



## *Explore Cambodia & Vietnam!*

An Exclusive Journey Exploring Nature and Culture along the Mekong River with  
JC Raulston's Mark Weathington!

*January 17 - 29, 2024*



It has been my philosophy throughout several years of hosting international garden trips that we enrich ourselves by encountering people from other cultures, enjoying their natural surroundings, and tasting their cuisine. We thereby come to appreciate the humanity in us all. We have planned this trip to be a journey you will never forget.

From the awe-inspiring Angkor temples to the pulsating city of Saigon, together we will experience the past, present and future of this vital region along its most storied waterway, the Mekong. Our journey begins in the town of Siem Reap, where we explore the history and culture of the Khmer empire as seen in the breathtaking ruins of Angkor, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We'll also explore the natural environment of the jungle that once hid these archeological treasures. From Siem Reap we cruise the Mekong River down through remote villages, and witnessing the rural life of Cambodia. Our gorgeous river ship, the 1<sup>st</sup> class, old world, *RV Bassac Pandaw*, balances traditional style with modern comfort. Our journey culminates in the vibrant city of Saigon. I look forward to exploring Southeast Asia with you!

*Mark*



**EARTHBOUND  
EXPEDITIONS**

Earthbound Expeditions Inc.

P.O. Box 11305, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110 USA

T. 800.723.8454 / T. 206.842.9775 / F. 206.238.8480

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### TRIP AT A GLANCE

3 Nights in Siem Reap, Cambodia's Angkor Wat World Heritage Archeology site  
7 Nights first class cruising on the RV Bassac Pandaw  
2 Nights in Saigon, Vietnam

### INCLUDED

- Hosted by Mark Weathington, Director of JC Raulston
- Guided by Earthbound Expeditions co-founder, Matthew Brumley
- Three nights 4-star hotel accommodation in Siem Reap
- Seven nights cruising the Mekong on the RV Bassac Pandaw
- Two nights 4-star hotel accommodation in Saigon
- Meals as described in your custom Mekong itinerary
- All activities and entrances as described in your trip itinerary
- Guided tours with local experts through archeology sites, markets, jungles etc.
- Special nature outings along the way
- Talks on the history and ecosystem of Southeast Asia
- All shore excursions
- Maps and fun language lessons



**NOT INCLUDED:** Trip Insurance \* Optional roundtrip air from the USA \* Gratuities for ship staff \* Alcohol beverages \* Entry and exit travel visas



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### TRIP FACTS

15 Days/ 14 Nights *(when including international air travel)*

Optional Group Flight departs Los Angeles on January 15, 2024 (TBA)

Trip begins in Cambodia upon arrival on January 17, 2024

Trip ends in Vietnam on January 29, 2024

Group flight returns to the USA on January 29, 2024

*\*Pricing & ship information on page 11*

### OPTIONAL GROUP:

Coming soon.

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## *Your Expedition Begins!*



**Day 0: Monday & Tuesday, January 15 & 16 - Travel from Los Angeles to Siem Reap via Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport**

Note: You'll cross the international dateline so the trip will appear longer. Not to worry, you'll get this day back on the way home!



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## Day 1: Wednesday, January 17 - Arrive into Siem Reap

Upon arrival, transfer to the comfortable hotel where you can relax and recover from jetlag. In the mid to late afternoon, the group convenes for a briefing of the trip ahead. Enjoy a traditional Cambodian meal at the hotel this evening. *Sleep at FCC Angkor by Avani (D)*



## Day 2: Thursday, January 18 - Siem Reap

**and the Angkor Jungle:** Starting out pre-dawn, we take a short drive out to Angkor Wat, the most famous monument in the country. We see the sun rise over the iconic towers and then, as the crowds head back to their hotels, we make the most of twin opportunities of cool morning air and minimal crowds to explore the site. Angkor

Wat is many things: it is a living architectural wonder, a house of Buddhist mythology and simply an aesthetic masterpiece. After covering the main points with our knowledgeable guides, we take a walk through the rear of the site where few people go. Here we encounter the woodlands, one of the best protected forests in Cambodia. A short walk brings us to a clearing by the river where a mini-buffet breakfast is set up.

After breakfast with freshly brewed coffee to keep you alert, we start a light hike through the forest to learn about the flora and fauna of the area. We often hear Gibbons monkeys off in the distance and see a variety of birds. The vegetation is mostly tropical hardwood trees, including a variety of other trees such as fig, banyan and kapok. We encounter many stonework sites such as the gates in the wall of Angkor Thom and the sentry temples at the primary points. On many of these structures, the trees have taken hold. The roots have probed through the gaps in the blocks of stone and the trees have sprouted out the top of the structure, making for incredible photo opportunities.

