

Ko Samui, Thailand - Ko Pha Ngan, Thailand – Ko Wua Ta Lap & Ko Mae Ko, Thailand – Ko Tao, Thailand – Ko Talu*, Thailand – Pattaya, Thailand – Ko Samet, Thailand – Ko Mak/ Ko Kham, Thailand – Sihanoukville, Cambodia – Koh Rong, Cambodia – Ko Samui, Thailand

*** (only on 11 nights cruise)**

All tours are offered with English speaking guides. The length of the tours is given as an indication only as it may vary depending on the road, weather, sea and traffic conditions and the group's pace. Time spent on site is also given on an indicative basis only. Minimum number of participants indicated per coach or group

The level of physical fitness required for our activities is given as a very general indication without any knowledge of our passenger's individual abilities. Broadly speaking to enjoy activities such as walking, hiking, biking, snorkelling, boating or other activities involving physical exertion, passengers should be fit and active. Passengers must judge for themselves whether they will be capable of participating in and above all enjoying such activities.

All information concerning excursions is correct at the time of printing. However Star Clippers reserves the right to make changes, which will be relayed to passengers during the Cruise Director's onboard information sessions.



Hiking tours in National Parks, please note : Please observe that only official National Park guides are authorised to conduct tours. These official guides are local people employed directly by the National Park Authorities; they are knowledgeable about local flora and fauna, but English is not their mother tongue, and they may not be able to engage in long conversations with visitors.



Ko Samui, Thailand

Has a population of about 40.000, 90% of whom are Buddhist. It is the second largest island in Thailand and has long been a favourite with tourists. The island has a vibrant beach party atmosphere but is also known as a centre for mindfulness and holistic wellbeing.

Ko Pha Ngan, Thailand

Ko Pha Ngan is located in Surat Thani Province, south eastern Thailand and is a popular destination for backpackers. It is picture postcard perfect with white sandy beaches framed by coconut trees, ideal for sunbathing, swimming and snorkelling. Partying is also high on the agenda with the legendary Full Moon Party which takes place once a month on Haad Rin beach.

Ko Wua Ta Lap & Ko Mae Ko, Mu Ko Ang Thong national park, Thailand

Mu Ko Ang Thong in Surat Thani province was established as a national park in 1980. It consists of 42 islands with high limestone mountains. The largest island, Ko Wua Talap is covered with dry evergreen forest. The park's headquarters is situated at Kha Bay, a fine sandy beach suitable for swimming. From here a trail leads to a spectacular viewpoint after a stiff 45 minute hike: 262m above sea level, 1300 steps. "No Pain, No Gain" as the saying goes, but the panoramic view is considered to be one of the finest in Thailand. There is a visitor's centre with a small exhibition showcasing the area's flora and fauna, and near the beach there is a bar and restaurant. The small beach named Ko Mae Ko is the starting point of a 250m trail leading to Talay Nay a lake of emerald green sea water surrounded by limestone mountains. A wooden staircase takes you to the top of a nearby mountain for a fantastic plunging view of the lake. Swimming is forbidden, but it is possible to approach the lake.

Ko Tao, Thailand

Ko Tao is situated on the east side of the Surat Thani coastline. The name means "Turtle Island" and is a reference to the island's shape and the fact that it is a breeding ground for sea turtles. Stunning coral reefs and warm clear turquoise water make this a wonderful place for diving and snorkelling. The island does attract a lot of visitors, but despite its popularity, the atmosphere remains very relaxed and laidback.

Ko Talu, Thailand

Ko talu is a lovely palm fringed island with a shallow reef teeming with colourful tropical fish, ideal for snorkelling. It is one of the very few islands in the Thai sea where turtles lay their eggs and wildlife conservation is very much to the forefront here. The island is shaped like a whale and offers white sandy beaches and clear turquoise water on one side and sheer cliffs which plunge into the sea on the other.



