

**Hanoi - Ha Long Bay - Siem Reap (Angkor Wat)
AMA Waterways Mekong River Cruise
Ho Chi Min City (Saigon)**



This was a long trip, and consequently, this will be a (very) long review. I will break it up into sections, and you can click on each section to go directly there if you don't want to read the whole thing. Within each section there will be links to more details, pictures, or videos that you can click on if you're interested. There is also a lot of info that I just couldn't include, but I am happy to go over any additional details at any time.

This review will cover Tom Bradley Terminal at LAX, Korean Air, Hanoi, Ha long Bay, Siem Reap (Angkor Wat), AMA Waterways Mekong River Cruise on the brand new AmaDara, Ho Chi Min City (Saigon), and the Seoul Incheon Airport. We stayed at Sofitel Hotels in each city which were very nice and each of them had a different feel.

This trip included some of the coolest things I have ever done; staying on a traditional wooden junk in Ha Long Bay and taking a street food tour on the back of a motorcycle in Ho Chi Min City, as well as some very moving experiences; visiting the killing fields and war remnants museum in Vietnam....and everything in between. We traveled by plane, car, cyclo, bus, rickshaw, riverboat, traditional skiff, tuk tuk, oxcart, motorcycle, and more.

The entire 16 day trip (not including travel to and from Asia) is a standard package offered by AMA that includes the 8 day and 7 night river cruise, as well the pre and post cruise as described below, with the exception of the Street Eats Food Tour that we did on our own. The Cu Chi tunnel tour is organized by AMA, but there is an extra charge for that.

Some basic info before we get into the full review. As usual, we both over-packed. You are only allowed 44 pounds for the inter-Asia flights, so we packed light to begin with. But, we did bring nicer clothes for dinner. That was not needed at all, no slacks, no long sleeve shirts, no dress shoes, leave it all at home. You will see pictures later that show how casually people dressed even at night. Almost everyone wore sandals every day and every night, even to dinner. It is very hot and humid (and we were there during the "cooler" time of year), and everyone realizes that, so, shorts, t-shirts and sandals are the main things you should bring. We had our laundry done a couple of times as everything gets pretty wet throughout the day; most of the others on the tour did the same thing.

We had one tour director for the entire trip, Tony, who was amazing, and then we had local drivers and local guides in each of the cities we visited. This worked out very well as we were able to get various perspectives on not only the actual sights we were seeing, but also the political climate, feelings towards Americans and personal stories about growing up during the turbulent times both Vietnam and Cambodia have experienced.

The exchange rates as of October 2015 are: The Vietnamese Dong is 22,000 per US Dollar, the Cambodian Riel is about 4400 per US Dollar. Everywhere we went, people readily accepted US Dollars for any purchase, especially Cambodia. They prefer crisp clean bills. One time at the front desk of the hotel when asking for change, the machine would not recognize my 100 because it was not crisp enough. Another time, at a local store, a twenty dollar bill had a corner bent and they asked for a different one.

[LAX and Korean Air](#)

[Hanoi and Sofitel Metropole](#)

[Ha Long Bay](#)

[Siem Reap, Angkor Wat and Sofitel Resort](#)

[AmaDara Mekong River Cruise](#)

[Ho Chi Min City and Saigon Sofitel](#)

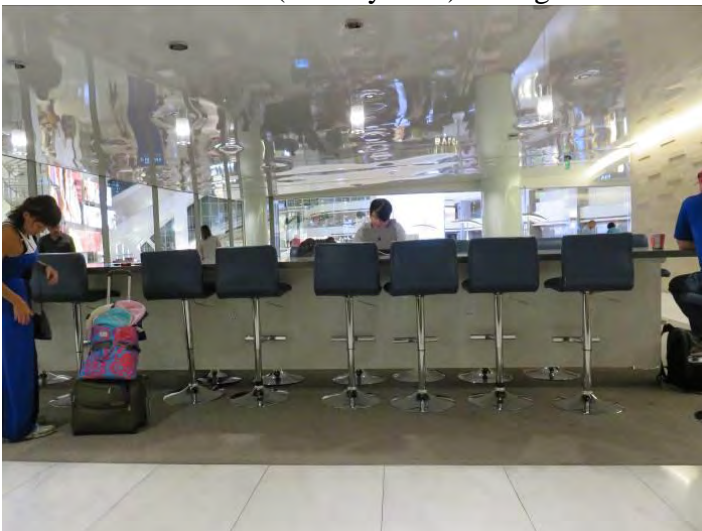
[Seoul Incheon Airport](#)

