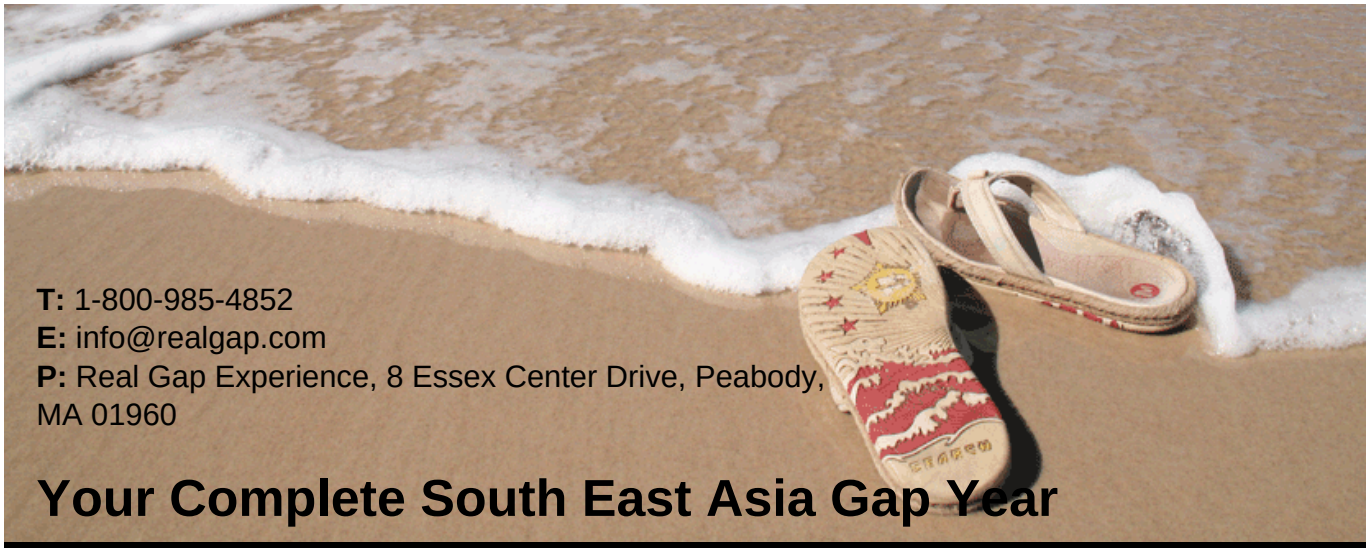

**T:** 1-800-985-4852
**E:** info@realgap.com
**P:** Real Gap Experience, 8 Essex Center Drive, Peabody, MA 01960

# Your Complete South East Asia Gap Year

Adventure Relaxation Culture

**Trip Name:** Your Complete South East Asia Gap Year **Trip Code:** QSEA **Duration:** From 1 year

## Trip Highlights

- Immerse yourself in Indian culture, volunteer and see the Taj Mahal!
- Explore Thai culture and it's islands, beaches and temples
- Make a difference volunteering in the fascinating town of Surin
- Enjoy the frenetic energy of Ho Chi Minh City
- Help Vietnamese Children build happy memories of their childhoods

## Overview

See the wonders of the travel world including the Taj Mahal, a variety of beautiful Thai islands and the world famous Halong Bay. As you travel through the wide expanses of India, Thailand & Vietnam, you'll have the opportunity to live and work with local people on volunteer projects and observe a different way of life along the way. Discover the range of culture, wildlife and amazing landscapes of Asia.

## Destination Info

The Republic of India - second most populous country in the world, the most populous liberal democracy in the world and former British colony. Its slogan, 'Unity in Diversity' sums up the country rather well, and its citizens are deeply proud of this fact. All of the world's major religions put in an appearance here, the best represented being Hindu (hence the many 'sacred' cows causing traffic jams in the capital, New Delhi!) as well as Muslims, Christians and Buddhists. The hustle and bustle is virtually constant, but there are always peaceful, spiritual spots that you can escape to easily. With a population of over 1 billion (2004 est.) it's not really a surprise that it's a bit noisy!

## Itinerary

**India Himalaya Community volunteer – 4 weeks**

Volunteering in India is an amazing way to immerse yourself in the culture, why not take it one step further and volunteer in the beautiful region of North India, based at the foothills of the Himalayas! This is an excellent placement if you wish to work and travel around India, you will discover regions often overlooked by other backpackers.

This project gives a great opportunity to make a real difference to the community through one of three main volunteering options.

Whichever option you choose, helping with childcare, assisting at a special needs centre or helping to teach under-privileged children; you will be making a long-term difference to the community and especially these children's lives.