Pattaya, Thailand

Pattaya has a hedonistic reputation as a pleasure seekers' paradise with hundreds of bars and a flourishing nightlife. However there are many other tourist attractions including Pattaya Floating Market and Wat Phra Khao Yai ("Big Buddha Hill"). The market's full name is the "Four Regions Floating Market", because it is divided into four sections each representing a specific region: north, northeast, south and central and selling produce from that area. Not all of the stalls float, some are on stilted buildings by the riverbank and some are on boats which move around the canals. There is an entrance fee to access the market which is one of Pattaya's best loved attractions offering shopping, floating kitchens, cultural activities and traditional folklore shows.

Wat Phra Khao Yai /"Big Buddha Hill" boasts the largest Buddha in the region, hence the name; the statue is 18m tall and 100 m above sea level. When you get to the top of the hill and stand next to the Buddha you can see all Pattaya beneath you and Jomtien Beach further out. As well as the Buddha there is a temple complex with many bells and incense burning all day long. The temple is in everyday use so you will see monks and local people at their devotions.

Ko Samet, Thailand national park

Ko Samet in Rayong province is blessed with flora and fauna that are so unique the Royal Forestry Department decided to add it to the list of Thailand's national parks (96 in all). It is named after the Samet trees which grow there in abundance (Samet is the Thai name for cajeput trees).

It is the perfect holiday destination with fine white sand and turquoise water. There are sixteen beaches providing endless opportunities for water sports. The south side of the island is more relaxed and family oriented while the north side has a more party atmosphere with a lively nightlife.

Ko Mak & Ko Kham, Thailand

Koh mak is one of the 52 islands that make up the Mu Ko Chang marine park - the pride of Trat province near the frontier with Cambodia. The island, which is 7km long, boasts several beaches blessed with fine white sand and limpid turquoise waters; despite its obvious attractions it has not yet been spoiled by mass tourism. Unlike the neighbouring islands Koh mak is devoid of mountains and jungle; it is flat and mostly given over to palm and rubber tree plantations. The palms are mainly betel tree palms which produce areca nuts; these nuts are called "mak" in Thai, hence the name of the island. Rubber plantations are spread throughout the eastern part of the island. Coconuts and pineapple are also cultivated. The inhabitants of Koh Mak are very committed to sustaining and enhancing natural resources by protecting the environment.

Ko Kham is a privately owned little island a short distance from Ko Mak, perfect for swimming, sunbathing and chilling out. Huge black lava rocks contrast with the finest powdery white sand you have ever seen, and snorkelling enthusiasts will discover a fascinating underwater world teeming with colourful coral fish and crabs. The island is covered with lush tropical vegetation, coconut trees and several varieties of wild orchid.



Sihanoukville - Cambodia

Sihanoukville, formerly known as Kompong Som, is a coastal town located in southern Cambodia on the Gulf of Thailand, 140 miles southwest of the capital city Phnom Penh. The town and surrounding province were named in honour of King Norodom Sihanouk, who was the driving force in Cambodia's struggle for independence from France which was granted in 1953. In the 1960's the international jet set "discovered" Sihanoukville and famous visitors like Jackie Kennedy and Catherine Deneuve flocked there to enjoy the fabulous beaches.

However this golden age was short-lived and in 1970 the king was deposed, and Cambodia was torn apart by civil war. Under the brutal Khmer Rouge Marxist dictatorship led by the infamous Pol Pot 21% of the population died. Private property, capitalism and religion were banned; the once chic Independence Hotel, symbol of foreign decadence, was used for target practice and many temples were destroyed.

In 1993 King Sihanouk returned to power at the head of a constitutional monarchy and with the return of political stability the country slowly began to emerge from the Khmer Rouge nightmare. Cambodia was always chiefly known for Siem Reap in the north, home to the iconic Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom and other ancient Khmer temples but visitors soon began to venture south for Sihanoukville's beautiful beaches.

