



Journeys That Capture The Soul Of The Country . . .

Gain a real insight into the country – places, history, people – whether for a few days or a few weeks.

Many of our clients come again and again – becoming immersed in the warm climate, vibrant colour, traditional cultures and ever-friendly welcome.

Created and managed as a social enterprise – using best business practices to realise humanitarian aims – at Carpe Diem Travel we strive to improve lives in the places we visit.

Seize the day
Find yourself
Give something back
Travel with us

Private trip portfolio

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Cambodia

Angkor Discovery

A classic introduction to the temples

Day 1: Morning arrival at SIEM REAP airport, where you will be met by one of our representatives and transferred to your hotel. Travel by private car or bus to some of the main temples of Angkor – including Angkor Thom, site of the famous heads of the Bayon, Ta Phrom, still largely claimed by the jungle, and Angkor Wat itself. Accompanied by an English-speaking local guide, learn about the historical evolution of the Khmer kingdom and the building of the temples. Sufficient time is allowed at each site for you to explore at your own pace, take photographs, or just stare in wonder – plus a long break for lunch to shelter from the heat of the midday sun! At just before sunset, climb to the top of Angkor Wat (if you dare!) for a sight not to be missed. Return to the hotel by early evening.

Day 2: Early morning, take a boat trip to the floating village on the giant Tonle Sap Lake. In the afternoon, visit further temples within the Angkor complex, including Banteay Srei, with amazingly intricate detail carved in red sandstone. Again, the day is unhurried, giving you time of your own and avoiding the pressurised rush of typical guided tours. For the evening, a traditional Khmer dinner/dance show (included in price) is planned for your entertainment.

Day 3: Visit Kbal Spein, the "river of a thousand lingas", with ancient carvings on a riverbed and a scenic short trek through the jungle to reach it. The afternoon is free – you can spend more time at the temples, walk around the town, buy some local handicrafts in the market, swim in a local resort pool, or just relax.

Day 4: Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

From GB£260 per person for a private trip for two people



Cambodia

Cultural Discovery

Get off the beaten track

Day 1: Arrival at SIEM REAP airport, where you will be met by one of our representatives and taken to your hotel to check in. Travel by private car or bus to some of the main temples of Angkor – including Angkor Thom, site of the famous heads of the Bayon, Ta Phrom, still largely claimed by the jungle, and Angkor Wat itself. Accompanied by an English-speaking local guide, learn about the historical evolution of the Khmer kingdom and the building of the temples. Sufficient time is allowed at each site for you to explore at your own pace, take photographs, or just stare in wonder – plus a long break for lunch to shelter from the heat of the midday sun! At just before sunset, climb to the top of Angkor Wat (if you dare!) for a sight not to be missed. Return to the hotel by early evening.

Day 2: Visit further temples within the Angkor complex, including Ta Phrom, still largely claimed by the jungle, and Banteay Srei, with amazingly intricate detail carved in red sandstone. Again, the day is unhurried, giving you time of your own and avoiding the pressurised rush of typical guided tours. Return to the hotel by early evening.

Day 3: Visit Kbal Spein, the "river of a thousand lingas", with ancient carvings on a riverbed and a scenic short trek through the jungle to reach it. The afternoon is free – you can spend more time at the temples, walk around the town, swim in a local resort pool, or just relax.

Day 4: Travel by private boat through a floating village, across a great lake and along the winding river to BATTAMBANG. Travelling past many small fishing villages, you can see local people going about their daily lives (except when they all stop to wave to you!). In the afternoon, take a trip by motorcycle (with driver) into the beautiful countryside surrounding Battambang to some local places of interest and visit one of the local voluntary organisations who are working with the Cambodian people in developing the country.

Day 5: Off the beaten track with your motorcycle driver. Headed by a local guide, you will visit some hilltop temples to enjoy the spectacular view and drive along tiny winding tracks into some small villages where tourists hardly ever venture. Visit the caves where many people were tortured and executed by the Khmer Rouge, an important part of Cambodia's recent tragic history. Return to the hotel by early evening.

