

saigon to angkor wat bike ride, Vietnam & Cambodia



This challenge entails cycling 500kms past plantations, across waterways and through villages deep in the heart of the lush Mekong Delta in Vietnam, to the dry lands and contrasting sights of ancient Cambodia.

You will pass temples and countless colourful pagodas, havens of calm and tranquillity and bustling markets. Your route takes you off the beaten track into the Mekong proper.

Few locals will have seen foreigners cycling past, and their interest and hospitality will spur on even the most tired cyclist to keep on pedalling.

Your end destination is the town of Siem Reap from where you can explore the ancient city of Angkor. Built from 879-1191AD by the Khmer civilization, Angkor represents one of humankind's most astonishing architectural achievements and in 1992, the city of Angkor became a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Day 1: International Departure

Meet at London Heathrow Airport at the check-in desk for the flight to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam. Your Charity Challenge representative will be there to assist you with the check-in and any last minute questions.

Day 2: Ho Chi Minh City

The flight arrives in Ho Chi Minh City, where you will be met and transferred by the Charity Challenge local agent, to a centrally located hotel to relax and have lunch. This afternoon you will receive a full trip briefing and bike fitting. Overnight in hotel.

Day 3: My Tho to Tra Vinh - approx 52kms cycling

After breakfast you will transfer a couple of hours out of Ho Chi Minh City to My Tho – the gateway to the Mekong Delta. Today's ride will lead you right into the heart of rural Mekong. The cycling begins after the ferry journey across the Tien Giang River at My Tho. The route takes you through narrow roads and lanes, past banana plantations, fields of sugar cane, through the lush green landscape of the Delta, crossing rivers and canals by numerous, ubiquitous, fascinating ferries. A section of biking cuts off road onto gravel and dirt lanes, and weaves around hamlets, across water channels and through quite dense vegetation. This makes for superb biking. A final ferry across the gaping expanse of Co Chien River leads us to Tra Vinh, a pretty tree lined town with a large population of ethnic Khmer. Overnight in hotel.



Day 4: Can Tho – approx 82kms

Today's route is peaceful, with narrow and very pretty roads all the way to Can Tho. You will begin with a visit to Ba Om Pond with its magnificent lotus flowers. There is plenty along the way to see, from the contrasting architectural styles of ethnic Khmer homes, to the numerous colourful Khmer temples and to the fascinating river scenes witnessed when pedalling over countless small wooden plank bridges and single trek lanes.. Overnight in hotel.



Day 5: Long Xuyen – approx 75kms

Today's ride is split into two sections and is a contrast to the previous day's ride. After a very early breakfast, you will take a boat trip to the famous Cai Rang floating market before riding on a narrow paved road market to Phong Dien floating market. The route weaves through morning market bustle along the banks of the very busy river. Absorb the sights of endless cottage industries, timber merchants, coconut shredders, small docks loading/unloading rice, and tiny vibrant markets. You will continue by bike on the narrow lane to the main road, which transfers along the highway back to Can Tho for lunch in a local restaurant. In the afternoon, you will continue riding along a road leading upstream towards Long Xuyen. The ride ends with a final 5-minute ferry crossing and transfer (1hr) to Long Xuyen. Dinner & overnight in hotel.

Day 6: Chau Doc – approx 75kms+

Once more, today's scenery is completely different. After a short early morning transfer to Tri Ton, the cycling starts to gently undulate and mountains begin to loom as you ride closer and closer to Chau Doc. The presence of Thot Not trees indicates the growing proximity to Cambodia and the local people speak Vietnamese as their second language. This afternoon you will cycle to the Killing Fields of Vietnam at Ba Chuc, where Pol Pot's regime massacred over 3,000 Vietnamese in 1978. The route loops round to Chau Doc from Ba Chuc along the border, or re-trace back to Tri Ton (depending on road conditions) and ride the rest of the way to Chau Doc along incredible country roads. Those with energy to spare can climb Sam 'Mountain' for sunset! Dinner & overnight in hotel for your last night in Vietnam.

Day 7: Chau Doc to Phnom Penh

Depart early for the boat journey up the Mekong River to Phnom Penh (take water, food, book etc for your approx 5hr journey). Once arriving at the pier at Chau Doc you will say Goodbye to your Vietnamese guide & bikes and cruise up the Bassac River for approximately 1hr to the Cambodian border. At the Cambodian border the boat crew will obtain your visas on your behalf (you will need a spare passport photo, fill in a form and pay the approx \$20 visa fee). This process will take about an hour. The boat will then continue (approx 3hrs) to take you upstream to Phnom Penh, where your new Cambodian team will be ready to greet you with your new bikes. You will then continue your journey into Cambodia & Phnom Penn. This capital city was once considered one of the most beautiful in the Orient, and despite its recent

turbulent history, it still retains a colonial charm. After lunch at the atmospheric Foreign Correspondent's Club and you will transfer to Cambodia's killing fields and a visit to S21, Tuol Sleng genocide museum. Later this afternoon you will transfer to your hotel where your bikes will be ready for you to fit and check. Overnight in hotel.