LAX and Korean Air

After checking in for our 11:50pm flight at LAX, we went to the Korean Air Business Class Lounge in the Tom Bradley Terminal. This is the same lounge you have access to with your Priority Pass from Amex Platinum. While it is always nice to wait for your flight in a lounge, this one was not nearly as nice as the Star Alliance Lounge just across the way, also in the Tom Bradley Terminal. Compared to the Star Alliance Lounge which I've visited in the past, the two different experiences are like night & day. The Star Alliance Lounge has plentiful comfortable seating, wood floors, waterfalls, dim lighting and tons of food options. Although I would never book my flights based on the lounge in the airport, it is something to be aware of. Below are pictures of the Korean Air Lounge on the left, and Pictures of the Star Alliance Lounge on the right from a previous trip. For those not familiar with the program, if you have an Amex Platinum card, you have free access to Priority Pass Lounges around the world. You do have to [sign up](#) for this, it is not automatic, but it is free. This comes in very handy if you're flying coach, but still want to have access to a lounge.

We boarded the plane and found our seats for the long 14-hour flight to Vietnam. One of the things I first noticed was the arrangement of the seats. The Business Class seats are arranged as 2-2-2, rather than 1-2-1. So if you book a window seat and need to use the restroom while your neighbor is sleeping, you might have an issue unless you want to climb over them and wake them up. With our flight leaving so late, we assumed they wouldn't serve any food until morning. We were surprised to find that they did serve dinner on the plane after midnight, but we chose to sleep and then eat when we woke up in the morning. Another thing to note is that Business Class on Korean Air isn't quite as most people have come to expect in Business Class. I've flown Business Class on other airlines (American, EVA, Air France, etc.) that give you more personal space and provide lots of cubbies for your belongings, a cold water bottle waiting at the seat, down comforters and noise-cancelling headphones. Korean air provided the basic amenities, but with expectations rising and other airlines really stepping it up in Business Class, I think Korean Air has a few things they can improve. The service and food were excellent, it just the hardware that needs a little upgrading. That said, we did get a good night's sleep, watch a few movies and have a good breakfast before landing in Seoul for our short layover before continuing on to Hanoi.

Korean Air (Priority Pass) Lounge



Star Alliance Lounge



Korean Air (Priority Pass) Food



Star Alliance Food



Korean Air Seats



American Airlines Seats



Korean Air Business Class Cabin



American Business Class Cabin



Hanoi & Sofitel Metropole

Once we arrived in Vietnam, we were met by a rep from Ama who called our car. After a 45 minute private shuttle we were met by Tony from AMA Waterways, who would be our Tour Director for the entire trip, both on land, and on the boat. We would be joined by local guides every day, but Tony was our “guy” for the duration. We checked into our first hotel – the [Sofitel Metropole Hanoi](#). The Ama Waterways pre-cruise & post-cruise hotel stays are a really great way to travel. Everything is already taken care of for you and you don’t have to worry about a thing. Tony does it all and just handed us our key after a quick walk to get us familiarized with the hotel. The hotel is beautiful and very different from the other two Sofitel’s we would stay at later. One really cool thing about the hotel is that The Metropole Bomb Shelter is right in the hotel. We got to go underground into the bomb shelter and learn some of the history of the hotel and the area. We had our first afternoon free and decided to wander around the city. The hotel is centrally located near the opera house, the large lake in the center of the city, and old town.

In the morning we had our included breakfast, very nice buffet that we would find to be the case at all of the hotels, and then started our tour of Hanoi. We went to the “[Hanoi Hilton](#)” which, as you know, is not an actual hotel. The official name is Hoa Lo Prison and it is one of the many places where people were kept and tortured during the Vietnam War. John McCain was here and his actual flight suit is on display. A lot of what we saw was very disturbing, but also interesting to see and learn about. We also toured downtown Hanoi where the drivers literally move around pedestrians who are crossing the street. There are no crosswalks, people just walk between the cars and know they won’t get hit. It is very strange to see entire families on one motorcycle or scooter, sometimes up to 5 people plus a baby tucked under one arm like a football.

