



Pandaw Cruises

EXPEDITION No 44

THE FULL MEKONG, FOUR COUNTRY 21 NIGHT COMBO CRUISE

21 NIGHTS

For the first time, join Pandaw on an in-depth exploration of the Mekong River from South to North. Combining our two 10 night Mekong expeditions through Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in this special four country expedition. Sailing all of the navigable stretches of this mighty river, you will learn about how one river can support a vast and diverse group of peoples and cultures, all from the comfort of our locally crafted Pandaw vessels.

New for 2024, this cruise expedition will be sailing from central Saigon, embarking or disembarking in Vietnam's bustling metropolis.

This combo cruise includes flight and one night accommodation between cruises within the price of your ticket. Flights and hotels are subject to routing and availability at time of booking.

YOUR SHIP - [RV MEKONG PANDAW](#) / [RV CHAMPA PANDAW](#) / [RV SABAIDEE PANDAW](#)

[MORE IMAGES OF THE RV MEKONG PANDAW](#)

[MORE IMAGES OF THE RV CHAMPA PANDAW](#)

[MORE IMAGES OF THE RV SABAIDEE PANDAW](#)

Cruise Price Includes: One overnight hotel in Vientiane (Downstream) or Chiang Rai/Chiang Mai (Upstream), one flight between ships, entrance fees, guide services (English language), gratuities to crew, main meals, local mineral water, jugged coffee, teas & tisanes. Transfers between ports of embarkation and international airport or hotel at the start and end of the voyage.

Cruise Price Excludes: International flights, port dues (if levied), laundry, all visa costs, fuel surcharges (see terms and conditions), all beverages except local mineral water, jugged coffee, teas & tisanes and tips to tour guides, local guides, bus drivers, boat operators and cyclo drivers.

UPSTREAM ITINERARY

DAY 1

FROM SAIGON TO THE DELTA

Embark your Pandaw vessel in central Saigon and relax on the spacious sundeck as we set sail past the towering skyscrapers of Vietnam's bustling metropolis. After lunch onboard you will meet the crew and enjoy local entertainment on the deck as we sail toward the Mekong Delta. We moor overnight on the Vam Co River.

DAY 2

BEN TRE AND THE FERTILE WATERWAYS

Early morning we set sail through the Cho Gao Canal, a vital waterway link for the transportation of goods to and from the city which was constructed in 1876 by the French and offers a fascinating insight to life along the water. We reach Ben Tre and journey by sampans through mangroves and bamboo forests to the fruit orchards abundant in the area. This is a fertile farming region with half of Vietnam's rice production coming from the Mekong Delta. It also hosts a rich artisanal culture which we will witness at a local village specialising in handicrafts. Back aboard we sail deeper into the delta toward Chau Doc.

DAY 3**CHAU DOC AND INTO CAMBODIA**

In the morning, we take minivans for a short drive to Sam Mountain, the location of Phuoc Dien Tu or the Hang Pagoda. After climbing the steps we are greeted with stunning views across the Mekong. For those not keen on the stairs, explore the local market instead. Afterwards, we visit the nearby floating fish farms by Sampan before being treated to a private Lion dance performance at a local Village. Upon return to the ship, we navigate a web of canals before dropping anchor on the Vietnam/Cambodia border to undergo Immigration formalities.

DAY 4**PHNOM PENH**

Morning orientation of Phnom Penh by cyclo visiting the Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda followed by the National Museum with its marvellous collection of Angkorian statuary. In the afternoon we visit the Killing Fields and Genocide Museum to learn more about the brutal Khmer Rouge regime. We dock overnight in Phnom Penh city port with its lively bars, restaurants and nightlife. Feel free to explore the city before returning to your hotel on the water.

DAY 5**PEAM CHI KORNG POTTERY VILLAGE**

Enjoy morning Tai Chi or just a coffee on deck as we take a sunrise cruise to Peam Chi Korng, an untouched gem that is a hub of pottery in Cambodia. After a short tuk tuk ride from the banks of the Mekong, we witness the local potters in action before continuing to explore the village and local fresh market where you can test your language skills.

