
Monuments and Culture of the Irrawaddy and Mekong:

Burma, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia

January 21 to
February 12, 2013 (exclusive of travel from US)

Introduction

The focus of this trip is the ancient and colonial culture of Southeast Asia found in present day Burma, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It takes as its focus and guiding principle the interrelationship of cultures across the region and through the span of time. As we explore many of the extraordinary monuments of these great ancient civilizations at places such as Pagan (Burma), Hanoi (Vietnam), Luang Prabang (Laos) and Angkor (Siem Reap, Cambodia) we will observe how these monuments are interrelated and how each great civilization influenced and was influenced by the others. So too today, these four countries are inextricably linked as their peoples migrate from one land to the next.



The temples at Pagan in the early morning mist (this and all other watercolors by Stephen Harby)

This ambitious and richly layered itinerary was originally proposed by John Walsh, Director Emeritus of the Getty Museum, and an exploratory trip with a small group took place last year. Kristin Kelly, formerly of the Getty (both Museum and Conservation Institute) will accompany us as lecturer, and Stephen Harby has framed it all in a workable itinerary, which as always has been planned for optimum comfort, pleasure and enhancement of appreciation of the cultural uniqueness of each place.

Reaching one of the major gateways (Beijing, Bangkok or Singapore) on our own, we will convene in Rangoon, Burma (now Yangon, Myanmar—for the purpose of this text original historic place names will be used)—where we will spend fourteen nights on an itinerary created for us by one of that country's best established companies engaged in cultural travel. From Burma we will fly directly to Hanoi in northern Vietnam whose intact French Colonial architecture and culture offers a counterpart to that of Burma. We will next fly to Luang Prabang on the Mekong River in northern Laos, which will strike us as one of the places least changed by the global march of increasing sameness. Luang Prabang, once the capital of the Kingdom of the Million Elephants, is full of Buddhist temples and French colonial architecture. We will fly on to Cambodia, recently emerged from its post Pol Pot hibernation and will start with two full days to see the great Khmer Temples, of which the famed Angkor Wat is but one of many. We will conclude our stay in Cambodia and our trip spending the last night in its capital Phnom Penh. For those who wish, there can be a last fling at the Oriental or Peninsula Hotel in Bangkok before returning to the reality of lives at home.



Burma

Despite its political situation, or perhaps in a sad way, because of it, Burma (or Myanmar as its leaders would have us call it) remains a world apart. It is one of the few places on the planet that has not been overwhelmed by the tides of globalized homogenization. Rangoon (Yangon) is one of the few Asian capitals to retain its colonial urban fabric intact—if faded and crumbling. It reminds us what Singapore, Bangkok and Penang must have once been like. Its people are welcoming, travel services are efficient, and a visit there is free of the sorts of controls and restrictions that one might imagine from such a regime.

Loosening restrictions and the advent of a political thaw have been much in the news this year, and a visit now is both timely and urgent, as the country is clearly poised for radical change, which, while we hope for the better for its people, will undoubtedly lead to the drastic transformation of the built environment that has occurred everywhere else in Southeast Asia.

Our fourteen-night itinerary begins and ends in Rangoon, where we will fly independently from either Bangkok or Singapore, connecting directly from the US, or with a stopover as



The Governor's Residence, our hotel in Rangoon



The serene landscape of the Irrawaddy River captured from the steamer's deck.

individuals choose. Our hotel there, the Governor's Residence is located in the diplomatic enclave and once hosted foreign diplomats. Impeccably refurbished by the Simplon Orient Express outfit, it will be a good place to spend three nights recovering from our long trip and from which to explore the Schwedagon Pagoda, and the old British buildings of the capital.

We will fly from Rangoon north to Mandalay, to spend two nights, making an excursion one day to Amarapura and Inwa, two ancient royal capitals. The world's longest teak bridge and a 17th century teak monastery are among the treasures that await us there.

The next morning we will embark on day's cruise down the Irrawaddy River to Pagan aboard our own privately chartered boat. Along the way we will be able to continue to unwind as we glide slowly along past one stunning tableau of river life after another: villages of thatched houses, rafts of logs lashed together reminiscent of Huckleberry Finn, and local boats packed with passengers. We'll make several stops along the way, including one to see a village where pottery is made for local export.

We will arrive in Pagan in the evening and will be met and taken to our hotel at the river's edge. Pagan is a vast dry plain with hundreds of pagodas, stupas and temples whose ethereal and varied profiles rise up out of the mist and the cover of trees. The next two days will be devoted to the exploration of the major temples. The highlight of our visit may well be a dawn ascent in a hot air balloon!

