

**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.

## DOWNSTREAM ITINERARY

DAY 1

#### SIEM REAP TO THE TONLE SAP

After a short 45 minute drive to Siem Reap inland port, we embark and set sail into the Tonle Sap lake. 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. In the afternoon we 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.

DAY 2

#### THE TONLE SAP LAKE AND KAMPONG CHHNANG

Wake up on the 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. We continue sailing before reaching Kampong Chhnang, an important trading town that focusses on fishing and creating local pottery. We explore the back waters by local boat before sailing downstream to moor alongside a remote fishing village. Enjoy evening cocktails around a fire pit in the village where we will be joined by village folk keen to share tales and show us their traditional dancing.

#### LIFE ON THE TONLE SAP RIVER

We sail early morning along 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. Over lunch we sail past Phnom Penh and onto the Mekong River. In the afternoon we step ashore at Pak Russei, a small and remote village on the banks of the Mekong. We will explore on foot and visit local craftspeople weaving silk and producing handmade noodles. Before returning to the ship, we learn about the ancient art of Bokator, a traditional form of martial art with a private performance in the village.

#### **DAY 4**

#### 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. In the afternoon we continue sailing along the mighty Mekong.

#### 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.

#### DAY 6

## 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.

#### 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 8**

#### **INTO VIETNAM**

We up anchor early in the morning and cruise downstream along the Mekong River to the Vietnam border for immigration formalities. The ship sails toward Chau Doc where we talk an evening stroll along the river before dinner aboard.

#### CHAU DOC AND THE FERTILE WATERWAYS

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. After lunch aboard we continue sailing into the heart of the Mekong delta and enjoy on-deck entertainment from your crew.

#### **DAY 10**

## BEN TRE AND SAILING INTO SAIGON

In the morning, we journey by sampans through mangroves and bamboo forests to the fruit orchards of Ben Tre. 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. After returning to the ship enjoy lunch onboard as we sail through the Cho Gao Canal toward Saigon. The Cho Gao Canal is 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. In the evening we sail into central Saigon and enjoy the stunning skyline over dinner.

## **DISEMBARK SAIGON**

After breakfast, disembark in the heart of Saigon and head to the airport for your flight to Vientiane. Upon arrival our guide will be waiting to take you to your hotel for the evening.

#### **DAY 12**

#### **VIENTIANE**

Pick up from your hotel in Vientiane at 08.00am, followed by a local <u>long-tail</u> <u>boat</u> expedition to your Pandaw vessel upstream. Lunch and drinks will be provided on the local boat by your Pandaw chef and bar staff. Embark your Pandaw in the afternoon for a welcome briefing and welcome drinks. We moor overnight at Pak Lay.

#### **MORE ABOUT VIENTIANE**

#### **DAY 13**

#### **CRUISING THE MEKONG**

Cruise upstream on the Mekong, passing lush jungle scenery and tiny riverside villages. Morning presentation on the Lao language after a short walk at Pha Laeb village. If time permits, we will also enjoy an afternoon walk at Ban Khok Fark.

#### MORE ABOUT CRUISING THE MEKONG

#### **XAYABOURI DAM**

Morning walk at Ban Pak Bor Khummu village before passing through Xayabouri Hydroelectric Dam, taking an inside look of the workings of this somewhat controversial attraction as we navigate the locks. Afternoon visit to Ban Na San village, a Hmong minority village.

#### **DAY 15**

#### **KUANG SI WATERFALLS**

In the morning we moor at the village of Ban Mouang Khai and visit the dramatic Kaung Si waterfall. On the way back to the ship, we stop at the Laos Buffalo Farm, a social enterprise utilizing the abundant buffalo in Laos. Arrive in the heart of the temple city of Luang Prabang mid-afternoon where there is a buzzing night market and many great cafes and local restaurants. Traditional Laos Bacci ceremony and dancing on the upper deck during happy hour. Moor overnight in central Luang Prabang.

MORE ABOUT KUANG SI WATERFALLS

#### LUANG PRABANG CRAFTS & CULTURE

Today we explore the various handicrafts of Laos in more detail. We start with 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. After lunch aboard the ship, we sail toward Ban Chan and take part in a pottery demonstration at the local pottery workshop. We finish the day with a sunset cruise on the Mekong alongside Luang Prabang, returning to moor overnight in the centre of town.

#### **DAY 17**

#### **LUANG PRABANG**

Early morning walking tour to observe the alms offerings 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.