DAY 6**KOH TRONG ISLAND TREE PLANTING**

Visit Koh Trong Island, a community based tourism site since 2008. We explore the island's fruit orchards by local transportation or bicycle and sample the local delicacies before we head to a community reforestation project and plant trees to support the island. Moor overnight alongside the island.

DAY 7**KRATIE AND THE DOLPHIN GROUNDS**

After breakfast we head to Kampi by coach to spot the Irrawaddy dolphins abundant in the waters below Stung Trang. We board small fishing vessels now used to monitor the dolphin populations and provide dolphin spotting for tourists to raise awareness of their plight. Whilst numbers have increased in recent years, they remain endangered and we learn more about the work of locals to support dolphin numbers and how Pandaw is supporting. This is a real highlight of the expedition. In the afternoon, we set sail downstream along the Mekong back toward Phnom Penh.

DAY 8**LIFE ON THE TONLE SAP RIVER**

We sail early morning up the winding channels of the Tonle Sap River to Kampong Tralach. We travel by ox-cart around the river-side villages, markets and temples to get a sense of life in rural Cambodia. In the evening cocktails are served around a fire pit at a small fishing village where we will be joined by village folk keen to share tales and show us their traditional dancing.

DAY 9**KAMPONG CHHNANG AND THE TONLE SAP LAKE**

Today we explore the backwaters of the vast Tonle Sap floodplains, with abundant fish farms around this important trading town. Returning to ship, we enter the Tonle Sap Lake to moor overnight in open waters savoring the peace and tranquility of this lake that in high water covers 6,200 miles and in low water shrinks to 1,000 square miles.

DAY 10**TONLE SAP FLOATING VILLAGES**

Continue the traverse of the great lake stopping to visit a floating village where houses, schools and restaurants are all accessed only by boat. Learn more about how these communities survive on the water and how their lives are changing with the development of Cambodia. In the afternoon we continue across the lake toward Siem Reap inland port. This is the perfect chance to spot the various bird life along the lake's edges as well as crocodiles and snakes that are abundant in these shallow waters. Not to forget also the giant Mekong catfish, the largest ever caught being 648 pounds in May 2004. There are 148 other species of fish in the lake which provide the main source of protein for the entire Cambodian population.

DAY 11**SIEM REAP DISEMBARKATION**

Disembark Siem Reap Port and transfer to Siem Reap airport for your flight to Thailand. Upon arrival, transfer to your hotel and enjoy a relaxing evening before your next cruise.

DAY 12**CHIANG KHONG**

Transfers from your hotel to the ship including Lunch at Ban Rai Sabaidee Farm plus guided visit to the Golden Triangle and the now infamous opium museum. Embark your ship by 16.00 and enjoy welcome drinks on the sundeck with traditional Thai dancing.

DAY 13**INTO LAOS**

Pass through immigration formalities at the Thai/Laos border and re-join the ship. Set sail downstream on the beautiful Upper Mekong River, Morning presentation on the Lao language. After lunch, if time allows, sightseeing on foot in Pak Sith.

DAY 14**PAK BENG ELEPHANT SANCTUARY**

Morning walk at Ban Luang Tong Lao Lowland village. Laos is known as 'The land of a million elephants' and after Lunch we will visit a rescue sanctuary that is helping to preserve the elephants of Laos and provide sustainable alternative employment for Mahouts who once trained and rode these beautiful creatures. In the evening we moor at a sandbank for a special riverside barbecue and cocktail party. Light paper lanterns with the crew and enjoy a dance in remote Laos.

DAY 15**BAN BOR AND YOI HAI KHMU VILLAGES**

Today we discover the Khmu minority group and learn about their remote way of life. In the morning we will visit Ban Bor village, home to the Lao & Khummu people. We will have the opportunity to support locally produced handicrafts and walk through the Khummu village of Yoi Hanoi in the afternoon.

DAY 16**PAK OU CAVES**

Continue cruising downstream to Pak Ou, sightseeing by local boat exploring the unique Pak Ou Caves, a Buddhist sanctuary with spectacular limestone cliff faces. See the production of local Laos whisky at the Whisky village and shop for locally produced handicrafts before sailing into the World Heritage City of Luang Prabang. Moor overnight in central Luang Prabang.