Leaving Pagan by road, we will pass nearby the sacred Mt. Popa where the Nats (spirits) sacred to the locals reside and whose lone peak rising up from the plain is festooned with spiky temples. This will bring us into the region of colonial hill stations, and we will stop at one, Kalaw, for the night. The next day we will continue on to Inle Lake, a center of Burmese rural life and crafts, with temples dotting the shores of the 13 mile lake. We will stay there in a brand new sybaritic resort for three nights and then return to Rangoon for one night in the downtown colonial Strand Hotel as a fitting end to this first segment of our journey before we fly to Hanoi.

Detailed Itinerary

The tour will officially begin upon arrival in Rangoon on January 21 (Day 1), while the arrangements to reach there will be made on your own. We will be happy to provide assistance with these bookings through our expert agent, Tom Vise at Vista Travel: 617-588-4233.

For Detailed Hotel Information, see list earlier in this document.

Saturday, January 19, 2013 Depart Home for Asian gateway (Beijing, Bangkok or Singapore)

Sunday, January 20 In flight, date line

Monday, January 21 Arrive major Asian gateway, connect for Yangon, Myanmar (Rangoon, Burma)

e.g. from Bangkok: TG 303 7:55-8:50 or TG 305 arrives 18:40 (this would permit a same day connection in Bangkok without spending the night).



British colonial era buildings in Rangoon run the gamut from stately neo classical to high Victorian Gothic

Start of Services

Day 1 Monday, January 21
Rangoon

Arrive and meet local guide; transfer to hotel for our stay of three nights. Balance of day at leisure.

Day 2 Tuesday, January 22
Rangoon

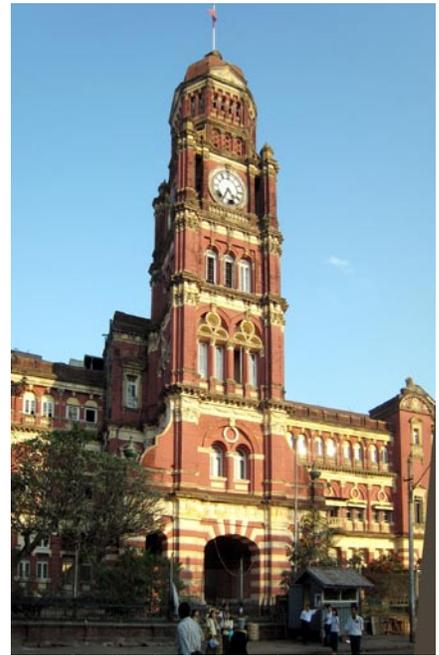
Morning free; afternoon and evening visit to Schwedagon Pagoda to see the crowds of worshippers gather as night falls and the lights come on.

Day 3 Wednesday, January 23
Rangoon

Full day visit of city to include Scott Market, National Museum and Central Colonial buildings.

Day 4 Thursday, January 24
Rangoon to Mandalay

Depart Rangoon on late morning flight for Mandalay; Transfer to hotel 2 nights; Afternoon tour of Mandalay, Amapura and Ava.



Day 5 Friday, January 25 Mandalay

Cruise up the Irrawaddy to visit the gigantic unfinished dagoba of Mingun. Back in Mandalay see the palace (made famous by the novel, *The Glass Palace*, by Amitav Gosh), and other sites.



Schwedagon Pagoda, Rangoon.



Bagaya Kyaung (Monastery), Inwa, near Mandalay, Built entirely of teak in 1834.

Day 6 Saturday, January 26 Mandalay to Bagan

Embark for our day's cruise down the Irrawaddy River on our private boat with stops along the way at local villages. Upon arrival, transfer to hotel for a stay of three nights.

Day 7 Sunday, January 27 Bagan

Today will be spent visiting the archaeological zone of Bagan with its many temples and stupas.

Day 8 Monday, January 28 Pagan

We will rise, seemingly in the middle of the night in order to take a dawn ride by hot air balloon over the plain of Bagan. Later we may continue with the sites of Bagan, or take the option to make an excursion to Salay.

Day 9 Tuesday, January 29 Pagan-Kalaw

Depart Pagan by Road via Mount Popa; continue on to Kalaw, a hill station from the colonial era. for one night.

