



Angkor to Saigon cycle

Two countries on two wheels. The ancient culture and hidden countryside of Vietnam and Cambodia - by bike.

Sixteen fantastic days of cycling and discovery await anyone who likes to pack in as much adventure as possible. From the day we start out at the ancient temple city of Cambodia's Angkor Wat, to the day we dismount in Vietnam's magnificent Mekong Delta, your senses will be working overtime digesting the history, culture and countryside of these two intriguing countries.

You'll see all the tourist treats these countries have to offer and, thanks to the beauty of bikes, much, much more. Both nations have enchanting, ancient histories and chilling, more recent pasts. There are some unique contrasts in cultures, customs and communities - and you'll get to experience them all.

We begin at the huge ancient city of Angkor Wat, a well travelled attraction in Cambodia, where we've planned the pedalling to make sure you see each of the main temples at the right time of day, where the sunlight is at its most magical and

Then we'll discover some of the hidden charms of the capital, Phnom Penh, with its fading colonial legacy and scenic river scape, before continuing into the country. The ancient ruins, mighty rivers, beautiful beaches, rice paddies, mountainous national parks and abandoned French hill stations are all on our route - and the excited welcome from village locals will be an experience you'll never forget.

Onto Vietnam and the backlanes of the vibrant Mekong Delta, exploring the floating markets, sleepy villages, temples, pagodas, old houses and villas from French colonial times - all the while surrounded by the Delta's flat, lush flood plains and emerald green paddy fields bordered by tropical fruit gardens, mangroves and palms. This is a real journey of discovery in a perfect environment for cycle touring - the beauty of SE Asia up close and personal.

The terrain makes for easy cycling but this trip is still fully supported by air-conditioned vehicle, so you can ride as much or as little as you want. When you rest each evening, you'll enjoy excellent local food and the very best accommodation available.

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive Siem Reap

Your guide will meet you at the Siem Reap Airport and take you to your hotel. Tonight you will be treated to a traditional Khmer meal and will have the opportunity to hear some of the history from your guide. Then enjoy a walk through the vibrant heart of Siem Reap town, where a diverse cultural community is emerging.

Meals included: D



Day 2 Siem Reap - Angkor Sunrise and the highlight temples

We make an early start to see an unforgettable sunrise at Angkor Wat. We then take a leisurely ride around some of the temple highlights, including Tha Prom, the Elephant Terrace and the Bayon. After lunch in the temple area, we cycle back to the hotel by small dirt trails through villages. This afternoon you are free to explore at your leisure, or go with your guide to see a handicraft workshop that supports under-privileged youth, by teaching them craft skills. The evening is free time.

Distance cycled: 35km

Meals included: B,L

Day 3 Kampong Thom - Cycle to Beng Melea

We start with a ride along the Siem Reap River and it's not long before the bustle of Siem Reap fades and we find ourselves cycling through open countryside, with farmers hard at work and children waving. We cycle on small dirt roads today, some in good condition, some in average condition. We reach the moss covered, shady temple of Beng Melea around lunch time and after losing yourself in this amazing structure, we will have a picnic lunch, before we board the vehicle to travel to our home for the night, Kampong Thom.

Kampong Thom is the provincial capital and is a growing, but still small city. In the evening, a walk along the river makes for a nice end to the day with many locals out for their evening exercise.

Meals included: B,L,D

Distance Cycled: Approximately 70km.

Day 4 Kampong Cham - Cycle

We start with a short drive, then we hit the bikes again and cycle down a well made secondary road, past various plantations, including cotton and rubber. The fertile soil of the Mekong Basin and the comfortable climate are perfect for these crops.

In the afternoon we pass a disused US-Era Air Strip before we make a small descent into Kampong Cham on small dirt paths.

Another provincial capital, Kampong Cham is located at the bridge over the Mekong that connects Cambodia's three North Eastern provinces of Kratie, Monduliri, Stung Treng and Rattanakiri to the central plains.

Meals included: B,L,D

Distance Cycled: Approximately 80km

Day 5 Phnom Penh - Cycle

This morning we follow the Mekong River as we cycle through Cham Muslim areas. Formerly a Hindu Kingdom that spanned much of what is now Southern Vietnam and Cambodia, the Champa Kingdom declined after a number of fierce battles with the Khmer and Vietnamese. They are thought to have converted to Islam after their King converted in or around the late fourteenth century. Today Cham people are scattered across their former domain and usually earn a living from fishing.

