

Vietnam Encompassed

15 days | Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City



Ultimate Vietnam! Discovering Hanoi, cruising the Mekong Delta and Halong Bay, lazing on the beach in Nha Trang and exploring the tunnels of Cu Chi. From Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City in 15 exhilarating days, visiting Hue and Hoi An en route.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Hanoi, The 'Paris of the Orient' and capital of Vietnam - The Old Quarter, Tai Chi at Hoan Kiem Lake, Chau Long Market, the Museum of Ethnology and Temple of Literature
- Halong Bay and Bai Tu Long Bay - UNESCO Listed region with thousands of beautiful limestone peaks and islets
- Hue - The Perfume River, Imperial City and ancient walled Citadel and Royal Tombs
- Hoi An - UNESCO Listed former merchant trading post, famed for its beautifully preserved architecture
- Saigon - Cosmopolitan and commercial hub of Vietnam, The Presidential Palace, the History Museum, Notre Dame Cathedral, Hotel D'Ville and Dong Khoi Street

- Cu Chi Tunnels - Vast underground network of tunnels used by the Viet Cong
- Cruising on the Mekong Delta - One of the world's greatest river regions
- Nha Trang - Coastal resort, white sandy beach, crystal clear water and off shore islands

What's Included

- Breakfast daily, 7 lunches and 1 dinner
- 13 nights STANDARD hotels. SUPERIOR and DELUXE hotel options are also available upon request. Accommodation rating – See Trip Notes for details
- 1 night aboard deluxe junk boat in Halong Bay (private en suite cabin)
- Guided sightseeing - Hanoi, Hue, Hoi An, Cu Chi Tunnels and Ho Chi Minh City
- Entrance fees to all included sights
- Nha Trang - Beach break and boat excursion
- Mekong Delta - Private boat cruise and visit to floating markets
- Hue - Boat trip on the Perfume River
- Local English speaking specialist guides for all sightseeing
- 3 economy class flights: Hanoi to Hue, Da Nang to Nha Trang and Nha Trang to Ho Chi Minh City
- An airport arrival transfer day 1 and a departure transfer day 15
- All relevant transfers and transportation in private air-conditioned vehicles

What's Not Included

- International flights and visa
- Tipping - An entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Hanoi

Good morning Vietnam! Upon arrival at Hanoi Airport you will be met and transferred to your city centre hotel. Known as the 'Paris of the Orient', Hanoi is the charming capital and cultural heart of Vietnam. Spend the remainder of the day at leisure. **Overnight - Hanoi**

Day 2 : Hanoi to Mai Chau



Hanoi – Mai Chau. This morning we head to Hoan Kiem Lake which is the very heart of the city. Residents of Hanoi congregate around the lake early each morning to partake in Tai chi, aerobics and other light exercise. Take a stroll around the lake before tucking into a traditional Vietnamese breakfast (Pho)

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at a cafe boasting marvellous views of the lake. Drop by a local coffee shop to observe how Hanoi locals enjoy sipping Vietnam bitter sweet coffee at Cafe Giang, the oldest cafe brand in Hanoi since 1946, it is well known for Cafe Trung, or Egg Cafe, which is something like a Hanoi Cappuccino with the option to try one yourself, or perhaps opt for a truly unique cooking experience instead.

In the afternoon, we travel through local villages en route to Mai Chau. Located in the beautiful valleys surrounded by rice terraces, are the small villages of the White Thai and Mai Chai people, known for their stilt houses and stunning scenery. On arrival, we have some time to freshen up before dinner.

Overnight - Mai Chau (B, D)

Day 3 : Mai Chau to Hanoi



Mai Chau – Hanoi. We wake up to the sounds of the roosters this morning and have some free time for a peaceful stroll through the countryside. Return to the hotel for breakfast before we mount our bikes and explore the daily village life of the Thai ethnic minority people, passing the regions villages, interacting with the locals. This afternoon we return to Hanoi, where we have the evening at leisure. **Overnight - Hanoi (B, D)**

Day 4 : Cruising on Halong Bay



We have some time to freshen up this morning before driving to Halong City (approx 4 hours), stopping for refreshments en route. At UNESCO Listed Halong Bay limestone peaks and forest clad islets, hidden coves and beautiful beaches await discovery! Board your Junk boat and cruise to the famous islands of Halong Bay, exploring the grottoes. There is a chance to explore more this stunning area by sea kayak. Back on board we enjoy a cooking demonstration as we continue to cruise down the bay.