That night, we took a cyclo (kind of like a rickshaw, but with a bike in front) from the hotel for an hour-long tour of old town, then we had time to wander around this very interesting area. We ended the night by seeing a traditional Vietnamese water puppet show. It was a great way to end our stay in Hanoi.

Videos:

When crossing the street in Hanoi, they say to just start walking, people will move around you, keep the same pace, do not run, do not stop, just step off the curb and walk.

[Hanoi Street Crossing](#)

Sofitel Metropole Hanoi Front Desk



Sofitel Metropole Hanoi Room



Sofitel Metropole Hanoi Room



Sofitel Metropole Hanoi Bathroom



Briefing with Tony with schedule for the entire trip



Hanoi Hilton



Bomb Shelter in the Metropole Hotel



Family of 5 on a scooter



Ha Long Bay

[Ha Long Bay](#) was definitely one of the highlights of the trip. It was about a 4 hour bus ride from the Sofitel in Hanoi to Ha Long Bay with one “happy stop” about half way. For this ride, and all tours and transfers during the trip, they split us into two groups. There were only 35 of us on the whole trip, so we could have easily fit on one bus, but AMA did it right and allowed each of us to spread out with lots of extra room. Upon arriving at Ha Long Bay we took a boat out to the Indochina Star, the wooden junk that we would be staying on for the night. We had left our luggage outside of our doors this morning, and we would see it again at the airport for the flight to Siem Reap, only a small carry-on is required for the one night stay in Ha Long Bay. The junk was absolutely gorgeous, inside and out, and so was the bay itself. The junk had beautiful wooden floors throughout the boat and our room was much nicer than we expected. We even had a nice balcony, which would have come in handy if we wanted to buy anything for the local women who paddle up to the junks on small boats loaded with souvenirs throughout the day.

During the day, we explored the bay and saw tons of floating “villages.” They were actually made up of multiple boats all tied up together. People live on these floating cities year-round, trading goods and even some will sell souvenirs to tourists. We also got to see a huge cave in the bay. We spent about an hour inside the cave walking around. There are lights inside so that you can see everything better, which was really cool.

After our day of exploring, we went back to the junk for dinner. Before heading down to the dining room, we had wine tasting and hors d’oeuvres on the top deck as the sun was going down. The dining room was great and they served us a ton of food for dinner – including appetizers and 2 full entrees! In the morning, there is coffee and pastries on deck at 6:30, then Tai Chi before breakfast at 9:30. We got back to shore at about 11:30 and boarded our busses for the trip to the airport for our flight to Siem Reap

If you are traveling to Vietnam, Ha Long Bay is definitely something you should make time to see!

Videos:

Ha Long Bay is a Unesco World Heritage site with 1600 islands of various sizes and shapes making for stunning scenery and a beautiful, serene setting for our night on the traditional junk.

[Ha Long Bay](#)

Floating villages have been located here for hundreds of years and thousands of people call them home. Notice the boy casually swinging in the hammock while his siblings play on the deck, this is everyday life for them

[Floating Village](#)

Ha Long Bay



Dining Room on the Junk



Sun Deck for Wine Tasting at night, Tai Chi in the am



Much nicer cabins than we expected



Beautiful Full Marble Bathroom on the Junk



Floating Village in Ha Long Bay



Huge Cave we Visited in Ha Long Bay



On the skiff visiting the Floating Villages



Wine Tasting and Hors d'oeuvres on the Sun Deck



Amazing dinner started off with soup and spring rolls



Then we were surprised to find that we were each served two separate entrees!



Siem Reap, Angkor Wat, and Hotel Sofitel Angkor Phokeethra Resort

Landed at Siem Reap at about 7:30 pm, so today was a fairly long travel day, immigration was nice and easy, got out bags, still in the Orange and Green groups, and then off to the bus for the 30 minute ride to the Sofitel. Got in after dark, but they had all of our keys out and ready for us, just get your key off of the table and head to your room. Bags were delivered shortly after. So nice to never have to deal with your suitcases. We stayed at the [Sofitel Angkor Resort](#), which was also a great hotel. The décor was more traditional than the Sofitel in Hanoi. The resort also has a large pond that's surrounded by beautiful greenery, as well as a pool, gym, and golf nearby. All of our meals here were buffet, and very good. One night there was a traditional Cambodian dance show before dinner.

