Cruise Details

Name:	Essence of Vietnam, Cambodia & Luxury Mekong
Reference:	SCENICVIMC070527-1
Operator:	Scenic River Cruises
Cruise Type:	River
Cruise Rating:	Luxury
Ship:	Scenic Spirit
Regions:	Mekong
Departs On:	07 May 27
Departs From:	Hanoi
Arrives On:	28 May 27
Arrives At:	Siem Reap
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. This colonial ‘grand old lady’ of Hanoi boasts luxury rooms and amenities with an exceptional staff to cater your needs and comforts.

Arrives On: 07 May 27

Day 2: Hanoi (Vietnam)

Rise and shine to a day of exploration in this nostalgic city with your first Scenic Freechoice. Scenic 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 Hoa Lo Prison, 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. Then discover the charm of the Old Quarter with its narrow alleys and stop at a local coffee shop to savour one of the local favourites, an egg coffee.

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 Cuon 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. Scenic 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: 08 May 27

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 new luxury Bhaya Soul 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: 09 May 27

Day 3: Cát Bà Island (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 09 May 27

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: 10 May 27

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 an overnight stay. 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. Scenic Freechoice Dining:
Tonight, you have a choice of venues for your dinner through Scenic's Freechoice.

Inspired by the comfort foods of Europe and the New World, enjoy a meal at Angelina, located within your hotel.

Or enjoy a family meal with a Hanoian family where you will spend an evening in a family home, sharing stories and learning about their life in the capital. Dine on traditional dishes prepared by your hosts and savour the authentic flavours of a home-cooked meal.

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: 11 May 27

Day 5: Hanoi (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 11 May 27

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. Scenic 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 on Vietnamese street food style dishes at Morning Glory Signature Restaurant or choose Mango Mango Restaurant nestled in the heart of Hoi An's Ancient Town.

Alternatively, nestled amongst the surrounding farmland, dine in the middle of rice paddies in a cosy and romantic setting whilst enjoying traditional Vietnamese and fusion cuisine at The Field Hoi An Restaurant and Bar.

Arrives On: 12 May 27

Day 6: Hoi An (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 12 May 27

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 try some local street food specialties of Hoi An such as Com Gà, Cao Lau and Bánh Mì at a local restaurant. The afternoon is 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. Scenic Sunset Drinks
Enjoy your Scenic Sundowners, a time to relax at a reception in the Blue Bar with included beer and wine.

Arrives On: 13 May 27

Day 8: Hoi An (Vietnam)

Start the day refreshed and ready to join your Scenic Freechoice activity. Scenic 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 hotel where you are then free to head back into town to explore on your own.

Arrives On: 14 May 27

Day 9: Hoi An (Vietnam)

This morning travel via the breath-taking Hai Van Pass to Hue, the former imperial capital. During an inspiring visit to Duc Son Pagoda, talk with the nuns and learn how they are supporting their orphanage through different initiatives, including the proceeds from your Vegetarian lunch at Tinh Tam Restaurant. In the afternoon, wander though the grandeur of Hue's Imperial Citadel ruins before enjoying a cyclo ride back to the hotel. Afterwards check into your hotel in Hue, your home for the night. Scenic Enrich
Traditional Vietnamese cuisine is served family style at the private Garden House accompanied by Royal Hue court music and a glass of wine.

Arrives On: 15 May 27

Day 9: Hue (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 15 May 27

Day 10: Hue (Vietnam)

Your final day in the centre of 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 historic hotel, your home 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: 16 May 27

Day 10: Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 16 May 27

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 a Pho lunch with the remainder of the afternoon at leisure. Scenic 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 Mandarine Restaurant, designed in the style of the Hue imperial court serving individual

Vietnamese dishes.

Or for something totally different dine at Noir Dining in the Dark, a restaurant dedicated to helping the blind and visually impaired community.

Other choices include experiencing the street food and bars of Saigon on a Vintage Jeep or enjoying the offerings at Buffet 19 at your hotel.