Overnight - Halong Bay - Junk boat (B, L, D)

Day 5 : Halong Bay to Hue

Halong Bay – Hue. Wake up to see a spectacular sunrise over the bay! This morning cruise through the stunning rocky islands emerging from the crystal-clear waters. After brunch we make our way back to Hanoi stopping en route in Dong Ho Village, famous for its long-preserved art of making pictures. We'll visit a studio in village, where you can watch the procedure of carving and printing these paintings and learn about the local folk tales represented in the paintings. Onward to Hanoi Airport for our evening flight to Hue in central Vietnam, where upon arrival we are met and transferred to our hotel.

Overnight - Hue (B)

Day 6 : The Imperial City of Hue



Hue was the Vietnamese capital during the Nguyen Dynasty 1802-1945 and ruins of the city's regal past can still be seen inside the Citadel and the Imperial City. Created in the 19th century, the Imperial City was modelled on the Forbidden City in Beijing and holds many palaces and temples inside its giant walls. Many of the buildings were damaged by French aerial bombing and the Tet Offensive

in 1968. Now it is slowly being restored thanks to generous funding by UNESCO.

Your tour begins after breakfast with the ancient walled Citadel containing the former Imperial Palace. Spend the morning wandering through the enclosure before travelling into the surrounding countryside to see the final resting place of the Emperors at one of the most impressive Royal Tombs. Spend the afternoon and evening at leisure.

Overnight - Hue (B, L)

Day 7 : Walking tour of Hoi An

Hue - Hoi An. This morning, continue south to the riverside town of Hoi An. The five hour trip hugs the coastline along the South China Sea with breathtaking views particularly as the road winds its way up Hai Van Pass ("Pass of the Clouds"). From the 16th to 18th centuries, Hoi An was a thriving international commercial port for Chinese, Dutch, French, Japanese, Portuguese and Arab merchants. Today, Hoi An is a quaint riverside town, renowned for its silk and popular with tourists for its eclectic architecture, tailors shops and numerous cafes. Some of the buildings in the narrow streets have remained unchanged for more than a century and much of the town is now heritage-listed.

In the afternoon, enjoy a guided walking tour through the narrow winding streets of the Ancient Quarter visiting Chua Ong Pagoda, Assembly Hall, 200-year-old Tam Ky house and the Japanese Covered Bridge. **Overnight - Hoi An (B)**

Day 8 : Free day in Hoi An



Spend a day at leisure on the beach or having clothes made by one of the expert, inexpensive tailors that Hoi An is famous for. In the evening, you might want to stroll Hoi An's

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romantic, silk lantern lit streets and dine in one of its fantastic riverside restaurants.

Overnight - Hoi An (B)

Days 9-11 : Nha Trang boat trip & beach R&R

Hoi An - Nha Trang. On day 9 transfer to the airport in Danang and fly to the coastal resort of Nha Trang. Upon arrival, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Spend the remains of the day at leisure. Nha Trang is a popular coastal resort in central Vietnam, with 7kms of white sandy beach and pristine waters surrounded by archipelagos and mountains.

Day 10. A day of leisure and indulgence as we cruise through blue clear waters amongst the islands off Nha Trang. We take drive to Cau Da port where we will embark on our boat. We cruise to visit the Tri Nguyen Aquarium, a small world of many sea species of local province at Mieu Island. We will then head out to Mun Island where you have the chance for swimming and optional snorkelling in the crystal clear waters. Lunch stop is at the fishing village of Lang Chai where there is time to explore further before boarding the boat back to Nha Trang harbour.

Spend day 11 at leisure. The resort is ideal for scuba diving, snorkelling or simply relaxing on the sandy beach. Sample some of the delicious seafood in some of the many restaurants and perhaps enjoy a spot of retail therapy at Cho Dam Market. **Overnight - Nha Trang (B:3, L:1)**

Days 12-13 : Ho Chi Minh City & Cu Chi Tunnels



Nha Trang - Ho Chi Minh City. In the morning on day 12, transfer to the airport and fly to Ho Chi Minh City. Upon arrival, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Spend the

remains of the day at leisure in this lively and cosmopolitan metropolis with its gleaming sky scrapers, expensive restaurants, bars and designer shops, which stand in stark contrast to the ancient pagodas, colonial era landmarks and ramshackle markets.

On day 13 take a morning excursion to the Cu Chi Tunnels, north west of the city. This immense network of connecting underground tunnels, were used by the Viet Cong and one of the famous battle grounds in the Vietnam War. Watch a short introductory video on the construction of the tunnels before exploring the maze of tunnels, accompanied by the guide. Also on display are various mantraps and the remains of an American tank as well as numerous bomb craters made by 500-pound bombs from B52 bombers.

