

Vietnam Adventure



Guest Know Before You Go!

Main Adventure: Vietnam: March 13-24, 2026 | Ho Chi Minh Extension: March 10 – 13 | Cambodia Extension: March 24-27, 2026

Welcome to Vietnam!

We're delighted you'll be joining us for this Walking Connection journey through one of Southeast Asia's most layered, flavorful, and quietly captivating countries. Vietnam rewards curiosity, patience, and presence—and this adventure has been designed to give you time and space to connect with the landscapes, the culture, and most importantly, the people you'll meet along the way.

This Know Before You Go is your companion guide, offering the latest updates for your upcoming adventure in Vietnam. It includes practical information, cultural insights, and a few gentle reminders to help you travel comfortably and confidently. As always, travel requires flexibility. While we make every effort to deliver the experience described here, details may shift due to safety, weather, local conditions, unexpected events, exceptional opportunities that arise on the ground, and, occasionally, the hosts' or guides' discretion. Even though those changes often become the most memorable moments of the journey, please be aware that the details in this trip are subject to change without prior notice.

Contact Information (We suggest leaving contact information with family or friends in case they need to reach you.)

Walking Connection Office Voice Messaging: 623.800.3649

Jo Ann's Mobile: 602.561.7240 (WhatsApp, Voice, Text) | Email: ja@walkingconnection.com

Gene's Mobile: 602.451.9086 (WhatsApp, Voice, Text) | gt@walkingconnection.com

Local Emergency Numbers:

Vietnam – Dial 113 (police), 115 (ambulance)

Cambodia -- Dial 119

International Dialing Code: The access code for calling a Vietnamese number is +84.

Our partner in Vietnam is: Asia Concierge. If you have any challenges or disruptions on your day of travel, contact the Experience Manager. She is on call 24 hours to assist: **24 HR CONTACT +84 339 700 988 ~ Her name is Thu.**

Accommodations: Your accommodations have been selected for their character, comfort, and sense of place:

March 10–13: The Caravelle – Ho Chi Minh (+84 28 3823 4999)

March 13-15: La Sinfonia Del Rey – Hanoi (+84 968 472 388)

March 16-17: Avana Retreat - Mai Chau (+84 218 3819 868)

March 18-19: Jiva Hoa Lu Retreat - Ninh Binh (+84 933 006 886)

March 20-21: Ylang Junk Boat- Lan Ha Bay (+84 28 3535 0488)

March 22-23: Ancient Garden House – Hue (+84 345 205 899)

Walking Connection Fellow Adventurers:

Frank & Sylvia Bernardi – Oro Valley, AZ
 Jean Collins – Auburn, MA
 Larry Dodson – Phoenix, AZ
 Rita Dransoff – Chandler, AZ
 Kathy Glisson – Watkinsville, GA

Dave & Rebbekka Hirsch – Tempe, AZ
 Tom & Juliette Howard – Peoria, AZ
 Randy Lahr – Corrales, NM
 Greg & Kathy Randolph – Scottsdale, AZ

Your Walking Connection Hosts: Gene and Jo Ann Taylor

 **Communications:** The Walking Connection uses **WhatsApp** as our primary text and telephone network. **Please check your mobile network and wifi internet access with your provider.** Please download WhatsApp [\[LINK\]](#) for both local and international communication. **It is FREE! Connect through FREE Wifi! \$0!**

 **Notifications While On Tour: ALL notifications from the Walking Connection Team to Guests are sent via the WhatsApp Group Chat.** Please download WhatsApp [\[LINK\]](#). This is also a great way to share images and videos, and to exchange information with the group. PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS A PRIVATE CHAT AND IS ONLY SUITABLE FOR GUESTS ON THIS WALKING CONNECTION TRIP.

By default, we will add you (your mobile number) to our PRIVATE WhatsApp group to share info and photos about Vietnam and Cambodia, and for you to share images, video and comments along the way. **Please let us know if you prefer to be EXCLUDED from the group chats.**

Travel Documents: You'll need a valid passport to travel to Vietnam. The passport must be valid for at least 6 months after your planned stay. It's a good idea to make a copy of the passport information pages and carry it separately from the original. If your passport is lost or stolen, having a copy will expedite the replacement process.

A Visa is required for entry into Vietnam and Cambodia. For Vietnam, please [apply online \(https://evisa.gov.vn\)](https://evisa.gov.vn) - You'll receive your e-Visa within 3 business days, and it's good for 30 days from the entry date. Do not apply until 90 days or less before your trip. IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE YOUR VISA AS PLANNED, PLEASE CONTACT US. We may be able to help. For those going on to Cambodia, we will apply for and pay for our visas as required by the government.