Day 10 Wednesday, January 30 Kalaw-Inle Lake

Visit Kalaw in the morning and then proceed to Nyaung Shwe, where we will



One of the many stupa/temples in Pagan



Above: The U Bein bridge is a teak structure linking several communities across the marshes and fields and teems with local color. Below, right: We will go aloft in a hot air balloon to survey the valley below. #

transfer to a boat to reach our hotel on Inle Lake, for a stay of three nights. Inle Lake is a remarkable place, reminiscent of what Venice must have been like when its settlements consisted of wooden huts built by traders and fishermen on the mud banks of the lagoon. Here, villagers live in houses on stilts and tend their floating gardens nearby. It may not be like this much longer!

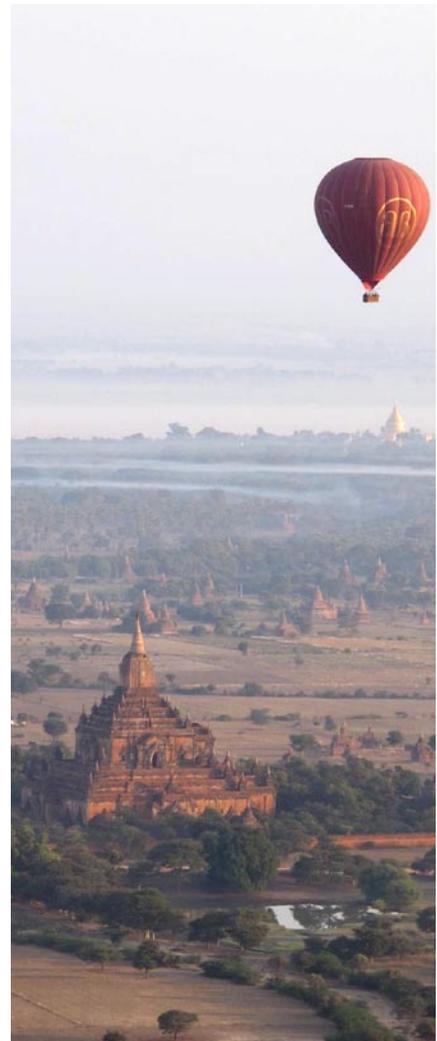
Day 11 Thursday, January 31 Inle Lake

Full day spent visiting the villages and temples along Inle Lake.

Day 12 Friday, February 1 Inle Lake
Continue touring of Inle Lake.

Day 13 Saturday, February 2 Inle Lake-Rangoon

Morning departure for Yangon. Back in the capital, we will stay this time in the very heart of the downtown in the restored colonial era Strand Hotel. The afternoon will be free for exploration of the nearby districts filled with crumbling buildings from the British era.



Day 14, Sunday, February 3 Rangoon-Hanoi

Today we will fly to Hanoi trading one former colonial seat for another.

Vietnam

Historically and culturally, the region of Southeast Asia has always found itself balanced between the two opposing poles of India and China. The major religions, Hinduism and Buddhism found their way initially from the sub-continent, but later forms of the latter faith, in the form of Confucianism found their way from China. While Burma and Cambodia have always seemed to be more strongly influenced by India, it can be said that Vietnam, both throughout its history and today is more strongly in the orbit of China.

There may be no city name in the world that creates as visceral a reaction from Americans of a certain age as Hanoi, the vibrant and cosmopolitan capital of Vietnam. Against all odds, many sections of Hanoi have survived in good condition, and its importance as an imperial capital dating back 1000 years was recognized by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in 2010, when a section of the city was declared a World Heritage Site. We will be able to wander the chaotic old Vietnamese quarter of the 36 Streets, each devoted to a particular craft or guild in the past, and see the well preserved structures left by the French, many of which have now been



Above: Hanoi's neoclassical opera house is a variation on the Opera Garnier in Paris. Below: The tomb of Ho Chi Minh. (photos this page © Kristin Kelly)

nice restored. There are also monuments of more contemporary Vietnam, including the imposing mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh, and his modest house adjacent to his tomb. We will be visiting the excellent Ethnology Museum, which explains the traditions of the 54 ethnic groups living in the country, and will see the Temple of Literature, almost 1000 years old and the most important temple in the city.

Day 14 Sunday, February 3, Cont'd.
Hanoi

Arriving in Hanoi, we will transfer to the Hotel Metropole, that city's venerable grand hostelry.



Day 15 Monday, February 4
Hanoi

Our visits will include the restored opera house, the tomb of Ho Chi Minh (his remains better preserved than either Mao or Lenin!) and various museums.