**Thailand Experience – 4 weeks**

Experience adventure travel in Thailand with all the best bits packed into just four weeks! You'll spend a full month getting to know Asia, Thailand, Thai food, Thai people and Thai landscapes!

We'll take you to some of the best tourist spots in unspoilt Kanchanaburi and Sangklaburi and you'll have a few days to get involved with worthwhile volunteer work or get a taste for adventure whilst trekking.

To round off your ultimate Thailand experience, the trip will end with an obligatory week hanging out on the beach on the island of Koh Pha Ngan. Well someone's got to do it!

**Thailand volunteering – 2 to 4 weeks**

Choice of:

***Child care***

Care for underprivileged youngsters by taking part in their daily lives, offer youngsters a refuge from life on the streets and assist with fun learning activities!

***Community and Elephants - - max 2 weeks***

Work and live within the local community, play a hands-on role in the care of Thai elephants and help to ensure their survival by preserving their habitat!

***Teaching***

Perfect your teaching technique whilst gaining classroom experience, give local children a better grasp of the English language and help to improve their employment chances through education!

**Highlights of Vietnam tour – 14 days**

A Vietnam adventure tour – with all the best bits packed into just two weeks. Your adventure tour starts in Ho Chi Minh City and ends in Hanoi – so it takes in the capitals of what were South Vietnam and North Vietnam – all names etched into the consciousness of your parents' generation from their association with the war. Vietnam is rich with culture and with history – both indigenous and French colonial.

There's lots to see and you'll spend time with local families so you'll get a feel for what life is like for the people

who live here.Try your hand at bargaining with the locals at floating markets, get a new wardrobe tailor-made overnight at Hoi An and enjoy the splendour of innumerable limestone karsts in world famous Halong Bay from the comfort of your deluxe junk ship.

**Vietnam volunteering - 2 weeks**

Choice of:

***Vietnam Care for Disadvantaged and Orphaned Children***

Spend your time volunteering in a Children's Home along with a care centre for disabled children. Your care and support is much needed by these lovely children and young people.

***Vietnam Caring for Disabled Children***

Spend time helping out at a care centre for disabled children in Vietnam's capital city Hanoi. Playing games, giving them an education, singing songs and arranging days out for these wonderful children is sure to a leave lasting memories for life.

## Accommodation

You will be staying in a variety of accommodation during your trip. These will range from hostels and guesthouses to hotels, beach resorts and home-stays.

## Meals

Depending on your choice of countries and experiences, some meals may be included but it will vary from place to place and project to project. Please refer to specific programme information to find out what's included.

## What's Included

- Flights from London – India – Thailand – Vietnam - London
- India Himilaya Community Volunteer
- Thailand Experience
- Thailand volunteer project
- Highlights of Vietnam Tour
- Vietnam volunteer project

## What's Not Included

- Travel insurance
- Extra activities not on itinerary
- Visas

## Minimum Age

Minimum 18 years, maximum decided on potential participants health.

## FAQs

1. **Could I change one of the programmes listed to an alternative programme that Real Gap offers instead?**
   Yes, that's fine we have a selection on our web site for each location for you to choose from.

2. **How flexible can Real Gap be about the duration of trips? Can I spend longer in Thailand as I would like to visit friends there?**
   Yes, you can tailor make the trip to suit yourself and add in time for independent travel as well - this is your trip after all!

3. **How much additional money should I take for the trip?**
   We recommend that you allow £50 to £75 per week and take a credit card just in case; you will find that you will spend different amounts in each country you visit as the cost of living can vary quite dramatically. It's always better to budget for more than you think you will need.

4. **When's the best time to go?**
   Whenever really, although March onwards is good to get the warmer weather in India and Thailand but take warmer clothing for the time in Vietnam if you travel at this time.

5. **Can I add a different destination to my flights so I can visit family in Australia?**
   Yes, that would be fine.

## DBS

This trip requires a Police Check to be carried out - please contact us for further information on how to do this.

## Support & Advice

Your safety is paramount which is why all our programs have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimized.

You will be assigned a personal travel advisor who will co-ordinate your program with you. Feel free to contact them at any time before you go, or when you are on your travels. They will provide you with competent assistance and help with any questions or advice you may need during your stay.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our staff at any time should you need to. In addition our overseas partners and coordinators are on hand in-country to assist you.

## Financial Security

We know that the last thing you want to worry about when you're planning your trip of a lifetime is whether your money is in safe hands. As a leading global gap year provider it's our job to make sure your finances are secure, so when you book with us you can be confident that we do just that.

Real Gap Experience is part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

## Insurance

Whether you're traveling for two weeks or two years, trekking the Amazon in Ecuador or on safari in Africa, insurance is an essential part of your adventure and will help you enjoy your travels, secure in the knowledge that you have the protection you need. In fact, everyone traveling with us must have adequate cover before their trip begins.