General Trip Information

Climate: March is a wonderful time to visit Vietnam! Vietnam stretches over 1,800 km from north to south so weather patterns vary across the country.

- **North:** Winter lasts from Nov - Apr, with temperatures averaging 60°F but with little rainfall.
- **Center:** Central Vietnam experiences a transitional climate, halfway between that of the north and south. Expect it to range from 68°F - 86°F at any time of year.
- **South:** Temperature is fairly constant at 77°F - 86°F. Seasons are determined by the rains; the dry season runs from Nov - April and the wet season from May to Oct. The hottest period is March/April before the rains. Typhoons are quite common in coastal areas between July and Nov.
- **Highland areas:** In the hill resorts of Dalat, Buon Ma Thuot and Sapa, nights are cool throughout the year, and in the winter months, Oct - March, temperatures can fall to 40°F. Even in the hottest months of March and April the temperature rarely exceeds 79°F.

Food, Water & Health: Vietnamese cuisine features a combination of five fundamental tastes: sweet, salty, bitter, sour and spicy. Each dish reflects one or more elements based on a five-pronged philosophy. Vietnamese recipes use ingredients such as lemongrass, ginger, mint, coriander, cinnamon, chili, lime, and Thai basil leaves. Traditional Vietnamese cooking uses fresh ingredients and not much dairy or oil. The cuisine is low in sugar and almost always naturally gluten-free, since many dishes are rice-based rather than wheat-based. Pho (*pronounced: "Fa"*) is the country's most popular noodle soup. It is considered the Vietnamese national dish. Eating street food in Vietnam is a fantastic way to experience the local culture and cuisine. A general rule is that the busier the stall, the more likely it's worth the wait!

MORE ON WATER! Bottled or filtered water ONLY! The hotels may provide pitchers of filtered water in your room, which is safe to drink and use to brush your teeth. It's a great place to refill your personal water bottle. NO TAP WATER – EVER!

Refillable Water Bottles: If you have a favorite one, please bring it. If you don't have a bottle, don't worry, your Walking Connection guide will offer you a reusable bottle. If you already have a bottle, feel free to decline any offer of a reusable one. We don't want to add to the waste problem by giving you an aluminium bottle that you don't need.

Ice is generally safe in restaurants and hotels. Many restaurants buy ice from companies rather than manufacture it themselves, in which case the ice is safe.

Luggage on domestic flights in Vietnam and Cambodia: Most domestic flights have a baggage limit of 20 kg (44lbs.) per person.

Laundry Facilities: Laundry service is available at all hotels. Clothes are laundered and returned to you within 24 hours or even faster on request. It may cost extra.

Time Zone: Vietnam is 7 hours ahead of GMT. Vietnam is 14 hours ahead of Mountain time in Phoenix and 12 hours ahead of ET.

Electricity: Vietnam uses 220 volts alternating current at 50 cycles per second. Information on plugs and adapters can be found here: <https://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets/>. **We recommend always traveling with a universal travel adapter.**

\$ Dong, Dong, Dong \$ - Vietnamese currency

- **The official currency is the Vietnamese dong (VND).** Your phone will likely be your best source for calculating exchange rates. Don't hesitate to use it to show a merchant how much you are willing to pay when you negotiate.
- Most establishments accept major credit cards such as Visa.
- ATMs are widely available and recommended for cash instead of currency exchange points. Break larger bills when you have the opportunity, so you have smaller bills for small purchases.
- You do NOT need large amounts of cash for tips – **YEAH! See the Guide Below!**
- **Currency and Exchange** - You will receive a better exchange rate in-country than you would overseas, so wait until you're there before exchanging your money. Cash machines are widely available. Just be aware that there is usually a fee for each withdrawal, regardless of the amount (in addition to what your own bank charges for foreign cash withdrawals). If you need help finding an ATM, ask your guide. For example, on arrival, we recommend asking them to stop at an ATM en route to your hotel rather than queuing at the airport. Credit cards are generally accepted in hotels and restaurants in urban areas.

\$\$\$ Tips & Gratuities: Most are included in your trip cost. However, there are a few times where you may want to tip, ie. Someone does something special for you, and you would like to acknowledge them, or if you are extending your trip beyond our planned visits. To help, we have created a **special tipping guide at the end of this Know Before You Go.**

Shopping: Vietnam offers shoppers a dizzying array of high-quality, handcrafted items at reasonable prices. You'll find souvenirs made of rattan, wood, gold, silver, and stone, as well as a diverse range of products, including lacquerware, paintings, shoes, ceramics, handbags, and other handicrafts produced by the traditional ethnic minorities in rural regions. Keep in mind that you'll get the best price in Dong rather than in foreign currency, and that cities in the south are often cheaper than those in the north.

