

Hanoi to Hoi An

8 days | Hanoi to Hoi An



Travel between two of Vietnam's most charming destinations from the fading colonial chic of Hanoi to the attractive riverside merchant town of Hoi An with a night spent cruising the jade waters of Halong Bay and time spent exploring the royal citadel of imperial Hue, all in just 8 days.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Hanoi – rickshaw ride through the French Quarter and explore the 36 streets of the Old Quarter
- Hue – discover the iconic Thien Mu Pagoda and the Purple Palace, then visit the ancient Royal Tomb of Emperor Tu Duc
- Tra Que village – ride bicycles into the countryside and learn how to farm the land before enjoying a hands-on cooking lesson
- Halong Bay – cruise the beautiful UNESCO-listed bay aboard a comfortable junk boat, kayak, swim and explore the remarkable caves
- Cua Van - kayak to this floating fishing village in Halong Bay

- Hoi An – stroll around the enchanting UNESCO Listed Old Town, with its picturesque riverside setting

What's Included

- 7 breakfasts, 3 lunches and 1 dinner
- 5 nights 4 star and special class hotels, 1 night deluxe junk boat and 1 overnight sleeper train (Junk boat: private cabin, Sleeper train: basic, 4 berth cabin)
- Halong Bay Junk boat cruise - opt to swim, kayak and explore caves
- Bicycle ride to Tra Que village and cooking demonstration
- Airport arrival transfer day 1 and departure transfer day 8
- Guided sightseeing - Hanoi, Halong Bay, Hue and Hoi An
- Escorted by an English speaking Vietnamese tour guide
- All relevant transfers and transportation in private air-conditioned vehicles

What's Not Included

- Tipping Kitty: USD\$25-35pp, paid in USD or VND
- Entrance Fees: USD\$30-40pp, paid in USD or VND
- International flights and visa
- Tip for your tour guide. We recommend you allow USD\$3 - 6 per day, per traveller. Tipping your guide is an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Welcome to Hanoi

Xin Chao or 'hello' in Vietnamese! Welcome to Hanoi, one of the region's most charming cities where French colonial elegance meets Asian spirit with attractive lakes, colourful pagodas and atmospheric streets. On arrival you will be met by our local representative and transferred to our joining hotel where the remainder of the day is at leisure for you to relax or head out and explore.

This evening you will have the opportunity to meet your tour guide and other tour guide at our welcome meeting which takes place at 17:00. If you are arriving overnight, your guide will relay this information to you in the morning.

If you have pre booked the optional Back Streets of Hanoi add-on, please meet in reception for departure at 8am from your hotel. This excursion ends back at the hotel at approx 5pm. **Overnight - Hanoi**

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Day 2 : UNESCO-listed Halong Bay



Hanoi – Halong Bay. After breakfast this morning we leave Hanoi and transfer to the crown in Vietnam's scenic crown - the incredibly beautiful Halong Bay. We'll explore the jade waters studded with karst islands aboard a traditional wooden junk boat and after embarkation there's time for lunch soaking up the views.

This afternoon we visit Trinh Nu Cave, one of the finest caves in Halong Bay, covering an area of 2,000m² with a stunning array of stalactites and stalagmites. There's also the opportunity to go kayaking and enjoy a refreshing swim. Later this evening back on board, watch a Vietnamese cooking demonstration held on the sundeck before settling down for a sumptuous seafood dinner.

Please note: the itinerary in Halong Bay can vary dependent upon the cruise we use and weather conditions. **Overnight - Deluxe Junk Boat (B, L, D)**

Day 3 : Caves & Hanoi cyclo ride



Halong Bay - Hanoi - Hue. Early birds can start the day with a relaxing Tai Chi class on the sundeck or a traditional massage - the perfect way to start the day. Before heading back to port this morning we explore the

beautiful Sung Sot cave (Surprise Grotto), which is 10,000m² and consists of two major chambers. These spectacular chambers are spacious enough to hold thousands of people.

On arrival back into Hanoi mid-afternoon we'll explore the maze of streets in the French Quarter by cyclo (rickshaw), taking in highlights such as the Opera house and Ly Thai To park. We then swap our wheels for a leisurely walk through '36 streets of the old quarter', named after the numerous guilds that once set up shop on a particular street from silk tailors to traditional medicine shops. Time will be given to freshen up before boarding our train (4 berth sleeper cabin, basic standard) on the 'Reunification Express' railway line to Hue.

If you've booked our Hanoi - Hue flight add-on you'll be transferred to the airport early this evening and touch down in Hue an hour later. **Overnight - Hue Hotel.** Tomorrow you will rendezvous with your guide and group (arriving off the overnight train) in the hotel upon at approx 10am.

