Cruise Details

Name:	Indochina Explorer and Luxury Mekong Cruise
Reference:	SCENICVIEX240228-2
Operator:	Scenic River Cruises
Cruise Type:	River
Cruise Rating:	Luxury
Ship:	Scenic Spirit
Regions:	Mekong
Departs On:	24 Feb 28
Departs From:	Hanoi
Arrives On:	18 Mar 28
Arrives At:	Ho Chi Minh City
Cruise Nights:	23
Total Vacation Days:	24

Itinerary

Day 1: Hanoi (Vietnam)

Welcome to vibrant Vietnam – a world of colour, culture and extraordinary food. Today is yours to settle in at your leisure, adjusting to the rhythms of this compelling city before your journey begins in earnest. Check in to your two-night Scenic Special Stay at the iconic Sofitel Legend Metropole, Hanoi’s most celebrated address. This beautifully preserved colonial grand dame has welcomed dignitaries and travellers since 1901, and its refined amenities and attentive service set the tone for the days ahead.

Arrives On: 24 Feb 28

Day 2: Hanoi (Vietnam)

After breakfast, depart your elegant surrounds and begin the four-hour journey northeast to Halong Bay, passing through the fertile farmlands of the Red River Delta along the way. On arrival, board the Bhaya Soul – a handsome luxury vessel purpose-built to explore the deeper

reaches of this World Heritage-listed seascape – for a two-night cruise among its iconic limestone karsts. The Bhaya Soul's well-appointed suites and attentive crew ensure a first-class experience from the moment you step on board, with access to secluded corners of the bay that remain well beyond the reach of day cruises.

Arrives On: 25 Feb 28

Day 2: Cát Bà Island (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 25 Feb 28

Day 3: Cát Bà Island (Vietnam)

Rise to one of Southeast Asia's most captivating mornings with a Tai Chi lesson on the Sun Deck as the Bhaya Soul sails deeper into the National Park. Later, take to a kayak and paddle through the narrow passages of a limestone cave system, enjoying a perspective of the bay that few visitors experience. Ashore on Cat Ba Island, a cycle ride reveals a landscape of dense jungle and quiet shoreline, largely untouched by development.

In the afternoon, gather on deck for an exclusive Scenic Sundowners wine tasting, set against the silhouette of the karst islands at sunset. After a fine dinner in the on-board restaurant, round out the evening with the time-honoured local tradition of squid fishing from the deck.

Arrives On: 26 Feb 28

Day 4: Cát Bà Island (Vietnam)

Savour a leisurely morning cruise back through the bay before disembarking and returning to Hanoi, with time enroute for lunch and a little shopping. Re-check into the Sofitel Legend Metropole for a second stay and, after settling back in, take part in a fascinating historical bunker tour beneath the hotel – a rarely seen chapter in the story of a capital city with more than 1,000 years of history. Scenic Freechoice Dining:
This evening, your Scenic Freechoice dinner opens three distinct options. Dine in the Metropole's own Angelina Restaurant, where Parisian café elegance meets the heart of Hanoi's most storied address. Alternatively, spend the evening as a guest of a local family, sharing home-cooked Vietnamese dishes and stories around their table in a genuinely warm and personal setting. Or, for those drawn to the energy of the streets, jump on the back of a Vespa for a guided foodie tour through Hanoi's Old Quarter, stopping at hidden local haunts for authentic street food with complimentary drinks flowing throughout.

Arrives On: 27 Feb 28

Day 4: Hanoi (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 27 Feb 28

Day 5: Hanoi (Vietnam)

A full day to go deeper into Hanoi, beginning with your choice of Scenic Freechoice activity. Scenic Freechoice:
Visit the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long and Hoa Lo Prison — the former a sweeping journey through the nation's past, the latter a sobering but essential insight into the prisoners held here across two very different chapters of history.

Alternatively, spend the morning at Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum and Quarter, then wander to the Temple of Literature — founded in 1070 and Vietnam's oldest university — before losing yourself in the narrow laneways of the Old Quarter over a celebrated egg coffee.

For those wanting a deeper cultural immersion, head to the ancient village of Bat Trang, a community dedicated to traditional porcelain and pottery. Learn the intricate craft firsthand, hear from a local elder about ancestral worship and spiritual traditions, then prepare and enjoy a hands-on lunch of Bánh Cuon rice pancakes. Scenic Enrich
This evening, a green electric car winds through the Old Quarter to deliver you to your Scenic Enrich experience: a VIP performance of Hanoi's world-famous water puppet theatre. Premium seating is reserved exclusively for Scenic guests, and a special backstage pass grants a rare glimpse behind the illusion.

