Vietnam Explored:
A JOURNEY THROUGH ITS HISTORY AND CULTURE
October 11 - 20, 2020
Optional Extension to Cambodia: October 20 - 25, 2020

Vassar Hosts: Professor Robert K. Brigham, Shirley Ecker Boskey Professor of History and International Relations and his wife Monica Church, Advisor to PHOCUS and the Baldeck Photographic Center at Vassar College.
October 11
Arrival in Hanoi

Upon arrival, you will be met after disembarking from the aircraft and will be escorted through immigration and customs. Meet your private driver for a transfer to the hotel.

These individual VIP airport arrival transfers are included.

- Accommodations: Sofitel Legend Metropole Hotel

October 12
Hanoi

For those early risers, we will offer a guided walk around Hoan Khiem Lake located just a few minutes from the hotel. During the early morning hours, we will come across hundreds of locals doing their morning exercises, such as Tai Chi and dances along the path that lines the lake.

Daily breakfast will be at your leisure. The day officially begins with an orientation meeting before heading out to explore Vietnam's capital city, an architectural museum piece with its many colonial buildings standing as a testament to the French influence during the 1930s.

Our sightseeing starts after the orientation meeting in Hanoi’s Old Quarter. With over 1,000 years of history packed into the maze of streets, alleys and shops, one can find everything from food to antiques.

During the 13th century, Hanoi’s 36 guilds of craftsmen and artisans established themselves in the Old Quarter. Subsequently, each street has been named after the specific product that was produced and sold here.

Located inside the Old Quarter is the beautiful St. Joseph’s Cathedral, dating back to 1886. The church serves as the Cathedral of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Hanoi to nearly 4 million Catholics in the country. It is named after Joseph, the patron saint of Vietnam and Indochina.

Situated just on the outskirts of the Old Quarter is the famous Hoa Lo Prison, also known as the “Hanoi Hilton” where the late Senator John McCain was held for more than five years during the Vietnam War. Several black and white photos of the young Senator are posted on the walls of the former prison.

After lunch, we will head to Ba Dinh Square, Hanoi’s equivalent of Tiananmen Square. It was here that Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam’s independence in 1945, and it is here that he is now buried.

Today’s sightseeing concludes at the former Presidential Palace and Ho Chi Minh’s House. For his house, Ho Chi Minh significantly chose a site behind the rococo Presidential Palace which is now painted a sunny yellow color. However, during those heady early days of Ho’s Viet Minh government, it was surely considered an undesirable symbol of the country’s various centuries under colonial rule, from the Chinese to the French and again under the Americans.

Welcome dinner will be served in a restaurant located in or just outside the Old Quarter.

- Accommodations: Sofitel Legend Metropole Hotel
- Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
DAY 3

October 13
Hanoi

We set out for a half-day excursion to Dong Cao Village in Bac Ninh Province, famous for its paper making industry known as "Do Paper." Do is made from the bark of the Do tree which can be found in Vietnam's northern region. This type of paper was and is widely used in Vietnamese folk art. After our tour of Dong Cao Village, we proceed to Dong Ho village to learn about the painting process applied to the paper.

Upon arrival back in Hanoi lunch will be served in a local restaurant followed by a gathering and talk by Professor Brigham and invited guests.

- Accommodations: Sofitel Legend Metropole Hotel
- Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

October 14
Hue

A morning flight takes us to the last imperial capital of Vietnam, Hue. Once Vietnam's cultural, religious, and educational center, this 19th century capital of regal pavilions has preserved its air of gracious reserve and faded glamour and is home to Vietnam's famous Royal Tombs. Although it was the scene of one of the Vietnam War's bloodiest incidents—the 1968 Tet Offensive, which all but decimated the city—there is something dreamy and untouched about Hue.

