Cruise Details

Name:	Essence of Cambodia, Vietnam & Luxury Mekong
Reference:	SCENICVIMC180327-2
Operator:	Scenic River Cruises
Cruise Type:	River
Cruise Rating:	Luxury
Ship:	Scenic Spirit
Regions:	Mekong
Departs On:	18 Mar 27
Departs From:	Hanoi
Arrives On:	08 Apr 27
Arrives At:	Ho Chi Minh City
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: 18 Mar 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 Imperial Citadel and Hoa Lo Prison. The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that represents Hanoi’s political and cultural centre for over 1,000 years. The site features extensive archaeological remains, royal foundations, ancient artifacts and exhibition

spaces illustrating Vietnam's history from the imperial era through to the colonial period. 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 (viewed from outside, closed on Mondays & Fridays), 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: 19 Mar 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: 20 Mar 27

Day 3: Cát Bà Island (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 20 Mar 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: 21 Mar 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 another night at tyour 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. Scenic Freechoice Dining:
Tonight, you have a choice of venues for your dinner through Scenic's Freechoice.

Angelina Restaurant, located within your hotel, showcases the vibrant flavours of Southern Europe and the Mediterranean, offering a sidewalk terrace and lively bar to an upstairs dining experience.

Or indulge in Vietnamese dishes with a meal with a Hanoian Family. Experience Hanoi the local way. Spend an evening in a family home, sharing stories and learning about their life in the capital. Dine on traditional dishes prepared by the 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: 22 Mar 27

Day 5: Hanoi (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 22 Mar 27

Day 6: Hanoi (Vietnam)

Enjoy your morning at leisure in Hanoi before flying to Hue, the former imperial capital in the afternoon. Check into your hotel, 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: 23 Mar 27

Day 6: Hue (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 23 Mar 27

Day 7: Hue (Vietnam)

Your days 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. Enjoy a cyclo ride to Hue's Imperial Citadel before wandering though the grandeur of it's ruins.

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. After lunch, travel along the breath-taking Hai Van Pass to the ancient town of Hoi An where you will enjoy a three-night stay, walking distance to Hoi An markets. 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: 24 Mar 27

Day 7: Hoi An (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 24 Mar 27

Day 8: 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.

Enjoy the afternoon at your leisure, 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 Scenic Sunset Drinks, a time to relax at Ember & Sip Bar with included beer and wine.

Arrives On: 25 Mar 27

Day 9: Hoi An (Vietnam)

Start the day refreshed and ready to join your Scenic Freechoice activity. Scenic Freechoice: The option of a half day trip 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 Vietnamese cooking class at Red Bridge Cooking School, located along the banks of the Thu Bon River, just 3 kms from central Hoi An. 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: 26 Mar 27

Day 10: Hoi An (Vietnam)

Your final day in the centre of Vietnam starts with breakfast before checking out and setting off to the airport in Danang to fly to the regional city of Siem Reap. Siem Reap is a split in time with ancient and traditional architecture weaved between the modern developments. Step back in time at your hotel, a definition of luxury and your historical home for the next three nights in Siem Reap. This brilliantly appointed accommodation is styled with a mix of French inspired architecture, local interior furnishings, the attentive staff provide a service beyond expectations, and brilliant amenities fit for royalty.

Arrives On: 27 Mar 27

Day 10: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 27 Mar 27

Day 11: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

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.

Other options include a 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 or undertake a village

walk through Ta Brak Village.

Alternatively, if you have enjoyed being on the water, sail on Tonle Sap (July to February), a picturesque UNESCO biosphere reserve and experiencing the life of a floating village or visit the Angkor Wildlife Aquarium and learn all about the Mekong eco system with a special behind-the-scenes tour where you can see animal care in action, participate in feeding sessions, and even meet some park stars up close.

Visit the Angkor Wildlife and Aquarium for an in-depth exploration of Tonle Sap Lake's aquatic ecosystem. Guided by a marine biologist, learn about the lake's species, environmental threats and the conservation efforts dedicated to preserving this unique environment.

You might like to experience a glimpse of rural Cambodian life during a visit to Ta Brak Village. Explore the vibrant market and immerse yourself in villager's daily life. Share a meal with friendly locals, learn about fish smoking and be blessed in a traditional Buddhist ceremony. 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.

This evening head to the colourful Cambodian Phare Circus where your VIP premium reserved seating awaits you. Beautifully dressed performers style a stunning show that is more than just a circus. The performers use theatre, music, dance and modern circus arts to tell uniquely Cambodian stories; historical, folk and modern.

