Cruise Details

Name:	Essence of Vietnam, Cambodia & Luxury Mekong
Reference:	SCENICVIMC171227-1
Operator:	Scenic River Cruises
Cruise Type:	River
Cruise Rating:	Luxury
Ship:	Scenic Spirit
Regions:	Mekong
Departs On:	17 Dec 27
Departs From:	Hanoi
Arrives On:	07 Jan 28
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 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: 17 Dec 27

Day 2: Hanoi (Vietnam)

A full day to explore this nostalgic city, beginning with your first Scenic Freechoice. Scenic Freechoice:
Visit the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long and Hoa Lo Prison, a journey through the nation’s past across two very

different chapters of history.

Alternatively, spend the morning at Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum and the Temple of Literature, founded in 1070, then discover the charm of the Old Quarter over a celebrated egg coffee.

Those wanting a deeper cultural immersion can head to the ancient village of Bat Trang, a community devoted to traditional porcelain and pottery, where a local elder shares the spiritual beliefs of his community before a hands-on lunch of Bánh Cuon rice pancakes. Scenic Enrich
This evening, a green electric car winds through the Old Quarter to your Scenic Enrich: a VIP performance of Hanoi's world-famous water puppet theatre, with a special backstage pass to follow.

Arrives On: 18 Dec 27

Day 3: Hanoi (Vietnam)

After breakfast and checkout, the journey heads northeast through the fertile farmlands of the Red River Delta toward Halong Bay. Board the luxury Bhaya Soul for a two-night cruise among the iconic limestone karsts of this World Heritage-listed seascape, reaching areas of the bay that remain well beyond the reach of day cruises.

Arrives On: 19 Dec 27

Day 4: Ha Long Bay (Vietnam)

A Tai Chi lesson on the Sun Deck opens the morning as the ship sails deeper into the national park. Take to a kayak and paddle through a limestone cave system before a bike ride on Cat Ba Island, 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 at anchor, set against the silhouette of the karst islands at sunset. After dinner, round out the evening with the local tradition of squid fishing from the deck.

Arrives On: 20 Dec 27

Day 5: Ha Long Bay (Vietnam)

A leisurely morning cruise back to harbour before returning to Hanoi and a second night at the Sofitel Legend Metropole. Take part in a fascinating historical bunker tour beneath the hotel, a rarely seen chapter in the story of a city with more than 1,000 years of history. Scenic Freechoice Dining:
This evening, Scenic Freechoice dining offers a French-inspired dinner at the Metropole's own Angelina Restaurant, a home-cooked meal shared with a local Hanoian family, or a Vespa foodie tour through the lantern-lit streets of the Old Quarter with complimentary drinks throughout.

Arrives On: 21 Dec 27

Day 6: Hoi An (Vietnam)

Fly south to Danang and continue past the Marble Mountains to the ancient trading town of Hoi An, where three nights await at the Moire Hoi An, Vignette Collection by IHG, within easy walking distance of the old town markets. Scenic Freechoice Dining:
Tonight, Scenic Freechoice dining sets the tone: Vietnamese street food at Morning Glory Signature Restaurant, the warmly lit Mango Mango in the heart of the Ancient Town, or The Field, where tables are set among rice paddies and the cuisine blends Vietnamese tradition with a contemporary hand.

Arrives On: 22 Dec 27

Day 7: Hoi An (Vietnam)

A walking tour of the World Heritage-listed Old Quarter visits the Japanese Covered Bridge and central market, followed by lunch featuring the town’s signature dishes: Cao Lau, Com Gà and Bánh Mì.

The afternoon is yours – a 60-minute spa treatment (included for every guest), the hotel pool or the tailors’ quarter the town has been renowned for since the 16th century. Scenic Sunset Drinks
Scenic Sundowners at Ember & Sip Bar with included beer and wine ease the day toward evening.

