



The Amazing Race across SE Asia challenge

Trip notes current for departures in 2010

Welcome to RAW Travel's Charity Challenges an exciting way to see the best of Asia! As we race through southern Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, we look forward to sharing our passion for these incredible destinations with you.

There are many contrasts to experience: the booming economic hub of Saigon with its impressive French colonial elegance, the incredible warmth and friendliness of the Cambodian people, surrounded by haunting reminders of torture and genocide, the magnificent remains of a once powerful ancient Khmer civilization and finally Vientiane the capital of Laos and sleepy Luang Prabang. Get ready for cryptic clues, awesome activities and unusual check points. Fun, fun and more fun!!

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive Ho Chi Minh

Arrive into Vietnam. Transfer to the Lac Vien Hotel near the city centre. This early encounter with Vietnam will have you animated with excitement in anticipation of the Amazing Race ahead. Before dinner we will all meet up in the bar where the RAW leader will go over race rules, challenges set and timings.

Meals included: dinner

Day 2 Start of Amazing Race

An early start this morning as we head off on our first days race around Saigon. Prepare for all kinds of activities and fun as you take on this dynamic and bustling city. In the afternoon we will transfer down to the Mekong Delta in the far south of Vietnam (5 hours) and board a boat to our accommodation. That night we'll enjoy a river cruise for dinner.

Meals included: breakfast and dinner

Day 3 Mekong Delta (race)

Race through the Mekong delta and get a great feel for the river life, visiting floating markets and rural scenes of Vietnam.

Meals included: breakfast and dinner

Day 4 Border Crossing (rest day)

The Cambodian adventure begins when we cross the border, take a boat up the Mekong river and into the capital city of Cambodia. Rest day to soak in and explore the many diverse sites & attractions that this amazing city has to offer.

Meals included: Breakfast and dinner

Day 5 Phnom Penh (race)

Race around Phnom Penh, the thriving capital of Cambodia which takes in all the main sites and is full of contrasts from the temples, palaces and markets to the infamous Killing Fields.

Meals included: Breakfast only

Day 6 Phnom Penh - Siem Reap (1/2 day race)

Depart Phnom Penh this morning with transport of your choosing to race to Siem Reap. In the afternoon we take a trip out to some of the lesser visited temples from the 9th century to watch a sunset and take in the amazing atmosphere.

Meals included: breakfast and dinner

Day 7 Angkor Wat (race)

What an amazing day lies ahead as you search for clues to your challenges amidst the extraordinary ruined city of Angkor and its temples. Today's race is a little different as it's not timed and allows teams plenty of time to explore the magnificent Angkor complex at your own pace. The temples were built between the 9th and 13th Centuries and are believed to represent the cosmic world. You have plenty of time to fully appreciate the great archaeological sites of Angkor Wat, the Bayon and the jungle covered Ta Prohm.

Meals included: breakfast only

Day 8 Angkor Wat (race & rest)

The day begins back at the famous ruins of Angkor to complete the challenges set from yesterday. Again the events are not timed allowing plenty of time to explore. Angkor's beauty and mystery never fail to have a profound effect upon visitors. You'll be sorry to leave here but Siem Reap offers some great and varied nightlife to celebrate the end of our Cambodia stage.

Meals included: breakfast only

Day 9 Transfer into Laos (race)

Today you'll be racing into Laos to spend the evening in Vientiane, the capital of Laos. Lots of surprises as you take on the streets of Vientiane and solve the fun and sometimes complex challenges as you negotiate around the city's sights. Good luck!

Meals included: breakfast and dinner

Day 10 Vientiane - Luang Prabang

Today it's a day of Travel through Lao's spectacular karst mountains on the rugged road from Vientiane to Luang Prabang.

Meals included: breakfast and dinner

Days 11 -12 Luang Prabang (race & rest)

The beautiful World heritage city of Luang Prabang, situated by the Mekong river, is our last stage for the Amazing race. There are over 32 temples and more than 1,000 monks in Luang Prabang, which is renowned as a centre of culture and spirituality. The night markets are excellent and surrounding scenery is sublime. This serene city makes for a great finish to the Amazing Race as excitement and adrenalin levels rise. Tonight we total points up and announce our winner!