In 2004 the first luxury beach property opened, and more were to follow. These days Sihanoukville is undergoing a total transformation with the development of tourism and the arrival of Chinese businessmen hungry for investment opportunities. Casinos, luxury hotel resorts and other real estate projects are springing up all over the place and you will see building sites humming with activity night and day. Despite this influx of foreign capital the majority of the local population remains quite poor. International organisations are working to get child beggars off the street and into school and create businesses which employ disabled adults.



Beyond the Boom - Authentic Sihanoukville tour

Offered day 1 in Sihanoukville

Transport by air-conditioned motor coach

Minimum 15 participants, maximum 36 per group

Duration 5hrs

Late lunch onboard

Euro 60

Sihanoukville is a town in a state of flux, with big business gradually transforming the environment. Grab this opportunity to explore the other side of Sihanoukville....before it finally totally disappears.

A guide will be waiting at the pier to greet you and accompany you on the motor coach.

The first stop will be the seaside village of Tomnub Rolork, one of the oldest fishing villages in Sihanoukville. Here you will have the opportunity of seeing local fishermen at work, drying shrimp, repairing their fishing nets and working on their boats. The fishing boats set off in the evening and come back in the early hours of the morning laden with fish.

The next stop is the Buddhist temple Wat Leu, one of the five main wats in the city, it is commonly known as "Upper Wat". The temple is located at the top of a wooded hill and affords spectacular views of the town and outlying islands. Climb the grand stone staircase up to the gold coloured temple and admire a large statue of Buddha made from black stone. The atmosphere is serene and contemplative in marked contrast with the bustling activity of the city below. There are many artistic and architectural features to be admired on site; the temple itself is surrounded by a stone wall with a three headed elephant carved out of the stone with three statues of Buddha on each of the heads. As you stroll through the grounds you will see sculptures with religious motifs and statues in honour of King Jayavoraman VII the most powerful of the Khmer monarchs and a devout Buddhist

You will then visit Phsar Leu market, the biggest traditional market in Sihanoukville. There is much to see: barber shops, tailors, stalls selling fruit, clothes, seafood, jewellery and crunchy fried insects, the traditional "go-to" snack all locals enjoy. The market is very busy and vibrant and gives you a great idea of how life is lived at grass roots level away from all the luxury resorts and casinos.

The tour ends with a visit to the Intra Ngean Pagoda also known as Wat Krom or Lower Wat. Set in the hills above the town this religious complex includes a main pagoda, several smaller ones and a monastery. Your guide will explain the significance of the reclining Buddha and the meanings behind the colourful woven tapestries and fascinating statuary. You will have to climb a staircase to reach the pagoda. Monks still live and work in the monastery on the temple grounds and visitors should make sure they are dressed appropriately.

Comfortable walking shoes are recommended

Socks and shoes must be removed before entering the temple

Legs and shoulders must be covered

Visits include Tomnub Rolork, Wat Leu/ Leu pagoda, Phsar Leu local market and Krom Pagoda

Traffic in Sihanoukville can be heavy and complicated, delays can be expected

This excursion gives an authentic view of local life in Sihanoukville, none of the locations has been "sanitised" or dressed up for tourists. The fishing village for example is a working village, and the market is for locals, plastic bags and rubbish are sometimes just part of the local landscape and begging is still endemic.



Green oasis now or never tour : Ream National Park

Offered day 1 in Sihanoukville

By air-conditioned motor coach

Duration 8 hrs

Minimum 15 participants, maximum 36

Lunch included

Euros 99

Ream national park, founded in 1993 by Cambodia's former leader King Sihanouk, is an oasis of greenery with mangrove swamps, indigenous animals and over 150 bird species.

It is as if this far-sighted statesman, firm believer in progress and building a new Cambodia, recognised the need to counterbalance all the construction work and development with a large tract of preserved land (approximately 60,000 acres). Here he created a sort of latter day, static, Noah's Ark to ensure the continuity of the flora and fauna of his beloved country.

