UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Angkor Wat, Cambodia and Ha Long Bay, Vietnam

A CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL ADVENTURE: VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA
NOVEMBER 3-20, 2017

Led by Ann Highum and Jerry Freund for Alumni and Friends of Luther College
Ann Highum, vice president for student life emerita and her husband, Jerry Freund, retired city manager of Decorah, invite you on an exciting adventure exploring the culturally diverse countries of Vietnam and Cambodia.

We invite you to share in an amazing cultural and historical tour to Vietnam and Cambodia. As a result of our travel opportunities over the past 35 years, we are happy to have the chance to do even more travel now that we are retired. Visits to India, Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam over the years have rekindled our love for Asia and her people. Cambodia and Vietnam are fascinating countries with wonderful people; they are safe for travel, culturally fascinating, and historically important.

There will be a focus on learning on this tour, with guest speakers and excellent guides who will share their knowledge about each country with the group. Our native Vietnamese colleague Lan Ahn Cao will accompany the group throughout as well; she is the owner of Asia Academic Experience, and has worked with several Luther student groups.

It is an active tour, in that there will be several options for hiking, biking, snorkeling, and swimming along the way, depending on weather and your interest. It is also a fairly challenging tour, for hardy explorers who enjoy good physical challenges, and are eager to spend most of their days “on the go.” For photographers, we will make sure there are plenty of opportunities for stunning photos.

We have worked to make this affordable as well as memorable, and hope you will consider joining us!

—Ann Highum and Jerry Freund

ITINERARY

Please note: The daily itinerary may change slightly so we can experience serendipitous moments that may occur along the way. *

**Friday, November 3**
Depart from Minneapolis or Chicago O’Hare (depending on price) for Hanoi, in northern Vietnam.

**Saturday, November 4**
Arrive in Hanoi in the late evening and transfer to the May De Ville Old Quarter Hotel and settle in for the night. www.maydevilleoldquarterhotel.com

**Sunday, November 5 (B, L, D)**
After a group orientation at breakfast, we will leave for our Hanoi City tour. This historic city was originally named Thang Long, “City of the Ascending Dragon,” and was the first capital of Vietnam in A.D. 1010. One of the 20 largest cities in the world, Hanoi has many sights, including the Temple of Literature, Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, HCM Stilt House, One Pillar Pagoda, and the Hoa Lo Prison Museum. We will stop at Hoan Kiem Lake to walk or bicycle as you wish, then visit the old quarter and Imperial Citadel. Our lunch will be at Quan An Ngon. In the afternoon or after dinner, we will hear about Hanoi culture and history from our guest speaker, Lady Borton. She has received two honorary degrees for her work with all sides during and after the Vietnam War, and is the author of four books about Vietnam. We will have a group welcome dinner tonight.

**Monday, November 6 (B, L, D)**
Our bus will take us for a 3-hour drive to Ha Long Bay where we will check in for our V Spirit Cruise. You can choose to kayak or swim (or both) at Sung Sot Grotto; a climb up to the top of the island provides us with a panoramic view of Ha Long Bay. For the photographers, this will be a day in paradise! Our afternoon ends with a seafood BBQ on the boat. You can relax and watch the sunset, or spend the evening fishing for squid.

**Tuesday, November 7 (B, L)**
We hope you’re early risers, as the sunrise at Ha Long Bay is not to be missed. You can also try Tai Chi on the boat before breakfast. The cruise takes us to Sung Sot Cave, passing Ba Hang Fishing Village, Dog Islet, and many other islands. While heading back to the harbor, you can watch a cooking demonstration before enjoying a traditional Vietnamese lunch. At noon, we will head back to Hanoi. That evening you will have dinner on your own, and then enjoy the famous Hanoi theater form of water puppetry before boarding the train for an overnight to Dong Hoi.

**Wednesday, November 8 (B, L)**
The train arrives in Dong Hoi early in the morning (5:30 a.m.); we will have time to relax and have breakfast before we head out to visit Paradise Cave, a remarkable cave system that is truly breathtaking. After lunch our bus will take us to Hue. On the way we will visit the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and the Vinh Moc Tunnel, which are significant historical sites if you are interested in the Vietnam War (which, in Vietnam, is called “The American War”). Our hotel is the New Star Hue Hotel (www.newstarhuehotel.com; after check-in, you will have a chance to dine on your own and sample local foods at one of the many Hue restaurants near our hotel. During one of these two days (8th or 9th), we will discuss the book, “The Eaves of Heaven.”

