This adventure of discovery and wonder starts in Saigon whose boomtown vibe is set against a backdrop of classic scenes and traditions. Explore the city’s grand boulevards, central squares, and river-front shops, but also get to know the people through such experiences as visiting the Truc Mai House where a local family of musical artists give an enchanting performance.

Your next stop is Hanoi, widely considered one of Asia's most alluring and beautiful cities with its tree-lined avenues and French-colonial architecture. Chinese, Japanese, French, and American cultural influences can be seen in the city’s collection of monuments and relic buildings, as well as its markets and its vibrant and fresh cuisine. Also visit Halong Bay, which is quintessential Vietnam with its karst outcroppings and traditional fishing villages, and where you can explore hidden beaches and waterways by kayak.

The wonderful and sedate World Heritage town of Luang Prabang will delight you with its mountain-encircled setting on the Mekong River, the mix of gleaming temple roofs, crumbling French provincial architecture, and multi-ethnic population. Here you may enjoy an endearing visit with the revered Asian elephant.

The program ends in Siem Reap, famous for the Temples of Angkor. Learn about how this impressively large area was lost to the jungle for so many years and what happened to its inhabitants. The efforts to restore and preserve what local artists and craftsmen built so many hundreds of years ago is an archeological feat. With their grandeur of scale and an extraordinary delicacy in detail, the temples rank among peoples’ supreme artistic expressions.

**GROUP SIZE:** 15-30 guests

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<th>ADULT RATE:</th>
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<th>CHILD RATE (12 YEARS OLD AND UNDER):</th>
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**STUDY LEADER:** **MICHAEL SZONYI** is professor of Chinese history and Director of the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard. Born in Canada, he received his doctorate from Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. He is a specialist in the history of China’s Ming Dynasty (fourteenth to seventeenth centuries) but he also writes about contemporary China. His recent books include *The China Questions: Critical Insights into a Rising Power* (edited with Jennifer Rudolph) and *The Art of Being Governed: Everyday Politics in Late Imperial China*.

Michael has been travelling in Southeast Asia for more than thirty years, and he teaches about the region in his course Asian Diasporas, about the histories of Chinese and Indian emigration. Michael is married to Francine McKenzie; they spent their honeymoon in rural Mongolia. They have two children who also like to travel.
SCHEDULE BY DAY
B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner

FRIDAY, JUNE 29
DEPART U.S. FOR VIETNAM

Independent flights to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

SATURDAY, JUN. 30, 2018
ARRIVE HO CHI MINH CITY (SAIGON)

Welcome to Vietnam! Upon arrival in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is free to relax after your long international flights.

Overnight: Le Meridien Saigon (meals aloft)

SUNDAY, JULY 1, 2018
SAIGON

After an early orientation, spend the rest of the morning exploring the bustling market district of Cholon, Saigon’s Chinatown, with its frenzied merchants. Stroll Binh Tay Market and visit Thien Hau Pagoda, Saigon’s most celebrated Buddhist shrine.

Also visit Saigon’s Cao Dai Temple. Vietnam’s most fascinating indigenous religion, Caodaism, was founded in 1926 by Ngo Minh Chiey. It is a syncretistic faith that merges both Eastern and Western religious and philosophical traditions, including Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Genism (an indigenous Vietnamese religion), Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

In the afternoon enjoy a leisurely walking tour of downtown, also known as District One. View some of the impressive colonial-era structures including Notre Dame Cathedral and the General Post Office, the former designed by Gustave Eiffel.

Continue to the Reunification Hall, historically known as Independence Palace, and tour the former nerve center of the war for South Vietnam. Largely maintaining its 1970s décor, the palace rooms are surprisingly spare. The dank, reinforced basement has large-scale maps, communications equipment, and tunnels.

Also visit the touching War Remnants Museum, the site of the former US Embassy, which is dedicated to the storage, preservation, and display of artifacts left over from the Vietnam War.

Return to your hotel with time to freshen up before a Welcome Dinner.

Overnight: Le Meridien Saigon (B, L, D)

MONDAY, JULY 2, 2018
SAIGON

This morning get an early start to visit the notorious Cu Chi tunnels, located about 46 miles northwest of Ho Chi Minh City in an area that played an important role during Vietnam’s wars for independence and reunification. The massive underground labyrinth of more than 125 miles once stretched from Saigon to the Cambodian frontier and was an important base of operations for the Viet Cong. Descending into the tunnels, discover firsthand their harsh conditions. You will be able to explore the bedrooms, meeting rooms, air-raid shelters, and smokeless kitchens, as you glimpse what life was like underground in this extraordinary tunnel complex.

