



TRIP DOSSIER

# VIETNAM



## *'Saigon and Central Highland Encounter'*

*£1,695 per person (group departures)*

*Single Supplement £195*

*From £1,750 per person (open-dated -2 person min)*

***Mekong Delta Extension***

*£195 per person (2 person min)*

### *Departure Dates:*

*Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2008*

*Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2008*

*Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009*

### *Tour Grade: C*

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## Introduction

Vietnam personifies the complete disparity between the Orient and the West. It is a land of contrasts, with the diversity of its beautiful scenery, people and culture. This tour has been designed to give you a good insight into the countryside of part of the Central Highlands around the old hill station of Dalat where you will see some of the most spectacular scenery in Vietnam. You will trek for ten days through the valleys, alongside rivers and over the hills, to lakes, passing through some fascinating Hill Tribe villages. The trekking will be fairly easy with a few steep hills to ascend. You will pass coffee and tea plantations, enjoy some truly stunning views and have a chance to ascend Langbian mountain (the most strenuous part of the trip). Whilst trekking your guides will cook simple but delicious meals. If you are lucky you might experience some colourful local entertainment. Finally, you have a further night to experience the extraordinary city of Saigon, with its throbbing Oriental lifestyle of markets, street sellers, road side stalls of local snacks and bikes galore, both push and motorised, a wonderful sight when people “promenade” on them at night, going nowhere in particular....

Highly recommended is the extension to the Mekong Delta where you will spend two fascinating days wandering around, visiting the tranquil backwaters of this amazing lush tropical area with its floating markets, fruit orchards, stilted houses of palm thatch, seeing the river life at first hand, not to mention experiencing some of Vietnam’s finest local cooking.

**History** Vietnam has had a troubled history for centuries, fighting amongst local warlords and occupation by the Chinese for hundreds of years. Later the French colonised Vietnam for a hundred years, forming part of their Indochina empire until 1954 when the Viet Minh defeated them and the country divided between the North and South. Soon more unrest followed, then civil war between the two factions with the Americans becoming involved, until 1975 when the country united under one Government. Today the country is making great strides forward and, although still a very poor country, it is becoming more and more prosperous with increasing foreign investment.

**Geography** Vietnam is shaped like the letter S with a huge coastline lapped by the South China Sea on the east coast of the Orient. It is some 3000 km long and at its most narrow only 35km wide. In the tropical south the huge delta of the Mekong is the main geographic feature, a vast area of waterways supporting the livelihoods of the many Vietnamese that live from fishing, fruit farming and, most of all, rice production. The mighty Mekong deposits mud and silt which is carried thousands of miles from its source in Tibet, making the soil of the Delta region some of the most fertile in the world. The waterway itself is a hub of activity as it is the prime source of communication and transportation in the area, yet there is a vast network of tranquil backwaters, green and lush vegetation with many coconut and banana palms and countless tropical fruit trees. The way of life is very Oriental; you feel you are stepping back in time through the pages of history to a far-flung and strange land!

The Central Highlands in the west of the country is a vast area, in parts very remote where many Hill tribe people live carrying on a way of life that has not changed for centuries. This area is composed of high pine covered hills, jungle, rivers and lakes, but it is also where a great deal of coffee and tea are grown. Around Dalat an abundance of vegetables and flowers are cultivated. Here it is much cooler than the south. These hills run all along the west of the country until they meet the high hills of the North West. To the east of the Central Highlands is a very arid and desert like area, very poor with little cultivation except a strange and delicious fruit called “Dragon Fruit” which grows on a cactus.

In the far North West you have the very remote hills leading to the Chinese border. Again many hill tribe people live here, barely making a living from the rice they grow and some primitive farming. This area is very beautiful with rivers and streams in the valleys, with rice terraces climbing up the hillsides to the dense vegetation covering the mountains.

Hanoi, further east, is the capital, it is less busy than Saigon in the south and has a somewhat peaceful feel about it. It is surrounded by poor agricultural land which leads to the Red River and on towards Halong Bay, famous for its limestone casts emerging from the sea for miles around giving the seascape a strange, dramatic, even eerie feel.