In the afternoon, a boat trip on the Perfume River takes us to Thien Mu Pagoda. This Buddhist monastery was erected in 1601 by Lord Nguyen Hoang, the ancestor of the Nguyen dynasty. It was renovated in 1844 under King Thieu Tri's sovereignty. It is said that one night people found an old lady sitting on this small hill, wearing a red long dress and green trousers and she claimed that this place belonged to the supernatural power, so a pagoda should be constructed here. Ever since then, it became known as the pagoda of the old celestial goddess.

The pagoda also houses the car that was used to drive Thich Quang Duc, the monk who burned himself on the streets of Saigon on June 11, 1963.

This evening we will experience Hue like no other tourists as we set out on a cyclo food tour through the hidden lanes of the city, learning all about traditional Hue cuisine including crispy Hue pancakes or lemongrass skewers and sweet soup for dessert. Cyclos are traditional tricycles operated by a local driver with a cab for the passengers attached to the back.

- Accommodations: Azerai La Residence
- Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5

October 15
Hue

The day starts with a walking tour, guided by Professor Brigham through the old Joan of Arc School and Cathedral as well as the former US military headquarters. Professor Brigham will describe the week of the most intense urban fighting during the entire Vietnam War. Using his recently discovered father's combat photos (US Marine Corps Sargent, Bruce Allen Atwell), he will help us understand the 1968 Tet Offensive in Hue.

Next, we drive to the city's famous Citadel. Constructed in 1805 by Emperor Gia Long, it houses the courtyard for royal ceremonies, the palace of supreme peace, halls of the mandarins, the memorial temple for Nguyen Kings, nine holy cannons, nine dynastic urns and the Forbidden City for the royal families. Located inside the Citadel is the Hue Museum of Royal Fine Arts. Here, the lost splendor of the Nguyen dynasty, which ruled Vietnam from 1802 until 1945, is displayed and housed inside an all-wood palace built in 1845. The museum is notable for its atmospheric setting and sumptuous royal artifacts, including furniture inlaid with mother-of-pearl, ceremonial weapons, and silk gowns. Inside the Citadel we will see the famous Purple Forbidden City, once reserved for the personal use of the emperor; where the only servants allowed inside where the eunuchs who would pose no threat to the women of the court.

After lunch, and depending on our timing, we will visit another highlight of Hue, one or two of the Royal Tombs of the rulers of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802 – 1945). These are extravagant mausoleums, spread out along the banks of the Perfume River, planned by the emperors during their lifetimes and even used as residences prior to their deaths.

- Accommodations: Azerai La Residence
- Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Dear Vassar College Traveler,

With its dramatic landscapes, fascinating history, epic food, and pulsating energy, Vietnam is the perfect travel destination. We invite you to join us October 11 – 20, 2020, as we explore Vietnam’s past and present in a remarkable tour of the country.

We begin in charming Hanoi, whose French architecture blends seamlessly with the serenity and timeless quality of ancient pagodas and temples. Time in Hanoi allows us to take in the city’s colorful Old Quarter, its historical highlights, and its many museums. We will meet the people primarily responsible for Vietnam’s remarkable transformation into one of the most dynamic countries in Asia. We will enjoy a night on a boat in Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with its majestic karst limestone mountains jutting out of the water. We next fly to Da Nang in Central Vietnam. A short drive takes us to Hoi An, another UNESCO World Heritage site, with its eclectic mix of merchant architecture showcasing old houses in French, Chinese and Japanese style all of which miraculously escaped the ravages of war. We end the trip in bustling Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), a mix of old and new that makes the perfect bookend for the journey. We will be in Ho Chi Minh City during the 50th anniversary of the Tet Offensive, a turning point in the war.

Private meetings with NGOs, entrepreneurs, and artists have been arranged exclusively for our group. We anticipate that interest in this well-paced, vibrant program will be strong. Contact Tina Patterson at Authentic Asia at (888) 586 9958 or tina@authenticasia.net to reserve your space today.