Days 13 Luang Prabang Lie in and reflect on your achievements with a wry smile! Chance for some last minute shopping before leaving for the airport by bus transfer to catch your flight back to Australia, unless you are extending your trip.

Meals included: breakfast only

Arrival Complications

We don't expect any problems (and nor should you!) but if for any reason you are unable to commence your group trip as scheduled, please contact your starting point hotel, requesting that you speak to or leave a message for your trip leader.

Joining Point

Thuan Thien Hotel
277 Le Thanh Ton St
District 1
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam
Tel: +848 822 8122 / 827 7949
Fax: +848 827 7950

Joining Point Instructions

Metered taxis are readily available as you leave the customs hall in Ho Chi Minh, and they cost



around US\$7 (VND100,000) set price for the drive to the joining hotels in city center. The hotels we use are easy to find and well known to most drivers.

Group Size

Maximum of 26 travellers per group.

Accommodation

Hotels and guesthouses.

Meal Inclusions

Most meals included - see itinerary

Transport

Bus, walking/running, boat, cyclo, train, plane & automobile!

Physical Rating

Activities include walking several hours per day in cities, flat water kayaking or other physical activities in conditions which are likely to be hot and muggy. You will raise your heart rate on these trips, so a basic level of aerobic fitness is required.

Culture Shock Rating

Expect to rough it every now and again, whether it's very simple group-share accommodation at a homestay, a packed public bus where you are forced to stand, the odd cold shower or an encounter with a squat toilet.

Important Notes

1. This is an outline itinerary only, the details of the race are subject to change dependant on local conditions and the judgement of the RAW leaders.
2. Trip accommodation is on a twin share basis.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all our trips. We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects. When travelling on a group trip, you will not be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number has been seen by your leader. If you have credit card insurance your tour leader will require proof of purchase of the trip (a receipt of credit card statement) with a credit card in your name. Contact your bank for details of their participating insurer, the level of coverage and emergency contact telephone number. Please go to <https://b2c.covermore.com.au/index.jsp?alpha=AAV0231> to view the policy and application form.

Visas

Please note that visas are the responsibility of the individual traveller. The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. We keep the following information up to date as much as possible, but rules do change. It is important that you check for yourself.

If you would like someone to take the hassle out of your visa application please visit the following website: www.visalink.com.au

Vietnam: Allow 5 working days and don't forget to attach a copy of the challenge itinerary. The cost for a single entry tourist visa is approximately AUD \$70.

For all Australian residents please send your application to:

Consulate General of Vietnam
Suite 205, Level 2, Edgecliff Centre
203 -233 New South Head Road
Edgecliff, NSW 2027
Tel: 02 9327 2539 / 9327 1912
Fax: 02 9328 1653

www.vnconsulate.org.au

A visa application form can be downloaded by clicking on this link:

<http://vietnamconsulate.org.au/forms/VisaApplicationFORM.doc>

Check list for a postal application:

- original passport
- 1 completed application form
- 1 passport photo
- copy of challenge itinerary
- stamp addressed envelope
- cheque or postal order

For the section on the application form 'proposed address for contact in Vietnam' please put:

Exotissimo
Saigon Finance Center, 9 Dinh Tien Hoan Street
District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, VIETNAM
Tel: +84 (0) 8 3825 1723
Fax: +84 (0) 8 3829 5800

Cambodia:

You can obtain a visa when crossing the border (bring 2 passport photos), cost US\$25. Alternatively apply via the online e-visa service offered by the Cambodian Government. Please visit the following site: <http://evisa.mfaic.gov.kh/>

Laos: Australian & New Zealand passport holders require a visa for Laos. All information regarding a Laos visa can be found on the Laos Embassy site where you can apply for your visa.

http://www.laosembassy.net/docs/visa_application_from.pdf

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all our trips.

We strongly recommend that you take out insurance the moment you register for a trip as you are then covered should you not be able to go in the event of illness or accident. Please send these details (name of insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number) to RAW Challenges prior to departure.

We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects.

