



TREASURES OF INDOCHINE

Exploring Southeast Asia

LAOS & CAMBODIA ~ CULTURAL JOURNEY ~ 16 DAYS

TRIP DETAILS

Moderate road travel

2-day boat cruise

Optional walks

15 nights hotels and lodges

2006 DATES

Jan 16–Jan 31

Feb 10–Feb 25

Nov 27–Dec 12

Dec 29, '06–Jan 13, '07

LAND COST

*\$4290 per person
(15-19 members)*

*\$4590 per person
(10-14 members)*

*\$4790 per person
(7-9 members)*

*\$625 per person for
international air
(Bangkok/Chiang
Rai...Luang
Prabang/Vientiane/
Phnom Penh/Siem Reap/
Bangkok—
subject to change)*

**TRIP LEVEL
EASIER**

It's easy to feel you've slipped into the past when you visit the countries of Southeast Asia. Not only are they naturally beautiful, with lush green deltas and soaring mountains, but their ancient cultures remain intact and the stunning architectural monuments evoke a visceral sense of ages past.

This popular adventure—with an itinerary unique to Mountain Travel Sobek—is an excellent survey of old French Indochina, whose “spice” is variety. You'll begin in Thailand with a stop at the exotic Golden Triangle, the mountainous region along the Mekong River where Myanmar (Burma), Laos, and Thailand meet. These jungled hills are the stronghold of semi-nomadic Tibetan-Burmese hilltribes, whose long isolation has helped them retain distinct languages, animist beliefs, and daily attire for women that often includes elaborate headdresses and massive jewelry. (In fact, some hilltribe women seem to have stepped right out of the pages of *National Geographic*.)

From here you enter into serene Laos, where the “kindest and most gentle people on earth” live, according to Gary Wintz, one of the scheduled trip leaders. Leaving the Thai border, you start a unique two-day boat journey along the peaceful Mekong River through some of the most isolated regions of the country (an MTS exclusive!). You will stop along the way to visit tribal villages that have little contact with the outside world, and to visit an ancient Buddhist cave-retreat packed with thousands of Buddha images. The river journey ends in Luang Prabang, Laos' imperial and religious capital (and a UNESCO World Heritage Site), where you'll spend time wandering among the splendidly preserved temples of the old city.

Next, you'll visit Vientiane, with its tree-lined boulevards and old Buddhist temples, then fly to Cambodia for the highlight of any travel experience in Southeast Asia—the splendid temple complex of Angkor Wat, one of the most majestic cultural and architectural sites in the world. We have planned four full nights in Angkor Wat—more than other group tours—to allow you to fully absorb the magic of this place. Its jungle setting provides a mystic atmosphere in which to enjoy its marvelous aesthetic accomplishments. You will walk around the temples in the early mornings and late afternoons to catch the best light and explore neighboring villages and the countryside.

Throughout the trip, you'll be in the company of accomplished trip leaders—people like Gary Wintz, his sister Tese Wintz Neighbor, or Sylvain Curtil—who have been visiting Southeast Asia for many years and hold this region close to their hearts. (In fact, Gary personally designed this itinerary for MTS; his passion shines through in every aspect of the trip.) Through them and the local friendships they have forged you'll have opportunities for personal, intimate encounters with the people, including visits to homes and tribal villages in remote areas.

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ITINERARY

DAY 1 ~ Arrive in Bangkok

Most flights arrive in the evening. A convenient walkway connects the international terminal to the Amari Airport Hotel, just a five-minute walk away from the Arrivals area. It takes two days to arrive in Bangkok (you arrive in the evening of the second day). More specific details will be sent to you in your pre-trip packet of information. Your trip leader will leave instructions at the hotel for rendezvous the following morning.

Amari Airport Hotel

Note—Most airlines arrive late at night into Bangkok, and our flight from Bangkok departs very early the next morning. If your flight into Bangkok is delayed by even just a few hours, it would be easy to miss the group departure flight to Chiang Rai. We therefore encourage you to arrive a day or two early in Bangkok to explore this fascinating city, or to help overcome jet lag before the tour actually starts. There are many sightseeing possibilities.

DAY 2 ~ The Golden Triangle

Early morning meeting in the hotel lobby, then walk over to the airport for the flight to Chiang Rai. Upon arrival we will meet with our vehicles and drive to the Golden Triangle, the center of a vast and notorious opium-growing region spanning Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), and Laos.

L,D...Anantara Golden Triangle Resort

DAY 3 ~ The Golden Triangle

The day is free to relax and enjoy the amenities of the hotel (pool, tennis, massages) or be more active and hike on local nature trails or hop aboard an elephant (if available) for a ride through the jungle.