Arrives On: 23 Dec 27

Day 8: Hoi An (Vietnam)

This morning choose from a range of Scenic Freechoice activities. Scenic Freechoice:
Head to the ancient Cham ruins of My Son for a glimpse into the majesty of the Champa Kingdom, including a local lunch. Alternatively, a bicycle ride to a fishing village leads to a bamboo basket boat experience and a sampan return through the water palms. Those drawn to community may choose a lantern-making class with the Reaching Out NGO at a historic merchant house, or a Vietnamese cooking class at Red Bridge Cooking School on the banks of the Thu Bon River. The afternoon is yours to spend as you please.

Arrives On: 24 Dec 27

Day 9: Hue (Vietnam)

Travel via the breathtaking Hai Van Pass to Hue, the former imperial capital. A vegetarian lunch at Tinh Tam Restaurant at Duc Son Pagoda supports the nuns’ orphanage before the afternoon brings a wander through the grandeur of the Imperial Citadel ruins and a cyclo ride back through the city streets to the Silk Path Grand Hue Hotel. Scenic Enrich
This evening, traditional Vietnamese cuisine is served family-style in a private garden house, accompanied by Royal Hue court music performed as it has been for

centuries, and a welcoming glass of wine.

Arrives On: 25 Dec 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 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: 26 Dec 27

Day 10: Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 26 Dec 27

Day 11: Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)

The morning is spent at the Cu Chi Tunnels, where more than 250 kilometres of underground passages dug by hand during the war reveal themselves with staggering ingenuity. Return to the city for a Pho lunch, with the afternoon at leisure. Scenic Freechoice Dining:
This evening, Scenic Freechoice dining offers a Vespa night tour stopping at the city’s finest street food haunts with complimentary drinks; a refined dinner at Mandarine Restaurant styled on the imperial courts of Hue; a table at Noir Dining in the Dark, dedicated to supporting the visually impaired community; a vintage jeep street food experience; or Buffet 19 at the hotel.

Arrives On: 27 Dec 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: 28 Dec 27

Day 12: Port information not found

Arrives On: 28 Dec 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, you will have time to take an evening dip in the pool overlooking the Mekong as the sun sets. Before dinner, experience a fantastically themed dinner on board the Spirit along with a lion dance performed by locals on the expansive Sundeck. The ship will set sail after your arrival back on board for the 6-hour journey to Tan Chau.

Arrives On: 29 Dec 27

Day 13: Sa Déc (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 29 Dec 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 making 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: 30 Dec 27

Day 14: Port information not found

Arrives On: 30 Dec 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 remork, a local style of tuk tuk, to explore the French architecture, backstreets 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 Sunset Drinks experience, including a private tour and tasting.

Arrives On: 31 Dec 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.

Get 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: 01 Jan 28

Day 16: Oudong (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 01 Jan 28

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 Southeast 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. Back on board, learn the many ways to wear a krama, the traditional Cambodian scarf, as the ship sails towards Kampong Cham.

Arrives On: 02 Jan 28

Day 17: Angkor Ban (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 02 Jan 28

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: 03 Jan 28

Day 18: Kampong Cham (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 03 Jan 28

Day 19: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 04 Jan 28

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:
Your Scenic Freechoice takes the morning in any direction: the rose-pink sandstone of Banteay Srei

temple and the Landmine Museum; artisan workshops at Senteurs d’Angkor; a village walk through Ta Brak; life on the Tonle Sap floating villages (July to February); or a behind-the-scenes tour of the Angkor Wildlife Aquarium. The afternoon belongs to Angkor Wat itself, best seen as the afternoon light plays across its galleries and towers. 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: 05 Jan 28

Day 21: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

Scenic Enrich
An early departure brings its own reward as the sunrise shifts across Angkor Wat’s moat, followed by a champagne breakfast prepared by a Scenic-supported NGO bakery school near the temples. The morning continues through the jungle-enveloped Ta Prohm and the many-faced Bayon at Angkor Thom. Scenic Enrich
The afternoon is free before the final Scenic Enrich brings the Siem Reap chapter to a close: a private gala dinner within the grounds of the 10th-century Prasat Kravan temple, Apsara dancers performing by candlelight among the ruins with complimentary drinks throughout.

Arrives On: 06 Jan 28

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. 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: 07 Jan 28

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