

TRAVEL WITH FRIENDS IN 2012



Mekong River Cruise: Saigon to Siem Reap

13 – 27 November 2012 (15 days / 14 nights)

Tour Leader: Christopher Hartney


Renaissance
Tours





Tour leader Christopher Hartney

BA, PhD

Dr Christopher Hartney is a lecturer in the Department of Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney where he has spent the last twelve years researching Vietnamese New Religious Movements. Chris has visited southern Vietnam and Cambodia on multiple occasions and in his research works closely with Vietnamese communities in Sydney. Additionally, he teaches courses in Art and Religion, the Politics of Terror in the Twentieth Century and East Asian Philosophy.

Christopher has written numerous papers on religion, the arts, aesthetics and popular culture in both the east and west. He is also a regular lecturer at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and has previously led very popular tours to Greece, Morocco and Southern Spain.

Mekong River Cruise: Saigon to Siem Reap

The Mekong is the river where East and West really did meet. The French colony of Indochina forced European culture on a land that had teetered for centuries between Cham, Thai and Vietnamese supremacy. In this battle the majestic complex at Angkor was fashioned, Saigon was founded and the flourishing of powerful cultures was nurtured by a hunger for civilisation and a stunning beauty that was then almost destroyed by some of the greatest tragedies of the twentieth century.

To discover this extraordinary river and its territory, you will spend seven nights in the lap of luxury on board 'The Jayavarman', Indochina's first boutique style river cruise liner. From the comfort of your 'floating hotel', explore the historic treasures, everyday life and rich culture of the mighty Mekong.

In this 'cruise-tour', Vietnamese expert, Chris Hartney will lead you into the depths of Indochina's fascinating history. Through on-board lectures, seminars, film showings and art experiences he will introduce you to local experts, artists and archaeologists and provide a considered and profound experience of Asian culture as you glide along one of the world's most amazing rivers.



Angkor Wat

ITINERARY

Tue 13 Nov Sydney – Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

Depart Sydney on board Singapore Airlines via Singapore arriving in Ho Chi Minh City in the evening. Transfer to your hotel located in the centre of Saigon close to the Notre Dame Cathedral and the Old Saigon Post Office. Famous landmarks such as the Reunification Palace, City Hall and the beautiful Opera House are also close-by.

After arrival and check-in, join Chris Hartney and fellow travellers for a welcome drink.

Wed 14 Nov Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

Saigon is the country's commercial centre and, with over eight million inhabitants and four million motorbikes, a city that never sleeps. On a walking tour starting at Dong Khoi street (Rue Catinat) discover some of the beautiful French colonial buildings built in the late 19th and early 20th century such as the splendidly restored exteriors of the **Opera House**, the former **Hotel de Ville**, the **Notre Dame Cathedral**, a red brick edifice with twin spires based on the original construction from Paris, and the **Central Post Office**, designed by the French architect, Gustav Eiffel. A visit to the former **Presidential Palace**, the headquarters of the Saigon Government during the American war, reveals the history of Saigon during its turbulent recent past.

After lunch at a local restaurant drive to **District 5** to visit **Thien Hau Temple**, built by the Cantonese congregation in the early 19th century to honour the Goddess of the Sea. The temple's ornate interior courtyard is always full of life as worshippers from the local Chinese community come to offer their prayers. Continue with a visit to **FITO**, the first museum of traditional medicine in Vietnam, offering an insight into how traditional medicine was used in the past. (BL)

Thu 15 Nov Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

Early morning visit to the **Jade Emperor Pagoda**, one of the most colourful pagodas in Saigon. It was built in 1909 by the Cantonese (Quang Dong) Congregation and is dedicated to the Emperor of Jade, the supreme Taoist god.

Continue to **Cao Dai Great Temple** in Tay Ninh arriving in time for midday worship. Cao Dai followers worship Jesus Christ, Confucius, Taoism and Buddha. Witness the solemn ceremony of the unique religion - Caodaism at Caodai Holy See at its prayer service with followers dressed in red, blue, yellow and white robes.

Return to Saigon via the **Cu Chi Tunnels**. The Cu Chi district is well-known as the base where the Vietnamese mounted their operations of the Tet Offensive in 1968. The tunnels are between 0.4 to 1m wide, just enough for a person to walk along by bending or dragging. However, parts of the tunnels have been modified to accommodate visitors. (BL)

Fri 16 Nov Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

Day at leisure to explore Saigon on your own. Why not visit the bustling **Cho Lon markets**?