**Thursday, November 9 (B, L, D)**
After breakfast, we will have a complete tour of Hue, the Vietnamese capital during the Nguyen Dynasty (1802–1945) and a well-known World Cultural Heritage Site. The Citadel and Imperial City still contain ruins of the city’s regal past, including seven royal tombs built by the emperors themselves. We will view the Thien Mu Pagoda (the oldest and most symbolic pagoda in Hue) and the royal tombs via a cruise along the Perfume River. We will have a group dinner at a restaurant near our hotel.

**Friday, November 10 (B)**
After breakfast our bus takes us to Hoi An, a 3-hour trip along the South China Sea coastline, with breathtaking views, particularly as the road winds up to Hai Van Pass, better known as “Pass of the Clouds.” We will arrive in Hoi An in time for you to grab lunch before our walking tour and preview of this city. Our visit will include the Ancient Town, home to the beautiful Chua Cau or roofed bridge, the ancient meeting places, as well as lovely hidden pagodas. Our hotel is the Thuy Duong 3 Hotel (www.thuyduonghotel-hoian.com). Dinner will be on your own, after a group happy hour discussion about what we’ve seen and learned so far.

**Saturday, November 11 (B, D)**
Today is for you to further explore Hoi An, where there is shopping and massage available at the historic market, relaxation at our resort, and nearby biking or hiking. China Beach, one of Vietnam’s most beautiful beaches, is only 5 km away, via shuttle or rental bikes. Our day will end with a sunset boat ride to our cooking class at the Red Bridge Cooking School and enjoying the dinner we have prepared.
Sunday, November 12 (B, L)
Our flight to Ho Chi Minh City (the former Saigon) is in the early morning, after which we can check into the Asian Ruby Hotel (www.asianrubyhotel.com). Our Ho Chi Minh City tour includes the War Remnants Museum, Independence Palace, Post Office, Notre Dame Cathedral, Nguyen Hue, Dong Khoi Street, Ben Thanh Market, Opera House, and the Continental Hotel (where Graham Greene stayed and wrote The Quiet American). Lunch will be at the Nghi Xuan restaurant. Dinner is on your own.

Monday, November 13 (B, D)
Today is a free day in Ho Chi Minh City to explore, shop, and investigate this lovely city. If enough members of the group want, an optional tour to see the countryside around HCMC can be arranged. Tonight’s group dinner is a traditional Vietnamese dinner on the Indochina Junk, with a folk dance program.

Tuesday, November 14 (B, L)
We leave Vietnam today fairly early, with all our belongings, as we have lots to see and do on our way to Cambodia!
The first highlight is a visit to the Củ Chi Tunnels, an immense network of connecting underground tunnels located in the Củ Chi district of Ho Chi Minh City. The cramped tunnels were central to quite a few of the war’s strategic operations, including the famous 1968 Tet Offensive. American B52 bombers dropped hundreds of bombs, leaving huge craters behind in this area. The tunnels served not only as living quarters, but as supply routes and hospitals for thousands of guerrilla fighters. Many died there from malaria and other diseases.

Our goal will be to keep moving in order to visit the famous Cao Dai Temple in time for its noon ceremony (www.nytimes.com/2012/05/13/travel/in‐vietnam-the‐cao‐dai‐temple‐mixes‐religions‐and‐styles.html). After a picnic lunch, our bus ride takes us to cross the Moc Bai Border into Cambodia; by early evening, we will check into the Ohana Hotel (www.ohanahotelpp.com) in Phnom Penh. Dinner will be on your own at one of the many restaurants close to the hotel. Either late afternoon or early evening, we’ll have a group discussion led by Jerry Freund about the book, “Cambodia’s Curse.”

Wednesday, November 15 (B, L)
After breakfast on the hotel’s rooftop café, we will have a city tour. We can easily walk to the incredible Royal Palace, Silver Pagoda, and National Museum. We’ll have lunch and visit with staff members at the Daughters of Cambodia, an NGO that provides support to children trapped in their work in the sex industry. This organization offers training and education so they may have a life of safety, freedom, and dignity. Our afternoon visits include Wat Phnom, the temple for which Phnom Penh is named, and the Central Market. The Russian market will be an optional visit for those interested. Dinner will be on your own. We will have an evening discussion of “First They Killed my Father,” as preparation for tomorrow.

Thursday, November 16 (B, L, D)
We will begin our day with a visit to the sobering S21 (Tuol Sleng) Museum to learn about the Khmer Rouge genocide; the group will have a chance to talk to one of the seven survivors and see his cell at this prison. Lunch will be at the Pho 24 restaurant, followed by a 30‐minute bus ride to the Choeung Ek Killing field and its excellent Genocide Museum. We’ll return to Phnom Penh by 4:30 for a relaxing sunset cruise on the Mekong River, followed by dinner at the Friends Tapas Restaurant.

