Embassy.

For non-British nationals resident in the UK, visas can be arranged through CIBT Visa Service Company (an application pack will be provided two months before travel) or direct to the Embassy of Vietnam in London.

Cambodia: Visas are issued on arrival in Cambodia (arranged by the Cruise Director on board the ship) and cost \$50 per person, and must be paid for in cash. Please make sure you also have one passport photo with you.

[FCO Advice](#)

Travel advice issued by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office can be viewed at:
www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo.