We eat our lunch in the grounds of a modern, river-side temple before we board the vehicle for the drive into Phnom Penh. Phnom Penh with its broken charm is a busy city and is quite a change from the sleepy countryside that you have experienced thus far.

Meals included: B,L,D

Distance cycled: 65km

Day 6 Phnom Penh - Rest day

Today is free for you to explore Phnom Penh. The markets offer both great photographic opportunities, excellent shopping and for the more adventurous, some great food. Good massage is widely available and just walking around this city is entertaining. On a more sombre note, you could visit the S21 Museum or the Killing Fields and learn about the darker years in Cambodia's history, where the country was engulfed by the madness of the Khmer Rouge regime, during which time a huge proportion of the Cambodian population was wiped out. These two sites act as a memorial and a reminder of these events to help ensure that such a thing can never re-occur.



Meals included: B

Day 7 Takeo - Cycle

We leave Phnom Penh early in the morning as farmers are bringing their produce in and factory workers are making their way to work. We cycle a network of small roads and at times larger highways to reach Takeo, a small provincial capital.

Meals included: L,D

Distance cycled: 85km

Day 8 Kep - Cycle

We cycle on a lightly used highway today and at times on smaller, un-sealed shortcuts. We pass limestone hills and orchards as we travel to the coast. We arrive in the beach side town of Kep where we spend two nights. This evening we will try the fresh seafood that this area is known for.

Meals included: B,L,D

Distance cycled: 106km

Day 9 Kep - Explore Kep and Kampot

We take a morning ride into nearby Kampot where we will have morning tea at Sisters Cafe. Kampot is a pleasant and quiet town, sitting by a river in the shadow of Bokor Mountain. We then return to Kep and take a boat to Rabbit Island, a tiny island just off the coast where the water is crystal clear.

Meals included: B

Distance cycled: 40km

Day 10 | Phu Quoc | Cycle and boat

We make an early start to get over this sleepy border crossing and onto the town of Ha Tien. Here we take a boat to Phu Quoc, a much larger island that although geographically seems to fit with Cambodia, is Vietnamese sovereign territory. The afternoon is yours to explore or laze by the beach.

Meals included: B

Distance cycled: 35km

Day 11 Ha Tien - Boat and Cycle

A morning cycle around the island will give us a chance to see it from every angle and visit some of the quietest corners of this increasingly popular spot. After an early lunch, we board the boat back to Ha Tien where we spend the night. A night market usually starts up and some obscure clothing or food bargains can be found.

Meals included: B,L,D

Distance cycled: 35km

Day 12 Chau Doc - Cycle

We trace the Vietnamese/Cambodian Border northwards today, through marshlands and back up to the Mekong River. We will be on quieter roads most of the day, although some of these will carry some traffic. We spend this evening in the popular riverside town of Chau Doc, famous for its fish sauces and as a border trade town.

Meals included: B,L,D

Distance cycled: 90km

Day 13 Long Xuyen - Cycle

We cycle into the Delta in earnest today, along small canal paths and through little villages. We pass a great deal of farming activity as the soil here is some of the most fertile in the region. We find ourselves in Long Xuyen tonight, a larger delta city that is a trade point for much of the surrounding areas agricultural produce.



Meals included: B,L,D
Distance cycled: 100km

Day 14 Can Tho - Cycle

We will continue our ride along some fantastic tracks, following canals with very little traffic. We will reach our destination of Can Tho in the late afternoon. Can Tho at the convergence of two main sections of the Mekong is an exciting town that will seem like a city after the backwaters of the far south.

Meals included: B,L,D
Distance cycled: 85km

Day 15 Saigon - Cycle

Today is our last day on the bikes. We will start with a boat ride around the famous floating markets, before driving up to Cu Chi Tunnels. This maze of underground tunnels was one of the un-beatable tools used by a Viet-Cong in the American, Vietnam War. After learning about the tunnels, we will take a ride of the surrounding area to see rice paper production. We will then drive into the bustling commercial capital of Saigon where we celebrate our ride over dinner.

Meals included: B,L,D
Distance cycled: 30km

Day 16 Saigon - Finish

Today the tour concludes. Time to bid farewell to all your new friends and head off on your next adventure.

