



GAP ADVENTURE: VIETNAM, CAMBODIA & THAILAND (10 WEEKS)

ProjectsAbroad





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Embark on an extraordinary 70 day journey through the heart of Southeast Asia. This immersive journey invites you to explore the delicate balance between ancient traditions and rapid modernisation, while discovering the vibrancy of cultures that have endured centuries of transformation.

Immerse yourself in the local communities, contributing to conservation efforts while learning about sustainable practices. By leading multi-day adventures as a team, you'll embark on thrilling adventures, honing leadership skills and fostering collaboration. Discover the region's rich history, challenge yourself with adventurous activities, and embrace authentic cultural experiences.

This isn't a normal trip; it's a profound exploration of cultural resilience, environmental stewardship, and personal growth. You'll return home not only with unforgettable memories but also with a deeper understanding of Southeast Asian history, a nuanced appreciation for the delicate balance between tradition and progress, and the confidence to navigate an increasingly interconnected world. Prepare to unleash your inner explorer, expand your comfort zone, and complete a life-changing adventure!

Week 1

VIETNAM'S CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

- Explore Hanoi
- Live in a traditional stilt homestay
- Cycle through rice fields
- Float on bamboo rafts and swim at waterfalls

DAYS 1-3 | HANOI

Join a cultural orientation of Vietnam's capital city where you'll get to know your fellow travellers and practice some Vietnamese.

Learn about Vietnamese philosophy and religion during tours to the Temple of Literature and Temple of Jade. You'll explore Hoan Kiem Lake, Long Bien Bridge, the French Quarter, and then busy markets during a food tour. Try 'egg coffee' and watch a traditional water puppet show.

DAYS 3-9 | MAI CHAU

Journey to the mountains and rice fields of Mai Chau. Live with, and learn from, 'White Thai', Muong and Hmong minority groups. Support a women's social enterprise creating sustainable and organic fabrics. Learn traditional methods for dyeing, weaving and crafting. You'll practice making chopsticks, bamboo fans and baskets.

Cycle through rice fields, explore caves, kayak on the stunning Hoa Ban Lake and travel downstream on bamboo rafts. Spend a day hiking along the terraced rice fields of Pu Luong Nature Reserve, swimming at Hieu Waterfall and relaxing with views of giant water wheels in Tram village.

Play traditional games and practice bamboo dances at your homestay. In the evenings you'll also get involved in cooking classic Vietnamese dishes.



Week 2

LIMESTONE WONDERS

- Take an overnight cruise through Ha Long Bay
- Row through caves in Ninh Binh
- Marvel at Limestone karst mountains on land and at sea

DAYS 10-11 | HA LONG BAY

Board a boat and explore the vast maze of karst mountain islands in Ha Long Bay. Visit large caves and kayak in the bay while watching the sunset. Fish for squid in the evening or join a karaoke party before sleeping overnight on the boat.

Wake up in the bay and join a tai chi class on the boat deck. Hike to viewpoints looking across the bay and other islands. Join a cooking class as you sail back to the harbour.

DAYS 12-13 | HANOI

Gain insights into the history of Vietnam by touring the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - this complex of palaces, temples and towers was home to Emperors and rulers of Vietnam for over 1,000 years. Then visit Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and the Military History Museum to learn about the many wars and conflicts that have faced Vietnam. Watch soldiers parade outside the Mausoleum in the evening.

Explore Hanoi independently on your last day in the city. Discover hidden sights with your group mates or go it alone.

DAYS 14-15 | NINH BINH

Journey by bus to Bai Dinh Pagoda - a huge complex of Buddhist pagodas. Continue to Ninh Binh for a traditional paddle boat ride along the river and through caves. Cycle through rice fields and hike to viewpoints of the valley. You'll relax in hot springs and hike up to the stunning Mua Cave.

Week 3

CENTRAL VIETNAM

- Explore the Imperial Tombs of Hue
- Relax at the beach
- Release lanterns in Hoi An

DAYS 16-17 | HUE

Tour the Imperial City of Hue. Learn about the role of monarchy in Vietnamese history.

You'll spend a day visiting the tombs of Nguyen Dynasty emperors who reigned from 1802 until 1945. Hue acted as the national capital during this time. Each tomb is elaborately decorated and was often used as a residence of the monarchs while they lived.