Day 16 Tuesday, February 5
Hanoi to Luang Prabang

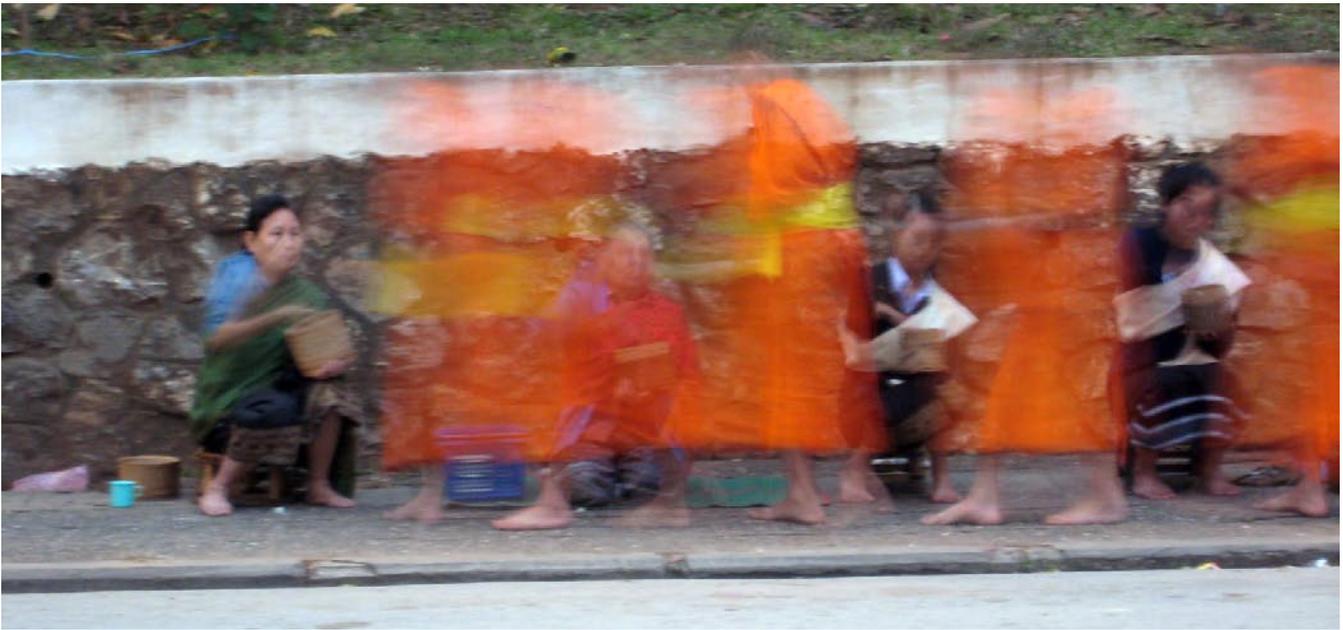
Transfer to the airport for our short flight to Luang Prabang.

Laos

Our stay in Laos of three nights will be based in Luang Prabang, a picturesque and bucolic town on the banks of the Mekong. Its cultural links include those with Thailand as well as to the Khmers in present day Cambodia. The town, really a village, is sited on a peninsula formed by the Mekong and a small tributary, and the whole is set in a picturesque valley ringed by mountains.

Day 16 Tuesday, February 5, cont'd
Luang Prabang

We will take a short flight southwest to the relatively simple and provincial riverside hamlet of Luang Prabang. We will transfer to our hotel for a stay of three nights.



Above: At sunrise in Luang Prabang monks process from their temples to receive alms of food offered by the locals. Below: The Mekong River at Luang Prabang

Day 17 Wednesday, February 6
Luang Prabang

An optional early start gives us the fantastic opportunity to participate in the daily morning ritual of saffron-clad monks collecting offerings of Alms from the faithful residents. This procession is very unique in Laos, being the only Buddhist nation still preserving the tradition. Afterwards, we have the option of visiting the local morning market, before returning to the hotel for breakfast.

After breakfast, our visit starts with That Makmo, known as ‘The Water Melon Stupa’ due to its shape and the Wat Visoun located within the same complex. Next we visit the excellent Arts and Ethnology Centre which gives us a further insight into the ethnic mix and culture of Laos. We also visit the magnificent Wat Xiengthong, with its roofs sweeping low to the ground, representing the classical Luang Prabang style. We then board a cruise upstream on the Mekong River,

which gives us a panoramic view of the tranquil countryside. Our first stop is the village of Ban Muangkeo where we start a short trek to reach the mysterious Pak Ou Caves, two linked caves crammed with thousands of gold lacquered Buddha statues of various shapes and sizes left by pilgrims. We then return to Luang Prabang by road via Ban Nongxai, an artisans’ village and also to visit a silversmith workshop. We arrive back in Luang Prabang by late afternoon.





