



Cruise Details

Name:	Essence of Vietnam, Cambodia & Luxury Mekong
Reference:	SCENICVIMC020525-1
Operator:	Scenic River Cruises
Cruise Type:	River
Cruise Rating:	Luxury
Ship:	Scenic Spirit
Regions:	Mekong
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Departs On:	02 May 25
Departs From:	Hanoi
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Arrives On:	23 May 25
Arrives At:	Siem Reap
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Cruise Nights:	21
Total Vacation Days:	22

Itinerary

Day 1: Hanoi (Vietnam)

Welcome to vibrant Vietnam, a world of colour, culture and food. Enjoy the day at leisure and settle into a two night Special Stay at your iconic hotel. This colonial 'grand old lady' of Hanoi boasts luxury rooms and amenities with an exceptional staff to cater your needs and comforts.

Arrives On: 02 May 25

Day 2: Hanoi (Vietnam)

Rise and shine to a day of exploration in this nostalgic city with your first Scenic Freechoice.

Freechoice: Choose to visit the History Museum and Hoa Lo Prison. The National Museum of Vietnamese History displays monumental components stretching across every period. Housed in a colonial French building completed in 1932, the design incorporated French colonial and traditional Vietnamese architecture. Continue to

Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, which was used by the French for political prisoners, and later by North Vietnam for prisoners during the Vietnam War. Alternatively, visit Ho Chi Minh Quarter and his Mausoleum, the resting place of Ho Chi Minh himself before visiting the Temple of Literature, originally built in 1070 as a university dedicated to Confucius, scholars and sages. Thirdly, visit the ancient village of Bat Trang, a traditional porcelain and pottery community. Interactively learn the intricate steps involved in making these ceramic works of art. Afterwards at a house where locals worship their ancestors, a local elder explains the unique aspects of Vietnamese culture and its spiritual beliefs. Conclude the trip by learning all about Bánh Cuốn or rice pancakes, a dish of northern Vietnam that you'll enjoy as part of a tasty self-made lunch of local specialties.

Enjoy a "green" electric car tour through Hanoi's old quarter to tonight's Enrich activity.

Enrich

For your Enrich Activity, attend a customary performance of Hanoi's famous water puppets. As a VIP ticket holder, you will have premium seating as well as the opportunity to learn the secrets behind this illusionary show thanks to your special backstage pass.

Arrives On: 03 May 25

Day 3: Hanoi (Vietnam)

After breakfast, checkout of your luxury accommodation and begin your four-hour journey to Halong Bay. Along the way you will drive through the prosperous farmlands of the Red River Delta before joining a two-night cruise onboard the Au Co for an awe-inspiring trip through the picturesque waters of this spectacular World Heritage-listed icon.

This stunning vessel provides a first-class experience from beginning to end. The luxurious features and suites allow a comfortable and exquisite way to explore Halong Bay reaching areas of the bay far beyond the day trippers and overnight cruises.

Arrives On: 04 May 25

Day 3: Cát Bà Island (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 04 May 25

Day 4: Cát Bà Island (Vietnam)

After breakfast, enjoy a Tai Chi lesson on the Sun Deck as the ship sails deeper into the National Park. Take control and jump into a kayak to paddle your way through a limestone cave system, and later take a bike ride on Cat Ba Island. Cat Ba Island has to be one of the hidden beauties of the region. Twined with jungle and wildlife, the island remains mainly untouched from large development.

After your adventure ashore head back to the ship to enjoy an exclusive to Scenic guests Sundowners activity whilst at anchor. Soak up the aromas in a wine tasting set against the backdrop of the karst Islands at sunset. Later, after enjoying the fine

local cuisine in the onboard restaurant, try your hand at some squid fishing from the boat.

Arrives On: 05 May 25

Day 5: Cát Bà Island (Vietnam)

Relax during your morning cruise back to the harbour. After stopping for lunch and shopping en-route back to Hanoi, arrive back for another night at your hotel. Later join a historical bunker tour at the hotel to learn about its place in the history of this capital city, a history that spans over 1000 years.

Freechoice Dining: Tonight, you have a choice of venues for your dinner through Scenic's Freechoice. Dine in house at the La Terrace at your hotel, or situated in the splendid surroundings of Hanoi's French quarter, near Hoan Kiem Lake and the Opera House, dine at the historic La Table Hanoi Restaurant located in the old Press Club, giving you the chance to experience traditional French dishes in a stylish and upbeat setting. For the more adventurous, ride tandem on the back on a Vespa with a guide for a foodie tour of Hanoi's Old Quarter, stopping at local food haunts for authentic Hanoi Street food with free flow drinks enabling you get a feel of the nightlife and vibe of the local Hanoi culture.