On the way back to Saigon, stop at the Truc Mai House to visit a family of local musicians. Enjoy a musical performance and learn about traditional Vietnamese instruments through conversations with the artists and performances from each family member.

Overnight: Le Meridien Saigon (B, L, D)

TUESDAY, JULY 3, 2018
SAIGON / HANOI

In the morning transfer to the airport for your flight north to Hanoi.
Upon arrival in Hanoi, tour the city’s Old Quarter aboard bicycle rickshaws, called _cyclo_. In this part of town, each colorful street is devoted to a particular craft or ware. You will be pedaled amongst the quaint French buildings along Shoe Street, Silk Street, and Banner Street, to name just a few, ending at historic Hoan Kiem Lake, the social center of Hanoi.

Your day ends at the Thang Long Water Puppets Theatre with an evening water puppet performance. Water puppets are an ancient form of entertainment enabling the puppeteers to control their active marionettes by levers hidden under the water. Water puppet skits generally enact ancient folklore and legends that are rural in origin, and the theme of water is often present, as it defines so much of Vietnam’s landscape.

Overnight: _Sofitel Metropole Hotel_ (B, L, D)

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 4, 2018**

**HANOI**

Today continue your exploration of Hanoi. Begin by examining the influence of Ho Chi Minh with a visit to his simple stilted home, where he lived during the last years of his life. Continue to the Confucian Temple of Literature, site of the first university in Vietnam and a serene and beautiful area. Visit a local market, the Beaux Arts-style Opera House, the One Pillar Pagoda and the lovely Quan Thanh Temple.

After lunch at a local restaurant, visit Hoa Lo prison museum, otherwise known as “the Hanoi Hilton.” Built by the French to house Vietnamese revolutionaries, it was later used to keep captured American POWs during the wartime.

This evening, break into smaller groups for a culinary and walking tour of Hanoi. Beginning on Hoan Kiem Street, sample _nom bo kho_ (papaya salad with fried beef) before strolling the Hang Be Market area for a glimpse of daily life in the city’s old quarter. On nearby Ta Hien Street, stop for a taste of _chim cau nuong_ (grilled squab), a specialty of Hanoi, before entering Hanoi’s Dong Xuan Market, a mecca for vendors of noodle soup, fresh fruit, and strong coffee. Snack on _nem cua be_ (crab spring rolls) or _mien luon_ (vermicelli with eel) as you check out the market. End your evening at a nearby café for a glass of _ca phe trung_ (coffee with egg and condensed milk), a popular dessert, as you savor the views of Hoan Kiem Lake.

Overnight: _Sofitel Metropole Hotel_ (B, L, D)

**THURSDAY, JULY 5, 2018**

**HANOI / HALONG BAY**

In the morning depart Hanoi on the approximately two-hour drive to Hai Phong and magnificent Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO Natural World Heritage site. Once at Dinh Vu Port, you will board a chartered sailing vessel for a two-night cruise through the limestone cliffs and emerald waters of Halong Bay. Legend holds that the 3,000 limestone pinnacles scattered throughout the Gulf of Tonkin were created by a dragon’s tail as he slipped into the sea.

Your cruise begins by sailing to Da Chong islet, with its lighthouse built by the French over 100 years ago. Continue to the islets of Con Vit and Gia Luan before heading to the Ba Trai Dao beach area of Lan Ha Bay, a separate part of Halong Bay. This region is known for its pristine beaches, spectacular beauty, and roughly 400 islands. Discover the small coracles, used by fishermen for centuries. Learn how they go about their trade, casting the nets, whilst navigating the waters in their tiny craft. Alternatively, try your hand at kayaking, or simply enjoy a swim.

Returning to the ship, watch the magnificent sunset over the Gulf of Tonkin and partake in a traditional cooking class with the boat’s chef. Enjoy the landscape of the bay at night up on the top deck. Try your hand at night squid fishing, or watch a movie in the restaurant.

*Please note that the sailing agenda while on Halong Bay is subject to change based on factors including but not limited to weather, governmental shipping/docking traffic control and your captain’s discretion. Government regulations further require that boats moor for the night in predetermined locations.*

Overnight: on board _Orchid Cruise Junk_ (B, L, D)
FRIDAY, JULY 6, 2018
HALONG BAY

Start the day with an (optional) early morning Tai Chi session on the sundeck.

After breakfast, continue exploring Bai Tu Long Bay. A smaller boat will depart for pristine Bai Tu Long. Here you will visit Vung Vieng fishing village, located in an area of quiet, peaceful, and stunning scenery. The lives of the fishermen throughout the years has changed little. You may also go for a swim or take a kayak out on Bai Tu Long Bay.