With kindest regards,

Robert K. Brigham
Shirley Ecker Boskey
Professor of History and International Relations

Monica Church
Advisor to PHOCUS and the Baldeck Photographic Center at Vassar College

Best regards,

Robert K. Brigham
Director, International Relations

October 16
Hoi An

Today’s drive takes us along a beautiful coastal road over the Hai Van Pass to Hoi An. Some 800 years ago, the pass was rumored to be a physical barrier between the Kingdoms of Dai Viet in the North of modern day Vietnam and the Champa Kingdom in the South. With limited transportation options of that period, the Hai Van Pass was the perfect place to separate the two kingdoms. Today’s divide between Danang City Municipality and Thua Thien-Hue province in the north is much more laid back with just a sign to distinguish one province from the next.

The legacy of maritime trade in the charming town of Hoi An left an eclectic mix of merchant architecture built in French, Chinese or Japanese styles. Hoi An is one of the rare places in Vietnam where you can find genuine Vietnamese architecture which miraculously escaped the war. The city is small and compact and the historic quarter is home to only 20,000 people. Our hotel is located at one of the entry points of the Old Town. The town is a haven for local artists and a shopper’s paradise.

En route to Hoi An, we will drive along the famous China Beach. Back in the days of the war, this long stretch of white sand beach became the American GIs go-to R&R spot. We will stop for a while to enjoy the beach.

A late lunch will be served in the hotel restaurant.

A guided leisurely walking tour in the late afternoon around the time when the lanterns are being lit takes us to our dining venue. There are no cars allowed in Old Town access is only for pedestrians.

• Accommodations: Anantara Resort
• Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

October 17
Hoi An

A wonderful morning bicycle excursion takes us into the surrounding countryside, through rice paddies and along the river canal. Stops will include the southern villages of Quang Nam Province where we visit with a local family to learn about Banh beo, the steamed rice cakes that make a common breakfast staple in Vietnam. We will also visit a family distillery where the local rice wine is being produced. The tour will conclude in time for lunch, followed by a free afternoon to allow plenty of time to shop in Hoi An.

For those travelers who chose not to participate in the morning bicycle excursion, we will offer an optional morning visit to My Son, a stunning site set in a verdant valley overlooked by the Cat’s Tooth Mountain- a bit reminiscent of the great monuments of Angkor Wat.

My Son was once a center for spirituality and worship during the reign of the Champa Kingdom. The My Son sanctuary, which exemplifies the height of Cham architectural achievement, is a large complex of religious monuments originally comprised of more than 70 structures; the vestiges of 25 of these structures remain today. The builders of My Son were the nobility of the Champa Kingdom who derived their cultural and spiritual influences almost exclusively from India. The tour will conclude in time for lunch, followed by a free afternoon to allow plenty of time to shop in Hoi An.

• Accommodations: Anantara Resort
• Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

October 18
Ho Chi Minh City

A morning drive takes us to Danang in time for our flight bound for Ho Chi Minh City.

Welcome to one of Vietnam’s most energetic and vibrant cities with its omnipresent bustle and crowds! Years of war and a difficult reunification took their toll on Ho Chi Minh City but, in the 1990s, the city Westerners once knew as Saigon gradually returned to life. Ho Chi Minh’s central district is still called Saigon, and the war is recalled in the War Remnants Museum and Reunification Palace, two stops on this afternoon’s itinerary. We will also drive by the famous Cathedral and the Post Office, designed by Gustave Eiffel.

• Accommodations: Park Hyatt Hotel
• Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

October 19
Ho Chi Minh City

The morning will be spent exploring some of Saigon’s contemporary art venues. The city’s flourishing contemporary art scene reflects its status as Vietnam’s most cosmopolitan and dynamic city. Over the past decade, Saigon has evolved from a commercial art hub to a more eclectic community of artists, curators, and educators creating platforms to promote Vietnamese contemporary art. The relative newness of the art scene here is exciting and artists are increasingly pushing boundaries.

Afternoon gathering and talk by Professor Brigham and invited guests. We will have our farewell dinner at Shri Lounge overlooking the lights of the city.