Friday, November 17 (B, L)
Today we fly to Siem Reap, get settled into the Central Boutique Hotel, (www.centralboutiqueangkorhotel.com), and have lunch at the Chanrey Tree restaurant. Then we’ll head out to one of the most beautiful of the temples in the temple area, Bantei Srei, and one of the most unusual, Ta Prohm. Unlike most Angkor temples, Ta Prohm has been left in much the same condition in which it was found. The photogenic and atmospheric combination of trees growing out of the ruins and the jungle surrounding it have made it one of Angkor’s most popular temples with visitors. We will have the evening to explore the bustling and active Market and Pub Streets with many restaurants serving food from all over the world. Dinner on your own.

Saturday, November 18 (B, D)
We are rewarded for an early departure by watching the sun rise at Angkor Wat, followed by breakfast back at the hotel. Then we return to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Angkor Wat for a more thorough tour. Next is a visit to Angkor Thom (Bayon) and Terrace of the Leper King. We’ll stop for lunch at the Angkor Cafe (on your own) in the temple area, and you are welcome to stay in the temple area for the afternoon or return to the hotel to further explore Siem Reap.

The Angkor Temple complex in Cambodia is the largest religious monument in the world. The temples of the Angkor area number over one thousand, ranging in scale from nondescript piles of brick rubble scattered through rice fields to the magnificent Angkor Wat. While we will visit the three main and biggest temples of the Angkor Complex: Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom, and the Terrace of the Leper King, your three‐day pass will allow you to visit other temples by tuk tuk if you like. Our final group dinner tonight will be at a pool‐side buffet with a Cambodian Aspara dance program.

Sunday, November 19 (B)
We’ll need to get packed early, as our last day brings several options: a trek into Kbal Spean, a visit to the Land Mine Museum or another museum, or your final massage, pedicure or manicure in the market area. The hike is a fairly strenuous 1.5‐km hike to see Kbal Spean, which is known as the original “River of a Thousand Lingas”, an intricately carved riverbed deep in the foothills of the Cambodian jungle. For those who go on the hike, lunch will be arranged near‐by (on your own). You will have time in the early afternoon to shower, change and get ready for our afternoon flight from Siem Reap to the departure city and then on to the U.S., with arrival back sometime on Monday, November 20.

*Itinerary subject to change, depending on weather, transportation, and opportunity.
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Round-trip airfare from Minneapolis or Chicago (depending on price) to Vietnam/Cambodia; all taxes and fuel surcharges.
- Sixteen nights accommodations in first-class (3.5–4-star) hotels with private bathrooms; most have pools, all are clean, comfortable, and in great locations.
- Daily breakfast, many lunches, and seven group dinners (see itinerary for exact meals).
- All transportation within countries: one flight within Vietnam, an overnight train trip in Vietnam, one flight within Cambodia, the flight from Siem Reap to the departure city to return to the U.S., and all motorcoaches, vans, and boats.
- Comprehensive guided sightseeing and activities, including all applicable entrance fees.
- Tour manager, group leaders, and in-country guides to accompany the group.
- All taxes and gratuities on inclusive services, including tips for the guides and drivers.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

For international travel, all U.S. citizens must have a current passport with 6-month validity remaining after your return date. We will assist participants in the forms and processes necessary for visas to each country; both countries allow purchase of the visa at the airport or border (VN visa is $45, Cambodia is $20). The Cambodian currency is the U.S. dollar. Vietnam has its own currency.

PRICING (PER PERSON)*

Double occupancy per person: $4,000
Single occupancy supplement: $350

Participants may handle their own airfare and purchase a land-only package.

- $500 per person is due with the reservation form by February 1, 2017
- An additional $2,000 is due by May 31, 2017.
- Final payment is due by July 31, 2017.

Registration is now open.

CANCELLATION POLICY

All cancellations must be in writing and acknowledged by Luther College. Cancellations made within 180 days of departure may incur a penalty of up to 10% of tour cost per person. Cancellations made within 60 days of departure may incur a penalty of up to 50% of tour cost per person. Cancellations made within 30 days of departure, penalty of 100% of tour cost per person. If replacements are found, the college will refund the costs of the trip, minus any costs already incurred for the person(s), and the single supplement, if applicable. Once the tour is in progress, no refund can be made for any unused portion of the tour.

TRAVEL INSURANCE INFORMATION

We strongly recommend that each participant purchase travel insurance so you will be covered for events that would cause you to cancel or interrupt your trip (for instance, pre-existing medical conditions, family illness, or illness while abroad) as well as for medical evacuation if necessary. Organizations we have used include Travel Guard (www.travelguard.com) or Travel Insured (www.travelinsured.com).

QUESTIONS? CONTACT

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