Arrives On: 17 May 27

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, 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, settling into your private suite does not mean you settle for service. At any time, your dedicated personal butler is free to swing by 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: 18 May 27

Day 12: Port information not found

Arrives On: 18 May 27

Day 13: Cái Bè (Vietnam)

Start the day with a full gourmet breakfast – complete with champagne – before heading out to explore Cai Be. Scenic Freechoice:
Choose to travel via sampan to Tan Phong, a small island located near Cai Be town that is rich in alluvial soil suitable for tropical fruit orchards all year round. With a total area of more than 1,000 hectares, surrounded by silted sandbanks, canals and a mild temperature, Tan Phong has long been a friendly destination for eco-tourism. On arrival, try a hands-on experience at a workshop specialised in weaving water hyacinth into artistic crafts. Board a motorised buggy for a ride through endless fruit orchards, stopping to enjoy the tropical fruits and interact with a farm owner. Reboard the sampan and cruise to Cái Bè town to discover the local cottage industry where families make rice-paper and sweets from pop-corn, pop-rice and coconut.

Alternatively take a sampan from the Scenic Spirit to savour a delicious afternoon 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.

If you would prefer to enjoy the

comforts of your ship, our highly skilled bar team is ready to welcome you to a hands-on cocktail/mocktail making class featuring fresh local ingredients. After your morning activity, head back to the ship for lunch whilst sailing to Sa Dec. Relax and soak in the beauty of the scenery, visit the on-board library to read up on future ports, or head to the Scenic Spirit lounge to unwind with fellow guests over a glass of wine. Later, upon arrival in Sa Dec, board your sampan once again to explore the lively wet market where you can meet the sellers and marvel at their wares, including live fish, frogs and even snakes. This two-hour exploration will take you deep into the local lifestyle. You can also see the grand home of Mr. Huynh Thuy Le, a Chinese merchant who inspired Marguerite Duras' novel L'Amant. Your expert guide will reveal the secrets behind this passionate tale of tragic love. After returning to the ship, and before dinner, marvel at a lion dance performed by locals on the expansive Sundeck. The ship will then set sail for the 6-hour journey to Tan Chau.

Arrives On: 19 May 27

Day 13: Sa Déc (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 19 May 27

Day 14: Tân Châu (Vietnam)

You may want to start with some exercise in the on-board gym, try stretching at the early morning yoga class or relax in the sauna. Then set off to discover the areas surrounding Tan Chau. Scenic Freechoice:
You could leave the city life behind at Tra Su Bird Sanctuary in Tra Su Forest. Travel by sampan through endless tranquil waterways, flanked by mangroves and lush greenery. This eco reserve spans 850 hectares and is an ecological haven for fauna and flora, home to more than 100 species of waterbirds.

Or experience a traditional way of life on Evergreen Island, joining local farmers for a morning of discovery. Back in Tan Chau, ride in a xe loi, a three-wheeled bicycle rickshaw that was introduced by the French in the 19th century and is a common form of transportation in rural Vietnam. Visit the recently renovated, brightly coloured Cao Dai temple. Caodaism is a new religion, established in 1926 in the southern Vietnamese city of Tây Ninh, and brings together beliefs and practices from Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism and Confucianism. Here, you will learn more about the mix of ideas that form the basis of this fascinating religion.

For your third choice, board a speedboat to visit Chau Doc, a major city in the Mekong Delta, and Tay An temple. Set at the foot of Sam Mountain, this elaborate temple is a mixture of Indian and Islamic architecture. Afterwards, board another sampan to visit Vinh Te canal and view life along the riverfront of Chau Doc, before stopping at a family-operated fish farm on your way back to 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. After the

ship clears immigration into Cambodia at the border, settle in for an overnight sail towards Phnom Penh, bidding farewell to Vietnam.

Arrives On: 20 May 27

Day 14: Port information not found

Arrives On: 20 May 27

Day 15: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

Welcome to Cambodia, arriving into the capital of Phnom Penh early this morning. After breakfast, it will be time to head out and explore the city. Scenic Freechoice:
You can choose to journey to the infamous Killing Fields and take a tour of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, housed inside a former prison. These sites are a sobering reminder of the terrors unleashed by the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s. This moving tour will give you a deeper insight into the tumultuous history of Cambodia and the resilience of its people.

