

Saigon City Stay

3 days | Starts/Ends: Ho Chi Minh City



See the best of Ho Chi Minh City, aka Saigon, with a 3 day city stay taking in historic sites like the Reunification Palace and colonial landmarks like the Notre Dame Cathedral with plenty of time to shop at the Ben Thanh Market and sample Vietnamese delicacies.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Saigon - officially known as Ho Chi Minh City and south Vietnam's largest city
- Reunification Palace - the site where north and south Vietnam were reunited after the war
- Notre Dame Cathedral - one of the last remaining colonial relics of Catholicism
- Saigon Post Office - stunning colonial architecture and fully functional post office today
- Ben Thanh Market - the city's largest shopping destination and perfect for souvenirs
- Pho Tay district - bright lights and fun nights with streetside cafes and bars

What's Included

- Breakfast daily
- Airport arrival transfer on day 1

- 2 nights superior hotel (standard and deluxe options available)
- Guided sightseeing on day 2 conducted by an English-speaking local guide
- All relevant transfers and transportation in private air-conditioned vehicles
- Entrance fees to included sites

What's Not Included

- International flights and visa
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture
- Laundry, drinks, items of a personal nature

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Welcome to Ho Chi Minh City



Welcome to Ho Chi Minh City and the south of Vietnam! This bustling metropolis, which is still commonly referred to as Saigon, is jam packed with historic landmarks, busy markets and enticing street stalls making it an

excellent city break destination. Arriving into Ho Chi Minh international airport you'll be met by our local representative and transferred to your hotel for check in (from 2pm onwards - early check in available at additional cost). Remainder of the day at leisure. **Overnight - Ho Chi Minh City**

Day 2 : City sightseeing



Spend the day exploring Ho Chi Minh City accompanied by an English-speaking local guide who will share the history of this compelling city. First up is the Reunification Palace, so named as it was from here that north and south Vietnam were reunited after the Vietnam War. It's now a museum where you can visit the "War Room" from where the South Vietnamese forces were controlled, and most poignantly, the room where the North Vietnamese army took official control in 1975.

Nearby stands the Neo-Romanesque form of the Notre Dame Cathedral, a major centre

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of Catholicism in modern day Vietnam. Close to here is the wonderful Saigon Central Post Office, built during French colonial rule with a stunning vaulted roof and arched windows. From here proceed to the sprawling Ben Thanh Market, packed to the rafters with all manner of goods from food to clothes with plenty of typically Vietnamese souvenirs including conical hats and lacquer ware.

The day concludes with a stroll around the bustling area of Pho Tay, known as 'Streets of Foreigners' thanks to its popularity with backpackers from around the world. Here you can sample some of Vietnam's delicious snacks and street food from noodle soups to savoury pancakes. Perhaps grab a seat at one of the corner cafes and a cold beverage for a bit of people watching in the city.

Overnight - Ho Chi Minh City (B)

Day 3 : Ho Chi Minh City



Today marks the end of touring arrangements. Make your way to the airport when you are ready. **Overnight - Ho Chi Minh City (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.

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

Edenstar Saigon Hotel

Escape the hustle and bustle at the Edenstar Saigon Hotel in the heart of the city. The comfortable guest rooms are simply furnished with contemporary decor and a neutral palette. Free WiFi is provided. Guests

can relax in the massage area or swim in the outdoor pool. Buffet breakfast is served in the hotel's restaurant and an evening beverage can be combined with panoramic views of the city from the hotel's bar.



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Entrance Fees

Entrance fees to most sites are not included, although reasonably priced. The entrance fee amount is noted under exclusions on page one of this document and a breakdown of the entrance fees is provided upon arrival on the Welcome Letter.

For tours starting in Vietnam we collect entrance fees on Day 2 of the tour. All funds collected in Vietnam are payable in either US dollars (USD) or Vietnamese dong (VND).

Multi country tours starting in Laos - please note if you are travelling on our Laos to Vietnam, Inside Indochina or Indochina Discovery tour your entrance fees will be split into two separate payments. Entrance fees for Laos will be collected on day 2 of the tour in Vientiane and entrance fees for Vietnam/Cambodia/Thailand will be collected on day 8 in Hanoi.

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 much to tip bellhops, luggage handlers, bus drivers, train conductors and other support staff throughout the tour.

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.

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Groups & Guides

The longest Signature Tour we offer in Southeast Asia is our Indochina Discovery 23 day tour. All other Signature Tours we offer (with the exception of the family tours) 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 our tours are modular you may have travellers join you part way through your holiday (in 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.

Guides:

In Laos a Lao national guide escorts our tours from Vientiane through to Luang Prabang and in Vietnam a Vietnamese national guide escorts our tours from Hanoi through to Ho Chi Minh City.

In Cambodia our tours have two guides - a Cambodian national guide in Phnom Penh and a specialist regional guide in Siem Reap.

Our tours that end in Bangkok are not fully escorted for the Thailand sector. On our Signature Tours there is a local Thai guide for the Bangkok city tour. If you are travelling on a Budget Tour a local guide will meet you at the Cambodia border and escort you to our hotel, then you will be unescorted for the rest of your stay in Bangkok.

What to Pack

- 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 flogs/ thongs
- DEET based mosquito repellent & antihistamine cream
- Electrical adaptors. A universal adaptor will cover all bases
- Lightweight, fold up raincoat/ poncho/ umbrella
- Two spare passport photos & a photocopy of your passport
- A small daypack for your day-to-day needs
- Sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, swimming costume and torch
- Sleep sheet if taking an overnight sleeper train in Vietnam. These also can be easily purchased in Hanoi at a cost of USD\$5
- 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.

Vietnam Country Guide

[new point]

Vietnam Arrival Transfers

An airport arrival transfer is provided on all Signature Tours, Private Tours and Short Stays if you are arriving on day 1 or you have booked pre tour accommodation with us.

Arrival Procedure for Hanoi - Noi Bai International Airport and Ho Chi Minh City - Tan Son Nhat International Airport. Upon arrival 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 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.

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.

Visas

UK passport holders do not need a visa to visit Vietnam for up to 15 days. 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 we will provide UK passport holders with a transfer voucher which can be presented at the airport, along with your tour voucher and tour itinerary (Trip Notes) so please have these available to show to border police if requested. A visa is required for stays of 16 days or longer and if you are planning to return to Vietnam within 30 days of your last departure you will also need a visa.

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 have to pay an additional 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.

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.

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.

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.

Currency

The official currency in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Dong.

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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.

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 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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