DAY 17**LUANG PRABANG CRAFTS & CULTURE**

Today we explore the various handicrafts of Laos in more detail. We start with a morning walk up the 228 steps to Phousi temple where the best views of Luang Prabang can be found. After lunch aboard the ship, we visit Ock Pop Tok, a social enterprise providing sustainable employment and training for the women of local weaving villages. We then head to TAEC (Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre) to understand more about Laos musical instruments. Cocktail hour is accompanied by a traditional Bacci ceremony onboard highlighting some of the instruments seen in the afternoon.

DAY 18**LUANG PRABANG**

Early morning walking tour to observe the morning alms offering by local people to the hundreds of monks who walk around the city every morning. We continue after breakfast to the morning market before taking tuktuks for a city tour of this well preserved and unique world heritage site with its many Buddhist temples, libraries and royal palace. The afternoon is free to explore the beauty and unique atmosphere of Luang Prabang.

DAY 19**KAUNG SI WATERFALL**

After breakfast sail downstream to Ban Chan where we take part in a pottery demonstration at the local pottery workshop. After Lunch we moor at Ban Mouang Khai and take a short drive to see the deep jungle pools at the Khaung Si Waterfall where you can swim in the crystal-clear waters. We then stop at the Laos Buffalo Farm, a social enterprise utilizing the abundant buffalo in Laos before rejoining the ship. We sail downstream for a sunset cruise and moor overnight at Ban Na San.

DAY 20**XAYABOURI DAM**

Morning walk through Ban Na San Hmong Village. In the afternoon we pass through Xayabouri Hydroelectric Dam and take an inside look of the workings of this somewhat controversial attraction as we pass through the locks. Afternoon walk at Ban Khok Fark and moor overnight.

DAY 21**BAN PAK YUN TO PAK LAY**

Explore Ban Pak Yun Mixed minorities tribe in the morning, a rural local village before setting sail to Pak Lay, our final destination. Enjoy a tour of your Pandaw ship and fruit carving demonstration on the sundeck in the afternoon before farewell cocktails and dinner in the evening.

DAY 22

VIENTIANE

Disembark at 08:30am followed by a local [long-tail boat](#) expedition downstream to Vientiane. Lunch and drinks will be provided on the local boat by your Pandaw chef and bar staff. Arrival to Vientiane around 17:30 with drop off at your hotel or Vientiane airport.

STATEROOM

The Pandaw stateroom is the most celebrated feature of our ships.

Finished in brass and teak, the main and upper deck rooms are very spacious at 168 square feet (15.6 sqm). Much loved by all our passengers we have ensured that with each ship we build the stateroom remains the same. Our cabins do not have mini-bars, satellite TV's, internet or phones. Pandaw passengers usually want to escape from the tiresome features found in international business hotels.

Many passengers describe life on board a Pandaw more like being a guest on a private motor yacht than a cruise ship. Where we go and what we see is intrepid in extreme. What you come back to is a floating base of discreet comfort, caring service and all the good things one looks for in life. All our cabins have the same size and Pandaw signature amenities. Choose from Main Deck, Upper Deck or Premium Upper Deck (Mekong only).

Special to Your Stateroom

- Fruit and flowers on arrival
- Kimonos and slippers
- Spa-branded amenities
- Unlimited mineral water

PRE-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

ARRIVAL IN HUE

Welcome to Vietnam. After arrival at Hue Airport meet your guide and driver for the transfer to your hotel. Rest of day at leisure.

Meals: none.

DAY 2

HUE

This morning we take a boat on the serene Perfume River to the best known pagoda in Middle Vietnam, Thien Mu. We then pay a visit to the impressive tomb of former Emperor Tu Duc and a beautiful garden once belonging to royalty followed by a royal style lunch at a local restaurant. In the afternoon, visit Hue citadel including Noon Gate, Thai Hoa Palace, Royal Urns and the ruins of the Forbidden Purple City.

Meals: Breakfast at the Hotel, Lunch at local restaurant.

DAY 3

HUE - HOI AN

After breakfast we leave Hue for Hoian. En route we pause to unwind on top of the Ocean Clouds Pass, on the Non Nuoc Beach and then visit the fascinating Cham Museum. We then proceed to the quaint town of Hoian for check in and to relax. In the afternoon, there is time to explore this charming and wonderfully preserved merchant town that retains Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese and European influences from its flourishing old days.