MORE ABOUT LUANG PRABANG

#### **PAK OU CAVES**

Morning at leisure in Luang Prabang before setting sail at midday upstream. Afternoon 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.

MORE ABOUT PAK OU CAVES AND NAM OU RIVER

**DAY 19** 

## **BAN TON AND SANDBANK BBQ**

Day of sailing upstream along the Mekong with morning walk through Ban Ton village. In the evening, we moor alongside a sandbank for a special riverside barbecue and cocktail party. Light paper lanterns with the crew and enjoy a dance in remote Laos.

#### PAK BENG ELEPHANT SANCTUARY

Laos is known as 'The land of a million elephants' and today 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. Afternoon walk at Ban Pak Sith Khummu village.

#### **MORE ABOUT PAK BENG**

#### **DAY 21**

#### PAK SITH - CHIANG KHONG

Today we sail the final leg of our journey upstream toward Huayxay. Cross over into Thailand via the Thai-Laos Friendship Bridge before rejoining your ship in Chiang Khong. Enjoy a ship tour of your Pandaw vessel and fruit carving demonstration from your Pandaw Chef. Farewell cocktails and Thai traditional dance on board for your last evening.

#### **DAY 22**

#### CHIANG KHONG

Disembark by 8.30 in Chiang Khong and group transfer to hotel/airport. En route, explore the Golden Triangle including a visit to the opium museum. Continue to airports or city hotels in Chiang Rai (2 hours) and Chiang Mai (6 hours).

## **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 SIEM REAP - ANGKOR

Our guide will pick you up at Siem Reap International airport or local Hotel in Siem Reap and transfer to the Jaya House Hotel for lunch before check in at the hotel. In the afternoon we visit the most famous temple of Cambodia, Angkor Wat. It is visually, architecturally and artistically breathtaking with a massive three tiered pyramid crowned by five beehive-like towers rising 65 meters from ground level. This temple is the centerpiece of any visit to the temples of Angkor. Take in the romantic view at sunset from Bakheng Hill. Overnight at hotel.

Meals: Lunch at hotel

## **TEMPLES OF ANGKOR**

Following breakfast in your hotel, set out for a day of exploration amongst the various temples and ruins of the Angkor Empire. The morning we will cover the large complex surrounding the imposing Bayon Temple. After lunch at a local restaurant, we discover more secluded temples including the awe inspiring and overgrown Ta Prohm, made famous by the Tomb Raider movie.

In the evening we experience a true highlight of Cambodia and meet talented young performers in a breathtaking and original Cambodian show at Phare Ponleu Selpak's Circus. Not just for entertainment, Phare is also a social enterprise supporting the youth of Cambodia gain skills and employment. Overnight at hotel.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3

## **ANGKOR - DEPARTURE**

Check out the hotel and transfer to the meeting point at 09:00am for registration and transfer to your Pandaw ship.

Meals: Breakfast at your hotel



**DISCOVER** 

## **Exploring Angkor (Jaya House Riverpark) Pre Tour**

Explore the magnificent temples of Angkor including the world famous Angkor Wat, high on any bucket list destination. With our specially selected hotels and local guide at your service throughout, this 2-night add-on to your Pandaw expedition it is the perfect choice for your trip in Cambodia.

#### Rates include:

One way transfer (airport to hotel and hotel to ship), two nights accommodation at Jaya House Riverpark, meals and excursion as per itinerary.

## Note

- Please advice arrival/departure flight details in order to arrange the transfer accordingly
- Visa on arrival to Cambodia not inclusive (USD 30 per person downstream if arriving at Siem Reap Airport, USD 35 upstream if crossing the water border between Vietnam/Cambodia)
- Check out time from hotel at 1200hrs

<sup>\*</sup> 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.

JAYA HOUSE RIVERPARK

River Road

Treang Village

Siem Reap - Slor Kram Commune

Tel: +855 639 62 555

Visit Hotel Website

## PRE-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

## ARRIVAL SIEM REAP - ANGKOR

Our guide will pick you up at Siem Reap International airport or local Hotel in Siem Reap and transfer to the FCC Angkor by Avani for lunch before check in at the hotel. In the afternoon we visit the most famous temple of Cambodia, Angkor Wat. It is visually, architecturally and artistically breathtaking with a massive three tiered pyramid crowned by five beehive-like towers rising 65 meters from ground level. This temple is the centerpiece of any visit to the temples of Angkor. Take in the romantic view at sunset from Bakheng Hill.

