



AQUA EXPEDITIONS

## Frequently Asked Questions about Aqua Expeditions Mekong Cruises

### **Why should I book my cruise with Aqua Expeditions?**

Aqua Expeditions pioneered the concept of ultra-luxurious small ship cruises on the Peruvian stretch of the Amazon River, always with the intention to take this uniquely intimate “eye level cruising” experience to other great rivers of the world. Our first ship, the Aqua Amazon immediately began to sell out, as word spread about the possibility to enjoy supremely luxurious accommodations and fine dining while exploring some of the most remote, wildlife rich areas of the Amazon River. Beyond building this stylish and safe cruising vessel, founder Francesco Galli Zugaro identified local guides who knew every animal, bird and tree of the Amazon jungle—most had grown up there. These Aqua Expeditions guides provide life changing travel and educational experiences for our guests. His success was so great that almost immediately he began construction on a second boat, the Aria Amazon, which also sails the Amazon. Demand from satisfied passengers who wanted the same luxury in other river destinations led to the creation of the Aqua Mekong. Here, between Cambodia and Vietnam, Aqua Expeditions delivers the same in depth exploration of culture and nature, luxurious comforts, design accommodations, gourmet cuisine and excellent service.

### **What does my all-inclusive Mekong River Cruise price include?**

Aqua Expeditions Mekong River Cruise rates include all meals, non-alcoholic drinks, selected wines and beer, design suite accommodations, excursions with knowledgeable local guides, onboard lectures, and evening entertainment. Before and after your cruise, we provide transportation between the vessel and our rendezvous point. Breakfast will be provided on your last day and is included in the rate. One advantage of our “all inclusive” rates is that you know in advance exactly how much your Mekong River vacation will cost. Your only additional expenses will be airfare, cocktails, boutique purchases, spa and gratuities.

### **Is it better to book the Aqua Mekong early or can I book on short notice?**

One defining advantage of the Aqua Mekong is its small capacity compared with other Mekong River journeys or a river lodge. Thus we recommend our guests book early, especially if your desired travel dates are not flexible. People typically book their Aqua Expeditions Mekong River Cruise in Vietnam and Cambodia at least 10 to 18 months in advance, however we will always do our best to accommodate your desired cruise dates.

### **Should I buy travel insurance for my trip to Vietnam and Cambodia?**

We strongly advise travelers on the Aqua Mekong to purchase trip cancellation insurance, which will reimburse the cost of air tickets and other non-refundable trip payments. International medical, baggage loss, and delay insurance are also recommended. If you miss the vessel because of a weather-related flight delay or cancellation, Aqua Expeditions will not reimburse the cost of the reservation, since flight delays and cancellations are beyond our control and we must comply with our schedules.

If the Aqua Mekong is not able to sail (i.e. due to force majeure or mechanical failure), Aqua Expeditions reserves the right to substitute another vessel. If the travelers do not take this option, Aqua Expeditions reserves the right to cancel the trip upon a refund pro rata per cruise night not used or, as an alternative, will offer credit toward a future Aqua Mekong cruise.



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### **When will I receive my Mekong River Cruise confirmation documents?**

You will receive an email confirmation 90 days prior to the start date for your cruise. Your travel confirmation and Mekong cruise ticket be sent to you following your final payment. We ask that you read these terms and conditions prior to arrival.

### **Do I need a visa for Cambodia and Vietnam, and how do I get these?**

#### **Cambodia**

Each passenger coming aboard the Aqua Mekong should confirm well in advance of departure if they require a tourist visa to enter Cambodia ([Cambodian Embassy or Consulate overseas](#)). This will depend on which country has issued your passport.

Travelers who begin their Aqua Mekong voyage in Cambodia may secure a Cambodia tourist visa through the Cambodian consulate in their home country prior to their international departure, or may opt to obtain a Cambodia tourist visa on arrival at the airports in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and at all major border crossings. You will need one passport-sized (4cm x 6cm) photograph, US\$33 in cash and a passport valid for a minimum of six months beyond the date of entry into Cambodia.

For the upstream cruise from Vietnam to Cambodia, Aqua Expeditions can help to secure the Cambodia visa on board prior to our arrival at the border, in which case the visa fees of US\$33 + US\$7 (processing charge) per person will be added to your Aqua Mekong onboard invoice. You will also need one passport-sized (4cm x 6cm) photograph. Please kindly send to our Reservations team a scanned copy of the passport at least 30 days prior to departure. Tourist visas are valid for one month from your date of entry into Cambodia.

#### **Vietnam**

Each passenger should confirm in advance of departure if they require a [tourist visa to enter Vietnam](#). This will depend on which country has issued your passport. In order to enter Vietnam, you will need a valid passport with at least six months validity.