Arrives On: 28 Feb 28

Day 6: Hanoi (Vietnam)

Bid farewell to Hanoi this morning and transfer to the airport for your flight west to Vientiane, the quietly captivating capital of Laos. After lunch, visit the Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE) – an organisation working to support people with mobility-related disabilities across the country. Their story is told with clarity and quiet power, offering a meaningful perspective on life in modern Laos. Check in to the Crowne Plaza for your overnight stay.

Arrives On: 29 Feb 28

Day 6: Vientiane (Laos)

Arrives On: 29 Feb 28

Day 7: Vientiane (Laos)

Begin the morning with a tour of Vientiane's most significant landmarks. Pha That Luang, the great gold-covered stupa at the heart of the city, is both a national symbol and a deeply sacred site. Nearby, the Patuxay Monument – built between 1957 and 1968 to honour those who

fought for independence from France – offers its own distinct perspective on the country's more recent history.

After lunch, your journey continues to Vang Vieng, where you check in to the Riverside Boutique Resort, beautifully positioned along the Nam Song River. Before the sun sets, take a long-tail boat ride downstream, with the dramatic ridgeline of the surrounding mountains reflected in the water. Dinner this evening is served from the balcony, with that same view for company.

Arrives On: 01 Mar 28

Day 7: Vang Vieng (Laos)

Arrives On: 01 Mar 28

Day 8: Vang Vieng (Laos)

The landscape around Vang Vieng is among the most striking in Laos, a terrain of sculpted limestone formations and forested valleys. This morning, explore Chang Caves, hidden deep within the hills and first discovered by villagers seeking refuge during wartime. Afterwards, transfer to the local station for the new high-speed train to Luang Prabang, a journey that is very much part of the experience as the line passes through tunnels and over viaducts with views that reward every window seat.

Arrive in this ancient city of temples and begin a three-night Scenic Special Stay at the Avani+ Luang Prabang, directly opposite the famous night markets. The remainder of the afternoon is yours to explore at your own pace.

Arrives On: 02 Mar 28

Day 8: Luang Prabang (Laos)

Arrives On: 02 Mar 28

Day 9: Luang Prabang (Laos)

Luang Prabang rewards those who take their time, and today does just that. Visit Wat Xieng Thong, one of the oldest and most revered temples in Laos, its sweeping rooflines a defining image of the city. Continue to Wat Mai and the former Royal Palace, now housing the National Museum.

Afterwards, board a boat for a gentle cruise along the Mekong River, calling at a riverside village known for its rice wine before arriving at the sacred Pak Ou Caves, known locally as Tam Ting, where thousands of gold Buddha statues are enshrined within the limestone cliffs. After visiting the caves, re-board the boat for a leisurely cruise back to Luang Prabang. Once back in town, learn the art of Pétanque, known here as Petong, from the locals. The evening is yours to browse Luang Prabang's renowned night markets at leisure.

Arrives On: 03 Mar 28

Day 10: Luang Prabang (Laos)

Well before dawn, the streets of Luang Prabang become a place of quiet ceremony. Join the morning alms giving procession and witness the silent, graceful movements of the monks as they collect their daily offerings, one of the most meditative and culturally significant experiences this journey offers. Scenic Freechoice:
Return to the hotel for breakfast before choosing your Scenic Freechoice activity for the morning. At the Living Land farm, step into the daily rhythms of Laotian agriculture, learning each stage of the rice growing and harvesting process with as much hands-on involvement as you wish. Alternatively, travel by tuk tuk and ferry to the village of Ban Chan, home to the Laos Pottery House, where you can shape your own piece using methods passed down through generations of royal pottery makers, or gather local produce and prepare a traditional lunch using time-honoured cooking techniques. The afternoon is free to spend as you choose.

Arrives On: 04 Mar 28

Day 11: Luang Prabang (Laos)

The morning begins with a visit to Kuang Si, a series of tiered waterfalls and turquoise swimming pools set within dense jungle and one of the most beloved natural scenes in all of Laos. Afterwards, transfer to the airport for your flight to Siem Reap in Cambodia, where ancient and contemporary worlds exist side by side.