Bartering: The prices for goods in supermarkets, pharmacies, restaurants, hotels, basic commodity shops, and for official transport are usually fixed. Elsewhere, haggling is expected. To barter effectively, laughter and politeness are essential! When an initial price is quoted, throw up your hands in exaggerated horror and offer between a third and a half. You can then negotiate towards a fair price. However, it's important not to fret too much over a few thousand Dong. **The most essential principle in haggling is arriving at a price both parties are happy with, not necessarily the lowest possible price.**

Begging by Children and... We would strongly advise you against giving anything to children (it encourages them to miss school to beg). It's far more constructive to give money to charitable organizations that offer long-term help to a far greater number of people. In fact, spending your money at stores or site visits is far more effective than giving to beggars. If you do wish to give money, we suggest donating to a local charity. We can assist you in donating.

Restrooms: Public toilet availability in Vietnam varies by location. In major cities, there are more public toilets available than in smaller towns and rural areas. Some may require a small fee, usually around 3,000 VND (0.10 USD). Always carry tissue paper and hand sanitizer with you as most public toilets in Vietnam do not provide them. Shopping centers and restaurants usually have clean, well-maintained toilets available to customers. There are "squat toilets" in rural areas.

Cultural Etiquette: Customs and Communications

As for all of Asia, losing one's temper is generally completely counterproductive; it is seen as a serious loss of face for both parties. Vendors expect you to haggle but keep a cheerful attitude (and accept that you won't get a local's price). Don't be offended if someone laughs at you. In Vietnamese culture, laughing at someone's embarrassment is a way of helping them make light of the situation. The Vietnamese generally shake hands when greeting and saying goodbye. A small bow of your head as you do this shows respect.

Good To Know:

- "Xin Chao" is the Vietnamese salutation for both hello and goodbye.
- Don't point to or touch someone's head (including children), as this is considered impolite.
- When you enter someone's house, take your shoes off just outside the door.
- When visiting temples, wear modest clothing and always remove your shoes and hat.
- Don't show affection in public.
- Giving/Receiving: use the right hand or both hands; the left hand is considered unclean.
- Crossing the road in a Vietnamese or Cambodian city deserves a mention. It takes a little practice, bravery, and confidence, but our advice is to stay calm, walk slowly forward, and the traffic will weave around you - honestly!

Photography: When in doubt, ask someone if it's OK? Taking photographs is an integral part of any holiday, and you will find people of all ages more than happy to pose and smile for your camera. As a general rule, if you identify a particular individual or photograph 'close-up', it is courteous to ask permission. Sign language usually works; simply gesture with your camera and smile, and a firm shake or nod of the head in response will quickly let you know if it is OK to photograph. Payment is not customary, but in tourist hotspots, you may be asked for a tip. Some locals like to see their photograph once it's been taken, and this can be a great way to interact.

Social Media: When leaving posts on social media, don't forget us! We would really appreciate it if you would mention Walking Connection as your tour company. Your referrals and exposure to others help us offer even more wonderful adventures. Please tag #JoAnnTaylor, #GenesJourney or #Walking Connection. THANK YOU!

Travel Insurance: If you have opted out of purchasing cancellation insurance for your upcoming trip, we strongly encourage you to purchase emergency medical insurance at a nominal price. To assist you in the event of medical emergencies or other travel disruptions, including flight delays, cancellations, and lost luggage, enter "zero" where it asks for the trip amount. We recommend that you consider travel insurance companies, such as one of our preferred partners.

Travel Insurance Center

Insure ALL Your Travels Through The Walking Connection

The Walking Connection proudly offers three comprehensive choices to insure your travel adventures.

- **Generali Global Assistance** has been a preferred Travel Insurance Provider of our company for over 25 years.
- **Allianz Global Assistance** is a preferred Travel Insurance Provider offering new benefits such as **Annual Travel Insurance for multi-trip travelers** and a **connected mobile app** to assist you on the go.
- **TraWick International** is a preferred Travel Insurance Provider offering a comprehensive variety of Travel Insurance, including plans for **Canadian, US and International Travelers** to global destinations!

Whether you're traveling with the Walking Connection, another travel company, or independently, WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED!