Overnight - Sleeper train (B)

Day 4 : Imperial citadel of Hue



Breakfast boxes will be served on the train. Arriving to Hue, we disembark and drive to our hotel. If rooms are ready we can check in, if not we'll depart shortly after on a guided sightseeing tour of the 19th-century Nguyen empire capital. We visit the Thien Mu Pagoda, home to the oldest monastery in the city, whose 21m high tower has become something of a symbol for Hue and the citadel. Within the citadel is the Imperial Purple Palace, an exact copy of the Forbidden City in Beijing, with its impressive ramparts,

formal moats and imperial palaces, some of which lay in ruin.

In the countryside lies the Royal Tombs of the Nguyen kings and here we'll view the elaborate mausoleum of Emperor Tu Duc. As the sun sets there is an optional cruise in a long boat along the gentle Perfume River or you can enjoy some retail therapy at the ever lively Dong Ba Market, a few minutes' walk from our hotel. **Overnight - Hue (B, L)**

Day 5 : Charming Hoi An

Hue - Road of the Ocean Clouds - Hoi An. Departing Hue this morning our scenic drive via the Hai Van Pass (Road of the Ocean Clouds) takes us to Hoi An. The road follows the coast so there'll be wonderful views of beach to the east and verdant hills to the west. There'll even be time to walk along My Khe beach, nicknamed 'China Beach' by the Americans during the war and featured in Francis Ford Coppola's movie 'Apocalypse Now'.

Arrive into the charming, old-world trading port of Hoi An later this afternoon. A short walking tour will introduce you to the highlights of this enchanting and historical town with highlights including the Chua Ong Pagoda, Chinese Assembly Hall, 200-year-old Tam Ky house, former merchants' homes and the 400 year-old Japanese Covered Bridge.

Note: Travellers that have pre booked the optional Hoi An Street Eats add-on, your guide will inform you today of which evening this will take place during your stay in Hoi An. **Overnight - Hoi An (B)**

Day 6 : Rural Life in Vietnam



Today will be spent out in the countryside learning all about the rural way of life in Vietnam. We'll reach Tra Que village by

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bicycle, a leisurely ride on flat roads that take us through rice paddies and farm land. The option of a taxi is available locally for those not keen on bike riding (payable locally). Once at the village we'll get our hands dirty learning about age-old farming practices and putting our knowledge to use by tending the fields and gardens. Lunch is a home-cooked affair with everyone mucking in. Later this afternoon return back to Hoi An on your bikes.

Overnight - Hoi An (B, L)

Day 7 : Hoi An - at leisure



Today is completely free for you to enjoy Hoi An as you wish. Lose yourself in the cobblestone streets lined with boutique restaurants, hip cafes, delightful craft shops and some of Asia's best bespoke tailors (whose services come at a nominal price). If you prefer some R&R, lounge by the hotel pool or head to the beach. Those keen on Vietnam's ancient and more recent history can take an optional excursion to the ruined Cham city of My Son, or to Quang Ngai, the site of the My Lai massacre memorial, which marked a significant turning point in the Vietnam War.

Overnight - Hoi An (B)

Day 8 : Hoi An

Saturday. Today marks the end of your time in Vietnam. A departure transfer will be provided to take you to Danang airport in time for your onward flight. (B)

HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard. If you require a complete list of the confirmed hotels for your tour please request this from your reservations consultant two weeks prior

to your departure. **Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.**

Sunway Hotel

This ambient, boutique hotel combines traditional appeal with modern pleasures. Rooms are furnished in a contemporary fashion with an array of amenities for added comfort. Its restaurant provides a great variety of Vietnamese cuisine and you are welcome to enjoy cocktails and live music in the Jazz Bar or relax in the hotel's health spa.



Sleeper train - 4 berth cabin

Cabins on board are comfortable though not comparable to European standards. Aboard each wagon are 9 compartments that comprise of 4 bunks per compartment shared by mixed sexes. A western-style toilet (with a varying degree of cleanliness) is located at either end of the wagon. Air-conditioning (not always operational in the summer) and lighting are controlled from inside the cabin, which is also lockable. Luggage can be stored in a compartment under the bottom bunk. Linen and a pillow are provided.



Bhaya Classic I Junk Boat

This premier cruise boat offers 18 well appointed cabins with en suite amenities. Cabins are contemporary in design, whilst the finer touches have a distinct oriental influence. All cabins feature large windows creating a bright and airy atmosphere as well as scenic views. Facilities and services onboard include a dining room and bar, a

sunbathing area on-deck, masseur and small library.