Overnight at hotel

Meals: Lunch at hotel

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Following breakfast in your hotel, set out for a day of exploration amongst the various temples and ruins of the Angkor Empire. The morning we will cover the large complex surrounding the imposing Bayon Temple. After lunch at a local restaurant, we discover more secluded temples including the awe inspiring and overgrown Ta Prohm, made famous by the Tomb Raider movie.

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Overnight at hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3

## **ANGKOR - DEPARTURE**

Check out the hotel and meet in the lobby at 09:00am for registration and transfer to your Pandaw ship.

Meals: Breakfast at your hotel



**DISCOVER** 

## **Exploring Angkor (FCC Angkor) Pre Tour**

Explore the magnificent temples of Angkor including the world famous Angkor Wat, high on any bucket list destination. With our specially selected hotels and local guide at your service throughout, this 2-night add-on to your Pandaw expedition it is the perfect choice for your trip in Cambodia.

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One way transfer (airport to hotel and hotel to ship), two nights accommodation at the FCC Angkor by Avani, meals and excursion as per itinerary.

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- Visa on arrival to Cambodia not inclusive (USD 30 per person downstream if arriving at Siem Reap Airport, USD 35 upstream if crossing the water border between Vietnam/Cambodia)
- 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.

FCC ANGKOR
Pokambor Ave
next to Royal residence
Siem Reap

Tel: +855 63 760 280

Cambodia

Visit Hotel Website

## **POST-TOUR EXTENSION**

DAY 1

# ARRIVE CHIANG MAI FROM PANDAW SHIP

Arrive from your Pandaw ship transfer at the deluxe Rachamankha Hotel, Chiang Mai where you stay in a superior room for 2-nights on a bend and breakfast basis.

## **EXPLORE CHIANG MAI**

After breakfast, you will be met by your guide for a morning visit of Chiang Mai including Suan Buak Hat, a lovely park full of flowers that lies just inside the moat. From here, you take a local rickshaw (three-wheeled bicycle taxi) to Wat Pan Tao. Wat Pan Tao is essentially built of wood and, although rarely visited, is certainly one of the most charming temples of Chiang Mai. Then, continue to Wat Phra Sing – the most famous temple in the old city centre. Afterwards, visit Warorot Market, Chiang Mai's biggest market and well known for its huge choice of flowers. Lunch is included at a typical local restaurant serving Northern Thai food.

After lunch, drive up Doi Suthep Mountain and visit Wat Doi Suthep, Chiang Mai's most revered temple on the mountaintop. According to an old legend, Monk Sumana presented the king with a bone relic of the Lord Buddha. He then tied it to the back of a royal elephant that stomped through the jungle for days. The elephant finally stopped at the actual place of the temple where he died. Both the king and monk Sumana agreed that this would be the place where Doi Suthep temple would be built.

DAY 3

## **CHIANG MAI - TRANSFER TO AIRPORT**

Check out after breakfast. You will be collected from the hotel lobby and transferred to Chiang Mai airport for your onward flight.



**DISCOVER** 

## The Rachamankha Hotel, Chiang Mai Post Tour

Enjoy the comfort and charm of the deluxe Rachamankha Hotel and explore Chiang Mai on our included full day excursion.

#### Rates include:

Airport transfer; sightseeing as per itinerary with English speaking local guide; 2-nights accommodation in superior room at the Rachamankha Hotel on bed and breakfast basis; lunch on day 2; entrance fees to specified sights; service charges, room tax and baggage handling.

#### Rates exclude:

Compulsory Gala Dinners at Rachamankha Hotel on 24 & 31 December 2016, travel insurance, visas, tips, items of a personal nature.

#### **Public facilities**

Public areas include the Library with over 2,000 books and an enchanting open-air massage pavilion overlooking a tranquil 20-meter pool where drinks and light snacks are served pool-side throughout the day. You can dine in al fresco or in the stylish restaurant. Antiques from different periods around the world, from Europe, Africa, China, Burma and Thailand are scattered throughout the hotel. The spacious and comfortable air-conditioned superior rooms are fully equipped with wireless Internet connection, TV and CD/DVD

player.