The park is a breeding ground for populations of birds of prey such as the Brahminy kite, Grey-headed fish eagle and White bellied sea eagle which are all in danger of extinction as well as marsh birds such as the Milky stork and the Painted stork. It is also home to Monkeys, Dolphins and Wild Pigs.

However in recent times the rampant tourist development in Cambodia, especially along the coastline, has threatened to engulf Ream National Park despite its protected status. The current context lends a sense of urgency to the excursion; visiting Ream National Park is an absolute must because who knows for how long this green oasis will continue to be a nature sanctuary.

Your guide will be waiting to greet you on the pier and will accompany you on the 45 minute scenic coach ride to Ream National Park.

At Prek Teuk Sap Village you will board a local wooden boat for a one hour ride along the mangrove lined river. You may see villagers fishing or birds such as spot billed pelicans congregating on the mud flats at low tide. The river has the particularity of being salty during the dry season when seawater flows inland, while during the wet season freshwater from the ponds pushes the saltwater out again. The estuary is home to the Dugong a gentle marine mammal which spends its time grazing on sea grasses, which is why it is also known as the Sea Cow.

These peaceful creatures are slow moving and have little protection against predators. They need to eat a vast amount of sea grass in order to survive and are particularly vulnerable to the destruction or degradation of their environment due to coastal development. Dugongs do not reproduce rapidly, and females only give birth to a single calf every five years; in many ways they are emblematic of the fragility of nature and the urgent need to curb Man's wilful destruction of the environment.

The boat will stop at Prek Trabek pier to visit a small fishing village. The path to the village is about 3 km long and takes you along the beach and through other villages so that you can get a good idea of the village lifestyle and the crops they cultivate to survive.

Afterwards your coach will pick you up and take you to Koh Sampouch, for lunch.

The last part of the excursion is in complete contrast with all that has gone before. Leave behind the tranquillity of the National park as your coach heads back to Sihanoukville for a visit to Phsar Leu Market. This is the biggest traditional market in town. A working market for local people, Phsar is a bustling, noisy, odorous hive of activity with fish and seafood stalls, fresh vegetables, clothes, jewellery, as well as barber shops, tailors and vendors of crispy fried insects - the traditional snack all locals enjoy.

This is the nitty gritty of life in Cambodia, light years away from the purpose built luxury hotel resorts and casinos.

The tour includes about 90 minutes of walking/ standing on uneven ground

Not suitable for people with mobility issues

Please wear weather appropriate clothing and flat comfortable shoes and take sun protection and insect repellent

Ream national park is a protected nature sanctuary, animals come and go as they please. Wildlife sightings are frequent but cannot be guaranteed.

Bottled water will be provided on the coach.



Angkor Wat, the temple city

By plane to Siem Reap

2 days, 1night

Seats limited

(PURCHASED AND PAID BEFORE THE CRUISE !)

Disembarkation - day 1 in Sihanoukville

Return - day 2 in Ko Rong

Day 1 : SIHANOUKVILLE – SIEM REAP

On leaving the ship you will be driven directly from the port to Keng Kong Airport for a domestic flight to Siem Reap, the gateway to Angkor Wat (one hour flight).

On arrival in Siem Reap you will be met by your guide and board an air-conditioned vehicle for the transfer to a local restaurant or hotel to enjoy some lunch before your bus transfer to Angkor Wat, the temple city. This architectural masterpiece of unparalleled splendour has become the symbol of Cambodia and appears on the national flag. It is a microcosm in stone of the cosmic universe; Mount Meru, the mythical home of the gods (a Hindu Mount Olympus) is represented by a central tower and five other towers representing the peaks of the mountain. The walls and moat symbolise the walls and water that enclose this celestial residence.

Angkor Wat is arguably the largest religious building in the world with a volume of stone equalling that of the Cheops pyramid in Egypt. Unlike other Khmer temples it faces west. The West is symbolically associated with dying and this gives credence to the idea that the temple was also intended to be the mausoleum of its creator, Suryavarman II. The complex took an estimated 30 years to build and was originally dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu. It was transformed into a Buddhist temple towards the end of the 12th century and has been in almost continuous use since it was built which accounts for its state of preservation.