The first morning, we woke up at 4am so we could make it to [Angkor Wat](#) for sunrise. On the way, in order to visit anything in the Angkor complex, all visitors must stop & get a pass at the entrance to the complex. You have to actually go up to the window and they take your picture which is then printed on the pass. Of course this is all included in the AMA package, but everywhere else, they were able to just hand us tickets to get in. The pass is good for 3 out of 7 days, for all temples. Once we made it into the temple, it was so worth it. The view of the sunrise over Angkor Wat was stunning and definitely another highlight of the trip. As you can see from the pictures, looking at Angkor Wat, the temple looks beautiful, empty and serene. But turn around and you will see a huge crowd of people all there to experience the sunrise. The temple itself was beautiful. It is the largest Buddhist temple in the entire world and there is plenty to see and explore. You could spend an entire day walking around the temple.

Before leaving for our trip, we did a lot of research about the proper attire for visiting Angkor Wat and everything we found online said you must wear long pants and have your shoulders covered. Once we were at the temple, we saw tons of people wearing shorts and t-shirts, and some women were even in short dresses. That being said, you can pretty much wear whatever you want unless you want to climb to the very top of the temple. There is one final staircase that is very steep and if you're walking up the stairs, they want you to be covered to below your knees, and no shoulders exposed. Women cannot wear a scarf to cover up, they must have a shirt on that covers their shoulders. There is someone positioned at the entrance to the third level and they are very strict. Other than that, the dress code is actually much more relaxed than we expected for all of the other temples.

Once we finished up there, we were taken back to the hotel for some free time. We decided to take a tuk tuk to the local market, \$2 US for about a 10 minute ride. Like most local markets, you can find vendors selling cheap knock-offs of various products, like watches and purses. We wandered through the market a little, then ended up on [Pub Street](#). It was a great place to relax, kick back and enjoy a beer (for \$0.50) and some lunch.

Then we went on to a couple more temples, first was the [Bayon Temple](#) with 37 of the original 54 towers still standing, each with 4 carved faces on them. The detail was astonishing. We had a guide leading us through the temple and telling us about the history.

The final temple we visited was [Ta Prohm](#) (aka the Tomb Raider temple) and is so old that there were literally trees overgrowing parts of it. It was a really cool thing to see.

After visiting the 3 temples, we moved on to the Apsara Waterways supported school where we got to meet Cambodian children and help them work on their English. The kids were so cute and friendly, it was really a great experience.

Another tuk tuk ride back to Pub Street with some new friends for another great lunch. It rained a bit for the first time of the trip and although the end of September into October is considered the rainy season it only rained for a couple hours on 2 of the days out of our entire 2 ½ week trip, this being one of them.

Today we had our laundry done at the hotel, as did most of the group. \$40 US for a full bag, we probably fit about 40 items in the between underwear, socks, shorts, shirts, pants, etc. Great deal, highly recommended as everything is already very dirty. Everything came back beautifully cleaned, folded and packed in tissue in a nice wooden box.

Video:

During lunch on Pub Street the second day in Siem Reap we experienced the first rain of the trip. It came down pretty hard, but only for about an hour or so, then we took a tuk tuk back to the hotel on the flooded streets.

[Rain & tuk tuk](#)

Lobby of the Sofitel Angkor Wat



Beautiful grounds at the Sofitel Angkor Wat



Guest Room & Bathroom at the Sofitel Angkor Wat



Room entrance and Patio at the Sofitel Angkor Wat



Ticket Booth in the dark at the Angkor Gate



Sunrise over Angkor Wat



All of the tourists watching the sunrise



Sample of what people wear (not allowed on top level)



Red Piano on Pub Street



Some of the 216 huge faces at the Bayon Temple



Typical street scene in Cambodia



Our local guide Vouthy



AMA Waterways supported English school



The kids were so cute and excited to practice English



AmaDara Mekong River Cruise

[Itinerary on AmaWaterways website](#)

From the Sofitel Resort in Siem Reap, we were ready to unpack and not have to move our belongings for a week. We got on our busses again, lots of extra room, and started what would turn out to be a 7 hours (with rest stops) drive from Siem Reap to board to the AmaDara, AmaWaterway's brand new boat. I guess the water in the lake was either too high, or too low, to board at the "regular" place, so they had to bypass that part of the cruise and have us board downstream a bit. It turns out that this pretty much happens every time. Not a big deal, but very important to be sure you are aware that this is a possibility. Some of the other passengers were not happy with the drive. One of the rest stops did allow us to see all of the bugs and spiders that people eat here. We were offered samples, but only one guy, not me, decided to try them.