Meals included: B

Accommodation

Accommodation is a mixture of hotels and guest houses and we have chosen the best that are available in the more remote locations. In Phnom Penh and Siem Reap we use great hotels which are very centrally located with comfortable rooms and facilities (the equivalent of four star) . Generally speaking, the accommodation on this trip is a good standard though some patience maybe required in the smaller guesthouses where the plumbing and standards of English may not always be as you like it!

Meal Inclusions

Most meals are included in this trip and the food is generally of an excellent quality. The only exclusion is on free days in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. please refer to the itinerary for exact inclusions:

We like to sample the best of local dishes and produce so you enjoy an authentic taste of the region which you're travelling through. Cambodian food is a mixture of different influences from Thailand, Cambodia and France. Vietnamese food is rightly regarded as one of the great Asian cuisines with its own distinctive flavours and influences from China and France.

Please not in the itnerary (B, L, D) stands for breakfast and lunch and dinner.

Transport

Any transport required is generally by private vehicle. You will have an air-conditioned support vehicle travelling with you in Cambodia throughout the trip.

Physical Rating

Moderate

You don't need to be a highly experienced cyclist to join these multi-day trips but a reasonably good level of fitness is required to participate fully. Full support is provided throughout, so you can ride as much or as little as you want to. Be prepared for moderate to strenuous physical activity as you will be cycling for between 5 and 7 hours each day on average and some pre-trip training is recommended to get the most from your adventure. Terrain is varied but generally on sealed roads and no technical skills needed to enjoy the trip.

Visas

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

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

Cambodia:

You can obtain a visa on arrival by air or at major land crossings (bring 2 passport photos), cost US\$25. You can obtain a visa in your own country if you wish. Before you travel check your passport to ensure that there is room for a visa and entry/exit stamps (at least 3 pages) and that it has at least 6 months validation remaining.

Vietnam:

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

For all NSW residents please send your application to:

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

A visa application form can be downloaded by clicking on this link: <http://vietnamconsulate.org.au/forms/VisaApplicationFORM.doc>

Check list for a postal application:

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

Visit the embassy website for full details of visa procedure : <http://www.vietnamconsulate.org.au>

If you are not from NSW then you will need to get your visa processed by the Vietnam Embassy in Canberra. Click on the following website for all visa application details: <http://www.vietnamembassy.org.au/>

Forms can be downloaded at: <http://www.vietnamembassy.org.au/Forms/foreigner.pdf>

Important Notes

1. Bikes

Please make sure that you let us know your height in cm's so that we can properly size you to the correct frame size. The bikes that we provide are 24 speed Trek 4400 mountain bikes with front suspension and have a single water bottle carrier cage. There are no racks and we advise bringing a handlebar bag to carry personal items. They have a light tread pattern for less rolling resistance.



2. Bringing your own bike

Not a problem but any extra charges for taking it on the train or plane are your responsibility. It is best to pack your bike in a bike box available from any bike shop. We can then carry the box in the truck. Please note that while every effort is made to maintain all the bikes in good condition on each trip, we cannot guarantee that some small damage such as scratching will not occur as a result of the daily loading and unloading of bikes into and out of the support vehicle.

Please note - If you are bringing your own bike and it has disc brakes, hydraulics, rear suspension, oil units or special pumps for adjusting the suspension pressure, please make sure that you bring the necessary spares and parts with you.

3. Travel Insurance

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

We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects. When travelling on a group trip, you will not be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number has been seen by your leader. If you have credit card insurance your tour leader will require proof of purchase of the trip (a receipt of credit card statement) with a credit card in your name. Contact your bank for details of their participating insurer, the level of coverage and emergency contact telephone number. Our preferred insurance company is CoverMore as they provide an excellent service. You can apply online directly by clicking on this link: <https://b2c.covermore.com.au/index.jsp?alpha=AAV0231>

What to take?

You should pack as lightly as possible. Your main luggage will be transported for you on all cycling days in the support vehicle. You will only need a day pack to carry your personal items when cycling. You are expected to carry your own luggage on and off the bus and though you will not be required to walk long distances with your luggage we recommend keeping the weight under 12kg. Suitcases are not recommended as they are awkward to store in the support vehicle.

