



SINGAPORE TO BANGKOK BY RAIL

Classic Tour | 18 Days | Physical Level 1

Singapore – Malacca – Kuala Lumpur – Cameron Highlands – Penang
– Phuket – Khao Sok – Hua Hin – Bangkok

Embark on an enchanting journey through Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand, travelling by a mix of trains, coaches and even a funicular railway. Immerse yourself in the heritage towns of the Malay Peninsula before venturing into the heart of the Cameron Highlands by train. In Thailand, ancient rainforests and scenic national parks await, with opportunities to hike, swim and relax. A poignant visit to Kanchanaburi offers insight into WWII history, before your journey terminates in dynamic Bangkok.

- Visit Singapore's world-famous Sky Garden
- Explore Malaysia and Thailand by rail
- Venture into Malaysia's rolling Cameron Highlands
- Discover the heritage of Georgetown and Malacca
- Immerse yourself in the beauty of Phang Nga Bay

TOUR MAP


CLASSIC TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals (from dinner on the day of arrival until breakfast on the day of departure)
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking Local Guides
- Visa fees for New Zealand passport holders (please see visa section below for further information)
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Safe and secure with IATA

The only things you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, meals not included, early check in or late check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

CLASSIC TOURS:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Southeast Asia on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully inclusive basis, so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

The maximum group size is 18 passengers on the 'Singapore to Bangkok by Rail' Group Tour

PHYSICAL LEVEL 1:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

'Singapore to Bangkok by Rail' is rated physical **level 1**. A reasonable level of fitness is required, and you should expect to be on your feet for much of the day. You'll be getting on and off coaches, trains and boats, walking around the sights, often including steps.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time, often on uneven surfaces.
- There is an uphill walk on natural terrain in the Cameron Highlands
- There is a long staircase at the Batu Caves, though this has a handrail and can be taken at your pace.
- You will be required to get on and off small boats without assistance.

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you require any more information about the pace of our tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

TRAINS IN MALAYSIA AND THAILAND

This tour incorporates five main rail journeys:

1. **TAMPIN (MALACCA) – KUALA LUMPUR:** 2h on ETS Gold 9322 service (15.54 - 17.55)
2. **KUALA LUMPUR – CAMERON HIGHLANDS:** 2h on ETS Platinum (11.32 – 13.36)
3. **IPOH – BUTTERWORTH (FOR PENANG):** 1h40 on ETS Platinum 9178 (18.26-20.07)
4. **SURAT THANI – HUA HIN:** 5h30 on the morning No.40 service
5. **PETCHABURI – BANGKOK:** 3h on the late afternoon No.40 service

In addition, you will enjoy three shorter rail experiences:

- Kuala Lumpur – Batu Caves by KTM Komuter metro (30 minutes each way)
- Penang Hill Funicular (c. 10 minutes each way)
- A section of the WWII Thai-Burma Railway, Kanchanaburi (40 minutes one way)

You will travel in comfortable standard-class seats, which are soft and air-conditioned with Western-style toilets. There may be a gap between the train and the platform.

When using public transport, delays may occur, and it is important that you pay attention to your National Escort regarding meeting points and final train times, which may replace the above.

Trains in Malaysia are of a slightly higher quality than those in Thailand, but trains are reasonably comfortable in both countries.

JOINING YOUR TOUR

The tour is 18 days in duration including international flights as this is the most likely flight option from New Zealand. Please note that depending on flight schedules passengers may depart and arrive on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only', the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour, or when booking pre and post night accommodation with Wendy Wu Tours. Please email your international flight times to info@wendywutours.co.nz so we can arrange your transfers accordingly.

Join the tour on Day 1 in Singapore and end the tour on Day 17 in Bangkok. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure. An informal Welcome Dinner will be held on Day 1 of the itinerary. If you miss this due to your arrival time, all information will be provided to you at breakfast the following morning.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

We intend to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours, or as dictated by local conditions. In these circumstances, we will endeavour to make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

DETAILED ITINERARY**Day 1: Arrive in Singapore**

Meals: D

Fly to Singapore. You will be met at the airport by your Local Guide or National Escort. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, travel to your hotel and check in.

Any time before this evening's dinner and welcome briefing is at leisure to start your explorations.