Returning to Ho Chi Minh City at around 2pm, stop for lunch before visiting some of the city's major attractions including the Reunification Palace, Notre Dame Cathedral (from the outside as renovations are taking place) and the War Remnants Museum. **Overnight - Ho Chi Minh City (B:2, L:1)**

Day 14 : Cruising the Mekong Delta



Enjoy a cruise on the Mekong Delta today! Ben Tre is famous for its coconut production and quiet, peaceful waterways. Here we enjoy a traditional sampan boat that will take us to visit a brick making shop, a fruit garden and a local family where rice paper made. This afternoon we return to Ho Chi Minh City. **Overnight - Ho Chi Minh City (B, L)**

Day 15 : Goodbye Ho Chi Minh City

After breakfast and hotel check out, included transfer to Ho Chi Minh City airport for your onward flight.(B)

Accommodation ratings

On our Private trips, you can often choose your style of accommodation. The price quoted on our website is reflective of the included accommodation, please see the "included" section on the first page of this document for details. Should you opt for an alternative hotel category, this will be confirmed in writing with the respective price on your invoice.

For further details about the indicative hotels, please see the "hotels" tab on our website. Here we rank hotel's in their respective country (REGIONAL CATEGORY) - but we also tell you how it ranks by Western standards (OUR CATEGORY).

STANDARD - Equates to a Western 3-star standard, always featuring en-suite rooms and usually a restaurant.

SUPERIOR - Equates to a Western 4-star standard, featuring en-suite rooms and usually a restaurant and often a swimming pool and/or a fitness centre.

DELUXE - Equates to a Western 5-star standard, usually featuring spacious, en-suite rooms, a restaurant, swimming pool and fitness centre and an array of amenities, excellent service and customer care.

LUXURY - Equates to a Western 5-star plus standard - the creme de la creme. Featuring spacious, en-suite rooms, a restaurant, swimming pool and fitness centre and an array of amenities, this accommodation is a cut above the rest. Sheer opulence!

What to pack

Please check local temperatures so you can pack accordingly. Visit www.worldclimate.com to get an idea of what the weather will be like on your holiday.

- Lightweight cotton garments. Ladies may need to have their shoulders and legs (to below the knee) covered when visiting certain sites, so please pack accordingly

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- Comfortable walking shoes in addition to flip flops/thongs
- DEET based mosquito repellent and antihistamine cream
- Electrical adaptors. A universal adaptor is best!
- Lightweight, fold up raincoat/poncho/umbrella
- Your Travel Voucher and two spare passport photos and a photocopy of your passport
- A small daypack for your day-to-day needs
- Sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, swimming costume and torch

Tipping

Tipping is an essential part of the culture. For a job well done, we would suggest for your tour guide: USD\$3-6 per traveller, for each day of sightseeing.

For your driver and On The Go Representative we'd recommend USD\$2-3 per traveller for each day of service. Tipping is an entirely personal gesture and ultimately the amount is up to you.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Vietnam Country Guide

Welcome to Vietnam - Arrival transfer

A complimentary airport arrival transfer is provided on our Signature Range Tours, Private Tours and Short Stays if you are arriving on day 1 or you have booked pre tour accommodation with us. An arrival transfer is not included on our Essentials Range tours*.

Arrival procedure for Hanoi - Noi Bai International Airport and Ho Chi Minh City - Tan Son Nhat International Airport. Upon arrival, please proceed to the immigration counter and pay the visa stamping fee of USD\$25 (if applicable). 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 or send a text message (standard text message, not

Messenger or WhatsApp) to the emergency contact number as stated on your Tour Voucher.

Please note: 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. Breakfast is included with our pre tour accommodation rates.

***Essentials Tours: Please note, airport transfers are NOT included on our budget Essentials Range of 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.

Visas & passports

Visa requirements are subject to change and visa procurement is the responsibility of the traveller and not On The Go Tours. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of departure from Vietnam.

After booking your holiday, please provide us with your passport details as soon as possible so that we can proceed to book all services. Please be advised visa requirements are subject to change, therefore it is essential that you check current visa requirements with the embassy before travel. For information about visas, head to www.onthegotours.com/Vietnam/Visas

Health requirements & water

You should seek medical advice for vaccinations and about medications before travelling.

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.

What to expect in Vietnam

Please visit www.onthegotours.com/Vietnam/Travel-tips-and-useful-info for local customs, currency, WiFi and other helpful

information to prepare you for an enjoyable holiday.

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 bear 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 Essentials Range 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. Nevertheless, 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

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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 wagon, 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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