**Climate** The climate of Vietnam is quite complex. The South has two seasons; May to October is called the wet season because it usually rains once a day for an hour or so, but it is hot and quite humid; November to April is the dry season, it hardly ever rains and is a little cooler. The sun shines nearly all the time all the year and temperatures vary from 18°C at night to 30°C at midday in the wet season.

The Central Highlands is much cooler - it is sunny and warm most of the time but it can rain at any time of the year usually for just brief periods, with more rain around November to February. The temperature in the days is between 18°C and 25°C whilst in the evenings it gets down to about 15°C.

The North has four seasons, short winters from November to January when in Hanoi it can be quite wet and cool, down to 10°C sometimes and in the hills of the North West even cooler. Spring is about two months long and considerably warmer. It gets very hot indeed in Hanoi during high summer followed by a cooling down leading into autumn around September and October. In the hills of the North it is always much cooler and again it can

rain almost anytime for a short period, with most rain in the winter. It never has the heat of Hanoi in the summer and is very pleasant.

**Language** Vietnamese is a tonal language with words having several different meanings depending on the tone used, it is therefore a difficult language to grasp, although the grammar is simple. The letters are Roman so it is not so difficult to make out place names etc. despite the amazing amount of different accents on the words. The language is the same all over the country except for regional dialects and a few words spelt and pronounced differently in the North from the South.

The Hill tribe people have their own languages, each tribe has their own and none of them are anything like Vietnamese. Some hill tribe people speak Vietnamese, especially the younger ones.

English is now becoming the most popular foreign language with more and more younger ones speaking it; you can now usually find someone who speaks English. French speakers can be found, especially amongst the older generation.

**The Areas Visited** Saigon is a big bustling city where old traditional buildings stand side by side with ultra modern buildings and French colonial buildings. The streets team with sellers of all sorts of local food, noodle soup and local snacks. Markets abound selling everything you can think of. The streets are jammed with small motorbikes, often with a family of five on them including the week's shopping; pushbikes; cyclos, (a sort of back to front rickshaw) and taxis. Crossing the road is an art but the traffic moves so slowly you soon get the hang of it! Saigon has interesting museums, old buildings and theatres and sits on the Saigon River where you can see huge cargo boats from all over the world and you can even take a night trip on one with dinner thrown in.

The city abounds with cafés and restaurants to suit all tastes and pockets - try the true local ones, the food is delicious and it is fun. Your programme will allow you to see most of this and your tour leaders will be only too pleased to point you in the right direction, give you advice or even take you to some of the places.

The Central Highlands is a huge area of wilderness which the French discovered and to where they retreated to escape the heat. Dalat is a hill station town now popular with honeymoon couples. We will see a little of Dalat but mainly we will be in the hills and valleys of this beautiful area with spectacular views over the distant mountains. The area is home to some Hill tribe people with their villages of thatched huts and is an area famous for its coffee and tea as well as flowers and vegetables. The hills are mainly covered in pine trees or jungle with remote winding tracks, used for centuries by the local people, criss-crossing down to some of Vietnam's most beautiful lakes and rivers in some of its most tranquil countryside. Langbian Mountain is the highest point in the area and it is an easy ascent.

The Mekong Delta is where the River Mekong finally meets the sea, its tributaries and waterways stretching like a web over a vast area which irrigates the incredibly rich soil thus making this one of the finest areas in the world to grow rice and fruit; not fruit that most of us see but a whole range of exotic tropical fruit with of course the inevitable coconuts and bananas. The boats all have a dragon's face on them and they vary in size from one man, (usually one woman), row boats, (standing up and pushing forwards) to huge wooden grain boats. Fishing here is very important. You will visit restaurants where you can sample locally caught catfish and elephant ear fish, tucked away in remote quarters of this fascinating area.