DAYS 18-20 | HOI AN

Explore the ancient town of Hoi An in the morning. Visit traditional craft and art markets, colourful winding streets and the iconic Japanese Covered Bridge. Cycle to a white sand beach and relax by the sea for the afternoon.

Visit lantern markets, galleries, and silk shops in the evening. Watch as the river fills with floating lanterns at night.

Visit the Marble Mountains. Five limestone peaks are named after the five elements: Kim (metal), Thủy (water), Mộc (wood), Hỏa (fire) and Thổ (earth). Hike through caves, tunnels and towers to explore shrines and pagodas built by Mahayana Buddhists and Nguyen Dynasty Kings. They blend harmoniously with the surrounding nature.

You'll have a free day to relax, explore independently or plan your student-led travel routes.



Week 4

SELF DISCOVERY: BACKPACK TRAIL TO SAIGON

- Travel in teams to Ho Chi Minh City
- Explore Cu Chi Tunnels
- Sail through the Mekong Delta

DAYS 21-24 | STUDENT-LED TRAVEL CHALLENGE

Depart Hoi An with a set budget given to you by your Group Leader. Travel in small teams for the next four days as you head towards Ho Chi Minh City. Your travel plan will be reviewed before you depart and staff will monitor your progress along the journey.

This is your chance to explore! The route, transport, accommodation and activities are all chosen by members of each team. Popular attractions along the route include Bai Na Hills, Nha Trang, Da Lat and the sand dunes of Mui Ne.

DAYS 25-26 | HO CHI MINH CITY

Celebrate reuniting with your group and tour the bustling markets of 'Saigon'. You'll visit the War Remnants Museum to learn how Vietnamese people view the history and impact of the Vietnam War.

Head outside the city to see Cu Chi Tunnels - a large network of tunnels used by the Viet Cong to evade American and South Vietnamese troops. Learn how people survived here and see the traps they set in the jungle.

DAY 27 | MEKONG DELTA

Take boat rides through a vast maze of rivers, swamps and bamboo forests. Cycle across delta islands and visit local farms.

Week 5

CAMBODIAN HERITAGE

- Support wildlife protection charities and prepare food for bears.
- Explore the tombs of Khmer Kings
- Learn about the Khmer Rouge Genocide
- Witness the impact of Fast Fashion

DAYS 28-31 | PHNOM PENH

The group will be taken across the border to Cambodia. Understand the recent history of Cambodia through tours of the Royal Palace, The Killing Fields and S-21 Genocide Museum.

Discover Cambodian traditions at a silk farm. Learn traditional weaving techniques, talk to Human Rights activists about sweatshop conditions, and visit ethical producers. Enjoy Cambodian cuisine with a cooking class, watching traditional Khmer Boxing matches in the evening and receive a water blessing from monks. You'll spend an evening meditating at a pagoda too!

DAY 32 | WILDLIFE RESCUE CENTER

Witness conservation efforts first-hand. See efforts to rescue and rehabilitate trafficked and endangered animals. This includes breeding programmes for Siamese Crocodiles, Malayan Sun Bears, Moon Bears. and Asiatic Black Bears. You'll help to prepare food and hide enrichment treats for the bears in their large enclosures.

DAY 33 | OUDONG

Visit a large working monastery. See how monks and nuns live on a typical day - visit their school, homes, and more.

Take steps up Odong Mountain to visit shrines and tombs of past Khmer Kings. This was the capital city until French colonisation. In the evening you'll enjoy a Korean BBQ and karaoke - a favourite pastime among Cambodians.



Week 6

COASTS AND ISLANDS

- Snorkel and relax on a tropical island
- Discover traditional farming practices
- Practice traditional dance and Khmer boxing

DAYS 34-36 | KOH RONG

Take a bus to the coastal city of Sihanoukville and then a speed boat to the remote tropical island of Koh Rong. The small island has dense jungle and quiet beaches.

Relax on white sand beaches and spend a day snorkelling around the island. At night you have a chance to see bioluminescent plankton sparkling in the warm water. You'll have a few days to rest and relax in this paradise.

DAYS 37-40 | KAMPOT & KEP

Take a bus to the sleepy riverside town of Kampot. Learn about traditional farming techniques at a Kampot Pepper Farm. Then cycle to the coast to see salt fields and the tiring process to produce salt. Relax on a sunset river cruise to see fireflies at night.