Day 6: Travel by private car to PHNOM PENH. This journey passes through many small provincial towns and villages, and there are many opportunities to stop and take photos, enjoy a cup of coffee at a roadside café or just admire the scenery. In the afternoon, take a guided tour of the Royal Palace, Silver Pagoda and the National Museum – location of many Angkorian era relics.

Day 7: Visit Tuol Sleng, a former Khmer Rouge interrogation camp, and the Killing Fields, immortalised in the film of the same name. In the afternoon, visit one of the local markets, where you can buy many local handicrafts at very reasonable prices.

Day 8: Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

From GB£680 per person for a private trip for two people



Cambodia

North Eastern Explorer

Waterfalls, Elephants, Hilltribes

Day 1: Depart for KRATIE by 4WD (around 5 hours, with a few short stops en route). In the afternoon, travel by small private boat to see the rare freshwater dolphins in the Mekong River – the only place in Cambodia where they can be seen. Overnight at a small local hotel.

Day 2: Travel by private 4WD to Banlung, capital of RATTANAKIRI province - this trip will take around 5 hours along an unsealed road. Along the way, you may well see some wildlife - this road sees hardly any cars and travels entirely through the countryside. On arrival, check into a local eco-resort, small simple wooden lodges surrounded by forest. In the afternoon, swim in the beautiful crater lake of Boeng Yeak Lom, with beautiful clear water, in the middle of the rainforest.

Day 3: Travel by private 4WD through beautiful scenery to the Virachey National Park, passing a number of Kreung (minority tribe) villages built in the bamboo forest. Travel by small private boat to some more remote villages (where you will eat a simple packed lunch - included), and walk back to the boat departure point (around two hours on fairly flat terrain) before returning back to Banlung.

Day 4: Today, really get "off the beaten track" - trek for around 5 hours (fairly easy grade) through the countryside, passing through jungle and minority villages. A packed lunch is included, and late afternoon you will arrive in one of the villages where you will stay overnight.

Day 5: Pick up from the village by your 4WD and transfer to "jungle transport" - an Asian elephant - for a one-hour ride to the Kachang waterfall, where you can take a refreshing swim. In the afternoon, visit the stunning Cha Oung waterfall, where it is possible to walk behind the waterfall and the drop is so steep that the cascade of water dwarfs anybody standing under it. Return to your lodge in time to take a walk up to the hill to watch the sunset.

Day 6: Visit the Banlung market, which sells locally grown fruit, before returning by 4WD to KRATIE, where you will stay overnight.

Day 7: In the morning, visit the largest wat in Cambodia - complete with over 100 columns, it is a place of local pilgrimage and home to some very old monks. In the afternoon, travel by private boat to an island in the Mekong river, then walk for around 3km around its coast to see its flora and fauna (including some unexpected creatures!) and rural way of life. Return to Kratie town early evening.

Day 8: Return to PHNOM PENH after breakfast, following a different route which goes through the forest close to the Mekong River. On the way, see the pepper plantations and how bricks are made. Lunch will be at a small restaurant on the way. Arrival in PHNOM PENH mid-afternoon, in time to connect with an evening flight out (additional nights' accommodation can be arranged for an additional charge)

From GBE780 per person for a private trip for two people



Cambodia

Beach Extension

Rest and relaxation

Day 1: Travel by private car to the beach resort of SIHANOUKVILLE, arriving around lunch time. The rest of the day is free.

Day 2: Free time.

Day 3: Free time

Day 4: Travel by private car back to PHNOM PENH airport, arriving in time to connect with an afternoon or evening flight.

Additional accommodation in Phnom Penh can be arranged in the event of a morning departure flight.



Malibu beachfront guesthouse

GB£285 per person (minimum two people), based on twin/double share

Sokha 4* resort hotel

GB£380 per person (minimum two people), based on twin/double share

Laos

River and Forest

From Vientiane to the South

Day 1: Arrival in VIENTIANE, the capital city of Laos. When you fly in you will see the green from the country around you, and you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. After lunch, take a guided walking tour to That Stupa national monument, the National Museum, Wat Sisaket - the oldest temple in Vientiane - and the Ho Phra art museum.

Day 2: In the morning, visit a humanitarian project which works with children living on the streets, to understand about the issues facing the poorest people in the city and appreciate what is being done to help them. They also have a training restaurant where you can have lunch. In the afternoon, walk to the independence monument (which looks very much like the Arc de Triomphe in Paris but without the traffic!), where you can climb the steps to the top and see the view over the city.