Arrives On: 06 May 25

Day 5: Hanoi (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 06 May 25

Day 6: Hanoi (Vietnam)

After breakfast, check-out and transfer to Hanoi Airport for your flight to Danang. Upon arrival continue south past Marble mountains to the ancient trading port town of Hoi An. Here enjoy a three night stay at your resort, which includes a daily spa journey as part of your stay.

Freechoice Dining: After you have settled into your little slice of heaven, take the opportunity to enjoy a range of carefully selected dining venues for your Scenic Freechoice dining. Dine in the old town at either the Morning Glory Signature Restaurant or Quang's Kitchen Restaurant, styled on a nostalgic ancient Hoi An House. Alternatively at Lim Dining Restaurant try modern Italian cuisine nestled in the heart of Hoi An's Ancient Town.

Arrives On: 07 May 25

Day 6: Hoi An (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 07 May 25

Day 7: Hoi An (Vietnam)

Step back in time as you take a walking tour of Hoi An's World Heritage-listed Old Quarter, visiting the Japanese Bridge and central market where you can experience its incredible sights and aromas. Afterwards stop at the home of a former merchant to learn all about what life is like in the old town of Hoi An, before trying some local street food specialists of Hoi An such as Com Gà, Cao Lu and Bánh Mì at a local restaurant.

Enjoy the afternoon at your leisure, perhaps to get a massage using your included spa treatment, swim in the hotel's large resort style pool or continuing shopping in the old town, visiting the many tailors the town is known for.

Sunset Drinks
Before dinner attend your Sunset Drinks, a time to relax at a reception in the Blue Bar with included beer and wine.

Arrives On: 08 May 25

Day 8: Hoi An (Vietnam)

Start the day refreshed and ready to join your Scenic Freechoice activity.

Freechoice: The option of a half day drip to My Son provides a glimpse into the area's ancient history and a truly cultural highlight of Central Vietnam. The remaining structures of the Tower Temples provide an atmospheric image of the majesty of the Champa Kingdom. Stroll through the ruins and visit the small museum at the entrance to My Son before a local lunch.

The second option is to ride a bicycle to a local village to learn about the local lives of Hoi An's fishermen. Climb into a small, round bamboo fishing basket and learn to cast a fishing net in the traditional way. Then continue to an area filled with water palms and coconut trees and learn about the history of this part of Hoi An. Round off the adventure with a scenic boat trip back to Hoi An, savouring lunch on board.

Thirdly meet with the representative of Reaching Out, an NGO established in 2000 and gain an insight into their efforts in providing opportunities for people with disability to learn skills and gain meaningful employment. Undertake a Lantern Making Class at their workshop located at an old merchant house and get a glimpse into how this NGO helps the disabled to integrate fully with their communities and lead independent and fulfilling lives.

Alternatively, you have the choice of participating in a bicycle ride to a local farm in Tra Que Village. Soak in the beauties of the vegetable gardens and participate in the preparation of the land and fertilizing it with seaweed with the local farmers. You will learn how to prepare 'Tam Hu'u', a local delicacy before sitting down for a home cooked meal including 'Banh Xeo' a specialty savory pancake wrapped in rice paper.

After your morning of adventures, arrive back at your resort where you are then free to head back into town to explore on your own.

Arrives On: 09 May 25

Day 9: Hoi An (Vietnam)

This morning travel via the breath-taking Hai Van Pass to Hue, the former imperial capital. In the afternoon, enjoy a cyclo ride to Hue's Imperial Citadel before wandering through the grandeur of its ruins. Afterwards check into your hotel, your home for the night.

Enrich Traditional Vietnamese cuisine is served family style at the private Garden House accompanied by Royal Hue court music and a glass of wine.

Enrich During an inspiring visit to Duc Son Pagoda, talk with the nuns and learn how they are supporting their orphanage through different initiatives.

Arrives On: 10 May 25

Day 9: Hue (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 10 May 25

Day 10: Hue (Vietnam)

Your final day in Central Vietnam starts with breakfast before checking out and setting off on a morning excursion to the Mausoleum of Emperor Tu Duc, the last independent emperor of Imperial Vietnam before French colonisation. After exploring the grounds, head to the airport for your flight to Ho Chi Minh City.