We'll be joined by a guest specialist today, someone who has lived in Siem Reap for around a decade and who is intimately familiar with the natural features of Cambodia, but is also very well read on the historical aspects. This individual will complement our excellent Cambodian guides who are well placed to provide historical and cultural context to the experience. Since the day started 5am, we'll return to the hotel by mid-afternoon, allowing for ample time to relax by the pool or take a leisurely exploration of Siem Reap town. Dinner will be at a venue within walking distance from the hotel, featuring Khmer cuisine. *Sleep at FCC Angkor by Avani (B, L, D)*



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### **Day 3: Friday, January 19 - Siem Reap with Nature Walks and Hidden Temples**

The many temples built by the Angkoreans span a huge area. There is much to see with each structure and each area having a unique look and feel. We'll start today at a more civilized hour and drive for around 45 minutes to reach the staging point for our next walk. This time we are coming into the core heritage area from a remote point, so the landscape will initially be home to forests, but also to villages that are scattered around the periphery. You can expect to see the local people here tending to small vegetable gardens and harvesting palm nectar from the many palm trees that dot the flat landscape. In the yards of the houses, you will see people preparing wood fires under clay stove tops where the palm nectar is cooked down into a viscous concentrate that is then solidified and wrapped in packages made from the palm leaves.

The walk will bring us to three key temple sites and there will be just a little vehicle shuttling in between. We will visit Preah Khan, a large, impressive temple with few visitors and towering trees surrounding it. We'll visit Ta Som, a smaller version of the iconic Tha Prom (that is inundated with tour groups these days) and we will visit Tane, hidden away on the banks of the Siem Reap River. Returning to the hotel by mid-afternoon, there is some downtime before we head out for an evening performance by the acrobats at the Phare Circus. This wonderful show is produced by Ponleu Selpak organization, a non-profit with a long history of contribution to the arts in Cambodia.

*Sleep at FCC Angkor by Avani (B, L, D)*



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**Day 4: Saturday, January 20 - Siem Reap and Embarkation of the RV Bassac Pandaw**

Today we transfer from Siem Reap to the town of Kampong Cham to embark on the expedition vessel, Bassac Pandaw. After a short cruise upriver, we moor midstream for cocktail hour and crew introductions. *Sleep on board the Bassac Pandaw (B, L, D)*

**Day 5: Sunday, January 21 – Discover Kratie**

This morning's visit to Koh Trong Island is a real immersion into Khmer rural life. Enjoy a bicycle or ox cart ride on the trail around the island for an up-close look of one of the prettiest places in Cambodia. We will also visit a reforestation site where personal trees may be planted. After lunch, our river ship moors off the picturesque town of Kratie.

*Sleep on board the Bassac Pandaw (B, L, D)*

**Day 6: Monday, January 22- Silk Island**

Sailing downstream this morning, we cruise past Phnom Penh and up the Bassac River to visit Koh Okhna Tey, or 'silk island'. Here we can see the entire silk making process from worms to weavers. There will also be a demonstration of the ancient Khmer martial art of Bokator. We return to ship and cruise down the Bassac River to the Mekong confluence. After dinner, enjoy a lecture on Angkor and Khmer culture from a local expert. *Sleep on board the Bassac Pandaw (B, L, D)*



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**Day 7: Tuesday, January 23 - Phnom Penh**

Our morning orientation in Phnom Penh is by rickshaw as we visit the Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda followed by the National Museum with its marvelous collection of Angkorian statuary. This afternoon there is an optional excursion to the Killing Fields and Genocide Museum or you may opt to take a tuk-tuk to explore the riverfront and finish with High Tea at Raffles Hotel. The ship docks in port tonight so you can enjoy the lively bars, restaurants and night life of Phnom Penh. *Sleep on board the Bassac Pandaw (B, L, D)*

**Day 8: Wednesday, January 24 - Vietnam Border**

Early this morning we cross the Cambodia - Vietnam border. As the crew takes care of a few formalities with the border officials, there is an optional tour of the working ship or fruit carving classes on deck. After lunch we explore the labyrinthine canal system around Tan Chau and visit a Taoist temple where the monks can read your fortune. We continue through local villages by Xi Loi stopping off to visit with locals tending their fields and for a tour of a local fish farm. You may earn merit by releasing fish back into the Mekong! *Sleep on board the Bassac Pandaw (B, L, D)*

**Day 9: Thursday, January 25 - Con Phuoc Island**

In the morning the Bassac Pandaw sails up a small canal to moor off Con Phuoc Island. We go ashore to explore the island by tuk-tuk to see basket production, a 100-year-old Catholic Church and local woodworking artisans.