Piset is our local Cambodian tour guide for the orange group for the bus ride and while on the boat. As we were passing through his village and he saw the house where his parents and grandparents still live, he told us about his "school days". For high school he and 4 other boys biked 128 kilometers (about 80 miles) to school every day! They had four single speed bikes for the 5 of them. They would leave at 2:30 in the morning and stop to eat the breakfast they brought along at about 7 am and continued on to arrive at school at about 7:30 am. One day the army stopped them at their breakfast break and forcibly recruited them right then and there in spite of the evidence that they were actually students! There were no phones and no reliable mail service at that time so they kept writing notes to their parents and gave them to random people to drive or motorbike the letters back to their homes to let their families know what was going on. Finally, after about two weeks, Piset's father got one of the notes and went with the local principal of the school to talk them out of the army service. The catch was that he also had to make a huge monetary payoff to get the boys back. One boy's family couldn't come up with all the money so he ended up being in the army for three years. After they got back to school they made friends with some local monks who let them spend three nights a week at the monastery so they wouldn't have to bicycle so much!

Once we arrived at the boat, there is not "port" we just walk through an open field. This would be the case throughout the cruise with the exception of Phnom Penh, when getting on or off the boat, you are not docked in a port. The boat just pulls off to the side of the river and ties up to the river bank. They set up a tarp-like runway for you to walk on. We boarded the boat and were told that because the boat was so empty – only 45 people on the cruise – there were upgrades available for a low fee. We went to speak to the Hotel Manager Marcus about upgrading and since he knew we were celebrating our 25th anniversary, he was nice enough to put us in the owner's suite! The interior of the ship was beautiful, with wooden floors and a spiral staircase in the middle of the boat. Our room was equally stunning and had tons of space. We had a king size bed, TV, a desk, a coffee table and cushy chairs, storage space, and a bathroom with dual vanities, a shower and a Jacuzzi tub. We also had a balcony, like all cabins on the AmaDara, but the suites balconies are larger than others and had 2 lounge chairs for us to enjoy. The first three categories have identical cabins, all with balconies; the only difference is the location. Then, there are 12 suites on deck 3 along with 2 owner's suites, also on deck 3.

The boat also has a very nice pool, great to cool off and relax at the end of the day, bar/lounge area with snacks and coffee available 24/7, and dining room. One really cool thing about our cruise was that since the boat was only about a third full, we got to know almost everyone on board. Each time we got off and back on the boat, the crew would greet us by name and welcome us with towels and a beverage.

Every night there is a short briefing about what will be going on the next day. About half the time, this talk was preceded by a short performance by local dancers or musicians.

Every time you get off the boat, tons of kids rushed up to us trying to sell various things (which we actually found to be the case at every stop). We were on our way to a beautiful, golden-yellow monastery. We got to visit with monks and take part in a meditation ceremony. That day we also explored more floating cities, but these were actually floating houses, rather than boats like in Ha Long Bay.

That evening back on the boat, we had our first dinner onboard. When entering the dining room, that they have sample plates of all their menu items so you can go look and see what it is before ordering.

I'm actually not going to go into the details of each day and each excursion; you can find that in the itinerary link above. The pictures have short captions that should give you a good idea of what we did.

We had some laundry done the last day of the cruise, it was about \$40 for about 15 things, not too bad, and we needed more clean clothes for the last few days on land and flying home.

People always ask about tipping. We tipped the local guides \$2 per person per day, and each driver, bus, boat, rickshaw, etc., \$1 per person per trip. These are the amounts recommended by AMA, and it seemed that most people did the same. AMA recommends \$10 per person per day for the cruise, so \$140 total, but we felt that the service was excellent so we tipped the crew \$200. They also recommend \$2 per person per day for the main tour director, Tony. That would have been \$60. I think this is low for the amount of time he spends with us and everything he did, so we gave him \$100.

Videos:

There were so many kids, both young and old, every time we would pull up to a little village. It was very interesting how they would just wander around with us, even if they weren't trying to sell us anything. This little girl couldn't be more than 3 or 4, and there were no parent's or older kids around.