Of course you are free to buy insurance from any provider, however at Real Gap Experience, we have partnered with World Nomads to offer policies that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of global travel. If you think you're already covered by an existing policy, such as those offered by credit card providers, check the policy wording very carefully to ensure it covers you for your Real Gap Experience.

For more information on travel insurance please contact us to speak to one of our travel advisors.

## Money Matters

### India

Also denoted as 'Rs' the Indian rupee is the official currency of India. The rupee is divided into 100 subunits called paise (p) but single paise coins are rarely used or found in circulation. Coins are available in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 25 and 50 paise and 1, 2 and 5 rupee coins are also available. Rupee notes come in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1000 but note that the larger notes are difficult to change outside banks. The rupee is tied to a number of currencies.

ATMs can be found in most major cities and towns but carrying cash and traveller's cheques is recommended as power cuts can leave ATMs unavailable. All major travellers cheques are widely accepted but US dollar and Pounds sterling are the most popular.

Please note that passports will always be needed when changing currency or travellers cheques.

You'll find your money goes a pretty long way if you purchase local foods and drinks.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant 2.25 $

Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) 1.65 $

Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) 0.42 $
Water (0.33 litre bottle) 0.27 $

(Prices quoted in US Dollars)

## Thailand

The unit of currency in Thailand is the Baht (THB; symbol ?). There are 100 Satang to the Baht and coins come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 25 and 50 Satang or 1, 2, 5 and 10B. Paper bills come in 20B (green), 50B (blue), 100B (red), 500B (purple) and 1000B (beige), the 10B bill is rarely used as coins have largely replaced it.

US Dollars are the other most widely accepted currency and credit cards can be used for a fee in most large cities or at resort hotels but are not often accepted by small locally run businesses. ATMs are found in all major cities and almost all provincial banks.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant 2.43 $

Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) 1.86 $
Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) 0.53 $
Water (0.33 litre bottle) 0.25 $

(Prices quoted in US Dollar)

## Vietnam

The official currency is the Vietnam Dong (VND). Coins come in denominations of 200, 500, 1000, 2000 and 5000 Dong. Banknotes in the following values: VND 20,000, 10,000, 500,000, 50,000, 100,000 and 200,000, which exist both in the new polymer form and the old normal paper notes, these should be accepted by most businesses.

Credit cards and the US dollar are accepted in most major cities and tourist centres, though smaller businesses will usually only accept VND in cash. ATMs are accessible in cities but only give VND at around a 3% transactional fee.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant 3.96 $
Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) 0.97 $
Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) 0.41 $
Water (0.33 litre bottle) 0.31 $

(Prices quoted in US Dollar)

## Round the world

## Passports and Visas

### India

You should ensure that you have a full passport that is valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information provided below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

All British nationals must apply for a visa before travelling to India. Tourist visas are available for up to 6 months.

Indian visas become valid from the **date of issue** not the date of entry. Please ensure you take this into consideration when applying and calculate the optimum time to submit your application.

### UK passport holders

For UK passport holders, we have teamed up with a great partner, Travcour, to offer you specialist assistance and advice when arranging your visa/s for your time away; making your preparations for your trip easier and more straight forward.

To access the application forms please click here and select the correct trip name from the drop down list and press submit. You will then need to agree to Travcour's Terms and Conditions by ticking the box that will appear; once you have done this you will be able to download your visa information pack by clicking on the ***[pdf]*** button next to your trip name.

If the form requires details of addresses/ inviters/referees before it can be processed then you will receive these on your Online Account once you have booked.

If you have any questions relating to your application using this service, please contact Travcour directly on the following details:

Telephone: 020 7223 6295
Email: info@travcour.com

### Non-UK passport holders

If you are not a UK passport holder, you will need to contact your nearest Embassy, High Commission, Consulate for the country that you are travelling to in order to obtain the relevant visa for your time away.

## Thailand

You should ensure that you have a full passport that is valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information provided below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Citizens of the UK, the USA, Ireland, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and most European countries do not require a visa for stays of less than 30 days. For stays of up to 90 days a Tourist Visa can be obtained for a fee before you go and must be used within 90 days of receiving it.

For more information about Thailand visas see http://www.mfa.go.th/web/12.php

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### Non-UK passport holders

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## Vietnam

You should ensure that you have a full passport that is valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information provided below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Most visitors to Vietnam will need a visa with the exception of nationals of Denmark, Finland and Sweden who do not require a visa for stays of less than 15 days. The most common visa is the Tourist Visa, which can be purchased for stays of up to 30 days or 3 months and is available for both single and multiple entries.

More information please contact your nearest Vietnamese embassy.