Destination Information

Singapore – This tiny republic sits just above the equator and the tip of the Malay peninsula. The trading port was put on the global map by Stamford Raffles, who negotiated the 1819 Treaty of Singapore, when the British East India Company opened up a trading port. Singapore passed through the hands of Britain, Japan and Malaysia before gaining full independence in 1965. Today, it has a highly developed economy and is ranked as a world leader in healthcare and education.

Day 2: Singapore, the 'Little Red Dot'

Meals: B, L, D

Explore Singapore, the 'Little Red Dot' that punches well above its weight. Begin at the orchid garden before a stroll through the Civic District, home to key colonial landmarks such as the former Supreme Court and City Hall.

Head to the famous Orchard Road, the city's famous shopping street, before hopping on a bumboat to get another perspective of the city's skyscraper-studded skyline. Disembark at Merlion Park in Marina Bay, popular with photographers.



Enjoy some free time before this evening's visit to Gardens by the Bay, a world-famous horticultural park with an incredible Cloud Forest, featuring the world's tallest indoor waterfall, and the Flower Dome. Finish at the SuperTree Grove, an orchard of vertical gardens built in tree-like sculptures. As the night draws in, the trees come alive with an enthralling light and sound display.

Destination Information

Civic District – This area has a rich history dating back to the colonial era, serving as the administrative and political heart of the city-state. It was here the Singapore declared its independence in 1965.

Bumboats – These traditional, flat-bottomed bumboats have played a critical role in the transportation of goods between the ships in the harbour and warehouses on the riverbanks. Today, they cater to travellers in search of scenic river tours and a nostalgic glimpse into Singapore’s maritime heritage.

Gardens by the Bay – This large public garden is famous for its Supertree Grove – vertical gardens built on tree-like sculptures up to 50 metres tall. Atop them sits the Sky Garden, accessible by elevated walkway.

Day 3: Singapore – Malacca

Meals: B, L, D

Depart Singapore via the bridge to Johor Bahru, Malaysia, stopping to pass through customs. Take a road trip to Malacca, passing through the Malay countryside and hearing about the country’s history from your National Escort. Arrive in Malacca in the late afternoon and check in at your hotel.

This evening, enjoy an introductory boat trip through the Malacca canals as the sun sets.

**Destination Information**

Malacca – Also spelled Melaka, this UNESCO-listed town is an important trading port on the Straits. It was a major stop on the spice trade and has been influenced by many cultures, including China and India, along with the mark of three colonial rulers; the Portuguese, Dutch and British.

Day 4: Malacca – Kuala Lumpur

Meals: B, L, D

Immerse yourself in Malacca’s multifaceted heritage with a tour of its fascinating Stadthuys and Old Town. A blend of empires have left their mark here, including the Portuguese, Dutch and British Empires. Visit the Street of Harmony, where Hindu and Chinese temples sit peacefully alongside a local mosque. Stop by a museum before lunch.

Take a one-hour road trip through the Malay countryside to Tampin Station and hop on the two-hour ETS train to Kuala Lumpur, arriving at 17.55.



On arrival, check in at your hotel and freshen up before this evening’s street food tour.

Destination Information

Stadthuys – This old Dutch word means town hall and is pronounced ‘stadhaus’. One of the oldest Dutch buildings in the east, built between 1641-1660 as the official residence of the Dutch governors. It sits in the heart of Red Square, characterised by its picturesque red buildings.

Kuala Lumpur – This dynamic metropolis is known for its modern skyline, but its history is rooted in the mid-19th century, when it was founded by tin miners. It evolved into a commercial centre under British rule. When Malaysia became independent in 1957, ‘KL’ emerged as the capital.

Day 5: Batu Caves and Kuala Lumpur

Meals: B, L, D

Hop on the city metro and head thirty minutes out of town to visit Batu Caves, one of Malaysia’s most important Hindu temples.

Return to Kuala Lumpur and see some city highlights, including Masjid Jamek, Kuala Lumpur’s oldest mosque. Admire the old district’s iconic landmarks, including Sultan Abdul Samad Clock Tower, Independence Square, River of Life and Central Market. Finish up at KL Tower, where you can head up to the Skydeck for views over the city skyline, dominated by the Petronas Twin Towers.

