Travel with the World Affairs Council of Charlotte
A Trip of a Lifetime through Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand
April 23rd – May 8th, 2016 (16 days)

Please contact Ljubomir (L.J.) Stambuk, President & CEO of the World Affairs Council of Charlotte via email or call 704-687-7760 if you have questions or need more information about the trip.

If you’re interested in traveling with the World Affairs Council of Charlotte, confirm your interest via email or call 704-687-7762.

A deposit of $500 is due no later than February 12th, 2016 to secure your seat for the trip. Full payment is due no later than Saturday, February 20th, 2016.

Day 1: Saturday, April 23rd, 2016  Charlotte / Atlanta / Seoul

Depart from Charlotte-Douglass International Airport via Delta Airline at 8:15 a.m. Arrive in Atlanta at 9:35 a.m. before connecting with Korean Airline Airbus 380 nonstop service to Seoul, Korea.

Departure from Atlanta via Korean Airlines is at 12:20 p.m. with arrival in Seoul the following afternoon at
4:20 p.m.

Time-appropriate meals and inflight entertainment offered en route.

**Day 2: Sunday, April 24th, 2016**

Arrive in Seoul at 4:20 p.m. Connect to Korean Air departing Seoul at 6:45 p.m. Arrival time in Hanoi is 9:30 p.m.

**Welcome to Vietnam.**

Travelers will meet the tour manager before being transported to the [Sofitel Legend Metropole](https://www.sofitel.com/en/hotels-asia-pacific/hanoi-sofitel-legend-metropole.html).

*Step back into history at Hanoi's most storied 5-star hotel. A Grand Dame of Southeast Asia, Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi welcomes guests to experience her colonial grandeur and timeless elegance.*

*Located steps from the Opera House in Hanoi's French Quarter, this legendary property brings guests into intimate contact with the opulence of another era. Surround yourself in heritage as you stroll stately corridors and explore a dramatic past. Behind its classical white façade, green shutters, original wrought iron details, and stately wood paneling reside over a century of stories. Stand on the walkways that grace its lush courtyard lawn and immerse yourself in the hotel’s rich traditions.*

Spend the next three nights at this beautiful and centrally located 5-star hotel. Our travelers will enjoy the luxury and comfort of being in [Premium Rooms in the Opera Wing](https://www.sofitel.com/en/hotels-asia-pacific/hanoi-sofitel-legend-metropole.html).

Evening at your leisure due to the late arrival time into Hanoi.

**Overnight at the Sofitel Legend Metropole (5-Star)**
Day 3: Monday, April 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2016

Complimentary breakfast included.

Independent Lunch

After a leisurely morning relaxing in the hotel and an early lunch, begin your day in Hanoi visiting the Ho Chi Minh Stilt House. Set in a well-tended garden, this was the simple two-room dwelling where Ho Chi Minh lived intermittently from 1958 until his final days in 1969. The house, preserved as he left it, contains much of Ho's legendary personal effects and is an interpretation of a traditional rural northwest Vietnamese structure.

Showcasing sweeping boulevards, tree-fringed lakes and ancient pagodas, Hanoi is Asia’s most atmospheric capital. Just don’t expect a sleepy ambience. It’s an energetic city on the move, and Hanoi’s ambitious citizens are determined to make up for lost time. Read More

Continue on to visit the One Pillar Pagoda, a historic Buddhist temple in Hanoi. It is regarded as one of Vietnam’s most iconic pagodas reflecting exceptional architectural splendor. Dating from the 11\textsuperscript{th} century, this monument was rebuilt after being destroyed by the French in 1954.

The One Pillar Pagoda was originally built by the Emperor Ly Thai Tong who ruled from 1028 to 1054. According to the annals, the heirless emperor dreamed that he met Quan The Am Bo Tat, the Goddess of Mercy, who handed him a male child. Ly Thai Tong then married a young peasant girl and had a son and heir by her. As a way of expressing his gratitude for this event, he constructed a pagoda here in 1049. Read More

Next up on this afternoon’s tour is a visit to the Temple of Literature, a peaceful series of walled courtyards and graceful gateways and one of the best examples of well-preserved traditional Vietnamese architecture. Founded in 1070 and dedicated to Confucius, this was also the site of Vietnam’s first university.
Head to the **Hoan Kiem Lake** and **Ngoc Son Temple**, located in the heart of Hanoi.