After a cruise downstream in the afternoon we take a short coach trip to visit Gao Giong 'green oasis' with its bird sanctuary. Here a diverse selection of water birds and egrets gather in the tens of thousands across the Duong Tharp Muoi or 'Plain of Reeds'. Smaller row boats traverse the canals and take us to see the principal nesting areas.

*Sleep on board the Bassac Pandaw (B, L, D)*



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### **Day 10: Friday, January 26 - Cho Lach Island**

After breakfast the ship moors off Cho Lach Island for pot making and further glimpses of delta life, agriculture and local Viet hospitality including a culinary lesson in making traditional Banh Xeo. Upon return to the boat, we take a cruise downstream to Ben Tre where we travel by sampans through mangroves and bamboo groves to the fruit orchards of Ben Tre. In these, local artisans are at work and invite visitors into their homes for tea, fruit and honey products made from their own honey. This is an area rich in bird life and on our return journey we travel by horse cart through the lush countryside.

*Sleep on board the Bassac Pandaw (B, L, D)*

### **Day 11: Saturday, January 27 - Saigon - Bustling Commercial Metropolis**

An early rise gives us a great opportunity to visit a small floating market, then it is back on the ship to pack and disembark before the 2-hour drive to Saigon.

Saigon is the commercial capital of Vietnam, while the official and administrative capital is Hanoi. Saigon is a cosmopolitan city that has changed rapidly in the last ten years. These days there are galleries, craft beer breweries and a staggering number of dining and evening venues. We get our bearings by taking a walk in the former French Quarter where we see the old cathedral and visit the former South Vietnamese Presidential Palace, used these days as the Reunification Museum, complete with 1970s decor.

In the evening, we have a real treat, the AO Show. This is a dance and acrobatic show that tells a story of Vietnam. This impressive and enjoyable performance is held at the Opera House. *Sleep in Saigon at the M Gallery, Des Arts (B, L, D)*

### **Day 12: Sunday, January 28 - Saigon and Cu Chi Tunnels Visit**

This morning we depart for the Cu Chi Tunnels. This network of tunnels was used by the Viet Cong during the US/Vietnam conflict and was a significant advantage for them. There were many such tunnel bases throughout southern Vietnam, but a lot of effort has been put into preserving this site and making them suitable for visitors. We hear the full story from our guides and have the opportunity to wiggle our way through to get a feel for what it might have been like to use the tunnels.

On our way back down the river we make a stop at the Bonsai Garden of Nguyen Van Gi a man with a passion for Bonsai. He will take us on a short tour of his garden and talk about how he learned this art over a cup of tea.



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Back in Saigon we have a little free time, then in the late afternoon we will visit the offices of Gagaco. This company was founded in 2017 and is introducing urban vegetable gardens to the city, on rooftops, on balconies, even indoors. We meet the founders who will explain how they came up with this idea and the significant success they have already had in getting Saigon locals to adopt the idea.

Our final meal is at a low key, but exceptional restaurant – a meal that you will remember Vietnam by! *Sleep in Saigon at the M Gallery, Des Arts (B, L, D)*

**Day 13: Monday, January 29 - Depart Saigon for the US**

The tour concludes today at Saigon Airport. Airport transfers will be arranged as required.  
(B)

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## *Meet Your Host!*



Mark Weathington is the Director of the JC Raulston Arboretum at NC State University where he is passionate in his work to connect people with plants. His career in public horticulture has also included the Norfolk Botanical Garden where he served as Director of Horticulture and the Atlanta Botanical Garden as a horticulturist.

Mark travels extensively searching for new plants to diversify the American landscape and lecturing on a variety of topics in horticulture to further the JC Raulston Arboretum's vision of "Planning and Planting a Better World." His explorations and speaking engagements have taken him to China, Taiwan, Japan, Ecuador, Europe, Mexico, New Zealand, and throughout the US.

*ˆTour Details Subject to Changeˆ*



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## HANDCRAFTED LUXURY – THE RV BASSAC PANDAW

\$7,295 Main deck per person Double Occupancy / Single rate add 50%

\$7,795 Upper deck per person Double Occupancy / Single rate add 50%

Not Included: Gratuities for ship staff, travel insurance and items not mentioned in your itinerary. Additional port taxes, charges & fees are currently at \$65. Fuel surcharges may apply.