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### Non-UK passport holders

If you are not a UK passport holder, you will need to contact your nearest Embassy, High Commission, Consulate for the country that you are travelling to in order to obtain the relevant visa for your time away.

## Round the world

## Cultural Considerations

### India

#### Greetings

The traditional Indian greeting is to make pranaam, which involves folding your hands together in a prayer gesture in front of your chest, but without bowing. The standard Indian greeting “namaste” or “namaskar” can accompany this gesture and this combination can be used to say hello and goodbye. Female volunteers are encouraged to make pranaam to both women and men, as occasionally some Indian men use the Western tradition of handshaking as a way of making inappropriate physical contact with women. Refusing a man’s outstretched hand while making the pranaam gesture is not only appropriate but in some cases it will gain you considerable respect. Male volunteers, however, should feel comfortable in shaking hands with Indian men.

#### Clothing

Indians dress far more conservatively than we do here in the West. Dressing in accordance with Indian custom is one of the most effective ways to show respect to the local culture and help to eradicate certain stereotypes about Westerners that previous holidaymakers have introduced. In India clothing is not about expressing individuality but expressing group identity, such as status and religious traditions. Female Indian clothing helps to reflect and define the idea of Indian femininity. Therefore, it is best to dress in light clothes that cover your shoulders and your knees; it will prevent any unwanted attention and will protect you from the Indian sun.

#### Smoking, Alcohol

Smoking and drinking is acceptable in India and readily available. However, please respect other people. Smoking is not permissible in volunteer apartments or the host families’ homes. Drinking is only permissible in moderation and must not impact upon any volunteer work you undertake. While we want you to have fun in your free time, antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated.

#### Bathroom Facilities

You will experience a range of different shower and toilet facilities. Unless you are staying in a hotel you will rarely have hot water. The cool water takes a little getting used to but I’m sure you’ll find it refreshing after a hot and humid day. Toilets will be a combination of western and Asian. Remember to put all toilet tissue in the bin provided and not in the toilet.

Whist on excursions you will notice that many places do not have a western toilet and will have a typical Asian toilet; again this is all part of the Asian culture. Also, many places do not have soap in the bathrooms. It is a good idea to take a small bottle of soap gel and keep it in your day bag. This is an antibacterial gel that you don’t need to rinse off. These are available in chemists in the travel section.

### Thailand

Thailand is a developing country and you will see places and people far less fortunate than yourself. The accommodation you will be staying in is very basic and you will not have the luxuries that you may have in this country. Please respect that this is the way locals live and take the opportunity to experience this new way of life.

The friendly people, the great atmosphere and beautiful location will more than make up for this. Most travellers enjoy this change in lifestyle. It is very healthy, refreshing and opens your mind to a new world.

## Religion

Religion is an important part of Thai day-to-day life. The main religion is Buddhism, with about 95% of the population. However, there is also a 4% Muslim population.

## Clothing

Note to girls, regarding clothes: You will be staying or visiting areas where there are strict Buddhists and Muslims. They consider it impolite to wear the incorrect clothing so please make sure you think about what clothing you take with you. When travelling around to villages and places of interest you should wear long trousers or skirts. T-shirts should cover your shoulders and not be too fitted, vest tops are inappropriate but are fine for the beach.

When visiting temples you will need to wear long trousers and long sleeve tops. Remember clothes also need to cover your midriff and back, so please make sure your tops are quite long.

There are plenty of opportunities to sunbathe and swim whilst in Thailand, so do remember to take your bikini, swimsuit, swimming shorts etc.
Flip-flops are the easiest and coolest footwear to take with you. Whenever you enter houses, temples, or home stays you will need to remove your shoes and leave them at the door. This will soon become habit and you won't even realise you are doing it. Remember to take some trainers with you as well for the outdoor activities.

There are many opportunities to buy cheap clothes from markets. These are cool, cheap and ideal for the climate and social norms.

## Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

Smoking and drinking is acceptable in Thailand and readily available. However, please respect other people. Smoking is not permissible in volunteer apartments or the host families' homes. Drinking is only permissible in moderation and must not impact upon any volunteer work you undertake. While we want you to have fun in your free time, antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated.

It is absolutely forbidden to carry drugs into Thailand. Being caught in possession of drugs can lead to at least a prison sentence and a hefty fine if you are lucky but remember there is still a very real threat of the death penalty for carrying drugs in Thailand. Always keep an eye on your luggage while travelling. Never bring anyone else's luggage through customs.

## Bathroom Facilities

You will experience a range of different shower and toilet facilities. Unless you are staying in a hotel you will rarely have hot water. The cool water takes a little getting used to but I'm sure you'll find it refreshing after a hot and humid day. Toilets will be a combination of western and Asian. Remember to put all toilet tissue in the bin provided and not in the toilet.