Click the logos below to receive a list of coverages and programs to receive a personalized FREE QUOTE!

Click For Your Free Quote



<https://www.walkingconnection.com/travel-insurance>



More Information

Language: Vietnamese is the official and national language of Vietnam. English is also taught at all levels of education. Many educated Vietnamese speak French as a second language due to the legacy of colonial rule.

Religion: 86% Vietnamese Folk Religion or no religion; 5% Buddhism; 6% Catholicism; 1% Protestant, others less than 1%. As a communist country, Vietnam is officially an atheist state, but people are free to choose their own religion. Vietnamese regularly visit Buddhist pagodas, but most people, in fact, practice a system of beliefs called tam giao: a combination of Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism in which there is no inherent contradiction in making an offering to Buddha, a national saint and a personal ancestor, depending on the occasion.

When travelling in Vietnam, you will not only see beautiful religious architecture but also witness how religion influences Vietnamese thinking and daily life. If we are lucky, we'll catch one of more than 8,500 religious events that take place across the country every year.

1. **Population:** As of 2024, Vietnam has an estimated population of about 100 million people.
2. **Country Size:** Vietnam covers an area of approximately 331,212 square kilometers (around 128,565 square miles).
3. **Type of Government:** Vietnam has a socialist republic government, with the Communist Party of Vietnam being the single ruling party. The president serves as the head of state, and the prime minister is the head of government.
4. **Antipodal Point:** The antipode of Vietnam lies in the South Atlantic Ocean, east of Argentina. This means there is no significant landmass directly opposite Vietnam on the globe.
5. **Interesting Facts:**
 - Ha Long Bay is one of the most famous natural attractions in Vietnam, known for its emerald waters and thousands of towering limestone islands.
 - Vietnam is the second-largest exporter of coffee in the world, after Brazil.
 - Pho is Vietnam's iconic noodle soup and is popular worldwide.
 - Vietnam has a coastline that stretches over 3,000 kilometers (around 1,860 miles), offering stunning beaches and diverse ecosystems.
 - The country has a rich cultural history, with influences from China, France, and India blending into its architecture, food, and traditions.
 - The Mekong Delta is a vital agricultural area, often called the "rice bowl" of Vietnam, producing a significant portion of the country's rice and fish.

Public safety and personal security concerns:

Whenever you travel internationally, be as careful about where you go and your surroundings as you would in any large city. Here are a few reminders for avoiding petty theft anywhere:

- Make a photocopy of your passport.
- When changing money, ask for some in small bills.
- Leave your valuable jewelry and watches at home.

General Guidelines

Here are a few simple guidelines for traveling with The Walking Connection in Vietnam. They're meant to help you relax into the experience, travel smoothly as a group, and get the most out of every day. We've designed this journey to be immersive, comfortable, and full of meaningful moments—those small, unexpected connections that often become the highlight of the entire trip.

Traveling as a Group

One of the joys of traveling with The Walking Connection is the shared experience. Even in a small group, the trip runs best when we're thoughtful about one another and mindful of the schedule we're all moving through together. Because of that, we don't adjust the group itinerary or departure times for individual requests. If you absolutely need something outside the scope of the planned trip or included services, we may be able to arrange it (when possible) at an additional cost. Just talk with us, and we'll do our best to help.

Departure Times

In Vietnam, timing matters, especially when we're moving between places, meeting local hosts, catching flights, or staying on track for experiences that have been thoughtfully arranged. So our policy is simple: we depart at the posted time. Whether we're leaving the lodge, heading to a hike, exploring a market, gathering for a meal, or moving to a new destination, we'll leave on time unless there's an extraordinary circumstance.

We ask that you be fully ready at departure time, with everything you need for the day, including water, your day pack, appropriate clothing, and anything you'd like to have with you. If someone isn't ready, we may need to depart without them, and they would be responsible for meeting the group at the next destination at their convenience and expense.



Your Vacation

This trip is thoughtfully planned, but it's still your vacation. If there's something on the itinerary you'd rather not do, or you'd prefer to take time for something else, just let us know. We want you to feel comfortable making the experience your own. All we ask is that you communicate with us, so we're never left waiting or worrying about your whereabouts.

Slow Down. Learn. Enjoy.

Vietnam isn't a place to rush through. It's a place to sink into. Take your time. Watch the rhythm of daily life. Notice the details. Enjoy the moments between the highlights. Those are often the ones you remember most.