This evening, walk through an alley dotted with colonial era mansions until you reach a gate, behind of which an enchanting home awaits. The US Ambassador to South

Vietnam in the 1960s, Henry Cabot Lodge, lived in this stylish residence and today it has been restored to its former glory. Enjoy a delicious Vietnamese meal served in the magnificent dining room accompanied by live music to create a memorable atmosphere. (BD)

Sat 17 Nov Ho Chi Minh City – My Tho

Morning at leisure. Afternoon transfer to My Tho, the gateway to the Mekong River located 2hrs south of Saigon.

Here board 'The Jayavarman' a 20th century boutique style boat combining avant-garde French colonial design with enchanting Indochine architecture to perfection. It is Indochina's first of its kind boutique style river cruise liner.

After a welcome reception and briefing the remainder of the afternoon is at leisure to enjoy the many facilities on board. Welcome dinner on board. (BD)

Sun 18 Nov Cai Be – Sa Dec – Chau Doc

Start the day with an invigorating Tai-chi lesson on the sundeck if you wish.

Stop at Cai Be to visit the boisterous and colourful floating market on board a traditional sampan (flat bottomed Vietnamese wooden boat). Discover breathtaking landscapes along the river and quaff the rustic life on the Mekong Delta.

The cruise will halt intermittently to allow us to observe how rice paste, rice cookies and coconut candies are made, along with the Longan fruit drying process. After touring the canals, head to an ancient house surrounded by fruit orchards before returning to the ship for lunch.

In the afternoon cruise to Sa Dec. Upon arrival, embark again a traditional sampan to tour Binh Thanh Island and its man-made canals. Here, every villager is involved in the process of growing and processing water hyacinths into natural fibre floor mats and rattan baskets.

Return to the ship for a tranquil evening cruise towards Chau Doc. The ship will moor midstream overnight. (BLD)

Mon 19 Nov Chau Doc – Phnom Phen

Start the day with a shore excursion to Chau Doc, a pleasant town near the Cambodian border with sizeable Chinese, Kinh and Khmer communities. Visit the colourful local market near an ancient temple. Next is a boat trip to the



Jade Emperor Pagoda

floating villages and rustic catfish farms. Watch schools of basa fish being fed by hand followed by a shore excursion to the local **Cham Muslim community village**. Return to the ship for lunch.

By mid-afternoon, cross the boarder into Cambodia en route to Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia. (BLD)

Tue 20 Nov **Phnom Phen**

Phnom Penh was once the Paris of the East. Despite its rapid development, it has retained a lot of its rustic charm and elegance. After breakfast, join Chris Hartney for a comprehensive lecture on Cambodia's history.

This will be followed by a city tour of this dynamic, historical capital city of Cambodia which has managed to preserve huge slices of its French colonial allure. Visit the dazzling white and gold edifice of the **Royal Palace** and the **Silver Pagoda**, and witness the beautiful Khmer craft at the **National Museum**.

After lunch at a local restaurant, visit the **Genocide Museum** and the **Killing Field** in town. Be prepared to be heart wrenched by this stark reminder of the genocide that transpired during Cambodia's Khmer Rouge regime.

On return to the ship, cocktails will be served followed by a **traditional Apsara dance performance** and BBQ on the sundeck. (BLD)

Wed 21 Nov **Phnom Phen – Kampong Cham**

Depart Phnom Phen before the break of dawn. En route stop at the little known **Chong Koh silk weaving village**. Return to the ship and cruise past the Mekong's tranquil villages, exhilarating river life and sun-hardened fishermen on their make shift boats.

Later tour the rural **Angkor Ban** village where time stood still. Be transported back a hundred years into an era unsullified by modernity. The houses here are truly rustic, made by hand and without any concrete. Be welcomed by the warmth of the villagers. In the evening continue the cruise towards Kampong Cham. (BLD)

Thu 22 Nov **Kampong Cham – Wat Hanchey**

Wake up in the small hours of the morning to embark on a journey to the pre-Angkorian temple of **Wat Hanchey**. Travellers either take a motor-taxi or climb the 291 steps to the top. Located at the top of a hill overlooking the river,

it offers one of the most breath-taking views in Cambodia. Built in the 8th century, this ancient structure, together with a bigger and newer addition, underscores the superb architecture of the **Chenla Empire** which predates the mighty Angkor temple complex.

Return to the ship to witness a blessing ceremony performed by orange-clad local monks.

Continue the cruise towards Kampong Cham to visit **Wat Nokor**, a wat built within the ruins of an ancient temple which holds a timeless story. On the way back to the ship, visit an orphanage. (BLD)

Fri 23 Nov **Kampong Cham – Kampong Chhnang**

Before the sun peeks over the horizon, the cruiser sets sail towards Kampong Chhnang on the Tonle Sap River – an amazingly narrow river – which glides through leafy swaths of the Southeast Asian jungle. Be greeted by cacophonous children who waive enthusiastically early in the morning when they bring their livestock for a bath in the river. Approach Kampong Chhnang, Cambodia's 'waterworld' where everything is on stilts balanced on water rich soil.