• Accommodations: Park Hyatt Hotel
• Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Vassar Travel Program

CAMBODIA EXTENSION
OCTOBER 20 - 25, 2020

DAY 10  October 20
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Travelers departing and traveling back to the US will be transferred to the airport in time for their individual flights.

Others, who will continue on to Cambodia with us, will travel on a short flight from Saigon to Phnom Penh, Cambodia’s capital city. Motorbikes whiz through lane-ways, markets exude pungent scents; and all the while the sounds of life – of commerce, of survival – reverberate through the streets. But this is all part of the enigma. Once the “Pearl of Asia,” Phnom Penh’s glory was tarnished by the impact of war and revolution. But the city has since risen from the ashes to take its place among the emerging and hip capitals of the region.

Upon arrival we will drive to the site of Cheoung Ek, known to the world as the Killing Fields, where the Khmer Rouge executed over one million people. Today, a Buddhist stupa commemorates those who perished here.

- Accommodations: Sofitel Hotel (or similar)
- Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 11  October 21
Phnom Penh

Today, we take in the highlights of Phnom Penh, starting with Wat Phnom Temple, the tallest religious structure in the city and the Royal Palace with its treasures, such as a solid gold Buddha encrusted with 9,584 diamonds that weighs 90 kilos!

Afterwards we will drive to Tuol Sleng Museum. Located in a former high school, it is the location of the notorious security prison of the Khmer Rouge where an estimated 17,000 prisoners passed through before being sent to the Killing Fields. The site serves as a memorial to this dark time in Cambodia’s history.

For the shoppers in the group, we will allow for some time at the Russian Market. This sprawling bazaar is the place to shop for souvenirs. There are many other places we could stop at for a quick shopping spree such as Artisans of Angkor, Watthan Artisans or Rajana, a great handicraft store.

- Accommodations: Sofitel Hotel (or similar)
- Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 12  October 22
Siem Reap

After a short 20-minute flight we arrive in Siem Reap, home to one of Indochina’s most magnificent sites, the temples of Angkor. Ornamented by the finest artisans of its time, once redolent with incense and prayer, Angkor was lost beneath the sands of time only to be rediscovered at the opening of the last century. Whether one be king, queen, courtier or commoner, he or she would have had a mind-transforming experience of the order and harmony of the universe, the presence of powers far greater than mortal man. We know this, because it is the same as we enter Angkor today.

Angkor was built between the 9th and 14th centuries when Khmer civilization was at the height of its extraordinary creativity. From Angkor, the kings of the mighty Khmer empire ruled over a vast territory that extended from the tip of what is now Southern Vietnam northward to Yunnan in China and from Vietnam westward to the Bay of Bengal. Angkor’s hundred or so temples constitute the sacred skeleton of a spectacular administrative and religious center whose houses, public buildings and palaces were constructed of wood – now long decayed – because the right to dwell in structures of brick and stone was reserved for the gods.

Today we will visit some of the most important sites within Angkor this afternoon: Preah Khan, the jungle temple of Ta Prohm, Bayon with its many Buddha faces and Baphoum.

- Accommodations: Park Hyatt Hotel
- Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
We enter the Angkor complex early this morning as the sun begins to rise (5 am) and the temperatures will be much cooler than mid-day. Our destination is the most famous of all temples on the plain: Angkor Wat. It was built in the deep jungle in the 12th century and mysteriously abandoned two centuries later by the Khmer civilization. The jungle soon began to overwhelm the temple, hiding it for several centuries and covering it with thick foliage. It was not until 1861 when a French naturalist accidentally came across the jungle-veiled ruins. The temple complex covers 81 hectares and is comparable in size to the Imperial Palace in Beijing! A visit to Angkor Wat is the highlight of any trip to Cambodia.

We gather again after lunch time and take a scenic drive to Banteay Srei, loosely translated as the “Citadel of Women.” It houses some of the finest and best-preserved examples of classical Khmer bas-reliefs. The walls of the temple are covered with the most beautiful and intricate carvings of any Angkorian temple. The temple’s relatively small size and pink sandstone give it a fairyland ambiance.