B...Anantara Golden Triangle Resort

DAY 4 ~ Mekong Cruise (Laos)

We depart early in the morning for a couple of hours' drive to Chiang Khong in Thailand. After proceeding through departure custom formalities in Thailand, we cross the Mekong by ferry (a few minutes' ride), and enter Laos, known as the kingdom of a "Million Elephants." After checking in with immigration, we board the cruise boat at Houey Say pier for a two-day cruise along the Mekong River. We will make a few stops to observe rural life and visit with minority tribes. Late in the afternoon we arrive at Pakbeng and check in at Luangsay Lodge.

B,L,D...Luangsay Lodge

DAY 5 ~ Mekong Cruise, Pak Ou Caves, Luang Prabang

Morning walk to the Pakbeng market, where people from the surrounding villages bring in their wares for sale. Around 9:00 a.m., we'll board our boat for the second part of the journey along the tranquil Mekong River, stopping at a fishing village for a picnic lunch. We continue to Pak Ou ("mouth of the river Ou"). Here are located the famous Pak Ou Caves, ancient caves crammed full of priceless Buddha images in the Luang Prabang style (standing, "calling for rain"). After visiting the caves, we continue our journey to Luang Prabang. Upon arrival in Luang Prabang, we check into our hotel, followed by dinner.

B,L,D...Phou Vao Hotel

DAY 6 ~ Luang Prabang

Capital of the first Lao kingdom, Luang Prabang is probably the most unhurried, relaxed city in Asia (population 20,000), with some of the friendliest people you could hope to meet anywhere. There are few cars and no pollution or traffic jams; it's a perfect place to stroll leisurely through the ancient lanes and alleyways and absorb the timelessness of this still relatively undiscovered part of the world. The city is located on the Mekong River in a lovely mountain-encircled setting. It's renowned for its historic Buddhist temples—about 32 original temples dating from the 14th century still stand. We'll get a chance to visit some of these priceless monuments on a walking tour around the old city, now under UNESCO protection as a World Heritage Site. Wat Xieng Thong, Wat Mai, and numerous other historic buildings are on our itinerary. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

B,L,D...Phou Vao Hotel

DAY 7 ~ Luang Prabang

Excursion to the Kuang Sy Falls outside of Luang Prabang, with a picnic lunch. Return to town and visit the museum located in the former royal palace. The afternoon is free to explore Luang Prabang on your own.

B,L,D...Phou Vao Hotel

DAY 8 ~ Vientiane

Morning flight to Vientiane, capital city of the People's Democratic Republic of Laos. Lunch at the hotel. Located on the majestic Mekong River, Vientiane (translated as "sandalwood city") dates from the 10th century, but has been the capital of Laos from the early 16th century to the present. Vientiane is a relatively small, laid-back city, with tree-lined boulevards and old Buddhist temples. In the afternoon we'll visit some of the most important monuments, including Wat Si Saket, with its beautiful Lao-style Buddha images, Haw Pha Kaew, the former royal temple and now a museum, and Pha That Luang, the "Great Sacred Stupa," the most important national monument in Laos. No doubt you'll want to browse around the local markets; the Talaat Sao Market (a great food and vegetable market) is a wonderful venue for encountering the charming and fun-loving Laotians (bring plenty of film!). Dinner on your own.

B,L...Lao Plaza Hotel

DAY 9 ~ Vientiane to Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Morning at leisure. Transfer to the airport for a midday flight to Phnom Penh via Bangkok. After proceeding through entry formalities, we transfer to the hotel. Evening cruise on the Mekong River to the confluence with the Tonle Sap, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia. Dinner at the specialty restaurant in the hotel.

B,D...Hotel Cambodiana

DAY 10 ~ Phnom Penh

Morning visit to the Tuol Sleng (holocaust museum) and the Cheung Ek (Killing Fields) for a sobering look at the area where atrocities were committed by the Khmer Rouge. Return to Phnom Penh. In the afternoon we'll visit the Silver Pagoda in the Royal Palace and the National Museum. Lunch at Mekong Restaurant at the hotel. Dinner on your own.

B,L...Hotel Cambodiana

DAY 11 ~ Siem Reap/Angkor Wat

Morning transfer to the airport and fly to Siem Reap, the former capital of the Khmer empire, which ruled vast areas of Indochina between the ninth and thirteenth centuries. One of the overwhelming sites in the world is the Angkor

temple complex, the architectural triumph of the Khmer period. Nothing prepares you for the experience of seeing Angkor Wat for the first time, especially at sunset, when the soft light bathes the ruins with an otherworldly, haunting radiance. No less spectacular is Angkor Thom, once a city of a million inhabitants. In the center is the temple of Bayon with its 49 towers, each with multiple images of Avalokiteṣvara serenely smiling in what is surely one of the most mystical archaeological sites in the world. We'll explore the surrounding terraces, parade grounds, and temples with their exquisite bas-reliefs.