[Little Girl Walking](#)

The older kids would have things to sell to us, everything from silver, to rattan, to food, shirts, etc. We only bought from them one time. Our guides said that if you buy from the kids, they tell their friends to skip school and come sell so they can make money. The boy we bought from said he was selling to make money to pay for private school (about \$25 per month), I hope he was telling the truth ☺

[Buying Silver](#)

Piset grew up in one of the villages we drove through



It's not just crazy scooter drives on the streets



Getting close to our lunch stop on the 7 hour drive



Stopped for lunch overlooking this beautiful lake



Next rest stop to see and try the bugs (no, we didn't)



Crickets



Tarantulas, crickets, water beetles, larvae, and more!!



Oh nothing, just a tarantula on the bus



AMA Waterways Brand New AmaDara



Mid-ship, cabins on the left, public rooms on the right



Small Gift Shop on Deck 2



Hallway with cabins on decks 1,2 and 3



Standard Cabin on decks 1, 2, and 3



Standard Cabin view from bed



Standard Cabin dresser, closet, and front door



Standard Cabin Bathroom



Owners Suite view from front door



Owners Suite view from sitting area



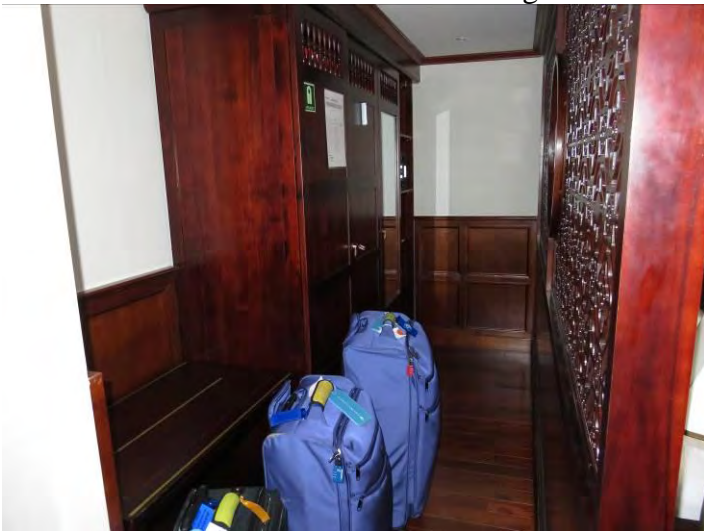
Owners Suite whirlpool tub and dual vanities



Owners Suite shower



Owners Suite closet and dressing area



Owners Suite balcony



Pool just outside of suites on deck 3



Bar and lounge where briefings are held



Snacks, coffee, tea, juice, and water always available at the back of the lounge



Typical transportation for locals on the Mekong



Many of the daily excursions were by boat



A small part of a typical floating village



Kids are everywhere, yelling "hello" as we go by



More kids greeting us as we “dock” in a village



This passes for main street in most of the villages



Buying silver from our new “friend”



Boats of all shapes and sizes are commonplace



Buddhist Monastery where we received a blessing



The Monks who blessed us



More of the blessing



Nice village tour by Oxcart



Live pigs on their way to market



No ports or docks, so this is how we get on and off



Cool towels and juice every time we got back onboard



Amazing dinner in the specialty restaurant



Specialty restaurant only holds about 30 people



Display kitchen



The food in the specialty restaurant!!



The Main Dining Room has actual food samples out as you enter to help you decide what to order



Typical evening entertainment



This picture is to show how most people dress at night



The visit to the Killing Fields was very moving



One of the few prisoners who survived the war



Just another helmetless baby on a scooter!



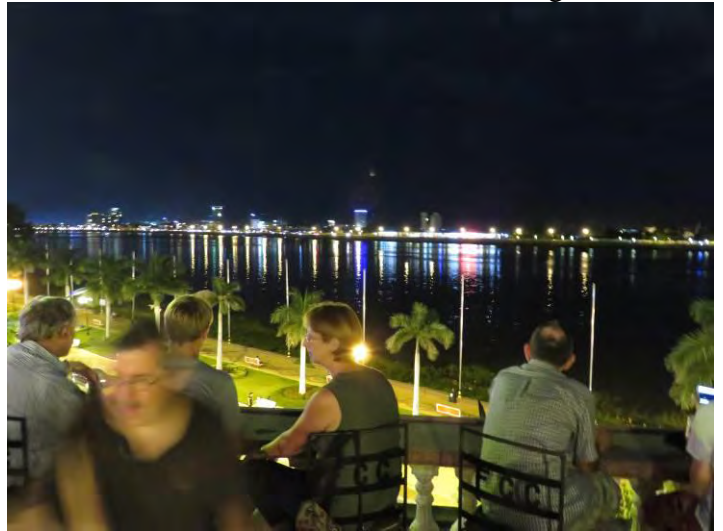
Tuk tuk ride to Raffles hotel in Phnom Pehn