Whist on excursions you will notice that many places do not have a western toilet and will have a typical Asian toilet; again this is all part of the Thai culture. Also, many places do not have soap in the bathrooms. It is a good idea to take a small bottle of soap gel and keep it in your day bag. This is an antibacterial gel that you don't need to rinse off. These are available in chemists in the travel section.

## Vietnam

You will find most Vietnamese people to be very polite and sensitive, with a casual and friendly manner. They tend to be very close to their families. The Vietnamese tend to be very traditional and conservative in their way of life, and as you are stepping into their land it is appropriate to behave in a respectful way towards them.

## Clothing

A note to girls, regarding clothes: You will be staying in area where it can be considered impolite to wear the incorrect clothing. Whilst in Hanoi you can pretty much wear what you like within reason. However when travelling around you should wear long trousers or skirts. T-shirts should cover your shoulders and not be too fitted. Vest tops are inappropriate. Wearing appropriate clothing also applies to men, it is best to dress conservatively when unsure.

Flip-flops are the easiest and coolest footwear to take with you. Whenever you enter houses, temples or home stays you will need to remove your shoes and leave them at the door. This will soon become habit and you won't even realise you are doing it. Remember to take some trainers with you as well for the outdoor activities.

If you are taking part on the teaching option of this project please note that clothes need to cover your shoulders, mid-drift and back. So make sure your tops are quite long.

## Smoking, Alcohol

Smoking and drinking is acceptable in Vietnam and readily available. However, please respect other people. Smoking is not permissible in volunteer apartments or the host families' homes. Drinking is only permissible in moderation and must not impact upon any volunteer work you undertake. While we want you to have fun in your free time, antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated.

## Bathroom Facilities

You will experience a range of different shower and toilet facilities. Unless you are staying in a hotel you will rarely have hot water. The cool water takes a little getting used to but I'm sure you'll find it refreshing after a hot and

humid day. Toilets will be a combination of western and Asian. Remember to put all toilet tissue in the bin provided and not in the toilet.

Whist on excursions you will notice that many places do not have a western toilet and will have a typical Asian toilet; again this is all part of the Vietnamese culture. Also, many places do not have soap in the bathrooms. It is a good idea to take a small bottle of soap gel and keep it in your day bag. This is an antibacterial gel that you don't need to rinse off. These are available in chemists in the travel section.

**Round the world**

## Vaccinations & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad. The risks to your health whilst travelling will vary depending on your general health and the type of activities you are going to be partaking in and the length of your stay.

Since we are not medically qualified, it is recommended that you consult with your Doctor or a recognised Travel Medical Advisory Service who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and/or anti-malarial tablets and advising you on what precautions you should take.

## Safety

**India**

India is not a particularly dangerous place for foreigners, but as in any strange setting, safety requires a certain degree of attention and thoughtfulness. Because Westerners are known to carry money and valuables, pickpockets and petty thieves often target them. Especially when riding trains and buses or walking in public areas, be sure to keep a close eye on your possessions. When in transit, money, documents and other small important items should be kept on you, preferably in a pouch or money belt, as opposed to in bags or purses. Valuable technology like cameras should be carried in small bags that can be kept close at hand at all times. Remember to photocopy all your documents (insurance, passport, traveller's checks etc), and keep them in a different place than the originals. If you have credit cards, be sure to keep a copy of the information and the customer service number in case they are lost or stolen.

Various scamsters and low-level con men also target travellers in India. If you are ever in doubt about the trustworthiness of someone that is offering you assistance or services, it is best to walk away. Travellers generally stay away from the truly dangerous and violent places in India, so you need not be worried that refusing assistance or attention will result in a dangerous or unpleasant reaction. When refusing potentially shady offers, be polite but firm.

Certain areas of India are popular with Indian tourists and Indian men will often go on holiday together to escape the confines of their home lives. These men are often interested in watching Western women who behave and dress very differently to the women they are familiar with. Female volunteers occasionally experience unwanted attention.

We advise that you check your government's advice before travelling abroad. For UK, American and Australian

customers please see the relevant links below;
UK: www.fco.gov.uk
USA: www.travel.state.gov
Australia: www.smartraveller.gov.au

The FCO have updated their information to recommend the following for female travellers visiting India;

*"Women travellers should exercise caution when travelling in India even if they are travelling in a group. Women should use caution when travelling in India. Reported cases of sexual assault against women and young girls are increasing; recent sexual attacks against female visitors in tourist areas and cities show that foreign women are also at risk. British women have been the victims of sexual assault in Goa, Delhi, Bangalore and Rajasthan and women travellers often receive unwanted attention in the form of verbal and physical harassment by individuals or groups of men. If you are a woman travelling in India you should respect local dress codes and customs and avoid isolated areas, including beaches, when alone at any time of day. Avoid travelling alone on public transport, or in taxis or auto-rickshaws, especially at night. If you have to use a taxi, get them from hotel taxi ranks and use pre-paid taxis at airports."*

### ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if you card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is then later retrieved by the thief.