**A Typical Day on Trek** This is a very relaxed tour and very diverse, there is not an excessive amount of trekking and all of it is fairly gentle taken at a leisurely pace with plenty of stops to admire the stunning scenery. Whilst we will not need very early starts it is best to set off in good time to make the most of each day, be it a trekking day or a travelling day. At each village you will be sleeping in local houses on comfortable mattresses on the floor with bed linen provided (although you might like to take a silk sleeping-bag liner). All the cooking will be done for you and eating utensils provided.

**Trekking Conditions** In the Central Highlands it is hard to predict the weather, at the time of the tour it should be dry and sunny and will always be warm even if it rains. The evenings could be slightly chilly so a light fleece is needed and just in case a very lightweight waterproof. Walking in t-shirts is normal and a lightweight pair of walking trousers would stop any scratches you might otherwise receive. A hat would also be a good idea to keep the sun off. 7-8 hours days are to be expected including stops and lunch breaks.

**What you need to provide** Your personal equipment as detailed in the clothing and equipment list later in this booklet. You will need a lightweight rucksack to carry a few overnight things and some spare clothing; there will be enough guides to help carry any excess but the emphasis is definitely minimum clothing - little else is required as all the eating utensils are provided at each village where you can also buy mineral water. You might like to carry a lightweight sleeping bag inner, (sleeping bags and other linen will be provided). You can buy silk inners in Saigon very cheaply. Local kids often like pens and other small gifts and of course sweets (not always a good idea especially in the remote areas of Hill tribes as sweets are not good for teeth or their diet which is basic

to say the least!). The Hill tribe children in the Central Highlands do need fruit, also old t-shirts or any old clothes would be appreciated.

**Ecological considerations.** *We ask for your full consideration and co-operation concerning all ecological matters, especially in the disposal of rubbish. Our local staff will outline for you the procedures we use in Vietnam. If you have any suggestions for improvements, please let our local staff know and inform us at Walks Worldwide on your return. It is with the tourists, the locals and the tour operators' co-operation that we can ensure that our tours are as eco-friendly as possible.*

**Please be aware that although we will do our best to adhere to this itinerary occasionally events out of our control may prevent us from following the exact schedule. Please be assured that the clients' best interest will be foremost in any changes that may occur. A degree of flexibility is essential in travelling on such holidays!**

**Cultural Considerations.** Vietnam is a pretty relaxed country. Although many people are extremely poor most manage to dress cleanly and casually smart. You should never wear shoes in people's houses no matter how scruffy and poor that house might be. In Buddhist Temples (Pagodas) always remove your shoes and if possible do not wear shorts or short skirts. Buddhist monks are very friendly and gentle and if they speak any English will gladly tell you about their way of life. Many Vietnamese are Catholics and the same rules in UK Catholic Churches apply in Vietnam. Vietnamese are very hospitable, particularly in rural areas so don't be surprised if they invite you into their house or offer you a drink (usually there is no ulterior motive, but of course as anywhere be aware). Local children might be fascinated by hairy arms or chests - don't be embarrassed or insulted, they are also fascinated by long Western noses! If you accept their inquisitiveness and join in the fun you will get so much more out of your stay.

## **Itinerary**

Your accommodation is indicated in **bold italic** at the end of each day.

**Day 1** Depart UK for your overnight flight to Vietnam. *Flight*

**Day 2** Arrive Saigon. You are met and transferred to your hotel in an air-conditioned bus (30 mins). The hotel is very centrally located in this vibrant and sophisticated city and within 2/3 minutes walk of some of the best restaurants (be they cheap and local or expensive and for tourists) bars and markets. *Hotel, Saigon*

**Day 3** You have a full day to enjoy this wonderfully fascinating city at leisure. Saigon is steeped in history and although it is now a modern commercial centre it retains a vibrant oriental lifestyle, worlds apart from other modern westernised cities. It is a delightful mix of new and old, street vendors, modern office blocks, dilapidated old French colonial buildings etc... an endless bonanza of cultural, historical, spiritual - and material delights! Take a city tour and enjoy a leisurely evening. *Hotel, Saigon, B*