Excursion to the Khmer-styled pottery at the **Aundaung Russey** village. Then, it is back to the river for an adventurous motorboat excursion to the wetlands, floating houses and fish farms in the region.

Return to the ship for lunch and a relaxing afternoon whilst cruising the narrow and meandering Tonle Sap River. (BLD)

Sat 24 Nov **Tonle Sap – Siem Reap**

Cross the Tonle Sap Lake at dawn. This great lake dominates Cambodia and is the largest freshwater lake in Asia with abundant birdlife. It is so wide that one can not see its shores from the middle of the lake. Enjoy the stillness of the water and the quiet tranquility on the way to Siem Reap.

At approx. 9.00 am the cruise comes to an end on arrival in Siem Reap, the city of the fabled Angkor temple complex. Disembark at the Siem Reap port and transfer to the Hotel de la Paix.

In the afternoon start your exploration of **Angkor Wat**, one of the modern wonders of the world. Be amazed by the sheer size of the temple and learn how the Khmer Empire prospered between the 9th and 13th centuries, around the time when Angkor Wat was built. Stroll through



Cao Dai Great Temple



Cao Dai Great Temple



Hong Bang Street Temple



Market Vendor, Saigon

the intricately carved hallways that show hundreds of fine carvings and discover small shrines still in use today by the local people. (BD)

Sun 25 Nov

Siem Reap

Visit to the picturesque **Ta Prohm Temple** forming part of Angkor Wat. This beautiful temple is overgrown with fig trees, giving a haunting yet exotic atmosphere. The magnificent roots of the trees have merged over the centuries with the temple's huge stone blocks, emphasising a 'forgotten city' feeling.

Continue to **Angkor Thom**, the ancient royal city of Khmer Empire with its centre piece, the **Bayon Temple**. As you approach, you will notice the enigmatic faces of former King Jayavarman VII looking into every direction. Visit the **Terrace of the Elephants**, which served as a platform from where the King could welcome back his victorious army. See also the **Terrace of the Leper King**, which holds detailed carvings winding along a narrow passage way that leads to the **Baphuon complex**. If time permits, continue to visit other temples in the area.

In the afternoon, visit **Artisans d'Angkor** focusing on training unschooled rural youth in traditional handicraft skills. Discover traditional Cambodian handicraft skills and observe the artisans at work. Meet one of the directors from Artisans d'Angkor who will explain the overall operations and their goals for the future. Learn more about the artisans' backgrounds and how this training has helped them to get a head start in life. (B)

Mon 26 Nov

Siem Reap

Return visit to Angkor Wat to explore some of the other temples.

Tonight join Christopher Hartney and fellow travellers for a farewell dinner. (BD)

Tue 27 Nov

Depart Siem Reap

Transfer to the airport for the Singapore Airlines flight to Sydney via Singapore. (B)

Wed 28 Nov

Arrive Sydney

Morning arrival in Sydney.



Royal Palace, Phnom Penh



Angkor Wat

The Jayavarman

- a floating sanctuary of style and space

Inspired by the golden age cruise liners, 'The Jayavarman' is a 20th century boutique style ship combining avant-garde French colonial design with enchanting Indochine architecture.



'The Jayavarman' is Indochina's first of its kind boutique style river cruise liner for a maximum of 54 passengers. Facilities include 'Club 1930' bar and lounge, 'Henry Mouhot' lobby lounge & observatory, library and boutique shop, 'The Jaya' restaurant, 'Aspara' Spa and a sun deck.



The guest accommodation consists of 27 expansive staterooms with floor to ceiling panoramic sliding glass doors opening onto a private French balcony. Amenities include bathroom with double vanity and glass shower cabin, mini bar, safe deposit box, ensuite temperature controls, bath robe, slippers and hair dryer.



Relief at Bayon



Tonle Sap



Terrace of Elephants, Siem Reap

TOUR PRICES ...

Per person, twin-share incl. return economy class airfares	AUD 8,950
Single supplement*	AUD 2,250
Upgrade to deluxe cabin on cruise – share twin	AUD 355
Upgrade to deluxe cabin on cruise – single supplement	AUD 595
Reduction without airfare	AUD 1,350
Business class surcharge	On Request
Deposit (per person)	AUD 1,000
Final Payment Due	14 Sept 2012

*Single travellers may request to share.
Please advise at time of booking.