Temples of Luang Prabang:



Day 18 Thursday, February 7
Luang Prabang

Morning Visit to temples across the river and a local weaving center in Ban Xangkhong and Ban Xienglek. Balance of day at leisure to shop and explore on one's own.

remained isolated and mired in poverty, shunned by all but the most intrepid (your leader visited in 1995 and had it to himself). All of that has changed, as we will discover: It has become a bustling tourist destination, as befits the importance and wonder-of-the-world status of the great temples dating from the Khmer empire in the 9th to 14th centuries AD.

Day 19 Friday, February 8, cont'd. Luang Prabang to Siem Reap

Arrival Siem Reap; Hotel: Residence d'Angkor, 3 nights.

Day 20 Saturday, February 9 Siem Reap

Touring Angkor Sites to include: Angkor Wat; Angkor Thom monuments (Terraces of Elephants and Leper King), Bayon Temple; Baphuon Temple (world's

Day 19 Friday, February 8 Luang Prabang to Siem Reap

We will depart late morning for our flight to Siem Reap, Cambodia, the modern town, where the great Khmer sites of Angkor are found. (Vietnam Airlines VN 931 10:40 to 12:00)

Cambodia

Flying from Luang Prabang non-stop, we will arrive in Siem Reap, where we will spend three nights. We will have ample to time to see the many major temple sites as well as the less often seen outlying places. We will conclude our trip in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital. It has recently undergone a significant transformation from the grim decades following the war as the Khmer Rouge lingered on in parts of the country and the country



largest jigsaw puzzle); Preah Khan; and if there is time, an excursion to Beng Mealea. Ta Prohm, Banteay Srei (10th century), gates of Angkor Thom.

Day 21 Sunday, February 10 Siem Reap
Continued Touring Angkor Sites

Day 22 Monday, February 11 Siem Reap to Phnom Penh

Depart in late morning on a non-stop flight (Cambodia Angkor Air K6 100 8:50-9:35); Transfer to Phnom Penh's historic grand Hotel, Le Royal, now a Raffles Property, for lunch/check in one night.

Tour to Museum and other city sites.

Day 23 Tuesday, February 12 Phnom Penh to Bangkok or other Gateway for homeward travel.

Individual Transfer to airport for individually arranged homeward travel.



Top: Preah Khan Temple, above and below: Angkor Wat at dusk and at dawn.

Conclusion of Services

The following information is for individual planning purposes and can be arranged or modified to meet individual participants' needs.

E. g. Depart for Bangkok (Thai Airways, TG 581 10:05- 11:10 am)

E.g. from Bangkok to Los Angeles: (TG 794 19:30-19:20 same day)



REGISTRATION FORM

Munuments and Culture of the Irrawaddy and Mekong: Burma, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia

January 21 to February 12, 2013 (dates exclusive of travel from/to US)

Yes, I/we would like to attend this journey! Tour price is \$12,750 per person double occupancy, \$15,000 single occupancy. (costs based on a group of 10-16 participants.)

Please provide upgraded hotel accommodations (larger rooms, preferred exposures when available) for \$1,200 pp add'l.

I/we would prefer to attend only the Burma portion of this itinerary. (Cost \$8,750/ \$10,000 pp double/single)

I/we would prefer to attend only the Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia portion of this itinerary. (Cost \$6,800/ \$7.800 pp double/single)

Preference will be given to those opting for the full itinerary, however should there be room, those wishing to join us for part of the trip will also be welcomed. Your deposit will be refunded in full, should this not be possible.

Costs have fluctuated unpredictably this past year due to changes in fuel costs and exchange rates. The above costs are based on market conditions as of March, 2012. They are subject to increase should market conditions change.

To register please complete this registration form and send it with a deposit of \$2,000 (per person) by check to Stephen Harby, 718 Cedar Street, Santa Monica, CA 90405-3810. Only written registrations, including appropriate payment will be accepted.

Final payment of balance will be due by August 1, 2012. (Also, please send a photocopy of the picture page of your passport.)