**Destination Information**

KTM Komuter – This commuter rail service connects Kuala Lumpur’s suburbs with the city centre. The electric trains are clean, modern and air-conditioned.

Batu Caves – These famous Hindu pilgrimage site features a series of cave temples within a hill and is known for a colossal gold statue of Lord Murugan at the entrance. Although 272 steps are required to access the caves, there are handrails, and these can be taken at your own pace. Travellers can opt to wait at the bottom and admire the rainbow staircase and golden statue.

Masjid Jamek – KL’s oldest mosque, Masjid Jamek combines distinctive Moorish and Mughal architectural elements, making it a serene landmark in the heart of the city.

Day 6: Kuala Lumpur – Indigenous Village – Cameron Highlands

Meals: B, L, D

The morning is at leisure before taking the 11.32 service to Tapah Road, taking two hours. Enjoy lunch before taking a winding road trip through the Cameron Highlands, with a pit stop at Lata Iskandar Waterfall. Stop by an indigenous Orang Asli roadside shop, selling forest honey and handicrafts. If you’re lucky, the village chief will extend an invitation to visit their village and learn about this indigenous community.

Check into your hotel in the Cameron Highlands before dinner.



Destination Information

Orang Asli – The Orange Asli (lit. First People) are the indigenous people of peninsular Malaysia. The Orang Asli are made up of several distinct ethnic groups.

Lata Iskandar Waterfall – Easily accessed from the road into the Cameron Highlands, this is a popular cascade surrounded by lush greenery.

Cameron Highlands – This lush region sits at some 1,500 metres above sea level, enjoying a cooler climate than the Malaysian lowlands. The area is known for its rolling hills, cloaked in tea plantations, strawberry farms and dense forests.

Day 7: Mossy Forest Walk and Train to Penang

Meals: B, L, D

Take a relaxed uphill hike to see the Mossy Forest, observing fragile exotic plants such as ferns and pitcher plants. Your reward is the beautiful panoramas at the top of the hill. Afterwards, drive to a tea plantation to learn about local tea production.



After lunch, drive down through the valley to reach Ipoh, stopping to see the Mirror Lake. Hop on the 18.26 train to Penang, riding through picturesque countryside and even ‘floating’ briefly as the train crosses Bukit Merah Lake. On arrival, transfer to Georgetown, home for the next two nights.

Destination Information

Mossy Forest – This diverse forest is known for its many species of orchids, pitcher plants, ferns and other flora. A light mist occasionally shrouds the trees, creating an ethereal ambience.

Georgetown – Penang’s UNESCO-listed capital city is renowned for its well-preserved colonial architecture and rich culture heritage. Founded in 1786 by Captain Francis Light of the British East India Company, it has flourished ever since.

Day 8: Georgetown and Penang Hill

Meals: B, L, D

Spend the morning exploring the streets of Georgetown, a city rich in heritage. Admire the intricate woodwork and porcelain décor of the local temples before visiting the Penang Peranakan Mansion, which displays hundreds of fascinating antiques.



After lunch, head to the foot of Penang Hill, the famous summer resort beloved by the British colonialists of the 19th century. Take the short funicular train to reach the top of the hill, pausing for a cup of tea and a pastry at the century-old bungalow-turned-restaurant.

Continue to the Habitat, on the edge of the protected rainforest. Stroll through the trails and look out for rare flora along with wildlife such as dusky leaf monkeys, macaques, and giant squirrels.

Destination Information

Penang Hill Funicular – Established in 1923, this steep funicular was overhauled in recent years. It is one of the steepest funicular tracks in Southeast Asia, offering breathtaking views of the island.

The Habitat – This ecological attraction is part of the local Biosphere Reserve. Its highlight is the Canopy Walkway, a series of suspension bridges and platforms that allow visitors to walk through the rainforest canopy.

Day 9: Fly to Phuket – Local Highlights and Thai Street Food Meals: B, L, D

Enjoy a morning at leisure before transferring to the airport for your lunchtime flight to Phuket in Thailand. On arrival, embark on a whirlwind journey through this intriguing island, seeing quirky local gems like a roadside donation-based barbershop and a colourful local temple, before enjoying a Thai street food tour.