- Accommodations: Park Hyatt Hotel
- Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

A morning excursion takes us to Kampong Kleang Village. Imagine wooden houses on 10-meter tall stilts surrounded by water in the wet season and the flood plains of the lake in the dry season. From here we will catch a wooden boat that takes us past the floating villages out into Tonle Sap Lake, the largest fresh water lake in Southeast Asia and the flowing heart of Cambodia.

After our return to Siem Reap in the afternoon, there will be time to visit the Old Market and the Angkor Museum.

- Accommodations: Park Hyatt Hotel
- Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

* Private meetings with NGOs, entrepreneurs, and artists that have been arranged throughout the tour will be announced prior to departure.

Tour Cost $ 7,170 per person based on double occupancy. Single Room Supplement $1,710.

Cambodia Extension $2,310 based on double occupancy. Single Room Supplement $970.

For additional information on this journey, please contact Tina Patterson at Authentic Asia at (888) 586-9958 or tina@authenticasia.net
Included are: All accommodations as listed; internal flights in Vietnam in economy class; international flight from Ho Chi Minh City to Phnom Penh and domestic flight in Cambodia for those travelers joining the trip extension; all meals as listed; individual airport transfers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City; tea and coffee with all meals; bottled water with all meals and during all sightseeing; soda and juice drinks with all meals; domestic beer and wine with dinner; all sightseeing and entrance fees; gratuities to guides, drivers and porters and wait staff; Vietnam and Cambodia visa fee, service of a professional tour manager and national Vietnamese guide, talks/lectures by Professor Brigham and Monica Church.

Not included are: U.S. domestic and international airfare in and out of Vietnam and/or Cambodia; trip cancellation/baggage insurance; excess baggage fees; items of purely personal nature and those not expressly mentioned as included.

Capacity: This departure is limited to a maximum of 20 paying participants.

What to expect: This trip does involve a certain amount of physical activity such as moderate walking, stair climbing, walking on uneven surfaces and getting in and out of boats. Travelers must be in good physical health in order to fully participate in the tour.

Reservations & Payments: To reserve a space, return the completed reservation form with your $1,000 per person deposit to: Authentic Asia, 1035 Pearl Street, Suite 403, Boulder, CO 80302 or fax it to (720) 549-9799. Balance of payment is due 60 days prior to departure. Personal checks should be made payable to our tour operator Authentic Asia Tours and Travel. VISA, MasterCard and American Express are also accepted. Reservations will be processed in order of receipt. Your trip deposit is non-refundable!

Cancellation Policy and Refund: The trip deposit of $1,000 is non-refundable. The final invoice will be sent 75 days prior to departure and is due upon receipt. Cancellations shall not be effective until they are received in writing and confirmed by Vassar Travel Program. The following cancellation fees will apply:

- If a written cancellation is received 74 – 61 days prior to departure: 50% of the trip price will be refunded.
- If a written cancellation is received 60 – 45 days prior to departure: 25% of the trip will be refunded.
- If a written cancellation is received less than 45 days prior to departure: no refund shall be issued.

No refund shall be issued after the tour has commenced, or for leaving the tour early. No refunds shall be issued for missed meals, sightseeing or any unused services.

Responsibility: Tour participants assume the responsibility to select a tour that is appropriate for his or her abilities and health. Authentic Asia, Vassar College and Vassar College Travel act only in the capacity of agents for the hotels, airlines, bus and ship lines or owners of contractors providing accommodations, transportation or other services. As a result, all coupons, receipts or tickets are issued subject to the terms and conditions specified by the supplier. By acceptance of tour membership, the participant agrees that neither Authentic Asia, Vassar College and Vassar College Travel nor any of its subsidiaries shall become liable or responsible for personal injury or illness, damage to person or property, loss, delay or irregularity caused by person not controlled by it, such as (without limitation) airlines, bus and shipping companies, suppliers of accommodations or other services, or resulting from any acts of God, defects in vehicles, strikes, wars, whether declared or otherwise, civil disturbances, medical or customs regulations, acts of terrorism, epidemics, government restrictions, criminal or negligent acts, weather, or any other circumstances over which Authentic Asia, Vassar College and Vassar College Travel have no control. Authentic Asia, Vassar College and Vassar College Travel are not responsible for any additional expenses or liability sustained or incurred by the participants as a result of the above mentioned causes.