*For centuries, Hanoians have been fascinated by the mysterious turtle that lives underneath the tranquil waters of Hoan Kiem Lake, passing down stories about the beloved creature from generation to generation. Nguyen Minh Huong separates the reality from the myth. The heart of Ha Noi, Hoan Kiem Lake looks tranquil and peaceful. On hot summer days, Hanoians rush to the western bank of the lake to catch a cool breeze or to simply enjoy the scenery. Read More*

**Ngoc Son Temple**, Hanoi’s most visited temple, sits pretty on a delightful little island in the northern part of Hoan Kiem Lake. An elegant scarlet bridge, Huc (Rising Sun) Bridge, constructed in classical Vietnamese style and lined with flags, connects the island to the lake shore. The nearby Martyrs’ Monument was erected as a memorial to those who died fighting for Vietnam’s independence. Read More

During the visit to **Hoan Kiem Lake**, there will be opportunities to view other colonial landmarks on the way, such as the magnificent **Hanoi Opera House** (may be viewed from the outside only) and the neo-gothic St. Joseph’s Cathedral.

From the lake, the group will explore **Hanoi’s Old Quarter**. This fascinating network of narrow alleys and shop houses are also known as “**The 36 Streets,”** with each street being named after the merchandise traditionally sold there, ranging from fabrics to crafts to medicines to tombstones. The Old Quarter is a handicraft lover’s paradise and an endlessly interesting area to explore local life.

*For those who visit Hanoi with a genuine desire to have a grasp of the city’s culture or a curiosity to travel back in time, Ha Noi Old Quarter is a must-go place that they definitely should not be missed by any means. Visiting this unique historical vestige comfortably lying around Hoan Kiem Lake, tourists get lost in a totally different world from the rest of the city and have the chance to explore the modest but energetic life of the local a hundred years ago... Read More*

The group will then visit the **National Museum of Vietnamese History**, which is located just behind the Hanoi Opera House.

*The wonderful architecture of the history museum was formerly home to the École Française d’Extrême Orient in Vietnam. It is an elegant,
ochre-coloured structure built between 1925 and 1932. French architect Ernest Hebrard was among the first in Vietnam to incorporate a blend of Chinese and French design elements. Highlights include bronzes from the Dong Son culture (3rd century BC to 3rd century AD), Hindu statuary from the Khmer and Champa kingdoms, and beautiful jewelry from imperial Vietnam. Read More

In the late afternoon, enjoy the world-famous Thang Long Water Puppet Show, a unique art form that dates back to the 11th century. Originating from northern Vietnam, the tradition of water puppet theatre stems from a time when rice paddy fields were flooded and villagers would create entertainment by standing in the waist-deep water with the puppets performing over the water.

Travelers will get some rest and freshen up for dinner later today.

Complimentary dinner included tonight at a local Vietnamese restaurant.

Overnight at the Sofitel Legend Metropole (5-Star)

Day 4: Tuesday, April 26th, 2016

Halong Bay

Complimentary breakfast included.

Travelers will have a full-day excursion to scenic Halong Bay this morning. The group will depart from the hotel to Halong Bay by motorcoach, arriving at the pier around noon. Enjoy a relaxing and scenic cruise through the bay aboard the charming wooden junket.

Imagine 2000 or more islands rising from the emerald waters of the Gulf of Tonkin and you have a vision of breathtaking beauty. Halong translates as ‘where the dragon descends into the sea’, and legend claims the islands of Halong Bay were created by a great
dragon from the mountains. As it charged towards the coast, its flailing tail gouged out valleys and crevasses. When it finally plunged into the sea, the area filled with water, leaving only the pinnacles visible. Read More

Complimentary lunch on board the cruise.

The cruise will pass by imaginatively-named limestone formations with monikers like the Stone Dog islet, Incense Burner (Dinh Huong) islet, and Fighting Cock (Ga Choi) islet.

At the core of the islets, the group will have the opportunity to visit the Thien Cung Cave (Heavenly Palace Cave), which is perched in the middle of the mountain. Once entering the cave, the unreal beauty is unmatched with its distinctive design and form.

