

Why Cruise the Mekong?

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Travelers sometimes ask us why we have restricted this Adventure to the Mekong River, as opposed to visiting the rest of Vietnam. We realize that Vietnam has many other sites worthy of a Walking Adventure, including Hanoi, Hue, Halong Bay, and other areas of historic, cultural, or scenic significance. We'd like to return to Vietnam and develop a future Adventure exploring these sites in central and northern Vietnam, but because of the advantages of cruising the Mekong, we decided to make this river our first area of exploration in Southeast Asia.

The Mekong is the 12th longest river system on the planet. Starting in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), we visit this largest and most vibrant of Vietnam's cities, and we explore Vietnam War sites like the Cu Chi Tunnels, the Reunification Palace where the war ended, and the War Remnants Museum. In Phnom Penh, we walk the streets of the city, see the Royal Palace and National Museum, and discover how the city is still recovering from decades of civil war and the senseless genocidal disaster that the Khmer Rouge communists brought upon the country. At the end of our journey, we are awed by the majesty of the temples of Angkor. Only the Nile Valley can compete with the number and architectural quality of the palaces and temples built at the height of the Khmer Empire 1000 years ago.



Walkers at Ta Prohm ruins

The common thread throughout the Adventure, however, is the River. Life along the river ebbs and flows with the waters of the river herself. She brings the seasons – high and low water; she yields an amazing harvest of fish; she provides water for the endless harvests of rice; and she offers a conduit for transportation and communication linking hundreds of miles. Traditional lifestyles are still the norm along the river, and our Mekong River cruise connects us to the heartbeat of over 60 million people who eat and sleep and marry and bear children and die along her banks.

All this makes a cruise along the Mekong an unforgettable experience!

Dan Friesen, WAI President