Passengers boarding the Aqua Mekong in Vietnam should obtain this visa prior arrival. Your Saigon hotel or home travel agent can assist you with the visa on arrival option if you wish.

Guests of the Aqua Mekong traveling from Cambodia to Vietnam will need to have secured their Vietnam tourist visa in advance, as it is compulsory to have this visa prior to crossing the Mekong River border into Vietnam. When filling out your Vietnam visa application, please note that the date of entry to Vietnam has to be the date of the start of the cruise in Cambodia.

The Vietnam Single Entry Tourist Visa will not allow you to re-enter Vietnam once your visa has been stamped on arrival into the country. If your Asia trip itinerary includes more than one entry to Vietnam, please apply directly for a Multiple Entry Tourist Visa or consult your travel agency.

### **How old do you have to be to cruise on the Aqua Mekong?**

The minimum age to travel on the Aqua Mekong is seven. Passengers must be at least 18 years of age to travel without their parents or guardians. If any occupant in the cabin is under 18, then a passenger at least 25 years old must be booked in the cabin with them. The only exception is that children under age 18 may be allowed to have their own cabin if they are in a connected suite shared by their parents or guardians.



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### **Do you welcome families with children?**

Yes, we welcome families with children, age seven or older. Four of our suites are interconnected to cater for families. An accommodation for one child or additional adult is available. Our naturalist guides are very comfortable working with kids and all of our staff will provide the necessary care for your family.

### **Do you need a minimum number of passengers to guarantee my departure date?**

No, all of our departures are guaranteed. You can find the chart of fixed departures on our website under the Cruise Dates and Rates section.

### **Do I need any shots before traveling to Vietnam and Cambodia?**

We suggest that you check with your physician before your departure regarding travel health and preventative measures.

### **What should I pack on my Mekong River Cruise?**

Life is casual aboard the Aqua Mekong. Bring comfortable walking shoes and lightweight long pants for our nature excursions and for our Buddhist temple excursions, women will need to cover their shoulders and knees. We also recommend a wide-brimmed hat, sunscreen, bathing suit, extra socks, mosquito repellent with DEET, and of course, your camera, with charger and extra batteries. During meals in the dining room we ask our guests to wear casual clothing and shoes. We recommend taking comfortable walking shoes for excursions on shore. We also provide waterproof ponchos with hoods to protect against rain. There will be hairdryers available in every suite.

### **How much luggage can I bring? Are there porters available at the airport and the pier?**

We allow you to bring as much luggage as you like, but suggest the use of soft suitcases/bags for easy storage. How much you bring, however, may be determined by the airlines, which have limits on both checked and carry-on baggage. Most domestic and international carriers have a limit of around 20KG per passenger. Porters are available at all our embarkation points, airport and piers. They will make sure that your bags arrive at the Aqua Mekong embarkation point. As soon as you have identified your luggage, our porters will take your suitcases to your suite.

### **Should I bring gifts to give away to the locals?**

Aqua Expeditions has identified different ways to effectively assist the Vietnamese and Cambodian villages that we visit, however we strongly discourage giving cash. We encourage our guests to focus their generosity on supporting the well-vetted community assistance initiatives that will be introduced onboard.

### **Will the shore excursions be physically challenging?**

A shore excursion can be anything from a tour of a bustling city to a chance to experience rural Mekong River life to bird watching within a flooded forest or an audience with a learned Buddhist monk. Some excursions do involve considerable walking, but most travelers who are reasonably fit will have no trouble participating in every excursion.



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### **Instead of going on an organized shore excursion, can we go off on our own?**

For safety reasons, Aqua Mekong passengers are required to be with one of our guides whenever they are on land during our cruise. We do however actively encourage our guests to consider pre- and post-cruise travel around Cambodia and Vietnam. Our Aqua Expeditions team will be happy to share our recommendations for these independent explorations.

### **Are the Aqua Mekong cabins assigned in advance?**

An Aqua Mekong Design Suite will be assigned to you when we confirm your reservation. All suites are described and numbered in our Deck Plan document. You may request a specific suite depending on your preference and we will assign it if available. In order to ensure the safety and comfort of our passengers, we allow a maximum of three people in each suite.

### **Do all suites include a Mekong River view?**

Yes. All suites aboard the Aqua Mekong have outward-facing, floor to ceiling panoramic windows, giving every cabin a river view. Each suite also has an either an outside balcony or interior day bed for enjoying our eye level cruising from the privacy of your Design Suite.