B,L,D... Angkor Century Hotel

DAYS 12-14 ~ Angkor Wat

We have three more days to allow for an in-depth exploration of Angkor Wat, with visits to Kravan, Srah Srang, Banteay Kdei, Banteay Srei, Ta Promh, Ta Keo, Thommanon, and Chau Say Tevoda temples. This afternoon, we return through Angkor Thom to dramatically overgrown Preah Khan, under preservation by the World Monuments Fund. This, the site of the filming of *Lord Jim*, possesses an overgrown ambiance of tropical trees enveloping their roots in a protective stranglehold around the temples and across corridors. One can get a feeling for how Angkor must have looked when French entomologist Henri Mouhot rediscovered it in 1837. We will also visit the royal baths at Preah Neak Pean in the Eastern Baray (a huge, man-made rectangular lake). The Khmer kings would bathe in religious rituals under spouts where water flowed through the mouths of various animal figures. There are four bathing ponds, each in the cardinal directions with a central pool in which the temple of the intertwining *nagas* (cobras) is placed. We will also spend half a day visiting Tonle Sap Lake nearby, including a boat ride through fishing villages on stilts on the lake itself. Lunch at the hotel.

B,L,D... Angkor Century Hotel

DAY 15 ~

Early morning sunrise at Angkor Wat. Transfer to Siem Reap airport for the return flight to Bangkok. Lunch and dinner on your own.

B... Amari Airport Hotel

DAY 16 ~ Fly home

For those returning home, the trip comes to an end all too soon! Cross the convenient walkway from the Amari Airport Hotel to the international terminal. Depart on homeward-bound flights, arriving in the U.S. the same day.

LAND COST

\$4290 per person (15-19 members)

\$4590 per person (10-14 members)

\$4790 per person (7-9 members)

\$625 per person for international air (Bangkok/Chiang Rai...Luang Prabang/Vientiane/Phnom Penh/Siem Reap/Bangkok—subject to change)

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations.

Single Supplement—\$1150 for “requested” singles; \$575 for “forced” singles.

If you prefer single accommodations, you must pay the Single Supplement Fee. If you're traveling alone and wish to share accommodations, we'll try our best to find you a roommate. If that's not possible, we will only charge you half of the single supplement.

Tier Pricing

Adventure travel works best with a small group of people. In order to operate these small groups, our trips are priced according to the number of full-price passengers on the trip. (Mountain Travel Sobek staff, trip doctors, and other discounted travelers are excluded from the count for this purpose.) We initially invoice you at the highest tier level price (the smallest group size we can operate). If the price drops due to an increase in group size, you will be refunded the difference.

What's Included

- expert leadership
- accommodations in hotels or inns in cities
- accommodations and all arrangements in the field
- meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- airport transfers
- sightseeing as noted in the itinerary
- ground transportation in a fully equipped mini-bus or equivalent
- domestic airport taxes
- additional guides where necessary
- entrance fees and permits
- basic medical and evacuation insurance

What's Not

International airfare; domestic air transportation within Laos and Cambodia (see separate cost above); Laos visa (must obtain in U.S.—see Zierer Visa Packet sent to trip members); Cambodia visa (approximately \$20 in-country); insurance other than basic medical and evacuation insurance noted above (we strongly recommend you purchase the supplementary trip insurance offered by Mountain Travel Sobek, which includes trip cancellation insurance); optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff; excess baggage charges; international airport taxes; cost of medical immunizations; items of a personal nature (alcoholic beverages, sodas, laundry, etc.).

Air Travel

Airfare is not included in the land cost of our trips. For air reservations, we recommend you contact the airlines directly, either by phone or the Internet. In addition, many travelers elect to use their "frequent flyer" miles when traveling with us. **But please check with our staff before purchasing or obtaining your tickets.** We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Expert Leadership

Expert leadership is the key to an exciting, unforgettable experience. Our trips feature gifted leaders for whom leading trips is a true vocation. Besides showing you wonders you'd never find on your own, they make sure everything runs smoothly and safely without a hitch. They are knowledgeable about all aspects of your trip, and take great pleasure in sharing their insights with you. More than just guides, they positively elevate your experience by being teachers, companions, and the best of friends. You'll be in good hands with them every step of the way.

Gary Wintz has traveled to more than 210 countries in the last 35 years, researching, writing, photographing, and lecturing about distant lands and cultures. He has worked on humanitarian projects in Indochina, Indonesia, and Bangladesh, and has contributed his expertise to development projects in Ethiopia for UNICEF. Since 1987, Gary has worked as a consultant with development organizations and for media projects throughout Southeast Asia. Gary has led multiple trips to Central Asia, Tibet, and Southeast Asia, and wins rave reviews as a tour director. Academically oriented, he is a superb historian and masterful storyteller. Gary was one of the first tour leaders to bring American groups to Indochina in 1987, including Angkor Wat, and has returned dozens of times since. He has lectured on Indochina at many universities, including the Henry Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington. He is a member of the Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Studies Group of the Southeast Asia Council of the Association of Asian Studies.