Thien Cung Cave (Heavenly Palace Cave) is located in the southwest of Halong Bay, 4 km away from Dau Go Island, which is considered the most beautiful primitive cave of the Bay. The cave is 10,000 square meters with complicated interior structure, many floors, and high ceiling. The cave becomes famous thanks to a unique system of stalactites and stalagmites with different forms and shapes. Read More

The cruise will end at about 4:30 p.m. and the group will return to Hanoi for an independent evening.

Independent Dinner

Overnight at the Sofitel Legend Metropole (5-Star)
Day 5: Wednesday, April 27th, 2016

Complimentary breakfast included.

After breakfast and checking out of the hotel, the group will take a short flight from Hanoi to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hue, ancient capital of Vietnam (see left).

Palaces and pagodas, tombs and temples, culture and cuisine, history and heartbreak – there’s no shortage of poetic pairings to describe Hue (pronounced ‘hway’). A UNESCO World Heritage site, this deeply evocative capital of the Nguyen emperors still resonates with the glories of imperial Vietnam. Hue owes its charm partly to its location on the Perfume River – picturesque on a clear day, atmospheric even in less flattering weather. There’s always restoration work going on to recover Hue’s royal splendor, but today the city is very much a blend of new and old as sleek modern hotels tower over crumbling century-old Citadel walls. Read More

Located in the heart of Hue is the Imperial Citadel (see left), a vast complex built in the 19th century and modeled after the Forbidden City of Beijing. The original walls stretched for 10 km and were surrounded by a wide moat. Today, most of the buildings have been destroyed due to bombings during the Vietnam War, but the monuments that remain provide a fascinating glimpse into the court life of the Nguyen Dynasty, the last of Vietnamese dynasty.

Head towards the striking Flag Tower (see left), where the Vietnamese flag waves proudly overhead. Also called the King's Knight, it is the focal point of Hue city.

Continue on to the imposing Ngo Mon Gate, facing the Flag Tower, which is the main entrance to the Imperial Enclosure.

The central passageway with its yellow doors was reserved for the use of the emperor, as was the bridge across the lotus pond. Others had to use the gates to either side or the paths around the pond. Read More
Walk through the spacious courtyards, enjoy the view by the serene lotus ponds and stroll around the Dien Tho Residence (Dien Tho Palace) where the Queen Mother lived.

The stunning, partially ruined Dien Tho Residence (1804) once comprised the apartments and audience hall of the Queen Mothers of the Nguyen dynasty. The audience hall houses an exhibition of photos illustrating its former use, and there is a display of embroidered royal garments. Read More

Visit the Thai Hoa Palace, the magnificently decorated reception hall, the Halls of the Mandarin, and the original Nine Dynastic Urns, among other sites.

This palace (Thai Hoa Palace; Palace of Supreme Harmony; 1803) is a spacious hall with an ornate timber roof supported by 80 carved and lacquered columns. It was used for the emperor’s official receptions and important ceremonies. On state occasions the emperor sat on his elevated throne, facing visitors entering via the Ngo Mon Gate. Read More

Enjoy the rest of your evening at your leisure. Explore local cuisine as you take in the sights and sounds of Hue.

Independent Dinner

Travelers will spend the night at the La Residence Hotel & Spa in Hue, an enchanting boutique hotel overlooking the Flagtower Bastion of Hue’s Citadel, once home to the Nguyen Dynasty.

In 1930, the mansion at 5 Le Loi opened as an addition to the residence of the colonial French Resident Superieure. This period was the hey-day of the art deco school of design... While art deco fever was especially fervent in Hanoi and Saigon, Hue also tapped the design current of the day for some of its landmark period buildings. The colonial authorities built the Cercle Sportif, a leisure club that still stands on the south bank of the of Perfume River. And they commissioned a grand colonial mansion, anchored by a rotunda and flanked by swept wings. The building’s bowed façade, its long horizontal lines and such nautical flourishes as porthole windows are hallmarks of the Streamline Moderne School of art deco architecture. Read More
Day 6: Thursday, April 28, 2016

After visiting the Thien Mu Pagoda, the group will continue cruising into the countryside to the Imperial Tomb of Minh Mang. A majestic complex of courtyards, pavilions and temples in a beautiful natural setting, the Imperial Tomb can be reached by crossing a lake of lotus flowers.