TOUR CODE AGS Mekong River

TOUR PRICES INCLUDE

- Accommodation in centrally located hotels with private facilities and daily breakfast (B)
- 8 day cruise on board 'Yajavarman' in superior cabins with private facilities and full board
- Transfers on arrival and departure if travelling on group flights (Singapore Airlines)
- Return economy class airfares on Singapore Airlines (23KG luggage allowance)
- Taxes and fuel surcharge as at 01 May 2011
- Meals as per itinerary (L=Lunch, D=Dinner) including special Welcome and Farewell dinners.
- Comprehensive sightseeing and visits to museums and attractions with Christopher Hartney and local guides including entrance fees as per itinerary
- Lecture series on board and talks with Christopher Hartney throughout
- Gratuities for local guides and drivers and cruise gratuities
- Hotel portorage (1 piece per person)
- Visas for Vietnam and Cambodia

DO NOT INCLUDE

- Transfers on arrival and departure if not travelling on group flights
- Items of a personal nature, including telephone, laundry, taxis etc.
- Drinks with meals except Welcome and Farewell dinners
- Airport portorage
- Travel insurance

YOUR HOTELS ...



Caravelle Hotel
Saigon
★★★★★



Hotel de la Paix
Siem Reap
★★★★★

NB. Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted

TERMS & CONDITIONS

How to Book

Complete, sign and return the Booking Form available from Renaissance Tours with your deposit of \$1,000 per person. Upon receipt of your Booking Form and deposit, you will receive confirmation of your place from Renaissance Tours.

Deposit / Final Payments

Deposit AUD 1,000

Your deposit is used to pay airline, cruise and hotel deposits and is non-refundable in the event of your cancellation. Your final payment is due 60 days before departure. Failure to make your final payment by the due date may result in cancellation of your booking and loss of deposit. We reserve the right to charge a late payment fee in the event of late booking and/or payment to cover additional communication and other expenses.

Payment by cash, cheque, American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa is accepted. A 3% service charge applies for payment by American Express and Diners Club.

Cancellation & Refunds

You may cancel the booking at any time. Written notification is essential even if verbal notification of an intention to cancel has been given. Cancellation charges will be applied as shown below, calculated from the day written notification is received by Renaissance Tours. In addition to the charges shown below, airlines may impose up to 100% cancellation charges.

60 days or more	forfeit of deposit (includes any flight deposit paid)
59 - 45 days	25% of tour cost
44 - 31 days	50% of tour cost
30 - 15 days	75% of tour cost
Less than 15 days	100% of tour cost

The above cancellation charges include applicable GST.

In addition to the above cancellation charges, the full insurance premium together with any existing administration fees is also payable in the event of a cancellation by the Client. If the reason for cancellation is covered by the insurance policy, you may be able to reclaim these charges.

Forced Cancellations

We reserve the right to cancel a tour for any reason (such as failure to reach minimum tour participant numbers). Except for force majeure or the Client's failure to pay the final balance, we will not cancel a tour less than 60 days before departure. Unless the Client fails to pay the final balance, we will return all monies paid, excluding payment for travel insurance and administration fees.

No compensation will be paid in the event of cancellation by Renaissance Tours. A full refund of monies paid for tour costs will be the full extent of our liability. Airlines may impose up to 100% cancellation charges.

Passports, Visas and Vaccinations

It is your responsibility to be in possession of a passport valid for 6 months after the date of your return to Australia. You are also responsible for obtaining all necessary visas, inoculations and preventative medicines as may be required for the duration of the tour. Information about these matters or related items is given in good faith but without responsibility on the part of Renaissance Tours.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of travel that you are covered by comprehensive travel insurance. You can make your own arrangements or your travel insurance can be arranged by Renaissance Tours. In either case all participants must provide the following information no later than 60 days prior to commencement of travel:

- a copy of your travel insurance policy (or details of master policy)
- the emergency telephone number of your insurance company
- next of kin emergency contact

Fitness and Participation

While our tours do not require a special level of fitness, for the overall benefit of the group, all tour members must possess a moderate level of mobility, including the ability to:

- negotiate airports and railway stations without wheelchair assistance
- use combined shower/bath facilities (it is impossible to guarantee walk-in shower facilities)
- undertake walking tour of 2-3 hours duration, including using stairs, walking over cobblestones and other uneven surfaces
- stand for long periods in museums and other sites
- embark / disembark coaches, trains and other methods of transportation without assistance
- handle your own luggage

If you (or we) have any doubts about your ability to participate in your chosen tour, you may be required to have a doctor's appraisal. This would require a doctor to read the itinerary of your chosen tour and provide you with a written confirmation of your ability to participate.

Terms & Conditions

You can find a copy of the full terms & conditions attached to the Renaissance Tours booking form. They can also be found on our website at: www.renaissancetours.com.au or we would be happy to post you a copy on request.



Mekong Delta



Tonle Sap Credit Todd Adams



Front and Back: Angkor Wat

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