Check in to the Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor, a legendary address that has defined Siem Reap's sense of colonial grandeur since the 1930s. French-inspired architecture, richly appointed interiors and service of the highest standard make this a true highlight of the journey. The remainder of the day is yours to settle in and explore the surrounds.

Arrives On: 05 Mar 28

Day 12: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

Your Siem Reap exploration starts with a delicious champagne buffet breakfast at the hotel. Scenic Freechoice:
Enjoy a range of Scenic Freechoice activities. The 10th-century Banteay Srei Temple, referred to as the Ladies Temple for its rose-pink sandstone and dedication to the Hindu god Shiva, is one of the most intricately carved structures in the Angkor region, best paired with a visit to the Landmine Museum, which has been working since 1997 to clear Cambodia's countryside of unexploded ordnance.

Other options include a visit to the Senteurs d'Angkor workshop, where skilled artisans produce soaps, balms, candles and spices by hand using traditional methods, with guests invited to try their hand at each workstation.

A village walk through Ta Brak offers a quieter, more personal perspective on daily life in the region.

Those drawn to the water may join a cruise on Tonle Sap (available July to February), a vast inland biosphere reserve where entire communities live on floating platforms.

Alternatively, a behind the scenes tour of the Angkor Wildlife

Aquarium offers insight into the Mekong’s ecosystem, including feeding sessions and close encounters with resident species.

For a different vantage point entirely, a tethered balloon flight reveals the full scale of the Angkor landscape, with the temples visible below as you rise above the canopy. This afternoon, visit Angkor Wat itself as the softer afternoon light plays across its towers and galleries, creating ideal conditions to take in this extraordinary site. This evening, your VIP reserved seats await at the Phare Circus, where Cambodian performers weave storytelling, music and acrobatics into a show of genuine artistry.

Arrives On: 06 Mar 28

Day 13: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

Scenic Enrich
An early start brings its own reward this morning. Arrive at Angkor Wat before the crowds to witness the sunrise reflecting across the temple’s moat, a sight of rare and lasting beauty. Afterwards, gather at a private location near a temple for a champagne breakfast, with food thoughtfully prepared by a Scenic-supported NGO bakery school. The morning continues with a visit to the jungle-enveloped Ta Prohm Temple, where tree roots have slowly claimed the ancient stonework over centuries, before moving on to Angkor Thom and the remarkable Bayon Temple, its dozens of carved stone faces gazing out in every direction. The afternoon is yours to rest or revisit the markets after an early start. Scenic Enrich
As evening falls, your Tour Director and the Scenic team escort you into one of the most exclusive experiences of the entire journey. A private gala dinner awaits within the grounds of Prasat Kravan, a small but deeply atmospheric 10th-century temple of five reddish brick towers. Apsara dancers perform by candlelight as complimentary drinks flow freely, an evening that belongs entirely to Scenic guests.

Arrives On: 07 Mar 28

Day 14: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

This morning, depart Siem Reap for the journey to Kampong Cham, passing through the Cambodian countryside and calling at the ancient Khmer bridge at Kampong Kdei and Kampong Thom, with a stop at a traditional stone cutters village along the way.

In Kampong Cham, the Scenic Spirit awaits, your five-star floating home for the Mekong River cruise ahead. A welcome cocktail reception hosted by your Cruise Director marks the start of life on board. Take time to familiarise yourself with the ship’s beautifully appointed spaces, then settle into your private balcony suite knowing your dedicated butler is on hand whenever needed, day or night.

Arrives On: 08 Mar 28

Day 15: Wat Hanchey (Cambodia)

Rise as the Scenic Spirit approaches Wat Hanchey, an ancient hilltop pagoda and monastery perched above the Mekong. Step ashore to learn about monastic life from those who live it, then take in the sweeping views across the river and surrounding countryside before cruising back to Kampong Cham. Scenic Freechoice:
This afternoon, choose your Scenic Freechoice experience. Join a guided visit to Phnom Pros, a mountaintop pagoda steeped in local legend and, more recently, the site of a Khmer Rouge killing field, a visit that carries both history and quiet reflection. Continue to Wat Nokor Bachey, a fascinating architectural layering of Angkorian era stonework and a working modern temple built within.

Alternatively, take a drive through Kampong Cham’s colonial era shop houses to a French-established rubber plantation, and on to a village known for its betel nut cultivation, an enduring part of Cambodian rural culture.