After your flight to Ho Chi Minh City, transfer to your hotel for the next two nights. Before dinner take a leisurely walk around Notre Dame Cathedral, the Opera House, and the Central Post Office.

Arrives On: 11 May 25

Day 10: Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 11 May 25

Day 11: 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 lunch and the remainder of the afternoon at leisure.

Freechoice Dining: Tonight, choose your Scenic Free Choice dining option from an exhilarating Vespa ride at night as your experienced driver winds in and out the hectic traffic of the streets, stopping at all the best local spots for the most scrumptious Vietnamese cuisines. Sample the best authentic street food and an unlimited supply of drinks and eating however much your stomach desires. Alternatively, dine at Home Saigon restaurant, a themed Vietnamese restaurant that is a quintessentially Vietnamese house or for something totally different dine at Noir Dining in the Dark, a restaurant dedicated to helping the

blind and visually impaired community. Alternatively, see and taste the street food of Vietnam's commercial centre by vintage Jeep or diner at Buffet NINETEEN location at Caravelle Saigon.

Arrives On: 12 May 25

Day 12: Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)

After breakfast and checkout, visit the War Museum and Reunification Palace. The former Presidential House of South Vietnam 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.

After lunch in Ho Chi Minh City, a coach will transfer you to My Tho where the breathtaking Scenic Spirit awaits. Start with a cocktail reception hosted by your Cruise Director. Take a stroll around the decks to orientate yourself as to where all the amenities are. After your welcome dinner, settle into your private suite. At any time, your dedicated personal butler is available to assist with a nightcap and delivery of your preferred pillows. A calm 4-hour sail brings you to halt off Cai Be where the ship will anchor overnight.

Arrives On: 13 May 25

Day 12: Port information not found

Arrives On: 13 May 25

Day 13: Cái Bè (Vietnam)

Enjoy a full gourmet champagne breakfast before heading out on your chosen Scenic Freechoice excursion.

Freechoice: Choose to board a sampan, gliding through a floating market and soaking in the local life on your way to visit Cai Be before stopping at local cottage industries and a French colonial or traditional Vietnamese house. Alternatively take a sampan to savour a delicious morning tea at the Le Longanier, a French colonial house restaurant, where staff will welcome you with tea, coffee and a range of local fruit and snacks for your tasting. You can dive into a local experience with a band playing music and performing traditional Vietnamese songs. Alternatively, if you are enjoying the comforts of the luxurious Scenic Spirit, our highly skilled bar team is ready to welcome you for a hands-on cocktail/mocktail making class featuring fresh local ingredients. Create delicious favourites from the Scenic Spirit menu.

After your morning activity, head back to the ship for lunch whilst sailing to Sa Dec. You may wish to unwind in the Scenic Spirit library to learn more about each port you will visit and the exciting activities ahead. Or head to the heart of this ship, the Scenic Spirit Lounge, which is a great place to unwind with a glass of wine and meet other guests.

Later, upon arrival in Sa Dec, re-board your sampan to explore and interact with the sellers in the lively wet market where you will see live fish, frogs and even snakes.

This 2-hour exploration lets you dive deep into the local lifestyle. You can also see the home of Mr. Huynh Thuy Le who inspired Marguerite Duras' novel *L'Amant*, a story of tragic love told by your entertaining expert.

After returning to the ship, you will have time to take an evening dip in the pool overlooking the Mekong as the sun sets. The ship will set sail after your arrival back on board for the 6-hour journey to Tan Chau. After dinner, retire in your suite for a restful cruise up the Mekong River.

Arrives On: 14 May 25

Day 13: Sa Déc (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 14 May 25

Day 14: Tân Châu (Vietnam)

You may wish to start your day with some exercise in the on board gym, try stretching at the early morning yoga class or relax in the sauna before setting off to a Scenic Freechoice excursion of your choosing in the areas surrounding Tan Chau.

Freechoice: A prime example of leaving the city life behind will be found at Tra Su Bird Sanctuary in Tra Su Forest where you travel by sampan through endless waterways flanked by mangroves and lush greenery. This eco reserve spans 850 hectares and is known as an ecological haven for fauna and flora, with more than 100 species of water birds known to reside here.

If you would like to experience the community side of Vietnam, look no further than Evergreen Island for a morning of discovery about the local farmers. Back in Tan Chau, experience a ride in a Xe Loi. This commonly used form of transportation in rural Vietnam will take you to the recently renovated Cao Dai temple. The religion of Cao Dai is a syncretic, monotheistic religion established in southern Vietnam in the city of Tây Ninh in 1926. Here, you will learn more about the mix of ideas that form the basis of this fascinating religion.