In the afternoon visit amazing Sung Sot Cave, one of the most beautiful caves in Halong Bay, with incredible stalactites and stalagmites.

Return to your boat for dinner and another wonderful night on the bay.

Overnight: on board Orchid Cruise Junk (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, JULY 7, 2018
HALONG BAY / FLY TO LUANG PRABANG

Disembark the cruise mid-morning and return to Hanoi for lunch and some free time before transferring to the airport for your flight to Luang Prabang, Laos.

Upon arrival in Luang Prabang, clear Immigration and Customs and transfer to your hotel for dinner and a good night’s sleep.

Overnight: Luang Prabang View Hotel (B, L, D)

SUNDAY, JULY 8, 2018
LUANG PRABANG

This morning begin exploring Luang Prabang. Your first stop is the colorful fruit and vegetable market on the edge of town. Continue to Wat Visounalat, known as “the Watermelon Stupa,” and also visit the ornate Wat Mai, and Wat Xieng Thong, an exquisite 400-year-old royal monastery complex.

Stop at the former Royal Palace, now the National Museum, where the Lao royal family lived until 1975. Its collection includes lovely murals of Lao life in shimmering mosaics and oils.

In the afternoon visit the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Center, a private, non-profit entity located in a historic building in Luang Prabang. The main components of the Center are displays on the ethnic peoples of Northern Laos and their artesian heritage, and a handicrafts shop promoting authentic, quality handicrafts direct from local communities.

Your tour of town ends with a climb up Phousi Hill, with its derelict anti-aircraft gun, revered shrine, and wonderful views of the Mekong and mountains beyond.

Early in the evening, you will be treated to the refined grace of a private baci ceremony at the small village of Ban Khomkhuan. These gentle villagers, led by their Nai Ban (village chief) offer visitors tidings of good luck and fortune for their life and travels by gently tying cotton cords symbolizing luck, friendship, and good health around our wrists.

Dinner tonight is at one of Luang Prabang’s wonderful restaurants. Afterwards, perhaps, stroll through the town’s thriving night market which offers an excellent array of handicrafts.

Overnight: Luang Prabang View Hotel (B, L, D)

MONDAY, JULY 9, 2018
LUANG PRABANG

Early risers have a chance to witness a moving ritual as long lines of barefoot monks walk silently along the streets on their morning alms rounds, while locals offer alms. This represents a symbiosis in which rice sustains the monks’ bodies, while the monks’ prayers nourish the spirit of those giving the rice. Nearly all Laotian boys enter monk-hood for a period of time during late childhood, where they live in a monastery and study Buddhism.

Afterwards return to your hotel for breakfast before driving to the Elephant and Adventure camp, located about 9.5 miles outside of Luang Prabang, along the Nam Khan River. This unspoiled valley is one of the most beautiful places in the area. Until recently, wild elephants and tigers roamed here.

Although historically known as the “Land of a Million Elephants,” Laos is gradually losing its biggest and most regal animals to human
development. The Elephant Village is investing in community eco-programs in Luang Prabang to give Lao elephants a new home and a brighter future. So far several elephants have been freed from logging work and given a new home in the park. Experienced mahouts (trainers and caregivers) and veterinarians help the elephants adapt to their new environment.

Arriving at the camp, we’ll tour the elephant village, watch the elephants bathe, and enjoy an hour-long ride on the back of one of these wonderful creatures. Venturing into the beautiful Lao countryside, stop at the cascade falls of Tad Sae before returning to the camp.

After lunch, enjoy an afternoon hike to an ethnic Khmu village to gain insight into the daily life and culture of this hill tribe. The village is nestled at the foot of the nearby mountains. Most of the people here are farmers and fishermen and live close to the land. End the day with a short boat ride on the Nam Khan River.

Dinner is on your own tonight. Recommendations will be provided.

Overnight: Luang Prabang View Hotel (B, L)

TUESDAY, JULY 10, 2018
LUANG PRABANG / SIEM REAP

Early in the morning, drive through Lao’s scenic countryside to the Pak Ou Caves, a mystical pilgrimage site perched high above the Mekong River, 27 miles outside of Luang Prabang. Arriving at Ban Pak Ou, board small boats to cross the river to reach the Pak Ou caves. Peering into dark corners, your eyes gradually adjust to reveal the serene faces and figures of more than 3,000 Buddha images, some inlaid with semi-precious stones. That these remain undisturbed in this remote site in one of the world’s poorest countries is a testament to the devotion of the people.