Day 8: Kampong Chhnang – approx 91kms

You will depart early this morning by bike and head north on National road N5 via the ancient Japanese bridge and start travelling through the Cambodian countryside. You will share the road with light local traffic and get a good sense of what Cambodian transportation actually is. After 12kms you arrive at Prek Phnov and at that junction you turn left onto unpaved roads, passing local villages and rice fields. As you continue along you pass the ancient capital of Udong where the Udong Mountain is still home to many old Royal Palaces. You will pay a visit to one of the remaining stupa's and afterwards you will ride along the paved road heading north-west to Kampong Chhnang. Kampong Chhnang is the provincial capital of the province of the same name. The Tonlé Sap River passes by Kampong Chhnang home to a floating village located 91kms north of Phnom Penh. The area is scenic and across the river you can find several ancient temples from the Chenla period, such as Samrong Sen and Prasat Prah Srey. You will experience great views of the countryside and meet hordes of local people welcoming you with broad smiles and greetings. Overnight and dinner in Kampong Chhnang.



Day 9: Kampong Chhnang to Siem Reap – approx 50kms

This morning you will start with a boat transfer (approx 4-5hrs with pic-nic lunch on board) to Siem Reap crossing the immense Tonlé Sap Lake. The Tonlé Sap Lake is the heart of Cambodia and nearly half of the Cambodians live on the lake. It is the largest fresh water lake in South East Asia and its biodiversity has put the lake amongst the ecological seven wonders of the world. Upon arrival in Siem Reap you will pass the floating village of Chhong Kneas a bustling trade centre for fish sales and tourism. You cycle 12kms into town before exploring the world largest heritage site: Angkor Wat. You will cycle towards the Angkor complex and cross the check point, from there the loop you take passes by many different styles of temples. The shady roads contribute to a pleasant ride through the complex where literally dozens of temples are scattered around. You stop at Srah Srang for refreshments and enjoy the sights

of this former Royal Pool. You then cycle via the temple of Banteay Kdei which is one of the largest in the complex. Most of the massive complexes were built between the 11th-13th century. A little further along you will find yourself passing Neak Poan, a small temple located on the Grand Circuit. Not many people visit here which is great as the crowds are nowhere to be seen. You will continue another 6kms along the Grand Circuit and pass Preah Kahn and eventually the former capital of the Khmer Empire; Angkor Thom with the Bayon Temple in its heart. Finally you head towards the highlight of the day: Angkor Wat! There you celebrate your accomplishment and head back to town for dinner, a fine feast & celebration with traditional Khmer dancing and food in the Apsara Theatre. Overnight in hotel.



Day 10: Full day in Angkor Wat. Depart Siem Reap

This morning you have the chance to enjoy an optional sunrise visit to the temples of Angkor (USD5 per person) to give you the opportunity to see the ruins in all their splendour. Angkor Wat itself is just one of the many temples in the region but is one of the best preserved and most impressive. It is worth climbing the remarkably steep and narrow steps of the central spire for the view over the whole temple surrounded by jungle. Angkor Thom is a fascinating ruin featuring many mysterious giant carved faces and some incredible wall carvings, and is one of the most remarkable sights in the area. Also not to be missed is the temple of Ta Prohm, which has been left to be reclaimed by nature and features incredible tree roots breaking through the stone carvings and walls, a fascinating tribute to the power of nature over man and an experience reminiscent of 'Indiana Jones' and 'Tomb Raider.' Later on this afternoon, you will head to the airport to begin your journey back to the UK, connecting in Bangkok.

Day 11: Arrive UK

Early this morning, you will arrive back at London Heathrow.



Optional extension:

Koh Samui beach (3 days, 3 nights)

- Half day City tour of Bangkok including the *must see* sights of Thailand's capital.
- Flight to/from Koh Samui. Spend two days on the largest and most spectacular Thai island.
- Enjoy a Thai massage or relax on the splendid beaches.



For cost and further information, please visit the Saigon and Angkor Wat Bike Ride challenge page of our website or click on "extension" in your member's area.