Your third Scenic Freechoice excursion to choose from is boarding a speedboat to visit Chau Doc, a major city in the Mekong Delta. Upon arrival, continue on board a coach to visit Tay An temple, which is a mixture of Indian and Islamic style architecture located at the foot of Sam Mountain. Then board another sampan to visit Vinh Te canal and view life along the riverfront of Chau Doc, stop at a family-operated fish farm and then return to the Scenic Spirit.

After lunch upon your arrival back on board, enjoy sailing to the Vietnamese and Cambodian border. Some down time is a great way to relax and what better way to do that than heading to the Wellness Centre or Beauty Salon for a bit of pampering. Whilst the ship clears immigration into Cambodia at the border, you will experience a fantastically themed dinner on board Scenic Spirit along with a lion dance performed by locals on the expansive Sun Deck. Settle in for an overnight sail towards Phnom Penh, bidding farewell to Vietnam.

Arrives On: 15 May 25

Day 14: Port information not found

Arrives On: 15 May 25

Day 15: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

Welcome to Cambodia, arriving into the capital of Phnom Penh early this morning. Soak in Cambodia's rich history; from the food, the people, and the remarkable temples that have stood for thousands of years. After breakfast, it will be time to head into Phnom Penh.

Freechoice: Your Scenic Freechoice excursions provide the option to journey to the Killing Fields and tour Tuol Sleng Prison. These locations are a sobering reminder of the terrors unleashed by the Khmer Rouge regime. Although not a delightful tour, visiting these monuments unlocks the keys to understanding the development of this country. You will then return to Scenic Spirit for lunch.

The second Scenic Freechoice excursion today is a hands-on cooking class. Take a trip to the local market with a local chef to purchase your ingredients. Head back to the kitchen to cook your own lunch, testing out the styles and flavours of the Cambodian cuisine.

The third option is to travel by Remok, a local style of Tuk Tuk to visit the French architecture and history of Phnom Penh. Finish this tour with a stop at the unique designed Central Market for some shopping. At the conclusion of this choice, you can head back to the Scenic Spirit for lunch.

The remainder of the afternoon is at your leisure.

Sunset Drinks Later this evening revel in our Phnom Penh by City Lights tour, giving you an insight to the nightlife of the capital before stopping at a distillery for an exclusive Sundowners tour and tasting behind closed doors.

Arrives On: 16 May 25

Day 16: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

Board your coach for the short drive to the former capital of Cambodia, Oudong. Witness the life of the monks and nuns who reside at the monastery and if you are lucky, you may be able to join in one of the many festivals and customs often held here. Experience the opulent side of Phnom Penh this afternoon at the Royal Palace with the famous Silver Pagoda, during your included visit to this must-see attraction. This evening, you may wish to dress up for the Scenic Sunset Drinks cocktail reception on the Sun Deck against the backdrop of Phnom Penh's lights. Enjoy the passing scenery and panoramic views as the ships sets sail towards Oknha Tey, commonly known as Silk Island.

Sunset Drinks Cocktail reception on the sundeck.

Arrives On: 17 May 25

Day 16: Oudong (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 17 May 25

Day 17: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

This morning we explore the island of Oknha Tey, dedicated to the art of silk weaving. Travel by tuk tuk to the farm and learn about the process of silk production. Return to Scenic Spirit for lunch and some free time. You may wish to socialise by the pool with a refreshing cocktail and swim.
Next port after lunch is Angkor Ban. Explore its historical rural wooden houses, which survived the Khmer Rouge and visit a school that teaches English to the local students after their regular school lessons. Back on board, continue sailing to Kampong Cham. Immerse yourself in local culture with our team by learning how to make and wear the Cambodian scarf.

Arrives On: 18 May 25

Day 17: Angkor Ban (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 18 May 25

Day 18: Kampong Cham (Cambodia)

