

# 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 a 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 4 star hotel (3 and 5 star hotel options available - please enquire)
- Guided sightseeing on day 2 conducted by a local English speaking specialist guide
- All relevant transfers and transportation in private air-conditioned vehicles
- Entrance fees to all included sites

#### What's Not Included

- International flights and visa
- Tipping - An entirely personal gesture
- Departure airport transfer

### 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.



#### What to pack

Please check local temperatures so you can pack accordingly. Visit [www.worldclimate.com](http://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
- 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

After booking your holiday, please provide us with your passport details as soon as possible so that we can proceed to book any train and flights tickets (where applicable).

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

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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. Visa requirements are subject to change, therefore it is essential that you check current visa requirements with the embassy before travel.

## 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.

## Currency

The official currency in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Dong.

Euro, GBP, USD 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 so you will have no problem using them. ATMs can be found in all major cities though it is not common to pay with a 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. 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 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 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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