Most travellers carry their luggage in a backpack, although an overnight bag with a shoulder strap would suffice if you travel lightly. Smaller bags with wheels are acceptable, although we recommend your bag has carry straps as well.

Checklist (suggested list):

Travel Documents:

- Passport (with photocopies) and Cambodia/Vietnam visas
- Copy of travel insurance
- Airline ticket
- USD cash
- Credit card

** Tip: use a money belt for security (put documents inside a plastic bag)

Personal Items

- - First Aid kit (see the health section)
- - High factor sunscreen
- - Mosquito repellent
- - Sunglasses
- - Toiletries (biodegradable)
- - Watch or alarm clock
- - Ear plugs (in case room mate snores!)
- - Plastic bags for wet or dirty clothing
- - Wet wipes or antiseptic hand gel

Clothing

- - 3 T-shirts (lightweight quick drying fabric) / long sleeved T-shirt
- - 2 pairs Cycling shorts (padded)
- - 1 pair of comfortable shoes for cycling
- - 1 pair of sport sandals
- - socks (for cycling)
- - 1 pair of knee length shorts
- - 1 pair lightweight long trousers
- - Lightweight waterproof top
- - Light sweater/fleece for evening
- - Small towel and swim wear
- - Sun hat
- - Clothes to relax in

Cycling Equipment

- - Helmet - (compulsory)- bring one with good ventilation
- - 1 water bottle (min. 750 ml capacity recommended) or 'Camel Bak' hydration pack
- - Handlebar bag / small day pack for carrying items when cycling
- - Cycling gloves

- Optional:
 - - Multi-tool (allen keys) for minor adjustments to your bike
 - - Your own saddle or gel seat cover
 - - Your own SPD pedals
 - - Mini bicycle pump
 - - Favourite snacks for cycling energy boost e.g. 'PowerBars', sports gel (a concentrated carbohydrate that delivers immediate energy when you feel tired or flat), dried fruit or nuts
 - ***Please refer again to our Cycling Guide on the homepage to see photo of bikes used and how to customise it.

Other Suggestions:

- - Camera and plenty of film
- - Adapter for recharging digital camera (American style with 2 parallel flat pins)
- - Spare batteries
- - Reading / writing material
- - Penknife (put in main luggage at airport)
- - Torch
- - Small calculator (when out bargaining!)
- - Photos of family or postcards of Australia (great way to have fun with locals you meet)
- - Phrase book, map and Lonely Planet guide
- - Small padlock for securing your luggage during flights

Local Dress

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

As a general guideline shoulders and knees should be covered at all times. The wearing of shorts and halter tops away from the beach or swimming pools are not allowed as they will restrict your entry into buildings of a religious nature and family homes. Cycling shorts and tops are ideal, though we do insist that you cover up when coming off the bike or stopping in villages as local people will be shocked and sometimes offended by the sight of tight body hugging lycra! So please be a good ambassador for your country and have a loose pair of shorts to put over your cycling shorts or a sarong to wrap around.

Health

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

Please let us know of any medical conditions on the registration form and if you are currently taking prescription medicine as it is important that our leader is aware of your circumstances. We therefore ask that you read the itinerary in these trip notes thoroughly and then realistically self-assess your physical ability to complete the trip as described. Please consult with your doctor if you have any doubts.

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

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

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

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

If you are 65 years or older a completed Medical Certificate is required.

Please let us know and we can post you a copy which then needs to be signed by your GP and posted or faxed through to 03 9787 0136 prior to departure.

Physical Preparation

In order to physically prepare yourself to cycle long hours in the saddle for up to 7 hours on successive days it is so important that you undertake a fitness program. Getting yourself fit is all part of the challenge and one that you'll benefit from long after your trip is over. It is really worth putting in the effort before you go to condition the body (backside, neck, shoulders and leg muscles) as it means you'll enjoy the event rather than it being a struggle.

Build up your base endurance by long and frequent bike rides which will ensure that you are in peak condition for the trip. You can also mix this up by taking other forms of regular exercise which you currently do such as yoga, spinning classes, walking and swimming.

The heat is a consideration as your body make take a few days to adjust to the more humid climate. We try and avoid riding at the hottest times of day and favour early mornings and late afternoons on long days.

Money Exchange

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

Vietnam: \$1 AUD = 20,000 Dong.