Meals: Breakfast at the hotel.

DAY 4

HOI AN

Day at leisure. Explore the beautiful old town of Hoi An or relax at the beach.

Meals: Breakfast at hotel.

DAY 5

HOI AN - DANANG - SAIGON

Transfer to the airport for a flight from Danang 08.00 to Saigon 09.25 (flight times subject to change). Upon arrival, drive to the extraordinary Cu Chi tunnels, about 65 Km (1½ hours' drive) from Saigon. This complicated underground network was built by Viet Cong guerillas. En route, you have the chance to see how rural people live and work such as cashew nut farming, duck breeding, rice farming and production of rice paper, a key ingredient in Vietnamese cuisine. After lunch in a local restaurant, return to Saigon. In the afternoon, visit to Reunification Hall, Notre Dame Cathedral, General Post Office, Former US Embassy, City Hall, War Museum of Remnants. Shopping at Ben Thanh market.

Meals: Breakfast at hotel, Lunch at local restaurant.

DAY 6

SAIGON DEPARTURE

Morning at leisure. Transfer with your fellow Pandaw passengers to My Tho to embark your ship.

Meals: Breakfast at Hotel.



DISCOVER

5 Night Vietnam's Heritage Road: Hue, Hoi An & Saigon Pre Tour

Hue and Hoi An are two of Vietnam's scenic and historic highlights and a 'must see' on most people's visit to this most wonderful country. Our trip includes a fascinating ride along the Perfume River and a visit to the enormous Hue Citadel. Hoi An is best explored independently and retains a charming village feel which comes alive after sunset with the glow of red lanterns and the senses of Asia. And, of course, plenty of time to relax at your beach resort.

We are pleased to offer a pre and post extension including connecting domestic flight, all transfers, excursions in Hue, a scenic journey from Hue to Hoi An and a 2-night stay in Hoi An. You will be staying in a delightful selection of boutique hotels. It is possible to extend your stay in Hoi An if required.

Your trip ends in the Oriental Pearl Saigon with tour and overnight stay before your cruise.

This is a Pandaw group tour.

Rates include:

English speaking guide on tours, 2x lunch at local restaurant, economy one-way domestic air ticket Danang to Saigon, hotels as advertised,

transportation by AC vehicle, daily breakfast, and entrance fees.

Rates exclude:

International flights, visa, travel insurance, not mentioned beverages and meal.

Note

- Please advise arrival flight details in order to arrange the transfer accordingly
- Check in time at hotel is 1400hrs
- Check out time from hotel at 1200hrs
- Early check in and late check out are subject to hotel room availability

* Please note that your hotel will be confirmed after we have received your deposit payment. Prices are subject to change. Hotel subject to availability. We will try to offer you alternative accommodation if the requested hotel is not available.

Airport Arrival Transfer Notes

Please take note your driver/guide will be waiting for you at Column No 12 outside the arrival area (either the International Arrival area or Domestic Arrival area, depending on your flight). Upon exiting the Arrival Terminal please look for column No 12. In case you do not see the driver/guide at column No 12, please call the Pandaw hotline number and remain standing at the column No 12 in order for the guide/driver to locate you. Please be on the lookout for the Pandaw welcome sign in front of Column No 12.

PRE-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

ARRIVAL IN SAIGON

Our guide will be waiting for you at the airport to transfer you to your hotel. Free time in the evening, we suggest heading to Nguyen Hue walking street to see the various artists, performers and local residents relaxing in true Vietnamese style.

Overnight Saigon

Meals: none

DAY 2

SAIGON CITY TOUR - CUCHI TUNNELS

In the morning, drive to the extraordinary Cu Chi tunnels, about 65 Km (1.5 hours drive) from Saigon. The complicated system of underground network was built by the Viet Cong guerillas. We return to the city for lunch at a local restaurant before taking in the sights of Saigon. Visit the Reunification Hall, Notre Dame Cathedral, General Post Office, Former US Embassy, City Hall and War Museum of Remnants. End the day with some shopping at Ben Thanh market, one of the earliest surviving structures in Saigon and symbol of the city turned tourist shopping hotspot.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3

DEPARTURE

After breakfast, check out and transfer to the ship at My Tho.