**Day 4** Take a scenic journey, travelling 300 km by air-conditioned bus, to Dalat in the Central Highlands. Dalat is a famous town set in stunning pine clad hills where the temperature is much cooler and where many Vietnamese traditionally go to escape the heat. It is the 'garden' of Vietnam. Many vegetables are grown here and the area has many coffee and tea plantations. It is also popular with honeymoon couples and is much more peaceful than Saigon. There are plenty of bars and restaurants to cater for all tastes, including eating on the street, in the market (at unbelievably low prices) or in a really smart restaurant. *Hotel, Dalat BL*

**Day 5** The surrounding hills are home to many hill tribes and ethnic minorities from China and Tibet who keep their customs, dress and way of life from centuries ago. Leaving excess luggage at your hotel you transfer to Lac Son village and start the trek walking through pine forest to Tha Lake, a small lake on the top of a small mountain. Your camp is next to this lake and your campfire will be waiting for you along with the cooks preparing your dinner. *Camp, BLD*

**Day 6** The trek continues in splendid pine forest and through fascinating tea plantations to the Cau Dat tea plantation. You will camp tonight on the top of a hill in the forest. *Camp, Cau Dat, BLD*

**Day 7** Walk through further pine forests and jungle, past waterfalls and down to Langbian river (which you can take a refreshing dip in), to a camp in the forest near to Tiger Falls. You will walk for 5/6 hours but with frequent rest stops and a picnic lunch at a suitably picturesque spot. There is the chance to meet local coffee farmers in their coffee plantations along the river side, this is not intensive farming but interesting small holdings and offering superb open riverside walking. *Camp, Tiger Falls BLD*

**Day 8** Start the day walking uphill to Lieng Tro, a small village of Chil Hill Tribe people. It is very poor (perhaps bring some small gifts for the children – not money!). Continue walking through the forest and along open ridges then down to Dasar Bridge. Camp next to the Langbian river in a wonderful spot. **Camp, Langbian River, BLD**

**Day 9** Today is a day trekking northwards through more plantations and over the surrounding hills, passing villages of the Lat and Chil people. You will have the chance to visit local flower farms including some spectacular orchids. Tonight you will camp on the slopes of Langbian Mountain, the highest peak in the area. Perhaps an evening of song and dance and food in a Lat village home with the villagers in their tribal costumes. **Camp, Langbian Mountain BLD**

**Day 10** Today you will have the opportunity to ascend Langbian Mountain (2163m) for magnificent 360° views of the entire area and the distant landscape of the Northern Central Highlands where you might want to return sometime when the area opens up to foreigners. The ‘mountain’ is more of a hill really and as you start at a fairly high altitude already it is not too taxing. Walking along the ridges will provide you with great views most of the time. After a picnic lunch you descend to Dankia Lake and camp next to Ankroet river. **Camp, Ankroet River BLD**

**Day 11** The trek continues along the river on a beautiful walk to Dangit village, meeting Chil people on the way. You will be walking some of the time through jungle of mainly bamboo, very overgrown and a bit of bushwacking may be called for! Camp at Ta Nung, a village of Lat people. **Camp, Ta Nung, BLD**

**Day 12** A fairly short walk today through jungle, up and down pine covered hills along good tracks. You will probably meet some local farmers on the way and may well get invited in for a cup of ‘tra’ tea. You will then meet up with a boat to cross Tuyen Lam Lake where you will camp on the other side in a lovely setting next to the lake. This is a superb area and great for swimming. **Camp, Tuyen Lam Lake, BLD**

**Day 13** Start the day with a gentle climb up to Pinhatt Mountain which has a beautiful view from the top overlooking the lake. Then down through the forest and jungle along the lake (another chance for a good swim). This night you will stay in minority type huts or camp in the forest. It is a wonderful place next to a very small minority village at the bottom of Elephant Mountain. **Camp, Elephant Mountain, BLD**