Enjoy local treats such as ‘Khanom Chin’, rice noodles accompanied by a curry of your choice, and ‘Oh Aew’ (shaved ice jelly). As dusk falls, head to the bustling night market, known for its upbeat feel and frequent live music, to sample sticky mango rice and spicy satay skewers.

Destination Information

Phuket – Thailand’s largest island, renowned for its white beaches and diverse street food scene.

Phuket street food – Phuket’s cuisine reflects a blend of Thai, Chinese, Malay, and Indian flavours. The availability of fresh seafood, aromatic spices, and a tradition of open-air markets have all fed the popularity of street food in Phuket.

Day 10: James Bond Island, Phang Nga Bay Meals: B, L, D

Hop in a speedboat and discover Phang Nga Bay, home to some of Thailand’s most spectacular scenery. Stop by Panak Island and canoe into its mysterious caves to admire the many stalactites.



Return to the speedboat and zip around Koh Tapu, or ‘James Bond Island’, lair of the Man With The Golden Gun in the Roger Moore 007 film. Bring a camera for the fantastic photo opportunities of the stunning Phang Nga Bay. Return to Phuket.

Destination Information

James Bond Island – Koh Tapu gained international fame in 1974, after it featured as a prominent filming location in the Roger Moore James Bond film, 'The Man with the Golden Gun'. It is beloved for its breathtaking scenery, with clear waters and lush greenery.

Day 11: Khao Lak

Meals: B, L, D

After check out, you will be transferred to Khao Lak to begin exploring the local area. You will visit Khuek Khak Temple (a modern marvel within Khao Lak) as well as the community's spiritual centre.

Continue your tour to visit the iconic Big Buddha, situated just outside of Khao Lak. This serene location offers an opportunity for reflection and appreciation of Buddhist teachings. After a scenic drive to the Andaman Viewpoint, enjoy a delicious lunch that's accompanied by breathtaking panoramic views of the countryside and sea.



This afternoon, visit the local harbor town of Baan Nam Khem, home to the Tsunami Museum—a poignant memorial dedicated to those affected by the 2004 tsunami. Gain a deeper understanding of the region's resilience here. Finally, visit Takuapa Old Town, a treasure trove of cultural gems. Admire the ancient Chinese shrine, and marvel at the beauty of the Golden Temple. Dinner this evening will be within your hotel resort.

Destination Information

Khao Lak– Khao Lak is a small village in Phang Nga province, located South of the main mountain. Tour operators like to use the popular name as location for a series of other villages, now tourist oriented, mainly in the Takua Pa District of Phang Nga Province, Thailand.

Day 12: Thaplamu

Meals: B, L, D

Today, you will transfer to Thaplamu for the day. Your first stop will be Tha Din Deang village to meet the locals whom reside here. The villagers will take you to explore deeper into the mangroves by kayak. Often, you'll see squirrels, snakes and wild monkeys in the trees here. Following on from this, you will take part in a tie-dye workshop. This honours a local tradition that has been practiced for years using natural dyes.



Pause for a lunch break where you will be invited to sample some local delicacies. All the food is prepared by the locals and many of the vegetables are grown organically in the village's hydroponic plantations.

You'll then have the opportunity to see a small creek and the remains of the old tin mine. You will learn about the history and importance that Tin mining had on Phang Nha, whilst witnessing some remains of the mine.

En route back to the hotel, you will go via Khao Na Yak pier where you will be able to enjoy the sweeping grasslands that are present there. This route will eventually lead to what is regarded as one of the most beautiful beaches in Thailand.

Dinner this evening will be within your hotel resort.

Destination Information

Tha Din Dean - A small coastal village in the Thaplamu river delta.

Day 13: Surat Thanai – Hua Hin by Train

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, you will be transferred from Khao Lak to Surat Thani train station. The journey time is approximately 160km / 3hrs. Upon arrival take a train to Hua Hin. The journey time is approximately 450km / 5.5hrs. Your lunch will be packed for you to enjoy on the train journey.



Upon arrival, you will be transferred to the hotel. Enjoy the rest of your day at leisure.