Meet the novice monks at Wat Hanchey, an ancient hilltop pagoda and monastery. Walk (or drive) to the top and soak in some of the best elevated views of the cruise.
Enrich
Receive a blessing from a monk and learn how to pray in a Buddhist pagoda before partaking in a ceremony, which contributes to the daily meal of the resident monks.
Freechoice: Back in Kampong Cham, your Scenic Freechoice excursions this afternoon provides the chance to learn about the history and industries of the area. First option is to learn about the local folklore with stops at Phnom Pros (Man Hill and Wat Nokor). Phnom Pros was part of a traditional local legend but more recently was used as a Killing Field during the Khmer Rouge era. The temple now features a Buddha garden and is home to a local troop of monkeys. Wat Nokor Bachey is a unique architectural experiment blending an Angkorian era temple with a new temple built inside it. This enriching experience can be completed in under 2 hours leaving the rest of the day to either explore independently or enjoy the luxurious facilities located on Scenic Spirit.
Alternatively explore Kampong Cham's history and industry with a drive through past shop houses, remnants of the French colonial era and the large Central Market. Visit a local rubber plantation established by the French, followed by a tour to view the processing of the raw rubber at a rubber factory before stopping at a village known for growing betel nut, a popular item in Cambodian culture.
Cambodia is known for its villages so your third option is to visit Kho Penh Village. Only accessible by local remork and located on Pen (Bamboo) Island, across the bamboo bridge / ferry from Kampong Cham, this remote village gives a good insight into the simple rural lifestyle of farmers in Cambodia.
Back on board Scenic Spirit, enjoy some time to relax

and overlook the gorgeous sunset of the Cambodian skyline before your engaging farewell dinner with the crew.

Arrives On: 19 May 25

Day 18: Kampong Cham (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 19 May 25

Day 19: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 20 May 25

Day 20: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

The second day of your Siem Reap exploration starts with a delicious champagne buffet breakfast at the hotel.

Freechoice: As part of Scenic's Freechoice you have multiple options to choose from.

Explore the 10th-century Banteay Srei Temple; a temple commonly referred to as the Ladies Temple because of its pinkish sandstone and dedication to the Hindu god Shiva. Afterwards visit the Landmine Museum, founded in 1997 with the aim to make the country safe through the removal of mines.

Visit Senteurs d'Angkor workshop: try your hand at producing your own local souvenir. Through different hands-on workstations, discover how the artisans make by hand soap with coconut oil, natural cosmetics, subtly scented balms, aromatic candles and local spices in traditional ways.

Alternatively, if you have enjoyed being on the water, sail on Tonle Sap Lake (July to February), a picturesque UNESCO biosphere reserve and dive deep into discovery when visiting and experiencing the life of a floating village.

Or take flight in a tethered balloon to discover the aerial beauties of the combination between traditional and modern Siem Reap. Enjoy the fresh air and take some remarkable photographs of the skyline as you lift into the skies of Siem Reap overlooking Angkor Wat below before visiting a Lotus Flower workshop. (Not available in November and December 2024).

Alternatively choose the Market Shopping Excursion, transfer to the central market by tuk tuk and shop independently.

Later this afternoon explore Angkor Wat itself, the largest religious monument in the world. Originally constructed as a Hindu temple dedicated to the god Vishnu for the Khmer Empire, it was gradually transformed into a Buddhist temple towards the end of the 12th century. An afternoon visit provides the perfect light for those idealic pictures of this colossal structure.

After the day of adventure, tonight is free to shop away at the night markets of Siem Reap or venture to Pub Street, both in walking distance or a short tuk tuk ride from your hotel.

Arrives On: 21 May 25

Day 21: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

Begin the day with an early morning Scenic Enrich, marvel at the sunrise over the magnificent Angkor Wat before moving to a special location near a temple for a scrumptious champagne breakfast with food prepared by an NGO supported local bakery school which also Scenic sponsors. After breakfast, visit the atmospheric, jungle covered Ta Prohm Temple, before stopping at Angkor Thom and the multi-faced Bayon Temple. Fortunately, you have the remainder of the afternoon to discover more of the Siem Reap markets or relax at your luxury hotel after your early morning start. The final Scenic Enrich is truly a special and exclusive one, one that is best experienced first hand to fully appreciate it's scale. Your tour directors and Scenic team will leave you in awe as you enter a private magical gala themed dinner at Prasat Kravan, a small 10th-century temple consisting of five reddish brick towers on a common terrace. Including free flow drinks and a show featuring Apsara dancers in front of the candle lit temple ruins, this evening brings a most incredible end to what is a remarkable trip.

Arrives On: 22 May 25

Day 22: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

It is time to bid farewell to your fellow travellers and Scenic team as you get ready to depart Cambodia for your homeland or extended travels. Transfer to the airport and leave with a full camera and stunning memories to treasure. This itinerary is a guide only and may be amended for operational reasons such as high and low water. Disruptions to cruising and alteration to itinerary arrangements may occur. Hotels are indicative and are subject to change.

Arrives On: 23 May 25

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

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