Arrives On: 28 Mar 27

Day 12: 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
This 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.

Arrives On: 29 Mar 27

Day 13: Siem Reap (Cambodia)

Discover the rural side of Cambodia as your coach will transfer you to Kampong Cham where the breathtaking Scenic Spirit awaits. Before arriving, you will be visiting the stunning Khmer bridge at Kampong Kdei, Kampong Thom and a stone cutters village.

After boarding, begin your cruise in style 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.

Arrives On: 30 Mar 27

Day 13: Port information not found

Arrives On: 30 Mar 27

Day 14: Kampong Cham (Cambodia)

Awake as you approach Wat Hanchey, an ancient hilltop pagoda and monastery. After learning about life as a novice monk from one of the locals, wander around the complex and admire the view over the Mekong River and surrounding countryside. 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. If you have not had a chance to enjoy your spectacular suite on the Scenic Spirit and are not feeling like socialising, it might be time to unwind and dine in private. Your dedicated butler can arrange for a beautiful meal to be served in your room or on the balcony as you enjoy the fresh air of the Mekong, overlooking the gorgeous sunset of the Cambodian skyline as you sail to Angkor Ban.

Arrives On: 31 Mar 27

Day 14: Kampong Cham (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 31 Mar 27

Day 15: Angkor Ban (Cambodia)

Upon arrival in Angkor Ban, explore its historical rural wooden houses, which survived the Khmer rouge and visit a local pagoda where a segregated and solemn excursion at a Buddhist pagoda awaits. 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. Afterwards reboard Scenic Spirit for lunch and sail downstream to 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 and some free time. The option to immerse yourself in local culture with our team is available by learning how to make and wear the Cambodian scarf.

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. Get ready for an evening of style with a Scenic Sunset Drinks cocktail reception on the sundeck against the backdrop of Phnom Penh’s lights and stunning scenery as we approach the capital of Cambodia.

Later before dinner, enjoy a cultural performance by the Cambodian Student and Children’s Organisation.

Arrives On: 01 Apr 27

Day 15: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 01 Apr 27

Day 15: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

Arrives On: 01 Apr 27

Day 16: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

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 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: 02 Apr 27

Day 17: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

Even the most developing countries have a standard of luxury and opulence. You can experience this this morning at the Royal Palace with the famous Silver Pagoda within, on your included visit to this must-see attraction. Set on the riverfront, this dazzling palace was built in the 1860s and still serves as the official residence of the King of Cambodia. Upon returning to the ship set sail and say goodbye to Phnom Penh as we sail to the Cambodian and Vietnamese border.

A relaxing afternoon of sailing will allow you to take advantage of the many exclusive facilities on the Scenic Spirit. Sometimes everyone needs a break from the hustle and bustle of this exciting cruise and for those bookworms, kick back in the Scenic Spirit library, or head to the heart of this ship, which is the Scenic Spirit lounge, a great place to unwind with a glass of wine. Obtain some background knowledge of each port and get the key information for the exciting activities ahead. With travelling throughout South-East Asia comes the heat and what better way to cool down than socialising with a fresh cocktail and swimming in the pool all or just settle into the private comfort of your luxury suite and private balcony.

After clearing immigration into Vietnam at the border, you will experience a fantastically themed dinner on board the Spirit along with a lion dance performed by locals on the expansive Sundeck.

Arrives On: 03 Apr 27

Day 17: Port information not found

Arrives On: 03 Apr 27

Day 17: Tân Châu (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 03 Apr 27

Day 18: Tân Châu (Vietnam)

You may want to start the day with some exercise in the on-board gym, an early morning yoga class or relax your muscles 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. What better way to end the first day in Vietnam than a delicious cocktail by the pool on board the Spirit along with a great view of the Mekong as you set sail for Sa Dec.

Arrives On: 04 Apr 27

Day 19: Sa Déc (Vietnam)

When you arrive 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 your morning excursion, head back to the Scenic Spirit for lunch whilst sailing downstream to Cai Be. Scenic Freechoice:
This afternoon enjoy your choice from the Scenic Freechoice activities.

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.

Arrives On: 05 Apr 27

Day 19: Cái Bè (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 05 Apr 27

Day 20: Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)

Arrives On: 06 Apr 27

Day 21: 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: 07 Apr 27

Day 22: 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.

Arrives On: 08 Apr 27

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