Day 14: WFFT Wildlife Rescue Centre - Bangkok

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast, check out and transfer to WFFT Wildlife Rescue Centre. Founded by Dutch-born Edwin Wiek in early 2001, the centre is dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of wild animals previously exploited as pets or within the tourism industry. You will be given an introduction to WFFT's work followed by an informative tour to explore the centre. Your lunch will be overlooking Thailand's largest elephant enclosure.



This afternoon, transfer to Petchaburi Train Station. Take Train No.40 to Bangkok. The journey is around 170km so will approximately take 2.5hrs.

Upon arrival, transfer to your hotel for check in. Enjoy dinner within your hotel this evening.

Destination Information

No. 40 Train – This special express service runs daily between Surat Thani and Bangkok. Carriages are older than those you will experience in Malaysia, but still comfortable, with soft seats and Western toilets.

Bangkok - Bangkok has been Thailand's dominant city since the 18th century. It was established as the capital after the former capital, Ayutthaya, was razed to the ground by the Burmese army. It was the centre of the modernisation of Siam in the late 19th century, leading the introduction of rail transport, the printing press, healthcare, and utilities infrastructure. With a population of over 10 million, the fast pace of the city can be intense; however, beneath the hustle and bustle, many hidden gems are waiting to be discovered.

Day 15: Kanchanaburi & The Bridge on the River Kwai

Meals: B, L, D

Take a day trip to Kanchanaburi, made famous by 'The Bridge on the River Kwai'. During the Japanese occupation of Thailand in WWII, thousands of Allied POWs and Southeast Asian indentured labourers were forced to build the Thai-Burma Railway. Many of the prisoners died under the brutal working conditions, hence the track's nickname 'Death Railway'.



Learn about their tragic story at the Thai-Burma Railway Museum, then pay respects to the victims at the Allied War Cemetery. Visit Hellfire Pass, a dramatic part of the railway that cuts through the mountain, before taking a 40-minute ride on the Death Railway – a journey that will take you across the famous Bridge on the River Kwai.

Destination Information

Thai Burma Railway (Death Railway) - Japan invaded the then-neutral Thailand in 1941, and subsequently invaded Burma (now Myanmar), intending to seize control of Burma from the UK. Japan's project aimed to connect Bangkok to Rangoon (Yangon) by rail to supply their troops. To complete such a huge undertaking, Japan used the forced labour of approximately 250,000 Southeast Asian civilians and over 60,000 Allied prisoners of war, who suffered under the brutal conditions. Over 100,000 of the victims died in its construction.

Hellfire Pass - Constructed for the Burma Railway during the Japanese occupation of Thailand in the Second World War. This remote part of the railway was particularly hard to build due to the scale of rock-cutting required. Its name is derived from the eerie glow produced by the torches at night.

Allied War Cemetery – The last resting place of almost 7,000 prisoners of war. The graves here belong to British, Dutch and Australian POWs who died while building the railway; the remains of the Americans were repatriated.

Day 16: Bangkok

Meals: B, L, D

Enjoy a half-day tour taking in Bangkok's finest attractions and journey around the city's fascinating canal network. Start at the magnificent Grand Palace, a sprawling temple complex boasting some of the finest architecture in the country. Explore the vast grounds and dazzling buildings, including the highly revered Temple of the Emerald Buddha.



Afterwards, head across the road to Wat Pho, one of the largest and oldest temples in Bangkok and home to more than 1,000 Buddha images. Stop by the amulet market before lunch and hear about Buddhist beliefs in the protection and blessings provided by these charms.

This evening, enjoy your farewell dinner at a local Thai restaurant.

Destination Information

Grand Palace - The Grand Palace is the city's most famous landmark. From 1782-1925, it was the official residence of the Kings of Siam; it is still used for many ceremonies and state events.

Temple of the Emerald Buddha – This royal chapel, found within the grounds of the Grand Palace, is one of Thailand's most sacred sites. It houses a 26-inch-tall statue of the meditating Buddha; opinions differ as to whether it is made of jasper or jade, but it is believed to date to the 15th century. It is considered the Thai palladium; a protective idol which secures the country's safety.

Wat Pho – Wat Pho is one of Bangkok's oldest and largest temples. Experience the monk's chant as you explore the grounds of the complex, spread over some 80,000 square metres. The largest reclining Buddha and the largest collection of Buddha images are housed here. The temple is considered the first public university in the Kingdom, and the birthplace of Thai massage.