Syrena Junk Boat

A tradition hand crafted boat, the Syrena Junk Boat offers superb en suite air conditioned cabins with comfortable interiors and balconies. The on board Lotus Restaurant serves up a delicious array of Vietnamese and International cuisine. Complimentary Wi-Fi is available in the public areas. Swimming, kayaking and tai chi are all offered on board and movie nights are also very popular.



Mondial Hotel

Just a 5 minute walk from the Ho Chi Minh museum, the Mondial Hotel is a contemporary hotel with excellent amenities. Guest rooms benefit from spacious interiors, comfortable beds and lots of mod-cons. There is complimentary Wi-Fi for guests, an outdoor pool and onsite spa - perfect for a relaxing massage. As well as the delicious Huong Xuan Restaurant there is also the Lobby Lounge - great for cocktails before dinner!



ÊMM Hotel

Situated in the heart of the former imperial capital, ÊMM Hotel is the perfect base from which to explore Hue's UNESCO World Heritage-listed sights. Completely renovated

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in 2016, the guestrooms are generously-sized and complete with modern amenities. The imperial jade and royal purple colour scheme was inspired by ancient Hue itself and guests can take advantage of the mini-gym, pool-side bar and a spacious reading area. Enjoy delicious Vietnamese and international cuisine in the contemporary restaurant after a day of exploring.



River Green Hotel

Set next to the Hoai River, the River Green Hotel is just a five-minute walk from the iconic Japanese Bridge. Guestrooms offer city or river views, alongside all the amenities you'd expect of a contemporary hotel. There's an outdoor pool, perfect for a refreshing swim, and an on-site restaurant where you can enjoy a variety of international flavours. Complimentary WiFi, bicycle hire and a fitness centre add to this hotel's list of facilities, making it a great base for exploring historic Hoi An.



Vinh Hung Riverside Resort

Situated right on the banks of the Thu Bon River, this upscale hotel is just a 10-minute walk from the ancient town of Hoi An. Combining Vietnamese tradition with modern facilities, its guestrooms are set in coconut tree-shaded gardens beside the water. They're well-equipped, with free WiFi and air conditioning, as well as private balconies. The hotel also offers a riverside restaurant, serving local specialties and western dishes on the outdoor terrace. This hotel's highlight, however, is its pool and fabulous swim up bar, which is the perfect place to enjoy a pre-dinner cocktail.



Thanh Binh Riverside hotel

Boasting a beautiful outdoor swimming pool, the Thanh Binh Riverside offers excellent accommodation in a great location. Guest rooms benefit from garden or river views and all come full air-conditioned, with stunning hardwood floors and all mod-cons. The onsite restaurant offers a great selection of Vietnamese and International dishes and the town centre is just a mere 200m walk away. Why not grab a cocktail and relax by the pool in the afternoon - a great way to refresh yourself from the Vietnam heat.



Full Moon Festival departure - 07 September 2019

Our 07 September 2019 departure is a special Full Moon Festival, Hoi An tour where we join in the Full Moon Festival (aka the Mid Autumn Festival) celebrations in Hoi An. Special arrangements on this tour are as follows:

Day 1: Saturday. Welcome to Hanoi, perhaps the most graceful, atmospheric and exotic capital city in Asia. Airport to hotel arrival transfer. This morning offers free time for you to explore the wide tree lined avenues, beautiful lakes and ancient pagoda's and thriving old city. Meeting our guide at 2pm we set off on foot to explore Hanoi's charming Old Quarter known as the '36 streets of the old Hanoi'. There is Silver Street, Silk Street, Comb Street, Paper Street and importantly Hang Ma street where we'll browse and learn about the history and traditions of Vietnam's Full Moon Festival. There may even be deliciously sweet traditional Mooncakes to be shared. Overnight - Hanoi

Days 2 - 5: Arrangements as per normal

Day 6: Today marks the height of the Full Moon Festival and we will be celebrating with the locals. This morning we ride by rickshaw to a local home on the outskirts of Hoi An where we will learn about the family's long tradition of lantern-making and handcraft our own lanterns for tonight's festivities. Heading into town we explore the local market stalls and authentic lantern shops before free time to visit one of the many great tailor shops, take a row boat down the river or spend the afternoon relaxing by the hotel swimming pool.