Cambodia: \$1 AUD = approx. 4000 Riel. Officially the Cambodian Riel is the unit of currency. Unofficially however, \$US runs the country and is the currency you should bring, mostly in cash.

Clean bills of small denominations are best for either country. Travellers cheques can be difficult to change. ATM's are appearing in larger cities in Vietnam and more so in Cambodia and credit cards can be used to advance cash in banks in major towns but attract a high fee. We recommend that you don't use money changers on the street. When changing money try and get a mix of denominations (your leader will advise you on this). Keep smaller notes with you when on the cycle ride as it can be difficult to change larger notes once out of the city.

Spending Money

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

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

Emergency Funds

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

Keeping In Touch - communication while on the road

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

Emergency Contact

In the case of a genuine crisis or emergency, please call the RAW Office. Tel: +61 3 9787 4366

Outside of office hours please call 0413 703 632

Your Fellow Cyclists

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

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

Group Leader

RAW has both resident western and local leaders who lead our trips in this region. Generally speaking you will have a western leader with a larger group size supported by local leaders as well. Where the group size is smaller or with a private booking for a few people you will have a local leader. All our staff are first aid trained and experienced with the special nature and demands of

cycle tours and are able to give you support and insights into the local culture.

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

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

One of the staff accompanying your trip will also double as Mechanic and ensure that your bikes are trouble free by checking them over regularly during your trip. It is your responsibility to communicate any problems you may have with your bikes to your leader so that they are aware of them. Please ensure that any maintenance required is pointed out to the mechanic / leader at a time when they have time to fix the problem and not immediately before your scheduled departure each morning - which will delay the day's ride for everyone.

Responsible Travel

We believe strongly in low impact or rather positive impact tourism. Broadly speaking this means that we try to minimise the negative aspects of tourism on the local cultures and environments that we visit and highlight the positive aspects. When we are cycling children will ask you for pens, money etc. It is always hard to resist giving them a small gift. However we ask you not to do this as it encourages a culture of begging and often parents will take their children out of school and get their children to prey on tourists. Ask your leader what is the best way to give.

RAW Travel has taken an active approach to helping communities in destinations that we visit and raising money for grass roots projects aimed at alleviating poverty and conservation of the natural environment. For more details please visit our website where we have a download document detailing our responsible travel practice and philosophy:
<http://rawtravel.com/resptravel/responsibletravel.pdf>

A Couple of Rules

Illegal drugs will not be tolerated on our trips. Possessing or using drugs not only contravenes the laws of the land but also puts the rest of the group at risk. Smoking marijuana and opium is a part of local culture in some parts of the world but is not acceptable for RAW travellers.

RAW's philosophy of travel is one of respect towards everyone we encounter, and in particular the local people who make our destinations such special places. The exploitation of prostitutes is completely contrary to this philosophy. Our group leader has the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession or if they use prostitutes.

Safety

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

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

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

Your leader will accompany you on all included activities however during your trip you will have some free time to pursue

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

Please also note that your group leader has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns. A thorough cycling safety briefing will be given prior to setting off about the bikes.

Dehydration

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

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

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

Participation

All RAW Travel passengers are required to sign a Participation Form on day 12 of the trip. Please note that signing the form is a prerequisite of travelling with RAW Travel. The wording of this form follows:

"I understand that travelling with RAW Travel may involve risks (and rewards) above and beyond those encountered on a more conventional holiday, and that I am undertaking an adventure trip with inherent dangers. I understand that I am travelling to geographical areas where, amongst other things, the standard of accommodation, transport, safety, hygiene, cleanliness, medical facilities, telecommunications and infrastructure development may not be of the standard I am used to at home or would find on a conventional holiday. I have read and understood the RAW Travel Pre-Trip Dossier for the trip I am undertaking and have provided details of any pre-existing medical conditions I have, to RAW Travel's representatives. I accept these risks and obligations and I fully assume the risks of travel. I release RAW Travel from any liabilities connected to these risks to the maximum extent permitted by law."

RAW Newsletter

We have a free email newsletter full of travellers stories and experiences as well as news on new trips that we are running. Please send us an extract from your travel journal at the end of the trip. We would also love to receive any photos after the event as we are starting to build up a travellers album for each of our destinations on our website. We need resolution of around 1MB.

Please could you send a CD to: RAW Challenges Photo album, 1/7 Davies Ave, Mt Eliza, VIC 3930.

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

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