Visit Kep seafood market and eat by the beach. See the various fishing practices in the area.

Take a day to relax or explore independently from Kampot.

DAY 41 | PHNOM PENH

Today focuses on learning traditional Khmer activities. Spend the morning practicing the basics of Khmer boxing. Later in the day, you'll learn traditional dance at the Royal Dance School where classes are often led by Cambodian princes and princesses.

Week 7

RIVER RAPIDS TO TEMPLE RUINS

- Kayak with Irrawady Dolphins
- Sunrise at the world famous Angkor Wat
- Visit a floating village on the Tonle Sap Lake
- Watch traditional dance and PHARE Circus

DAYS 42-44 | KRATIE

Travel North to the remote town of Kratie. Cycle through farming villages and visit pagodas and temples.

Take a day trip kayaking along the Mekong River. You'll bounce over rapids, relax on river islands, and spot the Irrawaddy Dolphins. Learn about this critically endangered species and efforts to try and prevent their extinction.

DAY 45-50 | SIEM REAP AND ANGKOR TEMPLES

Visit floating villages on the Tonle Sap Lake. Learn how communities live alongside nature, practice sustainable fishing, and how climate change is impacting lives as water levels become more unpredictable. In the evening, explore the PHARE social enterprise championing Cambodian art and culture among disadvantaged communities. Watch a performance by their award winning circus troop.

Spend two days exploring the temples of Angkor. Take a guided tour of Angkor Wat, Bayon Temple, and Ta Prohm. Learn about the Khmer Empire and explore the ruins of what was once the largest pre-industrial city on Earth. Angkor was at its peak between the 11th and 13th centuries. The second day will visit other vast temples and ruins in the jungle, but we will allow you to choose your own path through the ruins.

Visit the APOPO centre to see trained rats searching for landmines. Understand the legacy of war in the region. You'll also visit a cultural village to see traditional homes, and watch ancient apsara dance performances in the evening.





Week 8

JUNGLE SURVIVAL AND CITY LIGHTS

- Muay Thai Boxing classes
- Hike and camp overnight in the jungle
- Learn jungle survival and navigation skills

DAYS 51-52 | KULEN MOUNTAINS

Your final days in Cambodia will be spent hiking deep in the jungle. Explore hidden ruins far from tourist trails, meet rural villagers and monks, swim at waterfalls, and learn bush craft skills from professional trek leaders. The group will set up a camp, sleep in bivouac hammocks in the jungle and learn how to live in such a wild environment.

DAYS 53-56 | BANGKOK

Journey across the border by bus to enter Thailand and the bustling megacity of Bangkok!

Begin your journey by delving into the rich tapestry of Thai history and culture as you take a guided tour of the majestic Grand Palace and serene Wat Pho. Wander through vibrant markets, absorbing the sights, sounds, and aromas that make Bangkok a sensory feast. Then improve your culinary skills with a Thai cooking class.

Transform your experience from spectator to participant as you spend two mornings learning the ancient art of Muay Thai. These invigorating classes will not only introduce you to Thailand's national sport but also offer insights into the country's warrior spirit and physical discipline. With free time built into your schedule, you'll have the opportunity to further explore the city's hidden gems, famous nightlife or reflect on your newfound knowledge.

As your Bangkok adventure ends, you'll board a sleeper train to travel north overnight to the Thai Highlands.

Week 9

ANCIENT WISDOM AND MODERN ADVENTURE

- Reflect with monks at a 3 day meditation retreat
- Wash and feed elephants
- Learn to cook Thai food

DAYS 57-58 | CHIANG MAI

Discover ancient crafts and traditions in this mountainous and remote city. Your exploration begins with a captivating city tour - visiting the ornate Wat Phra Singh and the imposing Wat Chedi Luang.

Immerse yourself in Thai culinary arts with a farm visit and cooking class, then explore busy night markets.