The Imperial Tomb was constructed by Emperor Minh Mang’s son, Thieu Tri, between 1840 and 1843, and was built with the aid of over 10,000 artisans and workers.

Independent Lunch

After lunch, travelers will drive south from Hue along scenic mountain roads with spectacular vistas over the coastline of Vietnam. Highlights to watch along the way include the dramatic Hai Van Pass, the high dividing line between the climate zones of North and South Vietnam; Lang Co, a lovely stretch of beach curving outwards between a clear lagoon and the East Vietnam Sea; and the charming coastal city of Da Nang.

When travelers reach their destination of Da Nang, the group will check into the lovely Anantara Hoi An Resort for a two-night stay.

Complimentary breakfast included.

After breakfast, the group will enjoy a leisurely boat ride down the Perfume River. The first stop will be the iconic Thien Mu Pagoda, an elegant seven-tiered octagonal tower that has become Hue’s most recognizable monument.

The name of the pagoda derives from a special legend. A long time ago, an old woman appeared on the hill where the pagoda stands today, telling local people that a Lord would come and build a Buddhist pagoda for the country’s prosperity. Lord Nguyen Hoang therefore ordered the construction of the pagoda the "Heaven Fairy Lady" or Thiên Mụ in Vietnamese. Read More
Experience an idyllic blend of riverside relaxation and Anantara luxury, a UNESCO World Heritage Site on your doorstep, and beautiful beach life just a short bicycle or boat ride away.

Scenically positioned on the banks of the Thu Bon River, Anantara Hoi An Resort in Vietnam is a charming boutique retreat in the historic port town of Hoi An. Designed with French, Dutch, Chinese and Japanese influences that reveal Hoi An’s fascinating cultural diversity, split level rooms and suites open onto porches with comfortable daybeds, overlooking the river or a garden courtyard. Read More

Enjoy the rest of your evening at your leisure. Explore local cuisine as you take in the sights and sounds of Hue.

Independent Dinner
Day 7: Friday, April 29th, 2016

Hoi An

Complimentary breakfast included

After breakfast, travelers will visit the exquisitely preserved merchant town of Hoi An. Hoi An was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999, and its colorful shop houses and temples reflect a diverse heritage dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries when it was a major port for Western, Chinese, and Japanese traders. Today, it is a thriving center of traditional crafts and a shopper’s paradise best explored on foot.

Wander through the cobbled streets, past low tile-roofed buildings, and through the bustling central market and the small harbor where colorfully painted boats are moored. The walking tour will include visits to a private house where members of the same family have lived continuously for centuries in a traditional Vietnamese setting; a family chapel built by prominent merchants and official families as centers for ancestor worship; and a typical Chinese-style pagoda.

Continue from the market to the Sa Huynh Museum, located near the Japanese Covered Bridge and containing exhibitions from the earliest period of Hoi An’s history.

In Hoi An, visit a handicraft workshop where local products are artfully hand-crafted.

Finally, the walking tour will take the group to the famous Japanese Covered Bridge, first constructed in 1593 by the Japanese community of Hoi An.

After a lunch on your own, the group will board a local boat and cruise down the Thu Bon River, enjoying the unspoiled countryside and stopping to visit a pottery village and a woodcarving village before returning to Hoi An Harbour.

Enjoy the rest of your evening at your leisure. Experience local cuisine and explore all that Hoi An has to offer.

Independent Dinner

Overnight at Anantara Hoi An Resort
Day 8: Saturday, April 30th, 2016

Complimentary breakfast included.

After breakfast, the group will depart to Danang Airport for a short flight to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City).

A vibrant metropolis, Saigon teems with energy, activity and motion. The convergence of traditional and modern life is evident in everyday life.

From the finest of hotels to the cheapest of guesthouses, the classiest of restaurants to the tastiest of street stalls, the choicest of boutiques to the scrum of the markets, HCMC is a city of contrasts. Wander through timeless alleys to incense-infused temples before catching up with the present in designer malls beneath sleek skyscrapers. The ghosts of the past live on in buildings that one generation ago witnessed a city in turmoil, but the real beauty of (erstwhile) Saigon’s urban collage is the seamless blending of these two worlds into one thrilling, seething mass, while a host of new and exhilarating tours get you way off-the-beaten track. Read more

Travelers will begin the venture into Ho Chi Minh City with a tour of the Reunification Palace. Formerly the Independence Palace of the South Vietnamese president, this sixties-style building was famously stormed by tanks on April 30, 1975, an event that signified the fall of South Vietnam. The palace has been miraculously preserved and the original tanks remain on display near the entrance gates.