Tese Wintz Neighbor has traveled extensively around the world, but her heart and soul remain in Asia. After receiving a B.A. in Journalism and Political Science, she worked for organizations involved in US-China relations. In the early 1980s, Tese worked in Beijing as the English editor for *China Pictorial* magazine, taught English at Beijing University, and traveled extensively around the country. She was one of the first individual travelers to journey to Tibet in 1982 and has since led a number of tours there. Tese has lived in Seattle for the last 16 years, where she received an M.A. in China Regional Studies from the Henry Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington. She has worked as an adjunct Asian history instructor at Seattle-area colleges and currently teaches an intensive Asia Seminar class for the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia, based at the University of Washington. Since 1999 she has worked as the Director of Educational Programs (Tacoma and Pierce County) for the World Affairs Council.

Sylvain Curtil is a French national but lives in Thailand. He had his first contact with Asia at the age of 17, when the first refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam arrived in France in 1976. Trying to teach them French, he was soon "adopted" by a Lao family, living with them during his studies at Lyon University, and ended up learning the language and customs. Sylvain has led tours in Asia for several years and was one of the very first foreigners to visit the newly reopened Laos from north to south. He has more than a liking for Buddhism and its art, and lends his firsthand experience of Asian art, history, and Buddhism to all the groups he has the pleasure of leading. Sylvain speaks French, English, Thai, Lao, Spanish, and Brazilian Portuguese.

Leader assignments will be confirmed in the Final Bulletin sent to you three weeks prior to departure.

Activity Level

Mountain Travel Sobek trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active and intellectually involved, and have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. This trip is not particularly difficult in nature (except for its fair share of early morning flights!), but involves occasional walking over rough terrain and days of

hot weather. Therefore, we recommend you try to get in good shape. If you want to undertake a pre-trip fitness program, we suggest some moderate aerobic activities (hiking, jogging, bicycling) for at least 30 minutes a session at least three times a week several months before you go. Check with your doctor before undertaking any new fitness program.

Seasonal Considerations

We operate this trip during the cooler, drier season. Average daytime temperatures are warm to hot (70°-90°); nighttime temperatures are comfortable, in the 60s and 70s. December and January can be cooler in the hill country, with daytime temperatures in the 60s and 70s and nighttime temperatures in the 40s and 50s.

THE NEXT STEP

Ready to go? Signing up is easy!

Just call us at 1-888-MTSOBK (687-6235) and reserve your spot! You can also book a reservation online at our website (www.mtsobek.com). If you prefer to use a travel agent, he or she can book your trip at no extra cost and provide other helpful assistance.

Then Leave the Rest to Us

Before you go, we provide you with extensive pre-departure information, including clothing recommendations, suggested reading lists, up-to-date health advice prepared by our consulting physician (an expert in wilderness medicine), and other details from procuring visas to advice on local customs.

Why Mountain Travel Sobek is Your First Choice for Adventure

Mountain Travel Sobek is the pioneer in active adventure travel. No other adventure travel company can lay claim to that title. We were the first to take Americans trekking in Nepal, raft the wild rivers of Africa, and open up many previously inaccessible corners of the world to curious travelers. We set the standard for adventure travel and have a strong reputation for excellence that we do everything we can to maintain. Since we are the leading adventure company, we have a lot to live up to, so we make sure we provide safe, quality trips and the best customer service to our passengers.

With Mountain Travel Sobek, you'll see Southeast Asia as only an insider can, with friendly, hospitable guides who know the region intimately. They'll accompany you throughout the day, lending support and insights about where you are and what you see. Their close familiarity with the local geography, history, culture and traditions (plus their entertaining stories and great jokes) are the key to a superb, informative experience—one you just can't get on your own.

References

Don't take our word for how great our trips are. We'll be happy to provide you with references of satisfied past travelers.

Questions?

Feel free to call us at 1-888-MTSOBK (687-6235) if you still have any questions or concerns. We're here to help you.

Note on Itinerary

Although we will do our very best to adhere to the itinerary schedule as listed, it is subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control. Please read the Limitations of Liability and Booking Conditions in the four-page Participant Information Form.

Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a Mountain Travel Sobek trip is subject to the conditions stated in the four-page Participant Information Form, which includes the Agreement and Release from Liability and the Booking Conditions. We urge you to read this information carefully, and to call us if you have any questions.

Note on Services

We often use local suppliers who provide services that may include transportation, equipment, logistic support, and other services (hotels, restaurants, etc.). We do not own or operate these independent suppliers. We work with service providers who share our commitment to safety and quality, and work closely with them to develop itineraries unique to Mountain Travel Sobek.

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