**Day 14** Walk out in the morning through a wooded area and some jungle with fantastic views and then farmland to meet your vehicle and transfer back to Saigon, passing through some fascinating villages; a floating fishing village and a spectacular waterfall en route. Enjoy one last evening in South East Asia. **Hotel, Saigon, BL**

**Day 15** You will be transferred to the airport, bid farewell to your friendly guides and depart for home. **B**

**Day 16** Arrive UK.

### **Mekong Delta Extension**

**Day 15** On to the famous Mekong Delta! You will spend the next two days visiting the islands, gardens, orchards and villages of this extraordinary area. The people living in the Mekong Delta make their living as farmers and fishermen. Often they live right on the edge of the rivers or canals in various structures built on stilts from whatever materials can be found. Enjoy lush tropical vegetation, rice fields and fruit orchards of coconut and banana trees like you have never seen before. Witness this fascinating river life culture and colourfully chaotic floating markets. After the short bus journey from Saigon you will board a boat on to one of the islands. There is the opportunity to walk for several hours on this island, drinking in the activity. You can visit a fruit orchard with the most exotic fruit and have lunch in the tranquil surroundings of a fruit/bonsai farm. You will be accommodated and entertained in a thatched, stilted house with a fabulous authentic dinner cooked for you by your hosts, who are well known for their cooking skills. The accommodation is basic but it is very peaceful. **Stilted house, Mekong Delta BLD**

**Day 16** Enjoy some further time in this wonderful area. A delicious lunch will be taken in an orchard on an island before returning to Saigon, through lush tropical plants, passing the best rice fields in Vietnam giving you a truly delightful insight into genuine rural life. **Hotel, Saigon, BL**

**Day 17** You will be transferred to the airport, bid farewell to your friendly guides and depart for home. *Flight B*

**Day 18** Arrive UK.

## Practical Information

**Passports and Visas** All nationalities require a valid passport with an expiry date at least six months after the date of your return to the U.K. Most nationalities will need a visa to cover the duration of your stay. These can be obtained from the Vietnamese Embassy at 12/14 Victoria Rd., London W8 5RD. Tel: 0207 937 1912. Fax: 0207 931 6108. It costs about £30. You can apply in person but you will have to collect your visa a week or so later. It might be possible to obtain it as you wait for a small extra fee of about £5. You can apply by post but you first have to obtain the form by telephone or it may be possible to get this form off the Internet. Please allow several weeks to organise this. The Travcour website at [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) has lots of information regarding visa applications for Vietnam.

**Accommodation** In Saigon we use a tourist class hotel with en-suite facilities. In Dalat we use a similar standard hotel. Camping is simple and facilities are basic but adequate (whilst camping, sleeping bags and tents will be supplied). The home stay in the Mekong Delta is very simple, but delightful, it has showers and the dinner will be wonderful.

**Food and Drink** Vietnamese food is delicious with very fresh produce used. It is delicately flavoured with herbs and spices. It is not hot but there are an abundance of sauces and chillies to 'hot it up' if you so wish. Fish sauce is a popular component of Vietnamese cooking as is coconut milk and coconut juice on occasions. Typical dishes are Pho, a noodle soup with pork, beef or chicken and various leaves of herbs and mint, eaten at breakfast or any other time of the day.

Fish is a major part of the diet, it is fresh and wonderful for instance in 'Ca Kho To' (fish in caramelised sauce) or 'Lau Ca' (fish fondue) or just plain fresh grilled fish with ginger sauce. Pork is also very popular 'Thit kho nuoc dua' is tender pork cooked in coconut juice with fish sauce and duck eggs. Beef is also popular 'Bo xao bong thien ly' in stir-fried beef with flowers from vines, and "Bo Nuong La Lot", minced beef in vine leaves, also tiny Vietnamese spring rolls. Lamb is hard to come by. Fresh milk is nearly impossible to obtain but U.H.T milk is always available.

Vegetarians are well catered for and it is very normal to eat vegetarian food as much of the population are Buddhist and vegetarianism is part of their religion. Tofu is very popular as are many other soya products.