Tonight we make our way to the water's edge with the locals to release our lanterns and enjoy the spellbinding spectacle of hundreds of sparkling lights sailing down river and lighting up the night sky. Overnight - Hoi An (B)

Day 7: A bicycle ride into the countryside, leads us to Tra Que village. Here we discover age old farming practices and learn about traditional medicine. It's a hands on experience today where we'll assist with tending the fields and gardens and cooking lunch. Overnight - Hoi An (B, L)

Day 8: Arrangements as per normal.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Vietnam Country Guide

Entrance fees

Entrance fees to most sites are not included, although reasonably priced. In Vietnam, we collect entrance fees on Day 2 of the tour (the amount is noted under exclusions on page one of this document). A breakdown of the entrance fee total is provided upon arrival. All funds collected in Vietnam for entrance fees are payable in either US dollars (USD) or Vietnamese dong (VND).

Tipping Kitty

At the start of your tour, we take a small tipping kitty (the amount is noted under exclusions) from all tour participants to cover tips throughout your holiday. This saves you the hassle of knowing when and how

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much to tip bellhops, luggage handlers, bus drivers, train conductors and other support staff throughout the tour. The tipping kitty is payable in either US dollars (USD) or Vietnamese dong (VND) in Vietnam.

This amount does not include a tip for your tour guides. For a job well done, we would suggest USD \$3 - 6 per person per day. Tipping your guide is an entirely personal gesture and ultimately the amount is up to you.

Health Requirements

You should seek medical advice before travelling to Vietnam from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Typhoid and Tetanus are strongly recommended.

Malaria in Vietnam

Areas with malaria: Rural only, except none in the Red River Delta and the coast north of Nha Trang. Rare cases in the Mekong Delta. None in Da Nang, Haiphong, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Nha Trang, and Qui Nhon. Estimated relative risk of malaria for travellers: Low

Water

The tap water in Vietnam is generally considered safe to drink, but as a precaution against stomach upsets you may want to drink bottled mineral water, which is readily available from shops, hotels and restaurants.

Visas

UK passport holders do not need a visa to visit Vietnam for stays of up to 15 days from now till 30 June 2021. At customs you will need show your return airline ticket/E ticket as proof of your date of departure. If you're exiting Vietnam via a land border then your tour itinerary will be accepted as proof so please have this available to show to border security if requested. UK passport holders do require a visa to stay in Vietnam for longer than 15 days or if you are planning to return to Vietnam within 30 days of your last departure.

Most other nationalities including Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, South African and USA passport holders require a tourist visa to

visit Vietnam. Travellers can apply for a 30 day tourist visa (single or multiple entry) from the nearest Vietnamese Embassy or via the more convenient method of applying online for an E Visa. The cost is approx USD\$20. After submitting an application you will receive a confirmation number, then upon arrival into Vietnam you will receive the actual visa and additionally pay a stamping fee of USD\$25. The stamping fee for a multiple entry visa, for entries within one month is approximately USD\$50.

Applying in advance and then collecting your tourist visa upon arrival is available to all travellers entering the country via Hanoi - Noi Bai International Airport, Ho Chi Minh City - Tan Son Nhat International Airport and Danang International Airport.

PLEASE NOTE: Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after your departure date, if it is not you may be refused entry into the country.

Climate

Vietnam has a varied climate due to its geography. The south is hot year round and has two seasons: The wet season lasts from May to October, with brief, daily showers. The dry season from November to April is generally sunny and humid. In the north, the summer months (May to October) are hot and there is the occasional burst of heavy rain. In the winter (December to February) temperatures drop in the north and it can be damp. The coastal region of central Vietnam is blessed with long months of sunshine, although there is rainfall in November and December. At this time there can also be some typhoon activity in the central coastal region.

Guides and Groups

Our longest Signature Tour we offer in Southeast Asia is our Bangkok to Angkor Wat - 29 day tour. All other Signature Tours we offer (with the exception of our Vietnam For Teens tour) are sectors of this larger tour. The longest Budget Tour we offer in Southeast Asia is our Hanoi to Bangkok Tour 19 day tour, all other Budget Tours are sectors of this longer tour. As such on your holiday you may

have travellers join you part way through your tour (in Luang Prabang, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City or Phnom Penh on Signature Tours or in Ho Chi Minh City our Budget Tours). There will also be travellers who end their tour when you continue on.

Guiding: A Vietnamese guide will escort all arrangements throughout Vietnam.

Time & Voltage

The voltage in Vietnam is 220v. In Vietnam 3 types of plugs are commonly accepted: 2 flat prong plugs (type A), the 2 round pin plug (type C) and many of the new 4 and 5 star hotels use the British standard 3-pin plug (type G). To cover all bases, it is best to pack an international travel adaptor!

Vietnam is 7 hours ahead of GMT and does not observe daylight saving.