After the tour of the seminal Reunification Palace, travelers will go to the historic center of Saigon to visit the mystical Emperor of Jade Pagoda.

Built in 1909 in honor of the supreme Taoist god (the Jade Emperor or King of Heaven, Ngoc Hoang), this is one of the most spectacularly atmospheric temples in HCMC, stuffed with statues of phantasmal divinities and grotesque heroes. The pungent smoke of incense (huong) fills the air, obscuring the exquisite woodcarvings. Read more

After a visit to the Jade Emperor Pagoda, the group will have a quick visit to the neo-Romanesque Notre Dame Cathedral and
the Central Post Office of Saigon before passing by classic landmarks such as the ornate City Hall (Hotel de Ville) and the Old Opera House.

The group will finally end up at the central Ben Thanh Market, where vendors display a vast array of goods and handicrafts that appeal to every taste.

The group will check into the Park Hyatt Saigon for three nights.

Complimentary dinner is included tonight in a restaurant in downtown Saigon.

A mere 30-minute drive from Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Park Hyatt Saigon is one of the premier Ho Chi Minh City hotels, enjoying a prime location overlooking Saigon Opera House on the city’s most famous square. The elegant, French colonial-style hotel is within walking distance of the most popular cultural and historical attractions and things to do in Ho Chi Minh City - including Saigon Notre-Dame Basilica and Reunification Palace. Read More
Complimentary breakfast included.

After a leisurely breakfast, head to the Cu Chi Tunnels in the heart of Saigon. Never discovered by American forces, the Cu Chi Tunnels were an important Vietcong base during the Vietnam War. Stretching over 200 km, this incredible network was dug by hand out of hard laterite and connected command posts, hospitals, and weapons factories, in addition to offering shelter to those who needed it during the conflict.

Walk through the area and learn about the day-to-day life of the Vietcong. Bear witness to the cleverly disguised entrances and elaborate booby traps, and even venture inside the tunnels.

Return to your hotel after seeing the Cu Chi Tunnels for an independent afternoon and evening.

Independent lunch and dinner.

Overnight at the Park Hyatt Saigon

Complimentary breakfast included.

From Saigon, the group will travel to My Tho, a bustling town that serves as the gateway to the rich agricultural region of the Mekong Delta. The city was founded in the 1680s by Chinese refugees fleeing Taiwan after the fall of the Southern Ming Dynasty. Read more

In My Tho, travelers will visit the Vinh Trang Pagoda, a beautiful temple which displays the unique combination of Asian and European architectural styles.

At the Vinh Trang Pagoda, giant Buddha statues tower over the beautiful grounds of this peaceful temple around 1km east of the city center, where the monks maintain an ornate sanctuary, decorated with carved and gilded wood. They also provide a home for children with disabilities, orphans and other kids in
Following the Vinh Trang Pagoda, the group will board a local boat to explore the Mekong River Islands, stopping at a fruit orchard to enjoy fruit and tea while listening to local music and visiting Thoi Son islet. Travelers will enjoy a Vietnamese lunch and a brief sampan ride through the tiny waterways that thread the island.

Complimentary lunch included.

Return to Saigon for a final evening in the city.

Independent Dinner

Overnight in the Park Hyatt Saigon

Complimentary breakfast included.

After breakfast travelers will fly to Cambodia from Tan Son Nhat International Airport (one hour), arriving in Siem Reap, home of the largest religious structure in the world, Angkor Wat.

Welcome to Cambodia.

The group’s first stop will be Kampong Khleang. Located about
50 km from Siem Reap and situated on the northeast shore on the edge of the Tonle Sap Lake, Kampong Khleang is famous for its towering stilt-houses built to accommodate for dramatic changes in water level.

The **Tonle Sap Lake** is the largest fresh water body in Southeast Asia. The dramatic changes in water level are due mostly to the monsoon and dry seasons, and the surrounding area has adapted to withstand these drastic changes. The lake contains over 300 species of fish and 100 species of water birds in its remarkable biodiversity.