Drinks at the Elephant Bar at Raffles



Dinner on the roof of FCC overlooking the river



Thursday night at 11PM still crowded in Phnom Penh



Night market in Phnom Penh



One on the boat, you could choose groups each day



A typical landing to start a village tour



We were invited into locals homes in each village



Many villages are very rustic, this pond is the "toilet"



Last night on the boat was a crew talent show



Local market in one of the larger villages



This woman is 71 and has worked here for 60 years



Most food is sold live for freshness, poultry, fish, etc.



Preparing fresh fish after a sale



Entrance to one of the underground forts



Ho Chi Min City (Saigon) and Saigon Sofitel

We put our bags outside of our cabin doors at 8 am, disembarked around 9:30, and took the quick hour and a half ride to Saigon with a short stop at the historic [post office](#) and Notre Dame cathedral. After checking to the [Sofitel Saigon Plaza](#) we went downstairs for an amazing buffet lunch. This has got to be one of the largest buffets I have ever seen. There must have been at least 50 choices, everything you could ever want.

After lunch we left for our tour of the old presidential mansion and the [War Remnants Museum](#). Many of the artifacts in the museum were difficult to look at, lots of pictures and displays that graphically depict the horrors of the war.

We got on the green bus to get back to the hotel by 5:00 so we could take a quick shower before our food tour. Another nice aspect of the Ama tour, they are very accommodating and will always find a way to work with your individual plans. We made our reservations for the [Saigon Street Eats](#) food tour online a few days earlier, and received an email that we were supposed to meet our guide in the lobby of the hotel at 5:30. Binh was our main guide and my driver, Carolyn had Nguyen, they were both great. The tour was amazing, 40 US per person, and then we tipped another 5 per person to our drivers, they really tried to refuse the tips but we insisted. Carolyn found this before we left and it had great reviews on [Trip Advisor](#).

Our last day was spent touring the [Chu Chi tunnels](#), an optional tour that about 30 of us chose to do. It was about a 2 hour bus ride to the tunnels, then we spent about 2 hours at the tunnels, and then about 1 ½ hours back to the hotel. There was a little less traffic on the way back. We got back to the hotel at about 3:00 and everyone said their goodbyes. We had been with this great group of 33 others every day for over two weeks, so the goodbyes took a while. Time to shower, pack, have a quick bite in the bar downstairs, and head to the airport for the long trip home.

Videos:

This is one of many types of booby traps that were used during the war. When you walked on the “grass” you would fall onto the bamboo spikes

[Booby Trap](#)

The Cu Chi tunnels were used by the Viet Cong as hiding places and to move supplies throughout South Vietnam during the war. The video below is me crawling through an expanded tunnel for visitors; it is about 3 feet wide by 3 feet tall

[Cu Chi Tunnels](#)

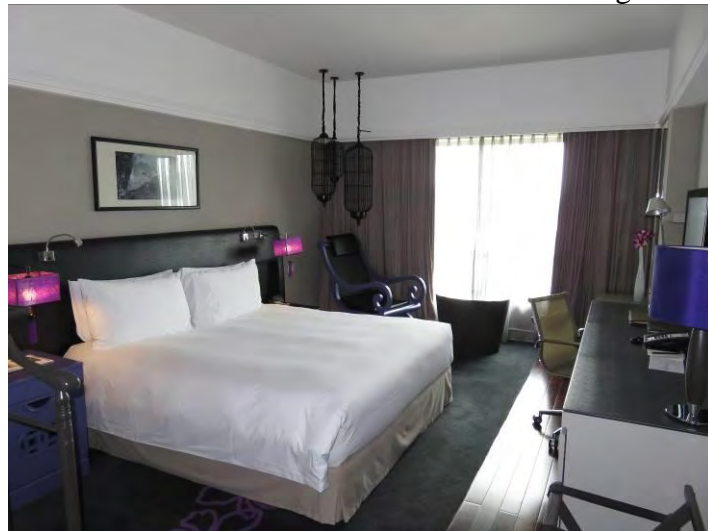
Each of us was on the back of a scooter driven by one of our guides through the busy (and sometimes scary) streets of Ho Chi Min City