In Saigon you will be able to find western food, as you will in Dalat.

Bread is surprisingly good, a legacy from the French, and the Vietnamese make wonderful sandwiches, (Banh Mi). However, do try Vietnamese food as it is so good - ask your tour leaders for advice. Saigon and Dalat have some excellent restaurants to suit all tastes. Your guides will cook simple meals at camp sites and when staying in guest houses and homes you will experience some of the best Vietnamese cooking.

Beer is good, like a lager really, but it is very good and cheap. The local brew is better than the imported brands. There is a "draught" beer (bia hoi) it can be good, but it can also be awful, take care. Rice wine is everywhere and varies from delicious to undrinkable. There are some absolutely wonderful and amazing fresh fruit drinks - really unusual and delicious. Do not drink tap water ever; mineral water is sold everywhere and is fine so stock up. Ice in drinks is popular and is usually o.k. if produced in controlled conditions but it is not recommended for children or those with a delicate disposition. This is a shame as they will be missing some wonderful iced drinks such as the coffee with condensed milk - but avoid ice in beer (ARGH)!!!!!!! Western spirits are available in cities and towns in some establishments and in the very few supermarkets of Saigon; coca cola is as always everywhere as is 7 UP or similar products.

**Vaccinations and medical precautions** No vaccinations are required for entry, but we recommend that you discuss inoculations with your doctor. Most of Vietnam is a malarial area, so you should take adequate supplies of a suitable malarial prophylactic.

**Currency** The currency is the Dong – this usually fluctuates at around 28,193.37 Dong to £1. Please check [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) for the latest rates. If you bring in more than £3000 in a foreign currency you have to declare it on entry. You cannot take out Dong or more money than you brought in, in any currency. Dollars are accepted almost anywhere but it is advisable to always carry Dong. You can change foreign currency in most banks in major cities and most towns. Legal moneychangers give slightly better rates than banks and there is no commission charged in banks or through the legal changers.

**Electricity** 240 volts two pin.

**Time** G.M.T. + 7 hours.

**Communications** It is not our policy to provide addresses and telephone numbers of every location that you will be staying at on this tour as, due to frequent changes in contact details, it is very difficult to provide an accurate list for all our tours. Your Final Joining Instructions, which you will receive approx two weeks prior to departure, will show any local contact details that are required for your tour. However we would be glad to provide you more details if you have a specific reason.

In an emergency, contact the Walks Worldwide office (01524 242000), from which we maintain fax, telephone and email communication with Vietnam. Mobile phones work in Vietnam, but reception is limited in mountainous areas. To be respectful of the desire of the majority of our clients who travel to remote areas to enjoy the peace and quiet, we do not encourage mobile phone use whilst walking on our trips. If you need to make a call, please do so away from the main group. *Please ensure your phone is set for roaming if you are taking a mobile.*

**Extra Expenses** Food is cheap and so are drinks, even beer. You can have a good meal in a restaurant with a few beers, soft drinks, or fresh fruit drinks for approximately £5 for two, you can pay more, you can pay less! Souvenirs are usually cheap, as are clothes. Always bargain.

**Tipping** This is up to you but appreciated if you think the service you received is good. It is normal therefore to give small tips to taxi drivers, in restaurants, to guides and where appropriate.

**Things to buy** Lacquer ware, silk products, ethnic products. Western style clothes are very cheap and often very good, C.D.'s. Bargain, even when they say they don't.

**Baggage** Please make sure that your baggage is clearly marked with your name, inside as well as outside, in case the labels get detached. We recommend you to pack your clothes in plastic bags to ensure they remain dry. We would prefer you use soft kitbags rather than large rucksacks on trek, and we will be sending you a complimentary Walks Worldwide kitbag about two weeks prior to the tour, which is ideal for the purpose. Your entire trek luggage should, if at all possible, be packed into one kitbag. Extra baggage may be left in your hotel while you are trekking.