For those seeking a more remote encounter, Kho Penh Village on Pen Island is accessible only by local remork across a bridge, offering a glimpse into a way of life unchanged by the pace of the wider world. Should you prefer a quieter afternoon, your butler is delighted to arrange dinner served privately in your suite or on your balcony as the Scenic Spirit makes her way toward Angkor Ban beneath the Cambodian sky.

Arrives On: 09 Mar 28

Day 16: Angkor Ban (Cambodia)

Arrive in the riverside settlement of Angkor Ban, where wooden houses more than a century old stand as quiet survivors of the Khmer Rouge era. Explore their history with a local guide before visiting a nearby Buddhist pagoda. Scenic Enrich
Receive a traditional blessing from a resident monk, learn how to offer prayers within the pagoda, and participate in an alms ceremony, a contribution to the daily sustenance of the monks and a deeply respectful cultural exchange. Re-board the Scenic Spirit for lunch before cruising to the island of Oknha Tey, known locally as Silk Island and dedicated to the ancient art of silk weaving. A tuk tuk ride to the farm reveals the full process from silkworm to loom.

Back on board, learn the many ways to drape and wear the krama, the traditional Cambodian scarf. The wellness centre and beauty salon are available for those seeking some quiet restoration, and complimentary laundry facilities are on hand ahead of a Scenic Sundowners cocktail reception on the Sun Deck as the Scenic Spirit approaches the illuminated skyline of Phnom Penh. This evening, a cultural performance by the Cambodian Student and Children’s Organisation provides a warm and uplifting close to the day.

Arrives On: 10 Mar 28

Day 17: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

Phnom Penh holds its history with dignity, and this morning’s Scenic Freechoice invites you to engage with it meaningfully. Scenic Freechoice:
Visit the Killing Fields and the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, a former school and later a prison during the Khmer Rouge regime, for a moving and essential account of Cambodia’s most turbulent period and the resilience of its people.

Alternatively, a hands-on Cambodian cooking class begins at the city’s bustling market, selecting ingredients with a local chef before preparing and sharing a lunch of traditional flavours.

Those wishing to take in the city’s fabric at street level may choose a remork tour through Phnom Penh’s French colonial quarter, finishing at the Art Deco Central Market, a striking building with a bright yellow façade and a labyrinth of stalls within. Return to the Scenic Spirit for lunch, with the afternoon at leisure. This evening, a Scenic Sundowners experience takes you out after dark for a city lights tour of Phnom Penh, with a private visit and tasting at a local rum distillery as the centrepiece.

Arrives On: 11 Mar 28

Day 18: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

Begin the morning with an included visit to Phnom Penh’s Royal Palace and the Silver Pagoda within. Set magnificently on the riverfront, this gilded complex has served as the official royal residence since the 1860s and remains one of Cambodia’s most impressive landmarks. Return to the Scenic Spirit and set course for the Vietnamese border.

The afternoon passage invites you to settle into the rhythm of river life. The Scenic Spirit library is a peaceful retreat, the lounge a convivial space for conversation over a glass of wine, and the pool a welcome respite from the warmth of the afternoon. As the ship clears immigration into Vietnam, the evening takes an unexpected turn — a festive themed dinner on the Sun Deck, complete with a lion dance performed by local artists as the Mekong carries you deeper into Vietnam.

Arrives On: 12 Mar 28

Day 19: Tân Châu (Vietnam)

Start the morning as you see fit, a session in the on-board gym, an early Tai Chi class or a quieter start in the sauna, before heading ashore to discover the character of Tan Chau. Scenic Freechoice:
Three Scenic Freechoice options open the region from different angles. At Tra Su Bird Sanctuary, a sampan glides through 850 hectares of protected wetland, flanked by mangroves and waterways that are home to more than 100 species of waterbirds.

On Evergreen Island, join local farmers for a morning of genuine discovery, then ride through the town in a xe loi, a three-wheeled bicycle rickshaw with roots in 19th-century French Indochina, before visiting the brightly hued Cao Dai Temple, a place of worship that draws on Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism and Confucianism in equal measure.

Alternatively, take a speedboat to Chau Doc to visit Tay An Temple at the foot of Sam

Mountain, its Indian and Islamic architectural influences making it a striking and singular sight, before a sampan journey along Vinh Te Canal for a riverfront perspective of the city. Back on board, the pool and a fresh cocktail offer a fitting close to the first full day in Vietnam as the Scenic Spirit sets course for Sa Dec.