### **Is there any difference between the lower and upper-deck suites?**

Dimensions and all features are exactly the same for both decks. Differences in suites exist only between those with balconies and those without balconies.

### **Do you have cell, satellite connection or Internet connectivity on board?**

The Aqua Mekong is equipped with wireless Internet service throughout the vessel. For cellular phone service, you may need to activate an international roaming service with your carrier and remember that you may be navigating in both Cambodia and Vietnam. If you need to contact your home or office for any emergency, the Aqua Mekong is equipped with a satellite phone. The cost of your call can be paid directly on board. We will inform you, prior to calling, of the current price of an international call.

### **Do you have laundry services on board?**

Yes we have laundry service on board.

### **What type of medical capabilities do you have on board?**

We have a paramedic on board at all times, plus first-aid trained staff can handle minor scrapes, bites or sprains. There are no handicapped facilities.

### **What safety precautions should I take on the Aqua Mekong?**

Once all the passengers have boarded, the crew will conduct a mandatory safety drill. Please be sure to check exactly where the life vests are located in your cabin. Memorize your way to the deck in case an emergency should arise. Consult your Cruise Director or Guide regarding any questions you may have. Life vests are provided for use while onboard the skiffs and you are required to wear them. Always hold the guide or crew member's hand while embarking or disembarking, since the boat ladder and deck may be wet and slippery. It is important for your safety that we verify that all our



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passengers are on board prior to departure. For this purpose there is a checklist in the reception area to sign upon returning from every visit.

### **What precautions should I take to prevent crime while traveling in Vietnam and Cambodia?**

Especially in the countryside, Vietnam and Cambodia are rightly known for their friendly, hospitable people. However, when traveling in large cities, visitors should be cautious about pickpockets and street crime, as they would be anywhere in the world. Keep your belongings close (don't keep valuables in a backpack) and avoid wearing flashy or expensive jewelry.

### **Will I have access to a safe deposit box?**

Yes. All cabins have safe deposit boxes for guest use.

### **Can we drink the water aboard the Aqua Mekong?**

When you board the Aqua Mekong, you will be supplied with a complimentary Aqua Expeditions water bottle that is yours to keep. Water refill stations are available throughout the vessel. We recommend that you should not drink the water from the faucet while on board.

### **Is motion sickness ever a problem?**

Not typically. The Mekong River is fairly calm, with some gentle waves.

### **How do I pay for purchases on board? Do you accept cash?**

You will be asked to sign for every alcoholic drink at the time you order it. Please keep track of your consumption of alcoholic beverages in order to avoid any confusion at the end of the cruise. You can settle your bar bill, as well as pay for spa treatments and any purchases from the boutique, either in U.S. dollars or by Visa, American Express or MasterCard.

### **What about tipping?**

We are often asked what gratuity is appropriate for guides and crew. Our response is that the quality of service should determine the amount of any tip. Our onboard information booklet offers a recommended amount range per passenger per day for the crew (to be divided among all the crew members) and a range per passenger per day for the guides.

### **Are there smoking areas on the vessel?**

Smoking is forbidden anywhere inside the Aqua Mekong and on the cabin balconies. Smoking is allowed only at the outside lounge and on the observation deck. If you want to smoke in the outside lounge, please ask the bartender for an ashtray. Please never throw your cigarette stubs or ash into the water.

### **What's the drinking age on the Aqua Mekong?**

You must be at least 18 years old to legally consume beer, wine, and other alcoholic beverages on the Aqua Mekong.



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### **What if I have special dietary needs?**

If you have special dietary requests, we strongly recommend that you inform Aqua Expeditions at the time of booking, or at least by 30 days prior to embarkation. Every effort will be made to cater to special dietary needs, and to accommodate special requests, subject to a given product's availability in Vietnam and Cambodia.

### **What if I don't like my tablemates? Is room service available?**

Seating in our dining room is flexible, so in most cases we can arrange for you to sit only among your party. However, if you are sharing a larger table and wish to move to another table, please speak with the Maitre d' or Cruise Director. They will make every effort on your behalf, discretely and politely. Room service is not available, but will be provided in the event of passenger illness.

### **Whom should I contact if I have a special request while on board?**

Please contact the Cruise Director.

### **What is the time zone in Vietnam and Cambodia?**

The time in Vietnam and Cambodia is 14 hours ahead of Pacific Time and 17 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time in the United States.

### **What currency is used in Vietnam and Cambodia?**

The dong is the official currency of Vietnam. One U.S. dollar equals about 20,000 dong. The Riel is the official currency of Cambodia. One U.S. dollar equals about 4,000 riel. However, most goods and services are priced here in US dollars, which are widely accepted.