If your card is confiscated or you are concerned that your card has been tampered with, please report immediately to the bank or cancel your card.

## Thailand

As in most countries there are people who try to take advantage of tourists. The following advice is intended to help you keep safe:

- Always keep your personal items such as passport, money and camera with you and in a safe place. You can buy mini padlocks to prevent people from going into your day sack without your permission.
- Always walk around in groups, never go off with strangers and people that you have only just met
- Never go out alone after dark
- Stick with the escorted trips. If you do go out in the evening unescorted, you do so at your own risk. Please tell the co-ordinator or your home-stay family where you are going, what time you will be back and ensure you sign the release from.
- Please do not get into fights, or arguments with local Thais. We cannot guarantee your safety and it could provoke future attacks on other travellers
- As in this country there have been reports of drinks being spiked on the islands. Please do not leave your drinks unattended and do not accept drinks from strangers.

- Most importantly of all, if you wouldn't do whilst your at home, then don't do it whilst you are away!

This information is not intended to scare you. Unfortunately, bad things can happen, as they can do in any country and we want you to be prepared. We want you to stay safe and have a good time.

We would like to add that the majority of the locals are friendly, warm and hospitable people who love meeting our travellers. Please be friendly, respectful and stay aware and you will have a great time.

We advise that you check your government's advice before travelling abroad. For UK, American and Australian customers please see the relevant links below;

UK: www.fco.gov.uk

USA: www.travel.state.gov
Australia: www.smartraveller.gov.au

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If your card is confiscated or you are concerned that your card has been tampered with, please report immediately to the bank or cancel your card.

## Thailand Terrorist Threat

Thailand is one of the most popular destinations for visitors to Southeast Asia. Most visitors enjoy a trouble-free stay. However, Thailand does have a history of political instability and has experienced a number of military coups since 1932. The political future of the country remains uncertain, though the situation remains stable.

The country experienced a series of bombings in the capital, Bangkok, on 31st December 2006 and 30th January 2007. However, the Thai government has increased security throughout the city. While there is an increased risk of further attacks, foreign travellers to the country are unlikely to be directly affected.
(Source: red24)

We advise that you should avoid large public gatherings and demonstrations. As in this country, there is an increased risk of terrorism in and around busy tourist spots in the capital, popular nightclubs/bars and transport stations.

## Vietnam

As in most countries, there are people in Vietnam who like to take advantage of tourists. So please take the following advice to help keep you safe:

- Always keep your personal items such as passport, money and camera with you or in a safe place. You can buy mini padlocks to prevent people from going into your daypack without your permission.
- Always walk around in groups
- Never go out alone after dark
- Stick with the escorted trips. If you do go out in the evening unescorted, you do so at your own risk. Please tell the co-ordinators where you are going and what time you will be back.

This information is not intended to scare you. Unfortunately bad things can happen like they do in this country and we want you to be prepared. At the end of the day, we want you to stay safe and have a good time.

The majority of the locals are friendly, warm and hospitable people who love meeting foreign travellers. So please be friendly, respectable and stay aware and you will have a great time.

We advise that you check your government's advice before travelling abroad. For UK, American and Australian customers please see the relevant links below;
UK: www.fco.gov.uk
USA: www.travel.state.gov
Australia: www.smartraveller.gov.au

## ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if your card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is then later retrieved by the thief.

If your card is confiscated or you are concerned that your card has been tampered with, please report immediately to the bank or cancel your card.

## Traffic

Traffic in Vietnam is very chaotic! Be very careful with the road traffic, even after a few days and be careful not to be too confident. Traffic moves on the right, although drivers frequently cross to the left to pass or turn and motorcycles and bicycles often travel (illegally) against the flow of traffic. Horns are used constantly often for no apparent reason and sudden stops by motorcycles and bicycles make driving a particular hazard.

## Round the world

## Language Guide

### India

Here are some useful phrases in Hindi to remember when you get to India. We also suggest you obtain a Lonely Planet or language guide for the destination(s) you are travelling to.

Hello/Goodbye - *Namaste*
Thank you very much - *Bahut bahut shukriya*
Thank You - *Dhanyavad*
Yes - *Haan (ha)*
No - *Nahi*
So you speak English? - *Kya aap angrezi samajhte hain?*
What is your name? - *Aapka naam kya hai?*
My name is… - *Mera naam … hai*
How are you? - *Aap kaise hain?*
Fine, and you? - *Bas ap sunaiye?*
Nice to meet you - *Aapse milkar khushii huyii*
Do you understand? - *Kya ap samjhi*
I don't understand - *Main samjha nahi*

### Thailand

Here are some useful phrases to remember when you get to Thailand. We also suggest you obtain a Lonely Planet or language guide for the destination(s) you are travelling to.

