Exploring Indochina
Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia
November 7 - 26, 2015
20 Days • 40 Meals
Escorted by Andrew Robb
The wonders of Indochina have been hidden from the western world by decades of turmoil. With the return of peace and prosperity, this region is once again extending a warm welcome to visitors from around the world. We'll delight in the people, scenery, and historic jewels of this region, while enjoying the comforts of modern hotels, genuine service and fine food.

On this popular journey we have included an extended visit in Laos and an overnight cruise in Halong Bay, two extremely important UNESCO World Heritage Sites in South East Asia. In all, this provides a more in-depth experience while ensuring a leisurely pace and a balance of free time. Most hotel stays will be for two or more nights, allowing more time to settle in and less time living from a suitcase. In Saigon and Hanoi, we will eat at some of the best restaurants in Asia. While this tour is full of wonderful experiences, one highlight will be the time spent in Cambodia, admiring the remains Angkor, the site of the world’s most magnificent temples.

INCLUSIVE FEATURES
- Return airfare to Indochina on Cathay Pacific Airways from Canadian cities listed plus domestic flights within Indochina
- Accommodations in first class / deluxe hotels, as indicated or similar
- Multi-night stays in most hotels
- 40 meals included as noted in the itinerary (B - 18 breakfasts, L - 8 lunches, D - 14 dinners)
- Services of your tour leader and/or local guides and escorts
- Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia Visa fees for Canadian passport holders
- All gratuities and taxes for included services, including airport departure taxes
- Comprehensive insurance coverage
- Airport transfers in Canada or equivalent value

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS
- Visit the Cu Chi Tunnels and explore modern Saigon
- Visit My Son, the Holy Land of the Cham
- Relax by the beach in Hoi An
- Rickshaw ride to Hue’s best-known religious site, Thien Mu Pagoda
- Marvel at the sites of Hanoi
- Traditional junk cruise in Ha Long Bay
- Feed the monks in Luang Prabang
- Cruise on the upper Mekong River to Pak Ou
- Magnificent temples and relics of Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom, and Banteay Srei
- The Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda in Phnom Penh

TOUR ESCORT
After a 35 year management career with Lafarge Canada, Andrew Robb and his wife Mary Catherine are now enjoying spending their time at the cottage and travelling to fascinating places around the world including South Africa, Italy, the Russian Waterways, Tunisia, Israel, the South Pacific and several other destinations. They have previously visited South East Asia on a cruise. They are very much looking forward to sharing this special adventure with you.
November 6/7, Friday/Saturday  Depart Canada
Tour members gather in Toronto or Vancouver late Friday evening for the Cathay Pacific flights to Hong Kong.

November 8, Sunday  Hong Kong / Ho Chi Minh
Arriving in Hong Kong we make a direct connection to Ho Chi Minh, better known as Saigon, Vietnam’s largest city. On arrival, we will be met and taken to our hotel with the balance of the day at leisure.

Intercontinental Asiana Saigon Hotel (3 nights)  D

November 9, Monday  Ho Chi Minh
Our journey this morning takes us out of the city centre to the Cu Chi region to visit the vast underground network of tunnels built first as a defence against the French, and later expanded during the American war. It was from these tunnels that the North Vietnamese waged their guerrilla warfare - marvel at their ingenuity and resilience! This afternoon explore Saigon, including the former Presidential Palace, the Cathedral of Notre Dame, the Old Saigon Post Office, the War Museum and a lacquer ware factory.  BL

November 10, Tuesday  My Tho, Mekong Delta
Enjoy a cruise on the great Mekong River to experience the Mekong Delta. From My Tho, gateway to the Mekong Delta and Vietnam’s ‘rice bowl’, we cruise to a delta island where we can visit a local family’s home, enjoy their hospitality, and share some tea or rice wine.  BD

November 11, Wednesday  Ho Chi Minh / Hoi An
This morning visit Thien Hau Pagoda and Binh Tay Market located in the heart of the city’s bustling Chinatown. In the afternoon, a short flight brings us to Hoi An, a major Asia trading port in the 17th and 18th centuries. Dinner this evening will be in the old town at Brother Café.  BD

Hoi An Beach Resort (2 nights)  BD

November 12, Thursday  My Son / Hoi An
During our morning walking tour of this World Heritage site we will see former French homes as well as the 400 year-old Japanese Covered Bridge. Also view traditional Chinese merchant homes and the colourful local market. Lunch will be at a local restaurant before we drive through 60 km of rolling countryside, exploring the former religious centre of My Son (Beautiful Mountain), the Holy land of the Cham. There were some 70 classic Cham monuments, dating from the 7th - 13th Centuries, backed by the Cat’s Tooth Mountain. Regretfully many were destroyed during the American war.  BL

November 13, Friday  Danang / Hue
Heading north, we drive over the dramatic Marble Mountains, with their caves and Buddhist shrines, to the central port city of Danang, where we visit the Cham Museum, noted for its exceptional collection of carved rock sculptures, and China Beach, made famous during the Vietnam War. After lunch we continue north to Hue, the former imperial capital of Vietnam.  BL

Morin Hue Hotel (2 nights)  BLD

November 14, Saturday  Hue
Start the day by cyclo (a ride in a rickshaw) to Hue’s best-known religious site, the Thien Mu Pagoda. Continue to the Imperial Citadel, the Forbidden Purple City which was the seat of power during the Nguyen Dynasty (1802 to 1945), and the Royal Fine Arts Museum. Enjoy a free afternoon to visit the Dong Ba Market, famous for the best conical hats in Vietnam. This evening we enjoy dinner at the Ancient Hue Restaurant, located within the walls of the Phu Mong Garden House (dates from 1800) and is known for its uniquely presented meals.  BD

November 15, Sunday  Hue / Hanoi
Visit the mausoleum of former emperor Tu Duc set in a tranquil forested park of gardens and lakes before we fly north to Hanoi, Vietnam’s capital, known for its tree-lined boulevards, busy local market, peaceful lakes, French colonial architecture, and Oriental temples.

