



ROSS GODDARD
signature journey

13 Day Journey Thailand to Vietnam

DAY 1 Bangkok

On arrival in Bangkok you will be met and transferred to your hotel.

Accommodation: Pathumwan Princess Hotel

DAY 2 Kanchanaburi and the RV River Kwai

This morning we will meet our fellow travellers for the drive towards the River Kwai and a visit to Hellfire Pass. This notorious section of the Thai-Burma railway was the largest rock cutting undertaken, and gained its nickname 'Hellfire' at the sight of exhausted prisoners labouring through the night in shifts the Japanese called 'speedo'. The work area was illuminated by oil lamps, and many were to lose their lives here in unbearable working conditions. Hellfire Pass is supported by the Australian Government, and also by individuals and their families who survived the death railway. In tandem they have created a memorial to all who suffered and perished. We will take an extended visit along the well-maintained walking paths into the cutting and see the remnants of the rail line. We continue to the mooring point of our river boat at Daowa Dung Bridge. Here we meet our cruise ship the RV River Kwai, our home for the next three nights.

Accommodation: RV River Kwai

DAY 3 On board the RV River Kwai

The RV River Kwai is the first inland cruise ship to operate in Thailand. Built in colonial style, similar to that of the former Irrawaddy Flotilla Company in Burma, she has ten well-appointed teak wood cabins with private facilities. The dining area and lounge are located on the upper deck, shaded by a canvas awning, with uninterrupted views of the river from all sides. We will take a morning excursion to visit Hin Dad hot springs, which was accidentally discovered by the Japanese soldiers during the construction of the railway. This natural hot spring features two large pools and is thought by the local people to cure many ailments, including berri berri and arthritis. Our excursion continues to Pha Tad waterfall, considered to be the most beautiful falls in Kanchanaburi Province. We return to the RV River Kwai for lunch and an afternoon of cruising and relaxation. Traditional Thai massage is available on board.

Accommodation: RV River Kwai

DAY 4 On board the RV River Kwai

This morning there is time to relax on board the RV River Kwai. After lunch we will visit (by private coach) Tham Krasae, and travel on the original Thai-Burma railway line to the station of Tha Kilen. The one hour trip traverses a spectacular wooden viaduct constructed by the Allied prisoners, considered at the time to be an 'engineering impossibility' as it hugs the cliff-face for 400 metres along the River Kwai. Despite predictions, it took the prisoners just seventeen days to complete. Here in the far south-west of Thailand we also find remnants of Khmer influence from the Angkor period some 800 years before. The extensive ruins of Prasat Muang Singh Temple are a great discovery, and indicate how extensive the Khmer empire was in its heyday from the late 10th century to its collapse in the 14th century. We return to our river boat.

Accommodation: RV River Kwai





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DAY 5 Bangkok | Vietnam Danang

Our boat travels downstream towards Wat Tham where we disembark and say farewell to the crew of the RV River Kwai. We will visit the Bridge on the River Kwai, made famous by a Hollywood movie in 1957. The story was loosely based on the Thai-Burma Railway. Historical consensus suggests that the railway line was a failed concept from the beginning. Coming at an enormous cost in human life, it was barely used as the Allied forces gained momentum after 1944 and bombed the line regularly. The bridge has been rebuilt and remains as a testament to the courage and endurance of those who lived and died through its construction. We will transfer to the airport for the short flight to Danang in central Vietnam. On arrival we transfer to the InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort, designed by renowned landscape architect Bill Bensley, offering the perfect setting, looking east to the South China Sea.

Accommodation: *InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort*

DAY 6 Danang

Danang is a modern Vietnamese city set by the Song Han River with long sandy beaches to the north and the south. In the last ten years the city has enjoyed unprecedented development and is well known amongst Vietnamese as both a holiday destination and a place to live. A full day of leisure to enjoy the many services that the hotel offers - you may indulge in the spa service, enjoy a range of water activities, food, swimming, or just relaxing with a good book. Dinner tonight is at the hotel.