The travelers can observe the floating fishing villages that are situated at the edges of the lake on a boat trip, passing submerged forests and fishing farms as they float through the Tonle Sap Lake.

From Tonle Sap, travelers will continue to the **Angkor National Museum**, located on the main road to Angkor. The museum’s objective is to be the one and only world class museum in Siem Reap that enhances the cultural heritage of the golden era of the Khmer Kingdom. [Read more](https://mekongtripstours.com/destinations/angkor-national-museum)

During the Golden Era of the Khmer Kingdom, one of the ancient civilizations of this world was being created. It was the origin of Khmer art, culture, and architecture. [Read more](https://lotusjourneys.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/kampong-phluk.jpg)

The group will spend the night at the **Raffles Grand Hotel d’Angkor**.

Raffles Grand Hotel d’Angkor first opened its doors in 1932 but the legend lives on today after careful restoration. The hotel is rich in Cambodian history and full of original treasures, right down to the original working cage elevator in the lobby. [Read more](http://www.cambodiatravel.us/wp-content/uploads/Tonle-Sap-Cambodia.jpg)

**Complimentary dinner included at hotel.**

[Photo: Kampong Khleang](https://lotusjourneys.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/kampong-phluk.jpg)

[Photo: Boat trip on Tonle Sap Lake](http://www.cambodiatravel.us/wp-content/uploads/Tonle-Sap-Cambodia.jpg)


[Photo: Raffles Grand Hotel d’Angkor](http://www.raffles.com/siem-reap/gallery/photos/hotel/)
Complimentary breakfast included.

The crowning jewel of Khmer architecture, Angkor Wat is the national symbol and the highlight of any visit to Cambodia. The largest, best-preserved, and most religiously significant of the Angkor temples, Angkor Wat impresses visitors both by its sheer scale and beautifully proportioned layout. The delicate artistry of its carvings is unparalleled.

To approach the temple, travelers will first cross the vast moat, continuing along a broad causeway lined with naga balustrades. After entering the main building, the group will ascend through a series of galleries and courtyards before reaching the central sanctuary. On the way, visitors can stop to enjoy the intricate stone carvings that adorn almost every surface of the temple.

Along the outer gallery walls runs the longest continuous bas-relief in the world, narrating the stories of Hindu mythology, including the famous story of the Churning of the Milk.

Angkor Wat is, quite literally, heaven on earth. Angkor is the earthly representation of Mt Meru, the Mt Olympus of the Hindu faith and the abode of ancient gods. The ‘temple that is a city’, Angkor Wat is the perfect fusion of creative ambition and spiritual devotion. The Cambodian god-kings of old each strove to better their ancestors’ structures in size, scale and symmetry, culminating in what is believed to be the world’s largest religious building, the mother of all temples, Angkor Wat. Read More

Travelers will go from Angkor Wat to the fortified city of Angkor Thom, a city that covers an area of ten square kilometers. Enclosed by a wall and wide moats, the city includes many of Angkor’s most popular sights. Guests will enter by the monumental South Gate over a causeway lined on all sides by statues of demons and gods, after which they will continue to the Terrace of the Elephants and the Terrace of the Leper Kings, both former spaces for public ceremonies and adorned with dramatic bas reliefs.
Travelers will visit the ruined Baphuon and Phimeanakas before continuing to the mysterious Bayon Temple.

Some have called Baphuon the ‘world's largest jigsaw puzzle’. Before the civil war the Baphuon was painstakingly taken apart piece-by-piece by a team of archaeologists, but their meticulous records were destroyed during the Khmer Rouge regime, leaving experts with 300,000 stones to put back into place. After years of excruciating research, this temple has been partially restored. On the western side, the retaining wall of the second level was fashioned, in the 16th century, into a reclining Buddha 60m in length. Read More

Phimeanakas, also known as the Royal Enclosure, was once the site of royal ablutions but is now used as swimming holes for local children. Phimeanakas translates as “Celestial Palace,” and some say that it once had a golden spire to top it.

