



“Trails of Indochina” trip October 2011

When we set off for our “Trails of Indochina” trip on October 2011 everyone was full of anticipation about the wonderful trip they were about to embark on. We all met up in Singapore and introduced ourselves which was the start of a lot of new friendships.

Upon arrival in Cambodia at Siem Reap it was raining and many of the streets of the city had a foot of water in them which made for interesting travel. On our first day we visited several temples including Angkor Watt, one of the modern day wonders of the world. It was constructed between the 9th and 13th centuries and is the largest Hindu structure in the world. Unfortunately it rained for most of the day and when I mean rain it did, it bucketed down. Full marks to our guide he was fantastic under very wet and trying conditions.

From Siem Reap we flew to Luang Prabang where we witnessed at dawn, and participated in, the offering of alms to hundreds of saffron-robed monks, an awe inspiring sight. This early morning ritual dates back generations in Laos. Everyone enjoyed the markets which take over the main street each night with lots of stalls. It is quite a sight to see how much produce they can fit on their motorbikes to bring to market. It was not uncommon to see a family of five on the one motor bike.

Next Day we journeyed to the Elephant Village and up the river, for an Elephant trek through the bush, what a wonderful experience but it did shake up the bones a bit. After the elephant ride we enjoyed a swim in the Tad Sea falls, which was just what the doctor ordered to cool off. The river ride was something else, long thin homemade wooden motorized boats, no life jackets, no OH&S here!

Hanoi was our next stop where we toured the city and visited the Palace and the very modest house where Ho Chi Minh lived during his reign in Vietnam and also the historic Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum where “Uncle Ho’s” preserved body resides. It is a huge lavishly built monument using marble and stone.

With millions of motorbikes in the city our guide taught us how to cross a busy Hanoi street. You just step out, walk at the same pace, don’t look at the oncoming motorbikes, head for the curb, and the traffic flows around you, unbelievable, terrifying at first.

From Hanoi we travelled to Halong Bay to spend a night on a junk. We were the only group on the junk that night so it was time for a sing song and kick up our heels, everyone joined in; it was a lot of fun.

It always amazes me how when people relax after a couple of wines they become good singers? Especially my friend Keith (nicknamed the “Pres” by everyone). “You’re nobody till somebody loves you”.

Next day we flew to Danang to visit the ancient city of Hoi An, where they are famous for making dresses, suits, shoes, you name it, whatever you want they will make it and orders are completed in 24 hours. One of our friends (Tom the farmer from Glenrowan) bought 10 pairs of sunglasses, so he could always find a pair, one for the tractor, one for the ute, one for the motor bike and so on.

Saigon or “Ho Chi Minh” City was our last stop, 7 million people and 4 million motorbikes wow what a place, just wonderful. We had very confronting day when we visited the War Museum and the Cu Chi Tunnels, what an experience. Many of us could have stayed longer at the War Museum it was very interesting. Our hotel was not far from the markets so it was time for some last minute shopping to make sure our bags were full with goodies to take home, I bought 8 T shirts and a lot of DVD’s.

As I said at the start, everyone was filled with anticipation but as my mate “Ian” from Mulwala would say to me every morning “okay, how are you going to better yesterday”, that’s the way it was, every day was a highlight. The food was wonderful and the running joke with the fella’s was before we would enter a restaurant, the beer had to be cold, Paul was in charge of beer temperature and taste, did a good job too!

As with the New Zealand trip everyone made a lot of new friends and now keep in touch. Several of those people will be joining Jenny and I on our “once in a lifetime trip” to England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland in July / August 2013. You should join in too – the details are on my website.

Feedback from Friends

"What a wonderful time we had exploring a land with such fascinating and breathtaking sites, rich in culture and in the company of such a fun group lead by our always entertaining and ever so happy tour leader, Rodney Vincent, lots of laughs, memories and new friends."

Sharon, Lauren & Keith Qld

"What an amazing holiday we had in Cambodia, Laos & Vietnam. A well organized and flexible tour package of places to see and things to do. Great value for money. The success of our trip was due to the ability and dedication of our tour leader Rodney and our National Guides whom we cannot praise highly enough. Wonderful memories and friendships are ours to keep. Thank you for that opportunity".

Pip Else Vic