Accommodation: *InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort*

DAY 7 By Rail to Quy Nhon

We depart from Danang railway station in the morning and will reach the seaside town of Quy Nhon in Binh Dinh province after lunch. The rail network in Vietnam was built by the French over 100 years ago and remains an important transport link from north to south. Today we experience the railway in the stylish Vietage carriage from Danang to Quy Nhon - a wonderful indulgence which includes a three course dining experience (lunch) and wine, beer or soft drinks. This part of Vietnam was once the homeland of the Cham, an indigenous group thought to have originated from Sri Lanka who first settled in central Vietnam in the 2nd century. After years of conflict with the Vietnamese they were reduced to a minority, fortunately their splendid carvings and Hindu temples remain scattered throughout the province. On arrival at Quy Nhon rail station we will be transferred to our accommodation for the next two nights at Anantara Quy Nhon Villas. Dinner tonight is by the sea at our hotel.

Accommodation: *Anantara Quy Nhon Villas - Ocean view pool villa*





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DAY 8 Quy Nhon

The beautiful surrounds of Anantara Villas offer ocean views from your room and a private swimming pool. This morning we will visit one of the nearby Cham towers and learn a little of its history while taking in stunning views of the coastal landscape. Much of Vietnam's coastline has pristine beaches, villages and bays, fed by large rivers that run east from the Truong Son mountain range. Seafood is bountiful and fishing has been a major enterprise for the locals for hundreds of years. Dinner tonight at our hotel.

Accommodation: *Anantara Quy Nhon Villas - Ocean view pool villa*



DAY 9 The Central Highlands

This morning we leave the coast of Vietnam and travel south-east into the highlands. Our destination is Dak Lak province, famous for its coffee and cacao industry. Vietnam has 54 ethnic minorities and many of them are found in the mountainous regions, practising animism, dressing in colourful costumes and cherishing traditions that have been their tribes' framework for hundreds of years. The drive is spectacular as we first meander through rice fields, then winding mountain passes, until we reach a plateau and our accommodation for two nights at Lak Tented Camp. Set by a lake and surrounded by mountains, Lak Tented Camp has been developed with a strong sense of environmental sustainability, and engagement with the local indigenous people. Tonight we stay comfortably in permanent tented rooms, tastefully furnished and with private facilities. Dinner tonight is in the Long House.

Accommodation: *Lak Tented Camp*

DAY 10 Dak Lak Province

Dak Lak province borders Cambodia to the west, and during the American War it was strategic for all combatants. After the war, an illegal logging trade flourished as many looked for quick income from the surrounding environment. Fortunately, time and ultimately government intervention slowed the damage, and cash crops like coffee and cacao were introduced. This province is now well known for its chocolate. Today we will take an easy walk to view waterfalls, and visit villages of Ede and Tay people who are growing cacao and developing cottage industries. Life in this part of Vietnam has not been easy, so developing alternative sources of income, including tourism, is important. There are plenty of activities available at the resort, including kayaks, biking and walking. Dinner in the Long House this evening.

Accommodation: *Lak Tented Camp*



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DAY 11 The Road to Dalat

Our journey in the central highlands of Vietnam continues with a picturesque drive to the delightful city of Dalat. The French occupied Vietnam from 1883 and were looking for locations in the mountains for rest and recreation - the cool weather and clean air of Dalat were a welcome change from the humidity and heat of Saigon. The city flourished until the French departed in 1954 and thereafter became a remote and difficult place to visit during the years of the American war. In more recent times Dalat has become a favorite for Vietnamese travelers, especially honeymooners who call Dalat the 'city of love'. It is also the center of tea and coffee production in Vietnam along with magnificent flowers and cool climate vegetables.

Accommodation: *Ana Mandara Villas Dalat*

DAY 12 In Dalat

At an elevation of 1250 meters above sea level Dalat enjoys a spring like climate year round. After the French established settlement, they built a railway line from the coast through the mountains - a distance of over 150 kilometers. It was a substantial engineering achievement and carried passengers until 1954 before falling into disrepair and ultimately oblivion when the tracks were repurposed after 1975 to create the Reunification railway from Hanoi to Saigon. We will visit the old French station and travel along an eight kilometer stretch of railway which has been preserved. The French also brought coffee and tea to the highlands in the 1920s and Vietnam now ranks number two in the world for coffee exports. We will visit a local farm and see how coffee is grown, processed and marketed.

Accommodation: *Ana Mandara Villas Dalat*

DAY 13 Departure

A relaxing morning before departure to Dalat airport and the short flight to Saigon and your onward connecting flight.