Expectations

Many travelers arrive with expectations shaped by documentaries, books, and travel articles. Those stories are often beautiful—but they're also carefully curated, sometimes captured over long periods. We encourage you to let go of expectations and embrace what's real and present. With an open mind, Vietnam tends to exceed whatever picture you arrived with, often in ways you didn't expect.

If Something Feels Off

If anything makes you uncomfortable along the way, please reach out to Jo Ann or Gene right away—or when the moment is appropriate. We're here to take care of you, but we can only help if we know what's going on.

A Different Country, A Different Rhythm

Part of the magic of international travel is learning to navigate a world that doesn't work exactly like home. Vietnam will feel different in all the best ways, lodging, food, transportation, climate, pace, and culture. Sometimes those differences require patience. But they also offer perspective, humor, and a deeper connection to the places we visit. Let it be part of the adventure.

Our Itinerary Is Tentative

A gentle reminder: our itinerary is always tentative. Weather, road conditions, local schedules, and travel logistics can change. When they do, we adapt calmly and keep moving forward. Flexibility is one of the most outstanding travel skills you can bring, and it always pays off.

Meet the People

The heart of Vietnam is its people. The more you engage, the richer the journey becomes. A conversation, a shared laugh, a quiet exchange, these moments are what transform a trip from "great" into unforgettable.

A Final Thought

Vietnam isn't a place to rush through. Let go of expectations, slow your pace, and allow the country to reveal itself through conversations, quiet walks, and moments you didn't plan. Together, we'll meet the people. Taste everything. Walk gently. Enjoy the journey.



Tip Guide

Tippling: Good news! Most Tipping is INCLUDED in the price of your trip! All tips for drivers, tour guides, and prearranged excursions are INCLUDED. On the cruise, you will want to tip the house staff and anyone who provides personal services, such as a massage. Here are tipping guidelines (Good To Know if you are extending your trip beyond our planned visits):

YOUR TIP-INCLUSIVE HOLIDAY WITH WALKING CONNECTION

Before you travel, we thought it might be helpful to remind you that your holiday is tip-inclusive and to give you a few tips (excuse the pun) on how this will work in practice. We also hope it takes away that where-is-the-cash and how-do-I-hand-it-over awkwardness at the end of your day!

Which Tips Are Included?

Generous tips are included in your holiday price for guides and drivers who work directly with Walking Connection. Where possible, they are also included for other guides who directly deliver a specific experience for you during your holiday. An activity will include tips unless we tell you otherwise. If you want to tip your main guides or drivers an additional amount for exceptional service, please feel free to do so.

Which Tips Are Not Included?

We don't include tips for hotel or restaurant staff because it is not practical. We also don't include tips if we can't guarantee they'll reach the people who deserve them.

Extra Tipping Guidelines.

Though the major guide and driver tips are included, we thought it could be handy to give you some guidelines on how much is reasonable to tip elsewhere. There are no hard-and-fast rules, so adjust up or down depending on the level of service you receive.

We are talking in US dollars here - this is to keep things simple. Make sure to carry small denominations of the local currency to cover equivalent amounts.

Short Services - For example, porters who help with your bags in airports or hotels. Please do not feel obliged to tip every time or to give more than a small note equivalent to \$1.

Taxi, Tuk Tuk, Boat etc. - Rounding up the fare is reasonable for taxis and tuk-tuk drivers - perhaps a little extra for a long journey. On short boat rides or crossings, the equivalent of a **dollar or two** will be welcomed. If you spend an entire day on a boat, **\$10-\$15** would be more reasonable.

Extra Activities and Tours - If you book extra activities (in addition to those Walking Connection has arranged for you) locally or through your hotel, we recommend tipping the staff who organize and operate that for you. **\$10-\$20 per day is a good measure** if you are a couple; consider doubling that if you are in a larger group or family.

Restaurants & Bars - If a service fee is not already included, then 10% is a good rule of thumb. In bars, we suggest rounding up or leaving a dollar or two.

For overnight boat trips, we suggest giving a little extra as the service often goes a little further. In this case, we recommend **\$5 per staff member** multiplied by the number of days. So, if you're in a private villa with four staff for a week, that would be \$140.

In huge hotels, there is usually no need to tip, as service is generally included. However, after an extended stay, we sometimes leave a small tip of \$5 or so for the housekeeping staff.