Day 3: Drive to the South of Laos, one of the most stunning areas of the country. There will be an overnight stop at SAVANNAKHET, a town with many influences from the bordering countries of Thailand and Vietnam. On arrival, visit the only Christian church you will see in the whole time you are in Laos, and one of the most important Buddhist stupas in the country. In the afternoon, you can take a forest walk with knowledgeable local guides who work for a conservation project .

Day 4: Drive to BOLOVEN PLATEAU, a cool green forested area. On the way, visit the tea plantations, where you can see how it is prepared for sale (and also buy some if you wish). Your guest house lodge is on the water with a view to a beautiful waterfall where it is possible to swim.

Day 5: Today is a gentle walking day in the mountains to appreciate the truly beautiful scenery. There will be a packed lunch (included).

Day 6: Travel to DONE KHONG ISLAND, one of the 4000 islands in the Mekong, where you will stay overnight. On the way, visit Champasak, home of Angkorian-era temples, where there is also a small Buddhism museum.

Day 7: After breakfast, travel by boat to visit the biggest waterfalls in South East Asia - Khon Phapheng and Somphamit Falls - where you can have lunch. On the way back, make a few stops to look at the old French architecture and the old railway (still with a train abandoned in the jungle!), before returning to the guesthouse for a cool drink while watching the sunset.

Day 8: Trip ends after breakfast. We can arrange transfers to Pakse airport, the Thai or Cambodian borders.

From GB£795 per person for a private trip for two people



Laos

History and Heritage

From Vientiane to the North

Day 1: Arrival in VIENTIANE, the capital city of Laos. When you fly in you will see the green from the country around you, and you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. After lunch, take a guided walking tour to That Stupa national monument, the National Museum, Wat Sisaket - the oldest temple in Vientiane - and the Ho Phra art museum.

Day 2: In the morning, visit a humanitarian project which works with children living on the streets, to understand about the issues facing the poorest people in the city and appreciate what is being done to help them. They also have a training restaurant where you can have lunch. In the afternoon, walk to the independence monument (which looks very much like the Arc de Triomphe in Paris but without the traffic!), where you can climb the steps to the top and see the view over the city.

Day 3: This morning you will drive to VANG VIENG, famed for its intricate network of limestone caves. There will be several stops on the way to see some Buddhas carved out of rocks in the forest, and one of the minority villages. A packed lunch is included. We will spend some time exploring the caves before continuing to our peaceful guesthouse on the outskirts of town, away from the tourist hordes.

Day 4: A beautiful drive to Phonsavan, the site of the PLAIN OF JARS, travelling through the mountains. On the way, stop at a cave that was used as a hospital during the time the Americans were fighting the Vietnamese - Laos, although neutral, was bombed repeatedly during this time and suffered many casualties.

Day 5: Visit the market in the morning, to see all the fruit and vegetables available (and maybe even try a few!) Continue to visit some of the Jar sites - covering an area of around 50km, with jars of up to 3 metres high, they continue to baffle historians. Recent theory is that they are funeral urns - the larger the jar, the more important the person - but other historical artefacts found in the area have brought the experts no closer to understanding the civilization that created them.

Day 6: Travel to LUANG PRABANG. This is a very scenic trip - driving through many mountains, and you can stop to see the tea plantations. Also you will probably see many different kind of ethnic groups walking besides the road. On arrival, it will be possible to go for a traditional Laos massage, before visiting the night market - an opportunity to buy some beautiful locally-made items at very reasonable prices.

Day 7: Take a boat trip up the Mekong River to the famous caves of Pak Ou - housing thousands of retired Buddha statues. We will have a packed lunch here (included) overlooking the river. In the afternoon, visit the Kwang Xi Waterfall, where you can have a swim surrounded by jungle.

Day 8: In the morning, visit the Royal Palace museum for a guided tour to learn about the history of the Royal Family. After lunch, transfer to the airport for your onward flight.

From GBE735 per person for a private trip for two people



About our private trips

Our private trips have been carefully designed to offer a range of different experiences within a limited amount of time. Ranging from four to eight days, these itineraries are suitable for anyone with a reasonable degree of fitness, including families with older children.