**Maps** If you wish to purchase your own maps before the trip we advise either The Map Shop, 15 High Street, Upton-on-Severn, Worcs WR8 0HJ (Tel: 01684 593146) [www.themapshop.co.uk](http://www.themapshop.co.uk) or Stanfords at 12-14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP (Tel: 0207 836 1321) [www.stanfords.co.uk](http://www.stanfords.co.uk)

**Included in the price:**

- Flights and UK airport taxes
- Accommodation on a twin/share bed and breakfast basis
- All meals on trek
- All transportation
- Fully guided throughout
- Camping equipment (not sleeping bag liners)

**Extras (not included in the price):**

- Main meals in main cities
- Tips
- Visa (obtain prior to departure in UK)
- Travel insurance.
- Drinks, souvenirs, personal expenses.
- Departure Tax (payable locally in Vietnam, currently \$12 per person – subject to change)

**Flights** As airlines often change their routings and timings with little warning, we do not state them here but the exact details for your flight will given to you with your booking confirmation. Please note however that these details are subject to change up until the last minute, and there may be occasions when we even need to place passengers on a different airline.

**Local joining details for those not flying from London** We can provide you with a 'Land Only' price which does not include airfare or airport transfers. You must arrive in Saigon no later than the afternoon of Day 2. A taxi can be taken to your hotel (payable locally).

## Clothing and Equipment List

You will only need lightweight clothes for your stay in Vietnam, plus a fleece for The Central Highlands. You will also need a lightweight waterproof. In Saigon it is best to be casually smart in a very relaxed way (short sleeved shirt / t –shirt, lightweight trousers and shorts, sandals or light shoes). Whilst trekking, wear lightweight clothing (trousers are probably more sensible than shorts) and lightweight walking boots or sturdy trainers. For the Mekong, t-shirts and shorts. Cotton shirts are cooler than t-shirts and cotton clothing is cooler than synthetics or a mix of cotton and synthetics. Whilst trekking worry more about comfort than looks; take old, well-worn clothes rather than rushing out to buy new ones, since they will probably get rough treatment on trek. The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive, and experienced trekkers will take a good deal less luggage than we recommend. All hotels do laundry very quickly and cheaply.

CLOTHING	NUMBER	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking boots	1 pair		Inner sleeping bag	
Training shoes	1 pair - all purpose wear.		Water purifying tablets (iodine based are best)	
Casual shoes/sandals	Optional. For hotel wear.		Torch	
Socks	3+		Binoculars	
Underwear	3+		Camera, film & accessories	
"T" shirts	3+		A variety of plastic bags (the kitbags are not waterproof)	
Long trousers	2		Sunglasses	
Shorts	2/3		Daypack/small rucksack	
Light sweater/fleece	1/2		Binoculars (optional)	
Waterproof jacket	1		Washing & shaving kits	
Waterproof trousers	1		Relevant field guides	
Sunhat	Essential		Large water bottle	
Track suit	Optional.		Reading material	
Swimsuit/shorts			First aid kit	
			Notebook/diary	
			Towel	
			Money belt/pouch	

The following items should also be considered *and those in bold type essential*.

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Moisturising cream		Small sewing kit	
Safety pins		<b>Insect repellent</b>	
Penknife (not in hand luggage)		Universal travelling adapter	
Light washing line and pegs		Small mirror	
Spare bulbs and batteries		Scissors (not in hand luggage)	
Nail clippers		Earplugs (against dogs and snorers!)	
Cold water detergent		Padlock(s) for your kitbags	
<b>Loo paper for the trip</b>		Boot wax	
Spare glasses or contact lenses		Malarial prophylactics	
Spare boot laces		Sweets for energy	
Crayons/biros for the local kids		<b>Suncream - lots of it!</b>	
Baby wipes/'dry' handwash/sanitiser		<b>MONEY / TC'S</b>	
Copies of passport/tickets/insurance docs		<b>AIR TICKET</b>	
<b>PASSPORT with VISA</b>			