THE RACHAMANKHA HOTEL

6 Rachamankha

9 Phra Singh

Chiang Mai 50200

Thailand

Tel: +66 53 904 111

**Visit Hotel Website** 

## **POST-TOUR EXTENSION**

DAY 1

## PANDAW CRUISE - MAE CHAN

Upon arrival at Chiang Khong, meet and greet by our local guide for pick up and transfer to Mae Chan Mountain and your resort for the eveining. (approx. 90 minute drive)

Overnight at Katiliya Mountain Resort

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

## **GOLDEN TRIANGLE – DOI TUNG**

After breakfast. Drive to Chiang Saen, a small crossroads town on the banks of the Mekong. Scattered throughout the town are the ruins of the Chiang Saen Kingdom, founded in 1325, including chedis, images of the Buddha, and earthen city ramparts. Continue to visit the Golden Triangle where the Ruak river empties into the Mekong river bringing together the boundaries of Thailand, Burma and Laos. Next visit is the Hall of Opium which was built to educate people about the dangers of the drug through an entertaining exhibition which traces opium's history from its first use 5,000 years ago to current issues of drug abuse and addiction.

Lunch is at a local restaurant before we drive uphill to visit Doi Tung Royal Project, Hall of Inspiration and Mae Fah Luang Garden. Doi Tung Royal Project is a sustainable project founded by Princess Mother of King Rama IX aiming to support communities in Chiang Rai.

Overnight at Katiliya Mountain Resort & Spa

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## BAAN LORCHA – DOI ANGKHANG – CHIANG MAI

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel before we head to an Akha hill tribe village called Ban Lorcha. This community-based tourism (CBT) project at Ban Lorcha was established in the mid-1990s and ensures that money from tourism activities is distributed evenly throughout the village. Continue to Doi Angkhang National Park. The area has a cool climate all year round, particularly from December to January. We visit Doi Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station which is a site for planting and researching for flowering plants, temperate fruit trees, vegetables and other crop under the patronage of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej (King Rama IX).

After lunch at a local restaurant, we visit the Muser Hill tribe at Baan Khob Dong village who believe in ghosts and spirits and still hold on to simple ways of life. The next stop will be Baan Nor Lae village, located on the Thai-Burmese border it is home to the No Lae people who migrated from Myanmar about 15 years ago. They speak their own language and are Buddhists. From here we continue to the villages of Baan Khum located near the Royal Agricultural Station. It is a small community comprising of people from various races such as Burmese, Hwa, and Thai Yai. They settled in the area and run souvenir shops and restaurants.

Overnight at the Rachamankha

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

HILLTRIBE EXPERIENCE

After breakfast we travel to the outskirts of town to Mae Tang area to visit a

traditional Lisu Village. Our Lisu guide will take you for a guided walk through

the village, observing village life as it happens. If we are lucky, we may have

a chance to meet the village Shaman and learn about his traditional and

spiritual healing methods.

In the afternoon we visit Araksa Tea Garden and plantation. Your local guide

and our resident plucker will lead you to the tea bushes where they will show

you how to pluck tea leaves. At the roasting station, we will demonstrate the

art of making tea by hand from kneading to roasting tea leaves. During the

process, learn from your guide about the different processes and methods

used to cultivate young tea plants.

Overnight at the Rachamankha

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5

CHIANG MAI DEPARTURE

Today will be your own leisure until check out time at noon. We will transfer

you to boarding either flight or train depending on your selection of

transportation to next destination. Rachamankha to Chiang Mai Airport: 15-20

min.

Meals: Breakfast



**DISCOVER** 

## The Hill Tribes of North Thailand Post Tour

Travel off the beaten track with your English speaking guide and discover the hilltribes, beautiful scenery and history of the land of opium, in our exclusive post cruise arrangement.

#### Rates include:

Accommodation at selected hotels with daily breakfast, check-in time is 2.00PM and check-out time is 12.00PM. Early or late service is subject to availability with surcharge, meals as mentioned, english speaking guide, tours and transfers as mentioned by air-conditioned vehicle, sightseeing fees and permits during guided time, service charge and current government VAT tax.

#### Rates exclude:

Early/late check in/out service at hotels (surcharge if requested), tips and gratuities, services and meals if not mentioned in itinerary, all drinks, including water, soft drink and alcohol on all included or optional excursions, laundry, telephone calls and expenditure of a personal nature, travel Insurance (Compulsory).

#### **Note**

This is a group tour exclusively for Pandaw guests

All accommodation will be booked after your deposit is received

## **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**