Hello (Male speaker) - *sawatdee krup*

Hello (Female speaker) - *sawatdee kaa*
How are you? - *sabai dee reu*
Thank you - *kop koon*
I can't speak Thai - *phoot Thai mai dai*
I don't understand - *mai kao chai*
Do you understand? - *kao chai mai*
Where is the rest room? - *hong nam yoo tee nai*
How much does this cost? - *nee tao-rai*
What is this? - *nee aria*
Good-bye - *la gon*
Sorry/Excuse me - *kor thoad*
The bill please - *Gep taang*

### Vietnam

Here are some useful words and phrases. We also suggest you obtain a Lonely Planet or language guide for the destination(s) you are travelling to.

Hello - *Xin chao*
Thank you - *Cam on*
Sorry - *Xin loi*
Yes - *Vang*
No - *Khong*
I - *Toi*
You - *Anh (male)/ Chi (female)*
Good - *tot*
Bad - *Khong tot*
How much - *Bao nhieu*
Too expensive - *Mac qua*

## Round the world

## Food & Drink

### India

Indian food is incredibly popular in western Europe, but tasting Indian food is a bit different than the stuff produced in the Indian down the road. In this respect the food may take a little getting used to. There are also a few cultural differences that you may need to observe. People in India tend to eat without cutlery, using either their hands or pieces of chapatti. If you are dining with strict Hindus, certain behaviours are considered inappropriate, for example sharing already eaten food and eating directly from the communal bowl.

Traditional Indian cuisine involves the intricate blending of multiple herbs and spices such as ginger, garlic, saffron and cloves. Popular ingredients vary from location to location, from lamb and yoghurt in the Northern regions to seafood in the coastal regions. In the South, more vegetables are used for cooking, along with coconut and curry leaves. In fact, most of the best dishes are vegetarian, especially when you take into account the dominant religious views of India - Hindus do not eat beef and Muslims do not eat pork. In most cases, even if you do order a meat dish, you will not find that much meat actually in it.

What is classed as a curry by western culture encompasses a huge amount of dishes in India, each with its own unique beautifully blended ingredients. You are bound to find something you like. Here are a few tips regarding food and drink:

- Raw food is subject to contamination; avoid salads, uncooked vegetables, and un-pasteurised milk products such as cheese. Fruit should be self-peeled
- Undercooked and raw meat, fish and shellfish may carry intestinal pathogens
- Cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at ambient temperatures should be thoroughly reheated before serving
- Yogurt and curd are naturally safe if kept in hygienic conditions, but be careful that they contain no water, as yogurt is often diluted with water in India
- The safest food is either well cooked and hot or personally peeled fruit
- As you will generally be eating without silverware, washing your hands thoroughly before all meals is absolutely imperative.

Choosing the proper beverages is as important as choosing the proper food. In a climate like India's, regular hydration is essential, however, many beverages can be dangerous to your health. The following suggestions will help you safely quench your thirst:

- Tap water is only safe if boiled; filters and purification tablets are not 100% effective. In all cases bottled water is by far the best option. Fruit juice and ice made with un-boiled water should also be considered unsafe
- When buying bottled water, stick whenever possible to known brands and make sure the bottle has an unbroken seal. Bottled water should cost no more than 30 Rupees.
- Hot beverages like coffee and tea should be boiled fully before consumption
- Though bad for hydration, carbonated beverages (incl. beer) are generally safe
- Try to remain conscious of casual water: dishes and utensils should be thoroughly clean and dry before use; teeth should be brushed with bottled or purified water

Remember to let us know of any dietary requirements before you depart.

### Thailand

It's normal in Thailand to eat rice dishes for breakfast and it is all part of the cultural experience. In fact, rice and noodles are served with all meals. The food is gorgeous, with fresh vegetables tasting far better than they do back home. Vegetarians will be happy, as Tofu is widely available as is plenty of fresh fruit. And meat lovers will also be tantalising their taste buds visiting the many local markets where you can buy chicken satay (marinated kebabs), beef kebabs and other types of meat. It is very cheap too. Remember to let us know before you depart if you have any special dietary requirements.

### Vietnam

Vietnamese food takes influence from China, India, Thailand and France but also has a very distinct cuisine of its own. Food tends to be light and subtle but with a good amount of flavour thanks to the fact that herbs and seasoning are favoured over sauces. Rice is the staple of the cuisine, though noodles are a tasty alternative, which will accompany meat or fish dishes or a vegetable dish. Fish in general is very popular, probably due to the extremely long coastline.