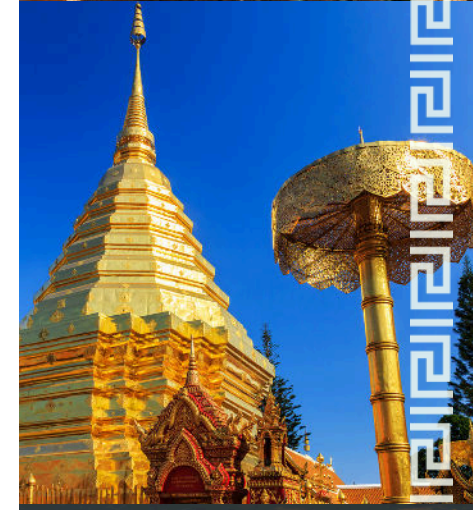
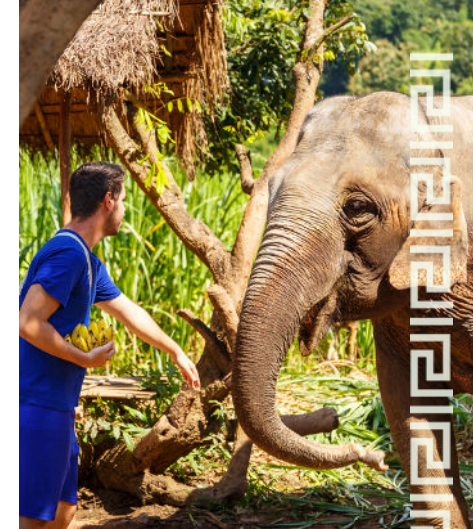
You'll also get a free day to explore Chiang Mai independently. Relax in cafes, explore temples, or explore the surrounding region.

DAY 59 | ELEPHANT SANCTUARY

Deepen your connection with nature at an ethical elephant sanctuary. Gain insights into the challenges these majestic creatures face in Southeast Asia and watch them play and socialise from observation decks. You'll actively support dedicated conservationists by feeding and washing the elephants too!

DAYS 60-62 | MEDITATION RETREAT

The journey takes a contemplative turn as you retreat to a secluded forest monastery. Join workshops, talks, and lessons led by Buddhist monks, practicing meditation by waterfalls, rivers and during forest walks. This spiritual break offers a profound opportunity for self-reflection and inner peace. Alternatively, you can easily reach the nearby village and explore the surrounding forest trails if you prefer.



Week 10

KOH TAO PARADISE CONSERVATION

- Explore UNESCO World Heritage ruins of Ayutthaya
- Support marine conservation work
- Snorkel and relax on a tropical island

DAYS 63-64 | AYUTTHAYA

Take another night train south and explore the grand ruins of Ayutthaya. Ayutthaya replaced Sukhotai (originally part of the Khmer Empire) as the Siamese capital in 1351 and became one of the largest urban areas in the world during the 14th to 18th centuries. It took over the regional power vacuum left after the fall of Angkor in Cambodia and the end of the Khmer Empire. You'll learn about the conflicts between both empires and be able to compare the similarities and differences between Ayutthaya and Angkor.

DAYS 65-70 | KOH TAO

Transition from the historical marvels of Ayutthaya to the natural wonders of Koh Tao, a paradise island in the Gulf of Thailand. Travel by bus and ferry to the remote island.

Your adventure takes on an environmental focus as you engage in vital marine conservation efforts. Support microplastic surveys, beach clean-ups and coral watch programs, contributing directly to the preservation of the island's delicate ecosystem. Snorkel in crystal-clear waters to see vibrant coral reefs and a wide range of marine life including sea turtles, friendly reef sharks and majestic whale sharks.

Balance your conservation work with moments of relaxation and reflection, including a rejuvenating yoga class. Your final two days will be unscheduled so you can explore and relax on the island as you want. You'll be taken by ferry to Koh Samui on the final day for your departure.

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WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- All activities and tours highlighted in the schedule
- Three meals per day and drinking water
- Accommodation - a mix of homestays, hostels, hotels, and lodges
- All transport from Hanoi to Koh Samui - a mix of public and private coaches, trains, and boat rides
- Airport pickup and drop-off
- A minimum of two Program Leaders with the group throughout the journey
- Visa support and advice

PROGRAM DESIGN

Five Gap Components provide the focus for the development of this program. They ensure the perfect blend of adrenaline, exploration and meaningful travel:

- Adventure
- Community
- Exploration
- People & Planet
- Transformation

We pride ourselves on our ability to deliver authentic, unforgettable experiences — with safety, support and the freedom to explore.

HOW DO I BOOK?

Contact us to discuss dates and secure your place, or ask any questions: info@projects-abroad.org

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