The trips highlighted here can be run in either direction, and can also be combined together if you have a bit more time available. We can also arrange transfers between one country and another – the following connections are possible in either direction:

Done Khong Island (Laos) – Rattanakiri (Cambodia) via the Mekong river

Pakse/Vientiane/Luang Prabang (Laos) – Siem Reap (Cambodia) by air

Pakse/Vientiane (Laos) – Phnom Penh by air

Perhaps you have special areas of interest, or particular needs? We can arrange a customised trip for you.

Nature lovers and trekkers are spoiled for choice in this region. Laos is especially renowned for its stunning scenery, jungle and forests, and there are many opportunities to spend a few days or a week totally away from civilisation.

Ornithologists can enjoy the spectacle of Tonle Sap Biosphere, a unique bird sanctuary in Cambodia. At certain times of year the plumage of the areas' many feathered visitors will provide a riot of colour.

As a social enterprise we have good relations with the local voluntary organisations and can provide an insight or a more in-depth view into **current issues, education and social welfare**.

Keen **photographers** will have hundreds, possibly thousands, of photo opportunities throughout the region: historic temples, crumbling colonial architecture, landscapes, nature, details and the constant warm smile of the local people.

Some visitors – possibly **honeymooners** – may have the objective of simply getting away from it all; looking for peace and serenity or a shared cultural experience. This too is something we can offer, along with hand-picked accommodation from small friendly guesthouses to five-star hotels.

Families with small children have many options to explore and enjoy, and we are experts in putting together an itinerary that keeps all members of the family happy!

Trips can easily be tailored for the **wheelchair-bound**, too – we believe that the insight that can be gained by travel should be accessible to everyone.



Accommodation

From simple to stunning

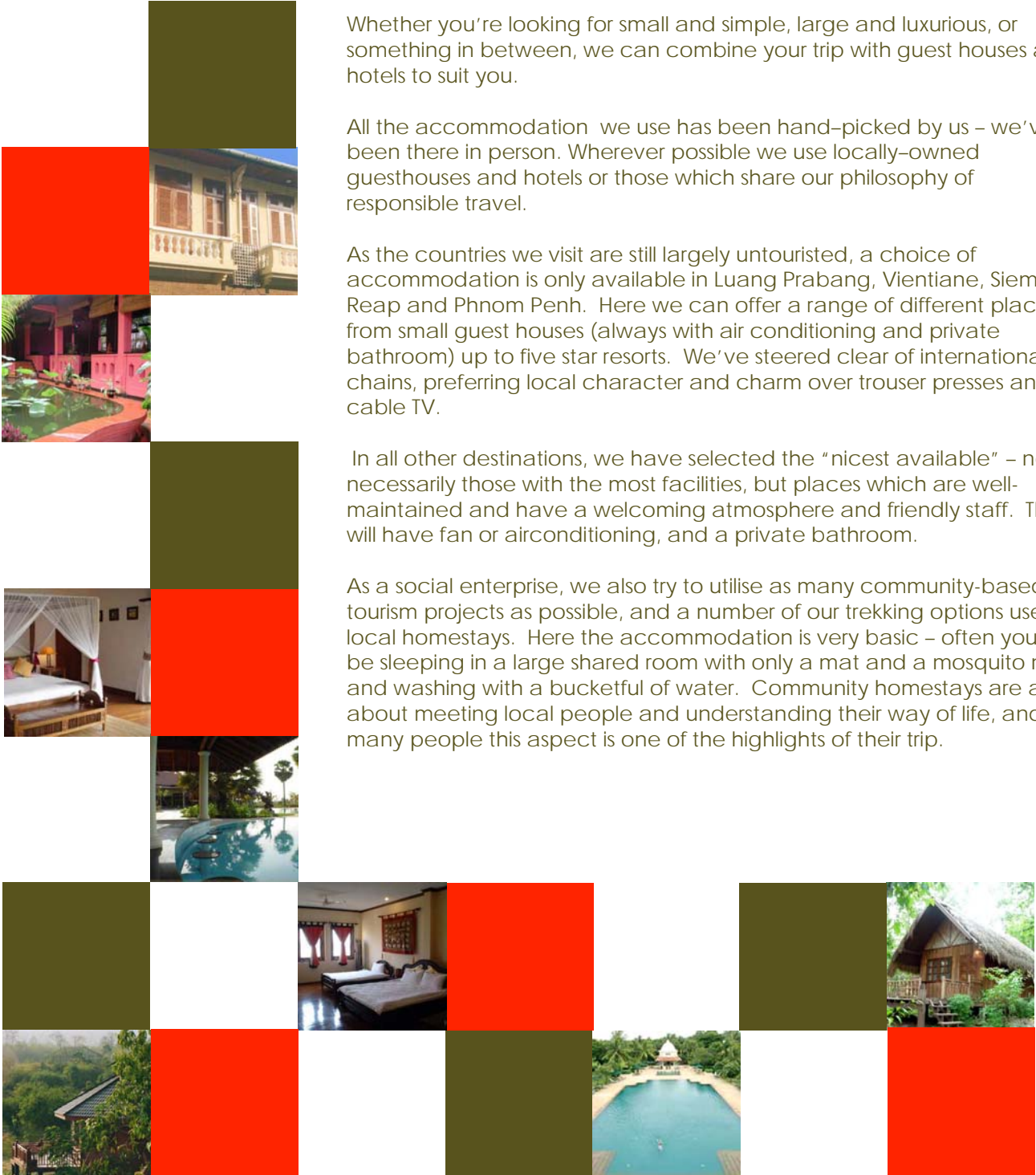
Whether you're looking for small and simple, large and luxurious, or something in between, we can combine your trip with guest houses and hotels to suit you.