Arrives On: 13 Mar 28

Day 20: Sa Déc (Vietnam)

Arrive in Sa Dec and step into one of the Mekong Delta's most atmospheric wet markets by sampan, a two-hour immersion into local trade where the morning wares range from fresh produce to live fish, frogs and snakes. Along the way, pass the ornate home of Mr Huynh Thuy Le, the Chinese merchant whose love affair with a young French woman inspired Marguerite Duras' celebrated novel L'Amant. Return to the Scenic Spirit for lunch as the ship moves downstream toward Cai Be. Scenic Freechoice:
This afternoon, your choice of Scenic Freechoice shapes the rest of the day. A sampan journey to Tan Phong Island reveals a patchwork of tropical fruit orchards across more than 1,000 lush hectares, with stops at a water hyacinth weaving workshop and a motorised buggy ride through the groves, before discovering the cottage industries of Cai Be where families handcraft rice paper and coconut-based sweets using generations-old methods.

Alternatively, drift by sampan to Le Longanier, a gracious French colonial restaurant set among mature trees, for a relaxed afternoon tea accompanied by live traditional music.

Those who prefer to stay on board are warmly welcomed to a cocktail and mocktail making class with the Scenic Spirit's bar team, using the freshest local ingredients. As the sun lowers over the delta, settle in to watch the ever-changing life of the Mekong River from the deck.

Arrives On: 14 Mar 28

Day 21: My Tho (Vietnam)

Departing My Tho, the Scenic Spirit enters the Cho Gao Canal, one of Vietnam's most significant arterial waterways connecting Tien Giang Province with Ho Chi Minh City. Spend the day on board watching the extraordinary volume of commercial traffic navigating this vital channel, with upwards of 1,800 vessels passing through each day. Cargo barges, fishing boats and local craft create a constantly shifting tableau of river life.

As the afternoon unfolds, find your preferred spot on deck, in the library or the cool of the lounge as the Scenic Spirit makes her way toward the city. By evening, the glow of Ho Chi Minh City appears along the riverbank. Due to Vietnamese customs regulations, guests remain on board tonight, but the view from the deck is a compelling one. Gather with your fellow guests and the crew for a farewell dinner, sharing stories that have accumulated over a remarkable cruise.

Arrives On: 15 Mar 28

Day 22: Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)

Bid a fond farewell to the Scenic Spirit and its crew this morning before commencing a city tour of Ho Chi Minh City. Visit the Reunification Palace, the former Presidential Palace of South Vietnam made famous in 1975 when tanks breached its gates to bring the War of Independence to its close, before taking an orientation walk around your hotel and checking in to the historic Caravelle Saigon. Situated in the heart of District One directly opposite the Opera House, this iconic address has been at the centre of the city's story for more than six decades. Scenic Freechoice Dining:
This evening, your Scenic Freechoice dining puts the city's most celebrated culinary experiences within reach. For those who want to feel the full energy of Saigon after dark, a Vespa ride through the exhilarating streets stops at the best local food haunts with complimentary drinks throughout.

Alternatively, dine at the elegant Mandarine Restaurant, styled on the imperial courts of Hue and serving refined individual Vietnamese dishes.

Noir Dining in the Dark offers something genuinely different, a restaurant dedicated to supporting the blind and visually impaired community where dining without sight heightens every other sense.

Those seeking a more relaxed evening may opt for a Vintage Jeep street food experience around the streets of Saigon, or dine at Buffet 19 within the hotel.

Arrives On: 16 Mar 28

Day 23: Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)

After breakfast, travel to the Cu Chi Tunnels and spend the morning learning about the development and establishment of this hidden covered tunnel network that the Viet Cong soldiers hid in for months on end. Return to the city for a Pho lunch with the remainder of the afternoon at leisure.

Later explore the Reunification Palace, the former Presidential House of South Vietnam which become famous in 1975 with images of tanks crashing through its gates leading to the South's surrender and end of the War of Independence. Enjoy tonight's farewell dinner with your fellow travellers.

Arrives On: 17 Mar 28

Day 24: Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)

After check out head to the airport as you get ready to depart Vietnam for your homeland or extended travels. Leave with a full camera and stunning memories to treasure. Rivers and waterways are subject to variations in water levels. While every effort is made to adhere to the planned itinerary, changes in river conditions, ad hoc local government regulations or local festivities may require journey modifications. These will be made based on the advice of local authorities or for safety reasons. Hotels are indicative and are subject to change. Please note: Preview itinerary subject to change.

Arrives On: 18 Mar 28

For more information on this cruise, please call +44 (0)1202 767926.

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