



**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.

# DOWNSTREAM ITINERARY

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## DAY 1

### EMBARK SIEM REAP

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After a short 45 minute drive to Siem Reap inland port, we embark and set sail into the Tonle Sap lake. Bird life along the lake's edges is profuse and look out for the grey headed fish eagle. Crocodiles and snakes abound in these shallow waters which are home to 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 and learn more about life on the lake.

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## DAY 2

### TONLE SAP AND KAMPONG CHHNANG

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Continue crossing this tranquil lake 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 returning to the boat and sailing downstream to moor alongside a remote fishing village where we enjoy evening cocktails around the campfire with the village people.

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### DAY 3

## KAMPONG TRALLACH

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Arriving in the morning to Kampong Trallach, We travel by ox-cart around the river-side villages, markets and temples to get a sense of life along the river. After lunch we visit the ancient capital of Oudong and discover the Vipassana Dhura meditation centre before mooring alongside Koh Chen, a silversmith village know for furnishing the royal families for centuries.

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### DAY 4

## PHNOM PENH

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Morning orientation of Phnom Penh by cyclo visiting the Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda followed by the National Museum with its marvelous collection of Angkorian statuary. In the afternoon we visit the Killing Fields and Genocide museum to learn more about the brutal Khmer Rouge regime. Overnight in Phnom Penh city port with its lively bars, restaurants and night life.

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### DAY 5

## ANGKOR BAN

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Sunrise cruise to Angkor Ban village to see how local villagers live and visit the library which was donated by Pandaw to Angkor Ban secondary school.

**NOTE:** if you want to donate books, please bring along some Children's books in English language (suitable for age 8 to 15 yrs) which you can personally gift to the library.

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**DAY 6**

## **KOH TRONG ISLAND**

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Visit Koh trong Island, a community based tourism site since 2008. We explore the fruit orchards and sample the local delicacies before we head to a community tree project and plant trees together with the local people. Moor overnight alongside the island.

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**DAY 7**

## **KRATIE AND THE DOLPHIN GROUNDS**

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Morning excursion by coach and smapan to hopefully spot the Irrawaddy dolphins abundant in the waters below Stuc Treng. This is a real highlight of the expedition.

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**DAY 8**

## **BORDER CROSSING – CHAU DOC**

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We cross into Vietnam by the river border in the morning before going alongside the picturesque border town of Chau Doc in the afternoon. Taking minivans for a short drive to Sam Mountain, location of Phuoc Dien Tu or the Hang Pagoda. We climb the steps to the top to visit the pagoda with breathtaking viewpoints available along the way for those who do not want to climb the full distance. We then return to the river and visit the floating fish farms by sampan, making a stop at a Chham Village on the way to observe the lives of Vietnamese Muslims. A traditional Lion dance is presented at the Cham Village.

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**DAY 9****CON PHUOC**

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Today the ship sails to Con Phuoc for the shore excursion. We pass through a small canal and head ashore to Con Phuoc Island where we visit local craftspeople weaving bamboo baskets the traditional way. After a demonstration, we try our hand at making our own. We then take a local tuk tuk for a drive through this peaceful village, stopping at a 100 year old church and meeting more of the friendly local community.

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**DAY 10****BEN TRE**

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Today we journey by sampans through mangroves and bamboo forests to the fruit orchards of Ben Tre. This is an area rich in birdlife which we will explore via local transport before transferring to a local rowboat. We will journey slowly through the bamboo covered canals before arriving at a village specialising in making local products. We sail the afternoon through the Chao Gao canal on the way to central Saigon, entering the city and enjoying a sunset dinner cruise along the Saigon river before we dock centrally. Please note we will be unable to leave the ship during this evening due to immigration formalities.

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## DAY 11

# DISEMBARK SAIGON

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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.

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## DAY 12

# VIENTIANE

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Pick up from your hotel in Vientiane at 08.00am, followed by a local [long-tail boat](#) 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](#)

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## DAY 13

# CRUISING THE MEKONG

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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](#)

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**DAY 14**

## **XAYABOURI DAM**

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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.

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**DAY 15**

## **KUANG SI WATERFALLS**

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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](#)

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**DAY 16**

## **LUANG PRABANG CRAFTS & CULTURE**

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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.

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**DAY 17**

## **LUANG PRABANG**

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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](#)

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**DAY 18**

## PAK OU CAVES

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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](#)

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**DAY 19**

## BAN TON AND SANDBANK BBQ

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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.

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**DAY 20**

## PAK BENG ELEPHANT SANCTUARY

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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](#)

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**DAY 21**

## PAK SITH - CHIANG KHONG

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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.

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**DAY 22**

## CHIANG KHONG

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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

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## 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

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## **DAY 2**

# **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

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## **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

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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 advise 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

\* 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

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### 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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## DAY 2

# 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

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## 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

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**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.**

### **Rates include:**

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.

### **Note**

- Please advise 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

\* 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

Cambodia

Tel: +855 63 760 280

[Visit Hotel Website](#)

## POST-TOUR EXTENSION

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### 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 bed and breakfast basis.

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## **DAY 2**

# **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.

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## **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.

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**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

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### 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 evening. (approx. 90 minute drive)

Overnight at Katiliya Mountain Resort

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

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## DAY 2

# 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

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### DAY 3

## BAAN LORCHA – DOI ANGKHANG – CHIANG MAI

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel before we head to an Akha hill tribe village called Ban Lorch. This community-based tourism (CBT) project at Ban Lorch 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

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## **DAY 4**

# **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

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## **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

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**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](#)