All the accommodation we use has been hand-picked by us – we've been there in person. Wherever possible we use locally-owned guesthouses and hotels or those which share our philosophy of responsible travel.

As the countries we visit are still largely untouristed, a choice of accommodation is only available in Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Siem Reap and Phnom Penh. Here we can offer a range of different places from small guest houses (always with air conditioning and private bathroom) up to five star resorts. We've steered clear of international chains, preferring local character and charm over trouser presses and cable TV.

In all other destinations, we have selected the "nicest available" – not necessarily those with the most facilities, but places which are well-maintained and have a welcoming atmosphere and friendly staff. These will have fan or airconditioning, and a private bathroom.

As a social enterprise, we also try to utilise as many community-based tourism projects as possible, and a number of our trekking options use local homestays. Here the accommodation is very basic – often you'll be sleeping in a large shared room with only a mat and a mosquito net, and washing with a bucketful of water. Community homestays are all about meeting local people and understanding their way of life, and for many people this aspect is one of the highlights of their trip.



Social Enterprise

Giving something back

Carpe Diem Travel is a social venture, established to empower local people and provide direct support to humanitarian projects on a profit-reinvestment basis.

We believe that truly responsible travel should benefit both the client and the destination in equal measures. The client gains an insight into other countries and cultures, learning a little bit about themselves in the process. The destination receives economic benefit and opportunities for self-development – but never at the sacrifice of their culture or integrity.

In order to achieve these aims we operate two policies alongside each other: the first to minimise what we take, the second to maximise what we give back.

Respect for local people, their culture and their surroundings is key to our philosophy. In undeveloped areas, we work closely with local communities and village elders to minimise the impact our trips have on the region. In addition to this, all our clients receive pre-trip guidelines on cultures, customs and environmental considerations relating to the destination they are visiting.

Most of our journeys include visits to local development, conservation or community-based projects. We aim to provide all our clients, even those who just come for a couple of days, with as much appreciation of the country as possible.

Self-administration of projects and funds we enable and sponsor ensures that **100%** of our support goes **directly** to the people who need it. Our country representatives, as well being there to ensure your journey runs smoothly, are responsible for monitoring the progress of projects and overseeing how funding is used.

As a social enterprise, most of our work is undertaken on the ground. Our sales and administrative functions are almost entirely internet based, utilising modern technology to minimise unnecessary overheads such as flashy storefronts and glossy brochures. In this way we maximise the benefit our destinations receive from your holiday.

Carpe Diem Travel is a UK registered limited company and complies fully with EC legislation to ensure your security and peace of mind.