Passionate foodies may like to choose a hands-on cooking class. Take a trip to the bustling market with a local chef to purchase your ingredients, then head back to the kitchen to cook your own lunch, testing out the styles and flavours of Cambodian cuisine.

Alternatively, travel by remok, a local style of tuk tuk, to explore the French architecture and history of Phnom Penh. Finish the tour with shopping at the Central Market, famed for its unique Art Deco design and bright yellow façade. At the conclusion of your tour, return to Scenic Spirit for lunch. The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure. Scenic Sunset Drinks
Later this evening, revel in our Phnom Penh by City Lights tour. You'll get to witness the nightlife of the capital before stopping at a local rum distillery for your exclusive Scenic Sundowners experience, including a private tour and tasting.

Arrives On: 21 May 27

Day 16: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

Board a bus this morning for the short drive to the ancient capital of Cambodia, Oudong. Here, experience the life of the monks and nuns who reside at the peaceful monastery. If you are lucky, you may be able to partake in one of the many festivals and traditional rituals often held here. After you return to the city, discover the opulence of Phnom Penh's Royal Palace and the famous Silver Pagoda within. Set on the riverfront, this dazzling palace was built in the 1860s and still serves as the official residence of the King of Cambodia. After returning to the ship and before setting sail, enjoy a cultural performance by the Cambodian Student and Children's Organisation. Scenic Sunset Drinks
Get an outfit ready for an evening of style with a Sundowner cocktail reception on the sundeck against

the backdrop of Phnom Penh’s lights and stunning scenery as the ships sets sail towards Oknha Tey, commonly known as Silk Island.

Arrives On: 22 May 27

Day 16: Oudong (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 22 May 27

Day 17: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

This morning, you will explore the island of Oknha Tey, dedicated to the art of silk weaving. Travel by traditional tuk tuk to the farm, meet the workers and learn about silk production. Return to Scenic Spirit for lunch and some free time. This could be the perfect opportunity to escape the heat of a South East Asian afternoon with a swim in the pool and a refreshing cocktail. After lunch, you will call at Angkor Ban, a small settlement where time stands still. Explore its historic wooden houses, which date back over 100 years and survived the destruction of the Khmer Rouge. You can also visit a local school that teaches English to the students alongside their regular lessons. Back on board, learn the many ways to wear a krama, the traditional Cambodian scarf, as the ship sails towards Kampong Cham.

Arrives On: 23 May 27

Day 17: Angkor Ban (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 23 May 27

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. Scenic Enrich
Receive a traditional blessing from a monk and learn how to pray in a Buddhist pagoda before partaking in an alms ceremony, which contributes to the daily meal of the resident monks. Sail back to Kampong Cham. Scenic Freechoice:
This afternoon, explore Kampong Cham and its surrounds. Choose to learn about local folklore at Phnom Pros, a mountaintop pagoda that has long been part of a traditional legend. Tragically, in more modern times, the site was used as a Killing Field by the Khmer Rouge. The temple now features a Buddha Garden and is home to a local troop of monkeys. Afterwards, visit Wat Nokor Bachey, a unique architectural experiment that blends an Angkorian era temple with a new temple built inside it.

Alternatively, explore Kampong Cham’s history and industry with a drive past shop houses, remnants of the French colonial era, and the large Central market. Visit a local rubber plantation

established by the French before stopping at a village known for growing betel nut, an important part of Cambodian culture.

Your third option today is a visit to Kho Penh Village. Located on Pen (Bamboo) Island, it’s only accessible by local remork after crossing by bamboo bridge or ferry from Kampong Cham. This remote village gives you a fascinating insight into the simple, rural lifestyle of farmers in Cambodia. Back on board you will have time to relax and overlook the gorgeous sunset of the Cambodian skyline before your engaging farewell dinner with the crew.

Arrives On: 24 May 27

Day 18: Kampong Cham (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 24 May 27

Day 19: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 25 May 27

Day 20: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

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

On another option visit Senteurs d'Angkor workshop to 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. 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: 26 May 27

Day 21: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

Scenic Enrich
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 a Scenic sponsored, NGO supported local bakery school. 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. Scenic Enrich
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: 27 May 27

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. Please note: Preview itinerary subject to change.

Arrives On: 28 May 27

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

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