Construction of the palace began under Rajendravarman II, although it was used by Jayavarman V and Udayadityavarman I. It was later added to and embellished by Jayavarman VII and his successors. The royal enclosure is fronted to the east by the Terrace of Elephants. The northwestern wall of the Royal Enclosure is very atmospheric, with immense trees and jungle vines cloaking the outer side, easily visible on a forest walk from Preah Palilay to Phimeanakas. Read More
Travelers will continue on to the Bayon Temple, one of the most popular and compelling in Angkor. This temple allows travelers to explore galleries of beautifully-preserved bas reliefs. The group will ascend narrow staircases to reach the central sanctuary, where giant stone faces will smile down at you from every angle.

At the heart of Angkor Thom is the 12th century Bayon, the mesmerising if slightly mind-bending state temple of Jayavarman VII. It epitomises the creative genius and inflated ego of Cambodia’s most celebrated king. Its 54 gothic towers are famously decorated with 216 gargantuan smiling faces of Avalokiteshvara that bear more than a passing resemblance to the great king himself. The Bayon is decorated 1.2km of extraordinary bas-reliefs incorporating more than 11,000 figures, depicting everyday life in 12th-century Cambodia. Read More

After the Bayon Temple, guests will visit Ta Prohm, one of the most popular attractions of Angkor due to its nearly untouched state. Most of the jungle has not been cleared, leaving the site very much as it would have appeared when European explorers first found them.

Built from 1186 and originally known as Rajavihara, Ta Prohm was a Buddhist temple dedicated to the mother of Jayavarman VII. It is one of the few temples in the Angkor region where an inscription provides information about the temple’s dependents and inhabitants. Almost 80,000 people were required to maintain or attend at the temple, among them more than 2,700 officials and 615 dancers. Read More

Angkor is stunning at any time of the day, but sunset and sunrise are particularly beautiful for watching the play of light on the stonework. Travelers will have the opportunity to watch the sunset over the Cambodian countryside from the upper terraces of an ancient Angkorian temple.

Complimentary dinner included in Siem Reap tonight. Overnight at Raffles Grand Hotel d’Angkor
Complimentary breakfast included.

This morning, transfer to Siem Reap International Airport for a short flight to Bangkok, the capital and most populous city of Thailand. Travelers will check into the 5-star hotel, The Peninsula, located on the banks of the Chao Phraya River.

Welcome to Thailand.

At The Peninsula Bangkok, Peninsula luxury is met with sophisticated Thai charm for the ultimate cultural experience, from the hotel’s iconic Peninsula Green Tuk Tuk to an adventure down the Chao Phraya River and sumptuous authentic Thai cuisine featuring recipes used by generations of Palace cooks. Read More

Independent Lunch

In the afternoon, travelers will venture into the city of Bangkok. First, the group will see the Reclining Buddha at Wat Po, an enormous Buddha covered in gold leaf and lying majestically on its side. The group will continue to the Grand Palace, a must-see in Bangkok. Built by King Rama I in 1782, it was the center of power in Bangkok for more than 150 years. Today, it is Bangkok’s most celebrated landmark.

Within the compound of The Grand Palace is the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Wat Pra Kaew), which houses Thailand’s most precious image of the Lord Buddha. Following the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, travelers will embark on a river cruise and travel along the picturesque Chao Phraya River. Along the way the group will be able to observe and photograph serene family homes and temples along the waterways that gave the city the nickname “Venice of the East.”

To conclude the day, the group will pay a visit to one of the city’s most photographed sites, the shimmering Wat Arun, or the Temple of Dawn. This majestic shrine has a pagoda 79 meters high and is decorated with glazed ceramic pieces that reflect the sun’s rays, giving the temple its name.
Independent Dinner

Overnight at The Peninsula (5-Star)

Photo: The Peninsula Hotel

Photo: Wat Arun on the Chao Phraya River in Thailand
(https://res.cloudinary.com/wanderable/image/upload/v1408307707/zx7y50npxkgswoxgrfr.jpg)

Day 14: Friday, May 6th, 2016

Complimentary breakfast included.

Today, travelers will journey to the unspoiled rural floating market of Damnoen Saduak. After boarding a long-tailed boat, the group will enjoy a cruise through the many small canals full of vendors.

After a pleasant morning of shopping in the floating market, the group will proceed to the Sampran Riverside to enjoy a Thai buffet lunch and a world-renowned Thai cultural show, which showcases a spectacular presentation of traditional music, folk dances, and martial arts, as well as an opportunity to see a family of majestic Thai elephants.