Return to Luang Prabang by boat, cruising along the Mekong. Enjoy the lush river life while sipping a drink and sampling some Lao snacks. Time permitting, stop at a wonderful silk weaving village called Ban Xang Khong, where the weaving techniques date back many centuries and are used to create some of Asia's most highly prized textiles. Some villagers are also engaged in sa paper production.

Arriving back in town, transfer to the airport for your nonstop flight to Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Upon arrival in Siem Reap, clear Immigration and Customs and transfer to your hotel for check-in and an early dinner.

In the evening enjoy a unique and fun “Cambodian Circus” presented by Phare Ponleu Selpak, which translates to Brightness of Art. PPS offers multidisciplinary schooling to young people, which gives them a perspective to make a living in art. Classes are given in subjects like theater, acrobatics, music, and a variety of art disciplines. PPS was founded by Cambodians who had learned in refugee camps that art can be a means to forget trauma.

Overnight: Shinta Mani Shack (B, L, D)

Designed around a gorgeous central courtyard replete with tropical gardens, manicured lawns and an inviting swimming pool, the Shinta Mani Resort walks the line between form and function with aplomb. Each of the resort’s 62 rooms and suites are decorated with sophisticated contemporary style and offer direct views into the verdant courtyard.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 11, 2018
SIEM REAP

Today begin early with a visit to the South Gate of the fortified city of Angkor Thom, with an easy, short walk along the wall to a hidden temple. Then visit the rest of the complex including Phimeanakas, Baphuon, the Terrace of the Elephants, the Terrace of the Leper King and finally the Bayon, with its mysterious towers and beautiful bas reliefs.

Continue to Ta Prohm, whose atmospheric dark gray sandstone towers and courtyards exude an aura of reverence and mystery. Built in 1186, Ta Prohm was dedicated to the mother of Jayavarman VII. Unlike the other temples of Angkor, Ta Prohm has been left to the elements and looks very much as the other temples must have when they were
"discovered" by Henri Mouhot in the 1860s. Navigating through its narrow passages, immense kapok trees, and its jungle-covered ruins is an unparalleled experience and one of the highlights of Angkor.

Finish your tour with an unforgettable sunset at Pre Rup Temple. The beautiful rusty-red hue of the laterite stone and brick used to build Pre Rup is accentuated during sunset and stands in brilliant contrast to the lush green of the jungle in the distance.

Overnight: Shinta Mani Shack (B, L, D)

THURSDAY, JULY 12, 2018
SIEM REAP

This morning is dedicated to the main temple of Angkor Wat, one of mankind’s greatest achievements. The intricate carvings at the temple of Angkor Wat demonstrate the skill of the Khmer builders. It was constructed in the jungle in the early 12th Century and is one of the main reason visitors come to Cambodia.

In the afternoon embark on a scenic drive to Banteay Srei, loosely translated as "Citadel of Women." This small temple houses some of the finest and best-preserved examples of classical Khmer bas-reliefs. The walls are densely covered with some of the most beautiful and intricate carvings of any Angkorian temple. The temple's relatively small size, pink sandstone construction, and ornate design give it a fairyland ambiance.

En route back to Siem Reap, visit Golden Silk Pheapch Preservation Center, one of the last remaining fully integrated silk producers in the world. Striving to restore and safeguard ancient Khmer methods and techniques, this NGO only produces fully handmade fabrics, dyed with natural pigments and made out of the rare, indigenous yellow silkworm.

Also visit the Land Mine Museum, founded by a former child soldier named Ra who was forced by the Khmer Rouge to lay thousands of mines. Ra has devoted his life to clearing the mines and has removed over 50,000. The facility he runs is part museum, but also an orphanage, school, and clinic for victims.

Returning to your hotel, the evening is free to relax and dine on your own.

Overnight: Shinta Mani Shack (B, L)

FRIDAY, JULY 13, 2018
SIEM REAP

Following breakfast you will depart for the village of Mechrey on Tonle Sap Lake, a drive of approximately one hour. En route stop at Ampil Peam to stroll through this traditional village where locals live much as they have for centuries. Continue to Mechrey, a small community on Tonle Sap Lake.

Board a local-style boat and explore the area with a foray into the nearby flooded forest. Your guide will explain the biodiversity in this area, and discuss the importance of the lake for the livelihood of thousands of locals. Tonle Sap, meaning “Great Lake,” is in fact a combined lake and river system. Learn about how its flow changes direction twice a year, depending on the season. It has been declared a UNESCO Biosphere, recognizing its great importance to the surrounding eco-system.

Returning to Siem Reap, there is time to freshen up before our Farewell Dinner.

Overnight: Shinta Mani Shack (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, JULY 14, 2018
SIEM REAP / FLY HOME

Transfer to the airport for your departing flights. (B)