Money

The official currency in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Dong.

Euro, British Pounds, US Dollars and other major currencies can be exchanged locally at the airport, bureau de changes or banks. US Dollar notes are widely accepted and shopkeepers use both currencies interchangeably. You can often pay for items in USD and receive your change in USD notes and coins in VND. Make sure that your USD bills are crisp and clean and you will have no problem using or exchanging these throughout your stay. ATM machines can be found in all major cities though it is not common to pay with credit card in restaurants, cafes or shops for purchases. It's advisable to request bank notes in smaller denominations, as it can sometimes be hard to get change from large notes and smaller notes are handy for smaller purchases and gratuities.

Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

Essential Packing

- Sleep sheet if taking an overnight sleeper train. These also can be easily purchased in Hanoi at a cost of USD\$5. Ask your guide for info on where to buy these

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- A day pack to carry all your essentials when out sightseeing each day
- An overnight bag, if your tour includes a night board a Junk boat in Halong Bay. As we will be returning to Hanoi it is not essential that you take your big bag/ suitcase with you
- Lightweight cotton garments
- Comfortable walking shoes in addition to flip flops/ thongs
- DEET based mosquito repellent & antihistamine cream
- Bring a 2 flat prong (type A) and a 2 round pin (type C) electrical adaptors. A universal adaptor will cover all bases
- Lightweight, fold up raincoat/ poncho
- Two spare passport photos & a photocopy of your passport
- Sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, swim costume and torch

Arrival Transfers

If your tour or short stay includes an airport arrival transfer (as indicated in the Inclusions section of these Trip Notes) our arrival procedure is as follows:

Arrive to Hanoi - Noi Bai International Airport, Ho Chi Minh City - Tan Son Nhat International Airport. Proceed to the immigration counter and pay the stamping fee of USD\$25 (this can take some time). After collecting your luggage proceed to the arrival hall and go to the meeting point detailed on your tour voucher.

If, for any reason you have trouble locating our representative (after waiting 20 minutes) or your flight is delayed please call the emergency contact number as stated on your tour voucher.

If arriving on day 1 of a holiday, that includes an airport arrival transfer (as indicated in the Inclusions section of these Trip Notes) we will be at the airport, ready to transfer you to your hotel. Further if you are booking pre-tour accommodation with us an airport arrival transfer will also be provided. If arriving prior to 9am on day 1 (essentially on a flight that arrives very, very early in the morning) you will need to purchase a night of pre-tour accommodation to save you waiting until standard hotel check in time, which is generally 2pm.

Budget Tours - please note airport transfers are NOT included on our Budget Tours, please make your own way to the start hotel noted on your tour voucher. Transfers can be booked upon request for an additional fee, please contact us for rates.

Airline Luggage Allowance

If your tour includes international or domestic flights within the region please be mindful that the free baggage allowance for Economy class travel is strictly 20kg and 1 piece of hand luggage up to 6kg. Any additional weight is charged at a per kilo rate. You may wish to keep this in mind whilst shopping.

Trains in Vietnam

It's not the Orient Express, but Vietnam's Reunification Express. On a number of our group tours we include an overnight train journey on the Reunification Express Railway Line between Hanoi and Hue and on our Budget Tours we include a second overnight train journey from Danang to Mui Ne. The particular SE series train that we use is the highest class of train available in Vietnam. It's titled as being the nation's fastest train; though by international standards it's quite the opposite. Never the less, our journey between Hanoi and Hue takes approximately 14 hours and travellers are accommodated in 4 berth 'Soft Sleeper' cabins.

Aboard each wagon are 9 compartments that comprise of 4 bunks per compartment. 4 persons of mixed sex share one compartment. You may be sharing with people from your tour group, other tourists or Vietnamese people. Who you will share your cabin with is ultimately dependent upon how the Vietnamese Railways Corporation configures the bookings.

Cabins onboard are comfortable though not comparable to European standards. A western style toilet (with a varying degree of cleanliness) is located at either end of the wagon. Air-conditioning (not always operational in the summer) and lighting are controlled from inside the cabin, which is also lockable. Luggage can be stored in a compartment under the bottom bunk. Linen and a pillow are provided though we strongly

recommend that you bring your own sleep sheet (easily purchased in Hanoi at a cost of USD\$5). The cleanliness of the train varies according to wagons assigned to the journey for that particular day. Some wagons are spotlessly clean whilst others can be unclean and should have been decommissioned long ago. Irrespective of the particular train you take, they all have large clear glass windows that allow for uninterrupted views of stunning landscapes and never ending rice paddy fields.

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