

Aqua Expeditions - Mekong 4 days

I was recently lucky enough to be invited to join a 4 day river cruise along the Mekong & Tonle Sap River in Cambodia, travelling in style on board Aqua Expeditions.

Wow, what an experience! I absolutely loved every second from the moment I stepped on board and was greeted warmly by the entire crew, then quickly ushered to the spacious indoor lounge and plied with delicious snacks and drinks.

It's hard to find any fault at all – yes, the boat is really just a floating Hotel and at first glance, the facilities are nothing to make it stand out from a 5* Hotel. However, the service is what makes Aqua special - the staff are outstanding and are certainly their biggest point of difference – nothing is too much trouble and the little touches go a long way. From your shoes being washed and returned to you after excursions, to each member of staff not only knowing your name every time but remembering if you preferred still or sparkling water, every time!!! I'm from a Hospitality background and the service I experienced on Aqua far surpasses anything I've ever come across. I also LOVE the no key policy!

I was a little apprehensive on the 1st day with meal schedules and shore excursion timetables but there is more than enough time to sit back, relax with a drink on one of two sundecks, choose a book from their library, watch a movie in the media room complete with popcorn or indulge in a spa treatment. You are never rushed and you can choose to do as little or as much as you desire.

The shore excursions were well planned and varied with unbelievably informative Guides – we nicknamed ours 'Mr Google' as there was literally nothing he couldn't answer immediately. I did find the balance between poverty in the villages and returning to the boat slightly hard sometimes but this would be the case anywhere you travel in Cambodia – travelling sustainably with local crew, eating local produce and visiting local businesses can only help their economy. I loved, loved, loved the opportunity for a Q&A session with a Monk and his novices and kayaking through a floating village was definitely a bucket list tick! I without a doubt experienced a side of Cambodia I would not have been able to see on my own.

Which leads to me the final and in my opinion, the best part of the cruise – the food! I came home with an envelope bursting full of recipes – please Aqua, write a Mekong cook book! The relaxed breakfast where you can load up from the buffet and hot dishes from the kitchen, to the incredible 'family style' three course lunch and dinners – everything was delicious and moreish. I love the sharing concept when dining, as I often have food envy from my fellow diners – not here and seconds are encouraged! Freshly prepared, mostly local produce and inventive dishes meant I never missed what was offered to me (I considered ordering off the 'western' menu one lunch until I saw the other menu for the day). You will not go hungry here and my occasional refusal of dessert was met with worried glances from the staff – is everything ok?!! Yes, I just can't move lol.

I will be forever grateful for the opportunity I was given to not only experience the wonder of Aqua Expeditions but the incredible joyfulness, happiness and love that Cambodia radiates. Thank you ☺

Trish Little