Days 17-18: Departure

Meals: B

Transfer to the airport for your onward flight.

Late checkout is bookable in advance for those who have chosen a later flight option. Any time before your transfer is at leisure to explore Bangkok.

If you wish to extend your stay in Southeast Asia, please talk to our team about our various private extension packages before your departure. This tour can often also be combined with our Vietnam by Rail group tour – please ask your reservations consultant for more information.

SINGAPORE TO THAILAND BY RAIL: TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

New Zealand passport holders do not need a visa for Singapore, Malaysia for stays for less than 90 days or Thailand for less than 30 days for tourist purposes. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back in New Zealand.

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate, Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa.

Singapore Entry requirement

You must complete an electronic SG Arrival card within the three days before you enter Singapore. See this website for further details: <https://eservices.ica.gov.sg/sgarrivalcard/>

Malaysia Entry requirement

You must fill in the Malaysia Digital Arrival Card (MDAC) 3 days before entering Malaysia. It may be requested at check-in. See the Malaysian Immigration website for further information: <https://imigresen-online.imi.gov.my/mdac/main?registerMain>

INSURANCE:

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24-hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your national escort should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

TIPPING POLICY:

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and Southeast Asia is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed to local guides and drivers throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the national escort.

If you are travelling in a smaller group with local guides only, then tipping is paid in each destination. To be fair to the guides we ask for slightly higher amounts per traveller with small groups.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

EATING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

Southeast Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in most local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region actually has its own distinct characteristics.

When dining in Southeast Asia, although some restaurants have adopted a western approach to dining, expect some restaurants to follow the traditional communal style of eating. Typically, this will mean each diner has their own small bowl and may serve themselves from a variety of shared dishes. At some local restaurants, appetizers and main courses might be served when they are ready instead of following a particular order.

Determining when it's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. In Vietnam, dishes are normally placed in the centre and people serve food for themselves with their own chopsticks and bowl. In Thailand and some other countries in Southeast Asia, fork and spoon are used for most dishes and chopsticks are typically provided to eat noodles. Usually chopsticks or other utensils are provided to scoop the food into your bowl to prevent your own chopsticks from touching the food that remains on the table. Dining in Southeast Asia is fairly casual with not too many rules. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Please read your travel guide, which you will receive with your final documents for more information about eating in Southeast Asia. We recommend that when it comes to Asia food, you stay open minded and try to be adventurous!

Please inform us of any allergies and/or special dietary requirements at time of booking

DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

Although Southeast Asia is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in New Zealand. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in New Zealand; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday, so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides.

ACCOMMODATION:

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities.

Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between New Zealand and Southeast Asia. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room.

If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your need.

TRANSPORT:

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. However, minibuses may be used for smaller groups (under 10 passengers).

Roads in Southeast Asia have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

Seatbelts: It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving. If you have any concerns, please notify your National Escort/Local Guides.

Air: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Pre-flight seat allocation is not available on internal flight sectors.

Train: Please refer to pages 3-4 of this dossier.

LUGGAGE:

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable.

CLIMBING STEPS:

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defence against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

APPROPRIATE DRESS:

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques.

Religious sites and homes throughout Southeast Asia – for Hindus, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory, so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove your shoes, you will have to remain outside.

We recommend shoes that easily slip on and off and carry a pair of thick socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces. The following itinerary will indicate when you need to consider this.

EXCHANGING CASH:

It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling outside major cities. US Dollars are easily exchanged however other currencies such as New Zealand Dollars can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are new and undamaged.

We suggest you have a small amount of local currency and exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

The local currency is the Singapore – Singapore Dollar, Malaysia – Malaysian Ringgit (MYR) and Thailand – Thai Baht (THB) although tipping can be done in US Dollars.

PERSONAL EXPENSES AND OPTIONAL TOURINGS:

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you.

Optional Tours - May be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available.

Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

We recommend that you contact either your doctor or local Health Centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Safe Travel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.safetravel.govt.nz

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.safetravel.govt.nz as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.

Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements.

You can also access the New Zealand Government's travel advisory service for up-to-date information about your destination on the same website.

AFTER YOUR BOOKING:

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice including a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

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