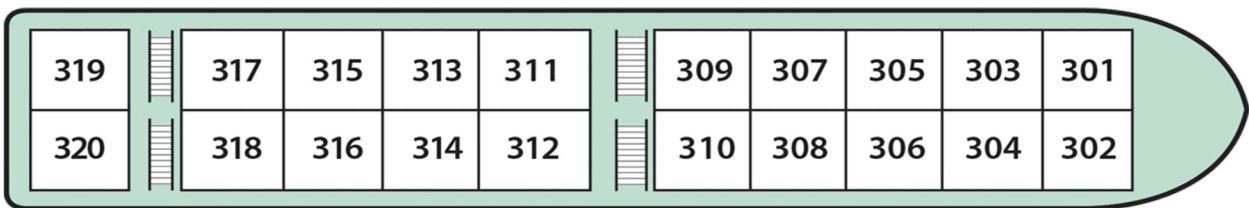
**SAVE \$400:** Alumni save \$100/ Pay by check & save \$200 / Reserve by July 31 & save \$100

### RV BASSAC PANDAW FACTS

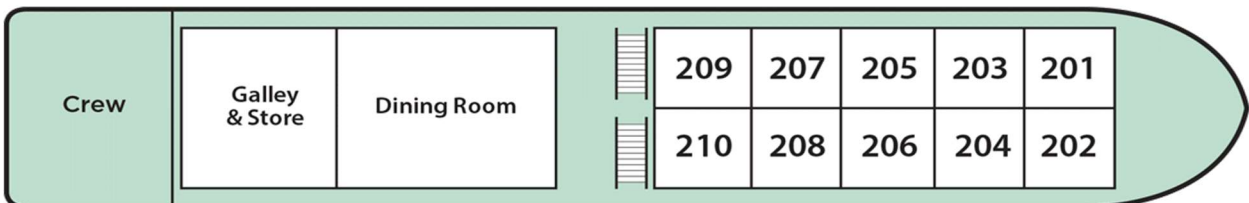
Built 2012 in Saigon, refit 2022 • Length: 167ft • Beam: 33.5ft • Draft: 3ft • Berths: 60



ELEVATION



UPPER DECK PLAN



MAIN DECK PLAN



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# FAQ

**RESERVATIONS:** A deposit of \$1,000 per person is required to confirm your space on the cruise. Deposits are refundable for 30 days from deposit or until **August 1, whichever comes first**, less a cancellation fee of \$500 per person. An additional, nonrefundable deposit of \$400 per person is required to participate in the group flight from Los Angeles. All payments made after August 1 are nonrefundable.

Reservations can be made at

[www.EarthboundExpeditions.com/mekong-river-cruise-2024](http://www.EarthboundExpeditions.com/mekong-river-cruise-2024) or by telephoning our travel staff at 800.723.8454. This is a small, privately-chartered vessel and space is limited.

**WEATHER:** Much of Southeast Asia experiences beautiful weather in January. The hottest months of the year are just around the corner so you can expect temperatures to gradually rise throughout the month. Despite this, January is considered 'relatively' cool, averaging around 75- 90F across much of the region.

**DRESS:** Casual, comfortable and expect summer weather conditions.

**HEALTH MATTERS:** It is the responsibility of each guest to be aware of their physical abilities or limitations, and to be in sufficient good health to undertake the trip. To make the most of your journey and participate in the various planned group activities, you should be able to be on your feet and walk unassisted for two to three hours (often over uneven cobblestones or pathways) with frequent standing. If you have questions about the physical requirements for your journey, please email or call our travel office. Any preexisting physical, mental, or emotional disability that may require attention must be reported in writing prior to the beginning the journey. Although it is not mandatory to participate in every planned and included group activity, not doing so isn't cause for a refund. For those desiring additional exercise, our trips allow free time to explore at your own pace. On boats, planes, ships and ferries, guests will need to be able to maneuver unassisted up and down gangways, stairs and in between decks. Smokers may smoke outside and downwind of the group.

**TRAVEL INSURANCE:** Earthbound Expeditions strongly encourages the purchase of Travel Insurance Coverage. We include information about trip insurance in your deposit information. Please read Earthbound Expeditions' Terms & Conditions carefully in order to avoid incurring costly penalties.

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS:** Click [here](#) to read the full Terms & Conditions.



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