[Food Tour Scooter](#)

Lobby of the Sofitel Saigon Plaza



Modern décor in the rooms at the Sofitel Saigon



Sofitel Saigon Plaza Bathroom



Just a couple of the many food stations at the lunch buffet in the Sofitel Saigon Plaza



Okay, had to do a few more food pictures, this was one of the biggest lunch buffets I have ever seen



Meeting our guides/drivers for the food tour



Just a "little" traffic on our way to the food



We were the only non-locals in the area where we ate



Just one of the many tables we shared that night



Cu Chi tunnels display



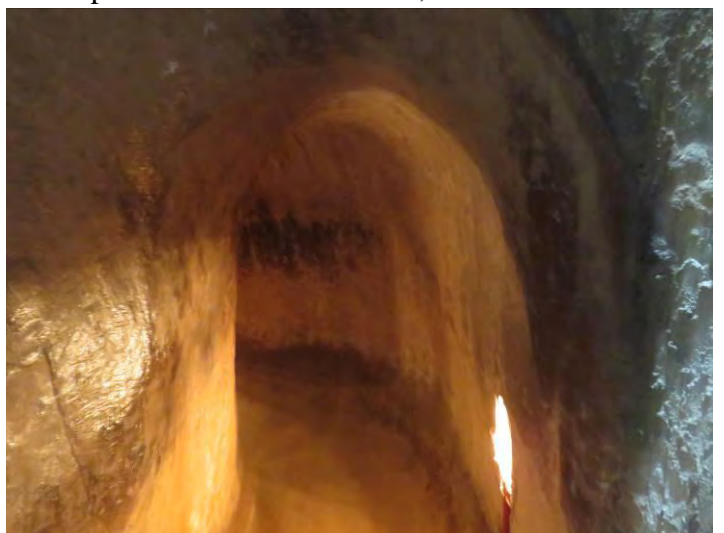
One of many varieties of booby traps in the area



Going down into the actual tunnels



Expanded tunnel for visitors, about 3 feet tall



Tony bought us ice cream after many of the tours ☺



Ho Chi Min City at night, so strange to see bulidings



Seoul Incheon Airport

When our travel plans require layovers in cities we like, or have never been to, we always try to make the layover a little longer so we can explore a little bit. Usually this involves putting our carry-on bags in a locker and taking a train downtown. We have done this in Zurich, Frankfurt, and other cities around the world. We had planned to do the same thing in Seoul since we had never been there before. Once we started checking n train schedules, we found that the Seoul Incheon Airport is consistently ranked as the #1 airport for in-transit passengers. We would not have to take a train to Seoul. The airport offers [free tours](#), ranging in length from 1 to 5 hours for in-transit passengers (those who are just changing planes). We decided that we would take the 3 ½ hour tour, but it turned out to be a little more complicated than we expected. I think this is a great idea, so let me know if you want details on how to make this work. Regardless, the airport has plenty to do, even if you don't leave.

There is a hotel right in the airport, plenty of restaurants, and a very large area with free services for in-transit passengers including showers, massage chairs, a sleeping room with beds, and much more. In addition, there is a small museum, a number of different gardens, and the Korean Cultural Experience where you can make traditional crafts, see live performances throughout the day and watch a parade down one of the concourses.

If you have to spend a few hours in an airport, this is definitely a nice place to do it.

Video:

Just one of the many things to do in the Incheon airport in Seoul. We were listening to the traditional instruments and music of Korea, and then, suddenly, they started playing a 20 minute medley of Beatles songs!

[Incheon Music](#)

4th floor Transit Area where almost everything is free



Free Massage Chairs



One of a few different “museums” in the airport



Free Showers



Free crafts, with instruction, to take home when done



Local musicians playing in the Cultural Center



And.....we're done....got to live Wednesday twice on the way home ☺

This was an amazing experience, please ask me if you have any questions or would like any additional info.