Name

Name

Address

City

State

Zip/Postal Code

Home phone

Alt. phone

Email

Please select one of the following:

double occupancy with 2 beds

I would like to have assistance booking my flights

double occupancy with one bed

single occupancy

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

WHAT IS INCLUDED

Hotels as indicated on the itinerary based on double occupancy. A limited number of single rooms are available at an additional supplement. We reserve the right to substitute other hotels of a similar quality.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner as mentioned in the itinerary (all meals are included, accompanied by local wine or beer when readily and affordably available; at other times local beer should be generally available).

Admission to all sites as described in the itinerary.

The handling of no more than two medium size suitcases per person

Private Coach transportation throughout.

Use of personal headset to facilitate hearing of on-site lectures and commentary.

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

International air transportation to Rangoon and from Phnom Penh. Incidental expenses such as for telephone calls, fax communications, a la carte orders or items not on the set menus, alcoholic drinks over and above those provided at evening meals, laundry, and any other items not specifically mentioned as included.

TRIP INSURANCE

In the event participants cancel their trip, all non-refundable payments will be forfeited. Trip cancellation insurance is recommended for this purpose.

REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

A passport with validity for at least six months beyond end of stay. Visa for Travel to Myanmar secured by each participant. Visas for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to be secured on arrival at participant's individual expense.

TOUR COSTS

Costs have been calculated on the basis of charges and exchange rates as of March, 2012. Should these change, Stephen Harby reserves the right to make appropriate adjustments to the tour cost.

ALTERATIONS TO ITINERARY

Stephen Harby reserves the right to alter, modify or withdraw the itinerary if air schedules and/or events beyond his control deem it necessary. Itinerary changes made by local travel providers are beyond the control of Stephen Harby and should such changes be made the participant will be bound accordingly.

ITINERARY DEVIATIONS

Stephen Harby assumes no liability or responsibility for any participant deviating from the group tour. Participants arriving and departing independently are responsible for their own transfers.

CANCELLATION

Should cancellation by the participant occur prior to 90 days before departure, a partial refund will be granted less a \$1,000 service charge (see note below); within the following days prior to departure, the specified percentage of tour costs is non-refundable: 60-89 days - 20%; 45-59 days - 30%; 30-44 days - 50%; 29 days or fewer - 100%. Cancellations must be submitted in writing; trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended. There will be no refund for any tour accommodation, service, or feature not taken, or if participant cancels for any reason while tour is in progress. Any additional costs due to leaving the tour are the responsibility of the departing passenger. In these times of uncertainty in the international realm, we also have to add that should cancellation or alteration of the program occur due to civil disturbances, acts of terrorism, war, natural disaster, and other events of force majeure or acts of God (including threat or fear of same), refunds will be made only to the extent that they are recoverable by Stephen Harby, and that such cancellation or alteration may result in the total loss of funds paid by participants. Such forfeiture may include funds paid by participants over and above the tour costs, such as international air travel, passport and visa fees. Note regarding cancellation prior to 90 days: Hotels in Burma are booked on the basis of full payment up-front. If you cancel, and we can find a replacement to fill your spot, the \$1,000 service charge will be refunded less \$200.

RESPONSIBILITY

Stephen Harby and /or agents assume no responsibility or liability in connection with the service of any train, carriage, aircraft, motor coach, or other conveyance or hotel which may be used wholly or in part, in the performance of the tour. Neither will they be responsible or liable for any injury, loss, accident, delay or irregularity which may be occasioned by reason of any defect in any vehicle or through neglect or default of any company or person engaged in conveying or accommodating the passengers; nor for any delays, injuries, damages or losses resulting directly or indirectly from any acts of God, acts of governments, de jure or de facto, wars whether declared or not, hostilities, civil disturbances, terrorist activities, riots, thefts, pilferage, epidemics, quarantines, medical or customs regulations, or from any causes beyond the control of Stephen Harby, and /or agents. In the event it becomes necessary for the comfort or well being of the participants to alter or modify the itinerary or arrangements, such alterations may be made without penalty to the tour operator and are not grounds for cancellation with refund. Additional expenses, if any, shall be borne by the participant. The sole responsibility of the airline used is limited to that set out in the passenger contract evidenced by the tickets. This agreement becomes effective upon acceptance into the tour by Stephen Harby. These Terms and Conditions shall be governed by the State of California.

Enrollment in this journey confirms that you have read the Terms and Conditions and accompanying itinerary and agree to abide by its contents. (Each participant is requested to sign below)

Date

Signature

Date

Signature