Tour participant acknowledges receipt of a copy of these terms and conditions and signifies acceptance of, and consents to all of the terms and conditions set forth herein, when registering for the tour, or making payments on this tour.

Association's Disclaimer: Please note that Vassar College does not conduct tours, nor does it act as an agent for guests interested in tours. Vassar College acts as a facilitator with tour operators, with whom tour participants make arrangements for completing travel, and is pleased to act as a liaison with tour operators should you have any questions that may arise before, during or after your tour. Vassar College encourages you to familiarize yourself thoroughly with the tour operator's cancellation and refund policy, and also to investigate available services such as trip cancellation insurance. Vassar College is not responsible for changes to trips or travel arrangements or for losses or additional expenses resulting from travel.

Robert K. Brigham, Shirley Ecker Boskey Professor of History and International Relations, joined the Vassar faculty in 1994. He is a specialist on the history of U.S. foreign policy, particularly the Vietnam War. Bob has been traveling and leading study trips to Vietnam since the 1980s. He is author of ten books on the war, including Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy, written with former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and James G. Blight of Brown University. His next book project is a historical memoir that explores Vietnam through his family’s experience with the war.

Monica Church is the Advisor to PHOCUS and The Baldeck Photographic Center at Vassar College. Church first traveled to Vietnam in 1992 on a research visa. While in Hanoi, she collected what little trash and detritus she could find and combined it with Joss papers to create a series of collages entitled, From the Streets of Hanoi. This series was exhibited in Lexington, KY, published on the cover of Vietnam Generation, and went on to win a Merit Award from the Anderson Fine Arts Center in Anderson, IN. In 2012, her post-war Vietnam inspired installation was part of Conflict, Destruction, Renewal: Contemporary Artists on War at Vassar’s Palmer Gallery. Many of her photographs have appeared in award-winning journals and books including, The Teacher's Guide for The Fog of War: A Erol Morris Film; Marigold: The Lost Chance for Peace in Vietnam, by James G. Hershberg and others.
PAYMENT

- Enclosed is my check for $___________ ($1,000 per person), payable to Authentic Asia, to reserve__________ places on the journey to Vietnam. OR
- Please charge the deposit to my:  
  - VISA  
  - MasterCard  
  - AmEX
- I/We will participate in the Cambodia extension.

_________________________     ___________________________
Card Number                                  Exp. Date

_________________________     ___________________________
Card Holder Signature                             Security Code

I/We understand that the final payment is due August 28, 2020, 60 days prior to departure. Registrations after August 28, 2020: Full payment is due. Your trip deposit is non refundable!

_________________________    _____________
Signature        Date

_________________________    _____________
Signature        Date

_________________________     ___________________________
Street Address

______________________    _________________
City/State              Zip/Postal Code

______________________    _________________
Home/Cell Phone             Work Phone

Fax               E-Mail

ACCOMMODATIONS

- Double/Share
- Single

I/We have agreed to read the tour itinerary and information section of the brochure and agree to the Terms and Conditions as stated therein.

Name # 1 (AS LISTED IN PASSPORT)   Vassar Affiliation

Name # 1 (AS IT SHOULD APPEAR ON NAME BADGE)

NAME # 2 (AS LISTED IN PASSPORT)   Vassar Affiliation

Name # 2 (AS IT SHOULD APPEAR ON NAME BADGE)

$ 7,170 per person based on double occupancy   |   Single Room Supplement $ 1,710.
Cambodia Extension $2,310. Single Room Supplement $970.