Intricate bas-relief friezes surround Angkor Wat on four sides, each of them depicting a different historical event or tale from mythology. The most famous is the Churning of the Sea of Milk on the East wing and your guide will give you a full explanation of this tale of Gods and demons.

You will also get the opportunity to visit Angkor Thom, the last capital of the Khmers and the Terrace of the Leper King. This intricately carved platform was the royal crematorium and the statue presiding over the site is that of Yama the Hindu God of death and not, as originally thought, an effigy of King Yasovarman I who suffered from leprosy. You will also see the Terrace of Elephants originally used as a viewing gallery for the king to preside over official ceremonies, parades and traditional sporting events.

The highlight of the tour is a visit to the hauntingly beautiful temple of the Bayon. This 12th century masterpiece lies at the heart of Angkor Thom and is a miracle of symmetry and grandeur. 216 gigantic faces are carved into its walls each with an enigmatic half smile playing on its lips.

Check-in and dinner will be at the Victoria Angkor hotel or an establishment of similar standing.



Day 2: SIEM REAP – SIHANOUKVILLE – KOH RONG

After an early breakfast you will check out of the hotel and journey to Ta Prohm by coach. The temple you see now with trees growing out of the ruins is broadly speaking what the French explorers discovered in the nineteenth century. The jungle appears to be closing in on the temple and the labyrinth of hallways is invaded by the roots of massive Banyan trees gripping the stonework in a stranglehold embrace. The temple dates from 1186 and is one of the largest temples in Angkor, known for its mysterious atmosphere and bewitching charm.

The visit to Angkor Wat will end on a high note with an 8 minute helicopter flight along the magnificent moat which surrounds the temple complex. Your flight will take off from Siem Reap International Airport and head towards the ancient canals and moat of Angkor Wat, giving you a stunning aerial view of this awe inspiring monument.

You will then take a flight from Siem Reap airport to Sihanoukville and thereafter there will be a coach transfer from the airport to the port and finally a local boat will take you back to the Star Clipper in Koh Rong.

Late arrival and late lunch onboard Star Clipper (3 pm).

At Siem Reap Airport, before the flight to Sihanoukville, you will have the opportunity to purchase snacks if you wish.

Angkor Wat is a temple complex and must be respected as such; shorts, skirts above the knee, and bare shoulders are prohibited in sacred places and Angkor Wat. Modest attire is the order of the day.

Note

We advise you to take hand luggage only on this trip to avoid wasting time at the airport

This tour includes a lot of walking on uneven ground at temple sites

It may be hot and humid; we recommend you bring sunscreen

Flat comfortable shoes should be worn (no sandals or flip-flops)

You should take US dollars with you as they are accepted practically everywhere. Change will be given in RIEL, the local currency

Avoid drinking tap water or drinks with ice cubes

Don't forget to bring your passport and visa card along with you !!

After visiting Ta Prohm on day 2, guests who do not wish to go on the helicopter flight will visit "Baksei Chamkrong" a 10th century temple located near Angkor Thom South gate. This Hindu temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, has a pyramid style base with a very steep staircase and a single prasat tower. The name Baksei Chamkrong means "the bird that shelters under its wings" and refers to a Khmer legend of a large bird swooping down to shelter a baby prince from the strong sunlight

Monkey Island – Koh Rong

Koh Rong, also known as Monkey Island, is located near the coast of Sihanoukville and is one of the 23 islands belonging to Ream National park. It is well known for the beauty of its white sandy beaches, crystal clear waters and dense jungle. Treat yourself to a day of rest and relaxation at the Royal Sand Resort. Stroll around this idyllic island retreat, go swimming, or just relax on the beach.

The resort is located on the western side of the island where the sunsets are legendary.