Fresh seasonings are favoured and food tends to not be too spicy, though you can use the accompanying chillies to spice it up if you wish and the use of coconut milk makes food extra rich! The most popular and infamous seasoning is nuoc mam, a sauce made from fermenting fish in salt for a long time, whereas the most famous dish are spring rolls, which tend to differ slightly in the North and the South of the country. Cities tend to have better food than remote locations and western tastes are also well catered for, especially in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh.

### Round the world

## Public Holidays

### India

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country. However, although businesses and government offices are closed on public holidays, tourist attractions and shops are almost never closed. The main impact on the tourist of these holidays is the increased competition for travel and accommodation from Indians who use long weekends to get away from the big city.

To view a list of the public holidays for India, please see the link below:

www.timeanddate.com/holidays/india/

### Thailand

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country. However, although businesses and government offices are closed on public holidays, tourist attractions and shops are almost never closed. The main impact on the tourist of these holidays is the increased competition for travel and accommodation from Thais who use long weekends to get away from the big city.

To view a list of the public holidays for Thailand please see the link below:

www.timeanddate.com/holidays/thailand/

### Vietnam

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country. However, although businesses and government offices are closed on public holidays, tourist attractions and shops are almost never closed. The main impact on the tourist of these holidays is the increased competition for travel and accommodation from Vietnamese who use long weekends to get away from the big city.

To view a list of the public holidays for Vietnam, please see the link below:
www.worldtravelguide.net/vietnam/public-holidays

### Round the world

## Weather

### India

India's climate generally has three seasons, which may vary from region to region. The hot season roughly beginning in February in the North and peaking in June can reach up to and above 45 Celsius in some areas, mostly in the centre of the country. You can expect Delhi to have temperatures at the high end of the 30's.

Monsoon season means steady rain for the whole country from the beginning of July. It stays pretty hot, and though it doesn't rain all day, it does generally rain every day. The Monsoon causes muddy conditions at best but serious flooding is also a threat. The cool season is the optimum time to travel in India, as it is not too hot and not too cool. In the winter it does get surprisingly cold in the Northern regions, whereas in the south the temperatures are beautiful.

### Thailand

Thailand's equatorial climate remains tropical and warm for most of the year, with the south getting the best of the weather. The monsoon season falls between May and October, bringing warm and humid air and dipping to a minimum of 18ºC. This means that Thailand is a great destination at most times of the year, though the best months are between November and February when temperatures are comfortable and rains have slackened off.

### Vietnam

Vietnam's climate is varied as the country itself, ranging from tropical heat in the Mekong Delta to chilly, and sometimes snowy, winters in the northern hills. Year round temperatures average at about 25°C, soaring to a balmy 40°C in the south during the dry season. The biggest thing to watch out for are the monsoons, the winter

monsoon hits between October and March and gives the north a few months of wet weather. The summer monsoon usually comes in April or May and stays until October, bringing heat and humidity to all areas not sheltered by mountains. This makes the months of April, May or October the best to travel.

### Round the world

## Time

### India

India is 5.5 hours ahead of GMT.

### Thailand

Thailand is 7 hours ahead of GMT.

### Vietnam

Vietnam is 7 hours ahead of GMT.

### Round the world

## Electricity

### India

Electricity in India uses 240 volts, 50Hz. If your device does not run on these rates, you'll need a voltage converter.

Outlets across India generally accept the following plug types;

Two round pins

or

Thre round pins arranged in a triangle

### Thailand

The electricity in Thailand is 220 volts and frequency 50 Hertz. Devices that do not accept this voltage will need to be used with an adapter. Outlets in Thailand generally accept 2 types of plug:

Flat blade plug

or

Two round pins

## Vietnam

Electricity in Vietnam is generally 220 Volts and frequency 50 Hertz, though outlets with 127 Volts can still be found in some areas. You will need to either bring devices that accept 220 Volts at 50 Hertz or you will need an adapter. Outlets in Vietnam generally accept 3 types of plug:

Flat blade plug

or

Two round pins

or

Two parallel flat pins with ground pin

## Round the world

## Trip Note Disclaimer

The information contained in this trip note has been compiled with great care and is provided in good faith. Any itinerary featured is correct at time of release. However, our itineraries may change as make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of reommended travel advice.

You can rest assured that it is always our goal to provide you with the most rewarding trip and experience ever!

## Our Details

If you have any questions about this trip please do not hesitate to contact us and we'll be happy to answer them.

**Phone:** 1-800-985-4852
**Email:** info@realgap.com
**Post:** Real Gap Experience, 8 Essex Center Drive, Peabody, MA 01960
**Web:** www.realgap.com