Meals: Breakfast



DISCOVER

Saigon & Surroundings Pre Tour

Discover the vibrant and dynamic Ho Chi Minh City, the largest and most populous city in Vietnam. On this two-night pre or post-cruise tour, you will experience the city's rich history, culture, and cuisine staying in our specially selected hotel partners. Visit the iconic landmarks such as the Notre-Dame Cathedral, the War Remnants Museum, and the Cu Chi Tunnels as well as soaking up the hectic atmosphere of central Saigon.

Rates include:

Transfer from Saigon Airport to hotel, two nights accommodation with daily breakfast, one lunch at local restaurant and excursion as per itinerary, transfer from hotel to ship.

Note

- Please advise arrival flight details in order to arrange your transfer accordingly
- Check out time from hotel at 1200hrs

* Please note that your hotel will be confirmed after we have received your deposit payment. Prices are subject to change. Hotel subject to availability. We will try to offer you an alternate accommodation if the requested hotel

would not be available.

Airport Arrival Transfer Notes

Please take note your driver/guide will be waiting for you at Column No 12 outside the arrival area (either the International Arrival area or Domestic Arrival area, depending on your flight). Upon exiting the Arrival Terminal please look for column No 12. In case you do not see the driver/guide at column No 12, please call the Pandaw hotline number and remain standing at the column No 12 in order for the guide/driver to locate you. Please be on the lookout for the Pandaw welcome sign in front of Column No 12.

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

VIENTIANE ARRIVAL

After your disembarkation transfer from the ship, check in to your hotel and enjoy the rest of the evening at leisure. We suggest heading to the riverside and exploring the night market.

Meals: none

DAY 2

VIENTIANE FULL DAY CITY TOUR

Depart with your local guide for a full day city tour exploring Laos' French colonial capital. Visit Talaat Sao - Vientiane's Morning Market, Wat Sisaket, Haw Phra Kaew and Putousay, the victory gate inspired by the Arc of Triumph in Paris. After lunch at a local restaurant, head out of town to visit one of Laos' slightly stranger attractions - Xieng Khuan Buddha Park which is home to over 200 statues including a 40-metre reclining Buddha.

Meals: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 3

VIENTIANE DEPARTURE

Check out of your hotel and our driver will transfer you to the airport for your onward flight.

Meals: Breakfast



Exploring Vientiane 2 Night Post Tour

Vientiane, the capital city of Laos has been given many evocative nicknames, such as the City of Sandalwood and the City of the Moon, at certain points in its history. Located on the banks of the Mekong River which acts as a focal point of the city with cafes, bars and restaurants giving the city a cosmopolitan feel. Explore this French colonial city with a 2-night extension to your Pandaw expedition.

This is a private tour but can be operated as a group tour with your fellow passengers upon request.

Rates include:

English or French speaking guide, 2-nights Hotel on a bed and breakfast basis, 1x lunch at local restaurant, taxes, all transfers and excursions as described and entrance fees.

Rates exclude:

International flights, visa, travel insurance, not mentioned beverages and meal.

River Conditions Warning!

The rivers you will sail on are subject to seasonal rises and falls of water level, in some places as much as 30 metres. Water levels can change dramatically overnight and a sudden rise can impede our progress upstream considerably and even prevent us from passing under certain bridges. A sudden fall can result in our being unable to get into certain places or go as far upstream as we would hope. Groundings on sandbars are not infrequent and are part of the excitement of any Pandaw expedition. Published itineraries are indicational only and subject to sudden change. In such events alternative itineraries will be provided and we do our best to ensure that if a stop is missed we make up for it with another stop. Passengers are thus forewarned and expected to be flexible and patient. River cruising in Asia can be a dramatic and adventurous experience - not like cruising the controlled waterways of Europe or America. Note also that we operate in areas with little or no developed infrastructure and subject to the strictures of local officialdom. Be prepared for this and it is all more the fun!

Useful Links

[Terms & Conditions](#)

[General Information & Life on Board](#)

[Visa Information](#)