###

Recommended Reading & Viewing

For Vietnam Walking Connection Travelers

Books

Vietnam: History, Humanity & Perspective

- *The Quiet American* – Graham Greene
A literary classic set in 1950s Vietnam that explores idealism, cultural misunderstanding, and unintended consequences. Read it for insight, not instruction.
 - *The Things They Cannot Say* – Kevin Bowen
Poetry and short reflections centered on Vietnamese voices and post-war memory. Quiet, human, and deeply moving.
 - *The Lotus Eaters* – Tatjana Soli
A novel about war photographers, moral ambiguity, and the difference between seeing and understanding. Strong emotional context without heaviness.
 - *The Happiest Refugee* – Anh Do
A warm, often humorous memoir about resilience, gratitude, and starting over. A favorite among Walking Connection travelers.
 - *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* – Frances Fitzgerald
For those who want deeper historical context. A Pulitzer Prize-winning work that centers Vietnam's own history and culture.
-

Movies & Documentaries

Feature Films & Cultural Portraits

- *The Scent of Green Papaya* (1993)
A poetic, intimate portrait of everyday Vietnamese life. Slow, beautiful, and deeply sensory.
- *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987)
A familiar cultural reference point. Best viewed with perspective and curiosity.
- *First They Killed My Father* (2017 – Netflix)
Set in Cambodia, but valuable for understanding the broader regional history of Southeast Asia.

Television & Travel Storytelling

- *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown* – Vietnam Episodes
Food, culture, contradictions, and humor. A love letter to Vietnam and its people.
 - *A Tourist's Guide to Love* – Netflix
Light and contemporary, offering glimpses of modern Vietnam beyond headlines.
-

YouTube (Short-Form & Visual Context)

- Kara and Nate – Vietnam travel episodes
Helpful for first-time travelers and visual learners.
- Mark Wiens – Vietnam food episodes
An excellent introduction to street food culture, especially in Hanoi.

Podcasts (Great for the Plane)

- *The Documentary Podcast* – BBC World Service (Vietnam-related episodes)
Thoughtful storytelling on history, culture, and modern life.
- *Asia Matters* – Asia Society Podcast (Vietnam-focused episodes)
Clear, accessible discussions for travelers who enjoy context without academic overload.

Media for Photography in Vietnam and Cambodia:

Here are 3 websites, 3 books, and 3 videos focused on photography in Vietnam and Cambodia to help you prepare for your trip.

Websites

1. **Pics of Asia (Etienne Bossot)**
 - *Why:* Run by a photographer based in Hoi An, this site offers tutorials and galleries specifically focused on Vietnam and Cambodia. It is highly regarded for its emphasis on "ethical photography" and how to interact respectfully with locals.
 - *Link:* picsofasia.com
2. **Réhahn Photography**
 - *Why:* Réhahn is one of the most famous photographers currently working in Vietnam. His website features incredible portraits of the various ethnic groups in Vietnam, providing great inspiration for cultural portraiture.
 - *Link:* rehahnphotographer.com

Books

1. **"Passage to Vietnam"** by Rick Smolan and Jennifer Er Witt
 - *Why:* A classic photo book featuring work from 70 top international photographers who documented the country over a single week. It serves as a masterclass in seeing the same country through many different artistic lenses.
2. **"Vietnam: A Natural History"** by Sterling, Hurley, and Le Duc
 - *Why:* For nature photographers, this book is invaluable. It provides visual references and context for the biodiversity, landscapes, flora, and fauna you will encounter.
3. **"Eternal Cambodia"** by Pierre Loti (with photos by Michael Freeman)
 - *Why:* Michael Freeman is a legendary travel photographer. This book pairs his stunning images of Angkor Wat and Cambodia with classic texts, offering both technical inspiration and historical mood.

Videos

1. **"Photographing the Temples of Angkor Wat"** (YouTube - *Thomas Heaton*)
 - *Content:* Heaton is a landscape photographer. His videos from Cambodia are excellent for learning how to deal with crowds, finding unique angles at popular spots like Angkor Wat, and managing the intense tropical light.
2. **"Travel Photography in Vietnam: Hoi An & Hanoi"** (YouTube - *Mitchell Kanashkevich*)
 - *Content:* Kanashkevich is excellent at explaining his thought process. He breaks down how he approaches lighting in rural villages and how he builds rapport with subjects for portraits.
3. **"Hanoi Street Photography POV"** (YouTube - *Various Creators like Sean Tucker or optic.legacy*)
 - *Content:* Search for "POV street photography Hanoi." These videos show you exactly what it's like to walk the chaotic streets, helping you prepare for the fast pace and traffic while trying to frame a shot.



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Cambodia

March 24-27, 2026

Much of the information provided in the Vietnam Know Before You Go is valid for your extension to Cambodia. Below are the significant items that differ from the main trip. Please make a note to review and email or ask any questions you may have.