*Sampran Riverside (formerly known as Rose Garden Riverside) is a family-run property close to Bangkok, where visitors can experience authentic Thai way of life and learn about our local wisdom. For decades it has been considered one of Bangkok’s favorite attractions because of the obvious dedication to preserving Thailand’s natural and cultural heritage by engaging with the local community.*

Read More

The group will return to Bangkok for a Manohra dinner cruise, where travelers will spend the evening journeying along the

Photo: Floating Market of Damnoen Saduak

Photo: Thai dancer at The Sampran Riverside
(https://farm8.staticflickr.com/7381/16597149612_f8021b643f_o.jpg)
Chao Phraya River aboard a beautifully restored traditional rice barge while enjoying the Royal Thai menu.

Complimentary dinner included tonight.

Overnight at The Peninsula (5-Star)

Day 15: Saturday, May 7th, 2016

Complimentary breakfast included.

Full day at leisure to explore Bangkok on your own before an evening departure for Bangkok International Airport. Depart from Bangkok via Korean Airlines flight to Seoul, South Korea at 11:45 pm, arriving the following morning at 7:20 am.

For those who prefer to keep their hotel rooms for the day until departure time, a special rate of $345 per room has been arranged.

OPTIONAL PROGRAM:
A full-day excursion will be available for a minimum of 10 passengers to Ayutthaya Historical Park. The old capital of the Kingdom of Siam and largely destroyed by the Burmese, it is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site full of intact temples, monasteries, palace ruins, and beheaded Buddhist temples. Lunch will be included on this excursion and travelers will be able to return to the hotel in time to freshen up before heading to the airport.

Excursion Rate for Tour of Ayutthaya Historical Park: $115
Day 16: Sunday, May 8th, 2016
Depart Seoul at 10:40 am via Korean Airlines nonstop flight to Chicago, arriving at 9:35 am, same day. After clearing US Customs and Immigration services, connect to American Airlines flight to Charlotte.

Welcome Home!

JUST ADDED: Two-Day Optional Extension in Thailand
Day 16-18: May 7 - May 9, 2016
Bangkok

Includes two nights at the 5-star hotel, The Peninsula, breakfast, VAT (value-added tax) and airport transfer on May 9th.

On the morning of May 9th, check out of your hotel before an evening departure for Bangkok International Airport. Depart from Bangkok via Korean Airlines flight to Seoul, South Korea at 11:45 pm, arriving the following morning at 7:20 am.

Rate for Two-Day Optional Extension in Bangkok, Thailand: $552 per person based on a minimum of 5 paying passengers.

WELCOME HOME
**PRICE PER PERSON BASED ON DOUBLE OCCUPANCY**

- Single occupancy at additional $2,185
- International airfare from Charlotte (and back) included
- All local flights in-trip included

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Travelers must be members of good standing with the World Affairs Council of Charlotte. If you are not a member, please contact Kristina Drye, Program and Membership Manager via e-mail at kdrye@worldaffairscharlotte.org or call 704-687-7757 or go to our website and sign up online. Individual membership begins at $50.

****In addition, air/government taxes and fuel surcharges will be billed at the prevailing rate at the time of billing.

- Single occupancy is available upon request (*Single occupancy rate: $2,185). If you are traveling alone, but would like a roommate, please let us know and we will work on matching you up with another traveler.
- Travel insurance is available through Knight Travel, Inc.
- Upgrade to Business or First Class air travel is available. Please contact Jeff Knight (jknight111@hotmail.com) as soon as possible if you are interested in an upgrade.
- Air/government taxes and fuel surcharges will be billed at prevailing rate at the time of billing. Current total of taxes and fuel surcharge is approximately $430.
- If you would like to keep your hotel room until departure on May 7th from Bangkok, there is a special rate of $345 available.
- Deposit of $500 is due no later than February 12th, 2016 to secure your seat on the trip.
- Final payment will be due no later than Saturday, February 20th, 2016.
- Please note that a 3% bank charge will be added to your payment if you choose to pay by credit card.

*The two-night extension in Bangkok is an additional $552 per person based on a minimum of 5 paying passengers.*