When travelling on a group trip, you will not be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number has been seen by your leader. If you have credit card insurance your tour leader will require proof of purchase of the trip (a receipt of credit card statement) with a credit card in your name. Contact your bank for details of their participating insurer, the level of coverage and emergency contact telephone number.

Our preferred insurance company is CoverMore as they provide an excellent service. You can apply on line directly by clicking on this link:

<https://b2c.covermore.com.au/index.jsp?alpha=AAV0231> to apply

Health

All RAW travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in the group travel experience. If, in the opinion of our group leader, any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, RAW Challenges reserves the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund.

Please let us know of any medical conditions on the registration form and if you are currently taking prescription medicine as it is important that our leader is aware of your circumstances.

We therefore ask that you read the itinerary in these trip notes thoroughly and then realistically self-assess your physical ability to complete the trip as described. Please consult with your doctor if you have any doubts.

There are no specific health requirements for entry into Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos. However, you should consult your doctor or travel clinic for up-to-date information and prescriptions for vaccinations and anti-malarial requirements. We would suggest that you are up to date with immunisation protection against typhoid, polio, tetanus and hepatitis. These countries are also a low risk malarial area and we recommend that you take a course of suitable malarial prophylactics. As some vaccinations require a course over weeks or months, contact your doctor as early as possible prior to departure. Generally, six to eight weeks' notice is adequate.

We recommend that you carry a First Aid kit as well as any personal medical requirements (such as a spare pair of prescription glasses). Please be aware that for legal reasons our leaders are prohibited from administering any type of drug including headache tablets/antibiotics etc.

Your first aid kit should include:

- headache tablets
- diarrhoea treatment (both a blocker to bring relief from the symptoms and an antibiotic)
- band-aids
- antiseptic for cuts & scrapes
- lip balm
- insect repellent
- high factor sunscreen.



Given the physical nature of this challenge we strongly advise bringing some sachets of an oral rehydration solution (available at chemists) as this aids recovery following activity and dehydration and also helps replace lost body salts should you suffer from 'gastro'. Just add a sachet to your water bottle each day. Please scroll down to the Special Safety Notes below for information on dehydration.

If you are 65 years or older a completed Medical Certificate is required. Please fax this through to 03 9597 0797 prior to departure.

Physical Preparation

Getting yourself fit is all part of the Challenge and one that you'll benefit from long after your trip is over. It is really worth putting in the effort before you go to condition the body (backside, neck, shoulders & leg muscles) as it means you'll enjoy the event rather than it being a struggle.

Money Exchange

Currency exchange rates often fluctuate. For the most up to date rates please refer to the following website: www.oanda.com

Vietnam = Dong / Cambodia = Riel / Laos = Kip

In all countries the USD \$ cash is the most convenient currency to carry when travelling in these countries. Clean bills of small denominations are best. Travellers cheques can be difficult to change. ATM's are appearing in larger cities. Credit cards can be used to advance cash in banks in major towns but attract a high fee. We recommend that you don't use money changers on the street.

When changing money try and get a mix of denominations (your leader will advise you on this). Keep smaller notes with you when on the cycle ride as it can be difficult to change larger notes once out of the city.

Spending Money

Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Some travellers may drink more than others while other travellers like to purchase more souvenirs than most. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping and tipping.

Any tip that you wish to give to your local guides or leader in recognition of excellent service is always appreciated. We recommend approx. US\$30 to go into a kitty to be distributed to the local team at the end of the trip. Usually we do this on the last night at the celebration dinner.

Departure Tax & Fuel Surcharge

Your departure tax and fuel surcharge should be included in your international airticket.

Emergency Funds

Please also make sure you have access to an additional USD\$400, to be used when unforeseen incidents or circumstances outside our control (eg. a natural disaster, or an outbreak of bird flu) necessitate a change to our planned route. This is a rare occurrence but it is well worth being prepared!



Keeping In Touch - communication while on the road

If you need to be contacted while travelling we recommend that you set up an email address that can be accessed on the road. Email cafes are commonplace throughout the regions we visit. If someone wishes to contact you in an emergency we recommend that they refer to our Emergency contact. We don't recommend that family and friends try to contact you through hotels, as they are subject to change and the reception staff may not speak English.