Local Emergency Numbers:

Cambodia -- Dial 119

International Dialing Code: The access code for calling a Cambodian number is +855.

Our partner in Cambodia is: Kouprey Adventures. If you have any challenges or disruptions on your day of travel, please contact their duty manager, who is on call 24 hours to assist: 24 HR CONTACT Emergency Number: +855 766 005 353

Accommodations: Your accommodations have been chosen for character, comfort, and sense of place:

March 24-27: Java House River Park (+855 639 62 555)

Travel Documents: You'll need a valid passport to travel to Cambodia. The passport must be valid for at least 6 months after your planned stay. It's a good idea to make a copy of the passport information pages and carry it separately from the original. If your passport is lost or stolen, having a copy will expedite the replacement process.

Food, Water & Health: Cambodian cuisine features a combination of five fundamental tastes: sweet, salty, bitter, sour, and spicy. Amok is sometimes called Cambodia's national dish. Grilled skewers are a popular street food in Cambodia. They are made with either meat or seafood. Eating street food in Cambodia is a fantastic way to experience the local culture and cuisine. A general rule is that the busier the stall, the more likely it's worth the wait!

MORE ON WATER! Bottled or filtered water ONLY! The hotels may provide pitchers of filtered water in your room that is safe to drink and brush your teeth. It's a great place to refill your personal water bottle. **NO TAP WATER – EVER!**

Refillable Water Bottles: If you have a favorite one, please bring it. If you don't have a bottle, don't worry, we will offer you one.

Ice is generally safe in restaurants and hotels. Many restaurants buy ice from companies rather than manufacture it themselves, in which case the ice is safe.

Luggage on domestic flights to Cambodia: Most domestic flights have a baggage limit of 20 kilos per person, so bear this in mind when you pack.

Laundry Facilities: Complimentary laundry service is available at all hotels. Clothes are laundered and returned to you within 24 hours or even faster on request.

Climate:

Cambodia's March average temperature is 86 F, with humidity. Nights are around 75 F. There is a low chance of rainfall at this time of year.

Language: Khmer is the official language, spoken by the vast majority of the population. English has become a popular second language, replacing French as the primary foreign language. Many older generations speak French as a second language due to the legacy of colonial rule.

Religion: Buddhism is the state religion and is practiced by 90% of the population. This is deeply woven in culture, with monasteries and monks central to daily life.

Restrooms: Public toilet availability in Vietnam and Cambodia varies by location. In major cities, there are more public toilets available than in smaller towns and rural areas. Some may require a small fee, and always carry tissue paper and hand sanitizer with you as most public toilets in Cambodia do not provide them. Shopping centers and restaurants usually have clean and well-maintained toilets available for customers. There are "squat toilets" in rural areas.

₰ Riel, Riel, Riel ₰ - Cambodia Currency

- **The official currency is the Cambodian Riel (VND).** Your phone will likely be your best source for calculating exchange rates. Don't hesitate to use it to show a merchant how much you are willing to pay when you negotiate. The US dollar is also officially accepted as currency, with an almost fixed exchange rate of approximately 4,100 Riels per USD.
- Most establishments accept major credit cards, including Visa, Mastercard, and American Express.
- ATMs are widely available and recommended instead of currency exchange points for cash. Break larger bills when you have the opportunity, so you have smaller bills for small purchases.
- You do NOT need large amounts of cash for tips – **YEAH! See the Guide Above in the Vietnam Section!**

\$\$\$ Tips & Gratuities: Most are included in your trip cost. However, there are a few times where you may want to tip, ie. Someone does something special for you, and you would like to acknowledge them, or if you are extending your trip beyond our planned visits. To help, we have created a **special tipping guide in this Know Before You Go.**

About Cambodia

1. **Population:** As of 2024, Cambodia has an estimated population of around 17.5 million people.
2. **Country Size:** Cambodia covers an area of approximately 181,035 square kilometers (around 69,898 square miles).
3. **Type of Government:** Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary representative democracy. The King is the head of state (a symbolic role), while the Prime Minister is the head of government with executive powers.
4. **Antipodal Point:** Cambodia's antipodal point lies in the Pacific Ocean, far from any major landmass.