M Gallery de l’Opera Hanoi Hotel (2 nights)  BD

November 16, Monday  Hanoi
On our exploration of Hanoi, we visit the city centre including the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, the Temple of Literature which dates back 900 years, the former Palace of the Governor, the wooden stilt house where Ho Chi Minh lived the last years of his life, the One Pillar Pagoda and the museum dedicated to the life of Ho Chi Minh. Enjoy a walk in the Old Quarter, a maze of traditional markets, to experience local lifestyles. Late this afternoon we will have a special treat, the unique Vietnamese water puppet show followed by dinner at the Wild Lotus Restaurant.  BLD

November 17, Tuesday  Halong Bay
Travel through the rich farmlands of the Red River Delta to the coast where we embark on a traditional wooden junk, enjoying a fresh seafood buffet lunch on the emerald green waters of Halong Bay, among 3,000 spectacular limestone islands. Halong, a World Heritage site, has been featured in numerous movies. During the afternoon and evening we continue our cruise, with opportunities to swim, snorkel and kayak. Paradise Cruises (1 night)  BLD

November 18, Wednesday  Halong Bay / Hanoi
Our cruise continues this morning, including an opportunity to join a Tai Chi class. Later this morning we disembark and return to Hanoi, with the balance of the day at leisure.

M Gallery de l’Opera Hanoi Hotel (1 night)  BD

November 19, Thursday  Hanoi / Luang Prabang
We shall fly to Luang Prabang, the capital of the Lane Xang (million elephants) Kingdom (16th Century) and visit Wat Xieng Thong, one of the most beautiful temples, characterized by several roofs that sweep low to the ground and the impressive ‘tree of life’ mosaic. At Phou Si Hill we can climb (350 steps) to enjoy panoramic views in all directions and visit Vat Phou Si set next to remnants of the regional wars. Finally we will take a stroll through the H’mong Market - a gathering place for locals and ethnic minorities.

The Grand Luang Prabang Hotel (3 nights)  BD
November 20, Friday  
Luang Prabang
Our day starts very early with an opportunity to join in a memorable event in Luang Prabang - the Tak Bat. At dawn hundreds of saffron robed monks move silently through the streets to collect alms (offerings of food). Enjoy a relaxing river cruise on the mighty Mekong to visit the sacred Pak Ou Buddha Cave, (containing over 3,000 images of the Buddha). Stop for lunch at a local restaurant in Ban Xanghai (where local people produce Lao rice wine). Later visit Ban Xang Khong, a weaving village of the Lu minority people from southern China. Dinner will be a special treat with Laotian dishes. This evening, weather permitting, stroll in the city's fabulous night market noted for its local crafts made by ethnic minorities. 
BLD

November 21, Saturday  
Luang Prabang
Visit Luang Prabang’s National Museum, formerly the Royal Palace, and Vat Mai, built in 1796 (the five-tiered wooden roof epitomizes the graceful architectural style). Drive through very scenic Laotian countryside, with rice paddies and many ethnic minority villages, to Kuang Si Waterfalls. If possible, enjoy a refreshing dip in the falls which cascade down several hundred feet into a series of cool, turquoise pools. Visit a riverside garden, to learn a little about traditional Lao lifestyles and to enjoy Lao refreshments and cocktails; relax and watch the sunset. BL

November 22, Sunday  
Luang Prabang / Siem Reap
This morning we fly to Siem Reap, Cambodia, our base for exploring the temples of Angkor, once a huge city and the capital of the Khmer Empire for over six hundred years. Balance of the day at leisure to enjoy our luxury resort.
Sofitel Angkor Phokeethra (3 nights) BD

November 23, Monday  
Siem Reap / Angkor
Today we shall enjoy a visit to Angkor Thom, the last temple of the Khmers with its Elephant Terrace, followed by an exploration of Angkor Wat a magnificent 12th century temple, considered by many to be one of the wonders of the ancient world. Return to the hotel after sunset. 
BL

November 24, Tuesday  
Siem Reap / Angkor
This morning we will venture further into the countryside to explore the temple of Banteay Srei, known for its exquisite stone carvings and described by many as the true gem of Angkor. On the way back, visit the overgrown remains of Ta Prohm Temple, embraced by the roots of enormous fig trees. Back in Siem Reap, enjoy some free time to relax by the pool or to visit the local market. 
BD

November 25, Wednesday  
Phnom Penh
Fly to Phnom Penh, capital and the largest city of Cambodia. This morning we will learn more about recent history at Cheung Ek (the killing fields) and Toul Sleng (S21), a former detention centre. Visit the Royal Palace (built in 1866 by King Norodom) and the Silver Pagoda (its floor is made up of 5,000 silver tiles). Treasures include a solid gold Buddha (encrusted with 9,584 diamonds) and a 17th Century emerald and baccarat crystal Buddha plus Khmer art and sculptures, 19th Century dance costumes, royal barge and palanquins.
Raffles Hotel Le Royal (1 night) BD

November 26, Thursday  
Phnom Penh / Canada
Our journey draws to a close as we catch our return flights via Hong Kong to our home cities across Canada. 
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