Emergency Contact

In the case of a genuine crisis or emergency, please call RAW Challenges Melbourne Office. Tel: +61 3 9597 0798. Outside of office hours please call 0413 703 632

Your Fellow 'Racers'

As you travel on a group trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of travelling in a group. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience.

Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part.

Group Leader

All RAW group trips are accompanied by one of our group leaders. The aim of the group leader is to take the hassle out of your travels and to help you have the best trip possible. They will provide information on the places you are travelling through, offer suggestions for things to do and see, recommend great local eating venues and introduce you to our local friends.

While not being guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad general knowledge of the countries visited on the trip, including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects. We also use local guides where we think more specific knowledge will add to the enjoyment of the places we are visiting - we think it's the best of both worlds.

Responsible Travel

We believe strongly in low impact or rather positive impact tourism. Broadly speaking this means that we try to minimise the negative aspects of tourism on the local cultures and environments that we visit and highlight the positive aspects.

When we are cycling children will ask you for pens, money etc. It is always hard to resist giving them small gift. However we ask you not to do this as it encourages a culture of begging and often parents will take their children out of school and get their children to prey on tourists. Ask your leader what is the best way to give. Alternatively support the RAW Foundation as each \$ is matched by RAW.

Please refer to our website at www.rawravel.com/responsibletravel for further details and suggestions on how you can be a responsible traveller.

A Couple Of Rules

Illegal drugs will not be tolerated on our trips. Possessing or using drugs not only contravenes the laws of the land but also puts the rest of the group at risk. Smoking marijuana and opium is a part of local culture in some parts of the world but is not acceptable for our travellers. RAW's philosophy of travel is one of respect towards everyone we encounter, and in particular the local people who make our destinations such special places. The exploitation of prostitutes is completely contrary to this philosophy. Our group leader has the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession or if they use prostitutes.

What To Take

What you need to bring will vary according to the trip style you have chosen, the countries you are visiting and when you are travelling. Generally speaking though, you should pack as lightly as possible. On the vast majority of our trips you are expected to carry your own luggage (please see below for exceptions), and though you will not be required to walk long distances with your luggage (max 30 minutes) we recommend keeping the weight under 10kg/22lb.

Suitcases are not recommended for RAW travellers! Most travellers carry their luggage in a backpack, although an overnight bag with a shoulder strap would suffice if you travel lightly. Smaller bags with wheels are acceptable, although we recommend your bag has carry straps as well, as you may be required to negotiate bus and railway station steps. You will also need a day pack/bag to carry water and a camera etc for day walks and day trips.

Average daytime temperatures are in the 26 - 32c range in the cool season in SE Asia.

Though on this trip we use our own private transport it is still a good idea to pack as lightly as possible (try to stay under 12 kg). Any portage fees you may incur is your responsibility. Most travellers carry their gear in a backpack, although an overnight bag with a shoulder strap would suffice. Suitcases are to be avoided as they take up too much storage space on our luggage van!

Checklist

Suggested List:

Travel Documents:

- Passport (with photocopies) and Vietnam visa
 - Travel insurance (with photocopies)
 - Airline tickets
 - USD cash and travellers cheques
 - Credit card
- ** Tip: use a money belt for security (put documents inside a plastic bag)

Personal Items

- Basic First Aid supplies (see the health section)
- High factor sunscreen
- Mosquito repellent

- Sunglasses
- Toiletries (biodegradable)
- Watch or alarm clock
- Ear plugs (in case room mate snores!)
- Plastic bags for wet or dirty clothing
- Wet wipes or antiseptic hand gel

Clothing

- 3 T-shirts (lightweight quick drying fabric) / long sleeved t-shirt
- pair of sport sandals or comfy shoes to relax in and on free days
- 1 pair of knee length shorts for walking
- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- Comfortable trousers for walking (not jeans)
- Small towel
- Sun hat
- Clothes to relax in

Equipment needed for the race

- Digital camera - at least one per team, preferably bring a spare
- Day pack for carrying items when walking
- a Mobile phone (local SIM cards provided)

Optional:

- Favourite snacks for energy boost e.g. 'PowerBars', sports gel (a concentrated carbohydrate that delivers immediate energy when you feel tired or flat), dried fruit or nuts
- ***Please refer again to our Trekking guide on the Home page for more details on walking

Other Suggestions:

- Adapter for recharging digital camera (Aussie styled plugs with 3 angled flat pins)
- Spare batteries
- Reading / writing material
- Torch
- Small calculator (when out bargaining!)
- Photos of family or postcards of home (great way to have fun with locals you meet)
- Phrasebook, map and Lonely Planet guide
- Small padlock for securing your luggage during flights

Local Dress

When packing be aware that dress standards are conservative throughout Asia. We will be spending a lot of time in the more conservative rural regions of Indochina. Please remember that as visitors to someone else's home it is our responsibility to fit with the local customs by wearing appropriate clothing (irrespective of what other travellers are wearing). Loose, lightweight, long clothing is both respectful and cool in the predominantly hot Asian climate.

As a general guideline shoulders and knees should be covered at all times. The wearing of shorts and halter tops away from the beach or swimming pools are not allowed as they will restrict your entry into buildings of a religious nature and family homes.

Safety

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information before departure.

We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling, for the safe-keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewellery at home - you won't need it while travelling.

Many of our hotels have safety deposit boxes, which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.

Your leader will accompany you on all included activities however during your trip you will have some free time to pursue your own interests, relax and take it easy or explore at your leisure. While your group leader will assist you with the available options in a given location, please note that any optional activities you undertake are not part of your RAW itinerary, and RAW Challenges makes no representations about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. Please use your own good judgment when selecting an activity in your free time.

Please also note that your group leader has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

Dehydration

Dehydration is the biggest risk when undertaking a physical challenge such as trekking over undulating terrain. It is so important to be aware of your fluid intake especially at altitude and to constantly drink water throughout the day (even when you do not feel thirsty). Symptoms of mild dehydration include:

- flushed face
- extreme thirst, more than normal or unable to drink
- dry, warm skin
- cannot pass urine or reduced amounts, dark, yellow
- dizziness made worse when you are standing - weakness - cramping in the arms and legs
- sleepy or irritable
- headaches
- dry mouth, dry tongue; with thick saliva

The simplest way of monitoring your fluid intake is by checking the colour of your urine. If it is clear or slightly yellow you are well hydrated but once it is a dark yellow you are in the danger zone and need to increase your fluid intake immediately. Ensure that you bring some Gastrolyte sachets as these help your recovery after trekking with the replacement of electrolytes. Gastrolyte is also the recommended treatment for dehydration caused by diarrhoea ('gastro').

Participation Form

All RAW Challenges travellers are required to sign a Participation Form on day 1 of the trip. Please note that signing the form is a prerequisite of travelling with RAW. The wording of this form follows:

"I understand that travelling with RAW Challenges may involve risks (and rewards) above

and beyond those encountered on a more conventional holiday, and that I am undertaking an adventure trip with inherent dangers. I understand that I am travelling to geographical areas where, amongst other things, the standard of accommodation, transport, safety, hygiene, cleanliness, medical facilities, telecommunications and infrastructure development may not be of the standard I am used to at home or would find on a conventional holiday. I have read and understood the RAW Challenges trip notes for the trip I am undertaking and have provided details of any pre-existing medical conditions I have to RAW's representatives.

I accept these risks and obligations and I fully assume the risks of travel. I release RAW Challenges from any liabilities connected to these risks to the maximum extent permitted by law."

RAW Challenges Newsletter

We have a free email newsletter full of travellers stories and experiences as well as news on new trips that we are running. Please send us an extract from your travel journal at the end of the trip.

We would also love to receive any photos after the event as we are starting to build up a travellers album for each of our destinations on our website. We need resolution of around 1MB. Please could you send a CD to: RAW Challenges Photo album, 2/24 Bay Road, Sandringham, VIC 3191.

If you have any suggestions to add more information to our trip dossier that you think other travellers would find useful please email: adventure@rawtravel.com. And of course email us if you have any questions leading up to the event.

HAVE AN AMAZING ADVENTURE!

The information in this trip dossier has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and RAW Challenges.