Interesting Facts:

- Angkor Wat, located in Siem Reap, is the world's largest religious monument and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It was originally built as a Hindu temple in the 12th century and later became a Buddhist site.
- Tonlé Sap is Southeast Asia's largest freshwater lake and plays a crucial role in Cambodia's agriculture and fishing industries.
- The Khmer Rouge regime (1975–1979) left a tragic legacy in Cambodia, with an estimated 1.7 to 2 million people dying during this period. The Killing Fields and the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh are reminders of this dark chapter.
- Cambodia's economy is driven by agriculture, textiles, and tourism, with the latter being significantly boosted by its cultural heritage sites.
- The Cambodian New Year, Chaul Chnam Thmey, is celebrated in mid-April and is one of the country's most important festivals, marked by traditional games, dancing, and ceremonies.
- Cambodia's flag is the only national flag in the world to feature a building, which is the iconic Angkor Wat.

Recommended Reading & Viewing

For Cambodia Walking Connection Travelers

Cambodia is a country of extraordinary beauty, deep spirituality, and powerful resilience. The selections below are **entirely optional**, but they add meaningful context to the culture, history, and everyday life you'll experience, especially beyond the temples.

 **Read what interests you. Watch what inspires you. Nothing here is required.**

Books

Cambodia: History, Humanity & Perspective

- *First They Killed My Father* – Loung Ung
A deeply personal memoir of survival during the Khmer Rouge era. Honest, heartbreaking, and unforgettable.

- *The Gate* – François Bizot

A rare, reflective account of a French ethnologist imprisoned by the Khmer Rouge—more philosophical than sensational, and full of moral complexity.

- *When the War Was Over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution* – Elizabeth Becker

One of the most respected narrative histories of modern Cambodia. Excellent context if you want the "how did this happen?" framework.

- *River of Time* – Jon Swain

A journalist's perspective on Cambodia over decades, including the region's upheaval and aftermath. Strong for travelers who like history through lived experience.

- *Cambodia: Report from a Stricken Land* – Henry Kamm

A clear, sober look at Cambodia's modern trauma and recovery. Not light reading, but important.

Movies & Documentaries

Feature Films & Cultural Portraits

- *First They Killed My Father* (Netflix)

Directed by Angelina Jolie, based on Loung Ung's memoir. A powerful film that helps frame Cambodia's modern history through one family's eyes.

- *The Killing Fields* (1984)

A classic film based on real events. Older, but still one of the most widely referenced portrayals of Cambodia's tragedy and survival.

- *The Missing Picture* (2013)

An award-winning documentary using clay figurines and archival footage to tell what can't easily be shown. Quietly devastating and deeply artistic.

Television & Travel Storytelling

- *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown* – Cambodia episodes (if available on your streaming platforms)

Food as a gateway to culture, history, and the people who carry it forward.

- *Globe Trekker / Lonely Planet* – Cambodia episodes

A lighter watch, but useful for visual orientation and "what's where" understanding.

YouTube (Short-Form & Visual Context)

- Kara and Nate – Cambodia travel episodes

Helpful for first-time travelers and visual learners (Siem Reap, temples, street food, and logistics).

- Mark Wiens – Cambodia food episodes

Great introduction to Khmer cuisine and market culture, watch before you arrive hungry (you will).

Podcasts (Great for the Plane)

- *The Documentary Podcast* – BBC World Service (Cambodia-related episodes)

High-quality storytelling and excellent cultural context.

- *In the Shadows of Utopia* (Cambodia series)

A deep-dive podcast into Cambodia's modern history, Khmer Rouge era, and long aftermath. Heavy, but very well done.

Enjoy exploring Cambodia before you arrive, or simply let the country introduce itself when you're there.



Social Media Posts & Reviews:

Social media posts are a fantastic way to share your experience with friends and family. If you choose to post pictures or your experience on any social media platform, please feel free to tag JoAnn, Gene, or the Walking Connection. Also, please use hashtags: #WalkEveryDay (JoAnn), #GenesJourney (Gene), or #WalkingConnection. These tags help people identify us, in case they choose to one day join you on another Walking Connection adventure, which we LOVE! Your referrals make up more than half of ALL WALKING SMALL GROUP DEPARTURES, so please use your voice to invite others to travel with YOU and US! ~THANK YOU!~

TripAdvisor

People, especially new potential guests of the Walking Connection, often check us out on TripAdvisor. They are interested in your experience with us! So, please, please, please, take a few moments, visit TripAdvisor, leave a 5-star review, and, if you're inclined, write a few words about your experience. New guests for the Walking Connection mean we can expand our offerings to more people and places. YOU ARE THE LIFE BLOOD OF OUR ADVENTURES, AND WE HOPE YOU WILL SHARE YOURS WITH EVERYONE ON TRIPADVISOR. ~Thank YOU!~

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