

# Highlights of Vietnam

## Highlights

- ✚ A north to south highlights of Vietnam including Sapa and the Mekong Delta
- ✚ Overnight Junk cruise at Halong Bay, cruise on Perfume River and Mekong River
- ✚ Three night stay at a beach resort
- ✚ Visit ethnic minority villages, Cu Chi Tunnels, Silver Waterfall, Marble Mountains and much, much more
- ✚ Meet interesting people from all around the world, make friends and share the spectacle and beauty of the adventure that you share

## Itinerary

### Day 1 Depart North America

Depart from North America today on an overnight flight.

### Day 2 Hanoi

Welcome to Vietnam arriving mid-morning. Upon arrival at Noi Bai International Airport, your local tour guide will greet and escort you to your hotel for check in. There is lots to see and do near the hotel. Take some time to relax or explore the surroundings.

Tirant Hotel

### Day 3 Hanoi - Sapa

After breakfast at the hotel we will start with a tour of Hanoi. Stops include Temple of Literature, Restored Sword Lake, Ngoc, Son Temple, One Pillar Pagoda, Ho Chi Minh Stilt House, and Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum. We'll have lunch at local restaurant and then visit West Lake with Tran Quoc Pagoda and then enjoy some shopping at the Old Quarter and Dong Xuan market. Our welcome dinner is tonight. After dinner we will transfer to Hanoi train station for an overnight sleeper train to Lao Cai.

Sleeper Train (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner included)

### Day 4 Sapa

After an early morning arrival in Lai Cai we will make our way to Sapa. After breakfast at a local restaurant, we will commence our journey from Sapa to Lao Chai village, a black Hmong ethnic minority village. You will then be able to walk from Lao Chai to Ta Van village where the Giay ethnic minority hill tribe lives. This popular trip is a good chance to traipse around the rice terraces and experience a bit of rural village life.

The walk continues through a bamboo forest to Giang Ta Chai, a Red Dzao ethnic minority village. After that we will have some rest and relaxation at a nearby waterfall before we make our way back to Sapa.

Chau Long Sapa II Hotel (Breakfast included)

### **Day 5 Sapa**

Today we will enjoy an excursion to Thac Bac (Silver Waterfall), 5km north of Sapa. You will have the rest of the day to do as you please.

Chau Long Sapa II Hotel (Breakfast included)

### **Day 6 Sapa - Hanoi**

Today we have an excursion to Ta Phin village, outside of Sapa. Ta Phin is a picturesque drive north of Sapa, set within a valley with a towering mountain peak at one end. It's alive with the daily life of the Kinh, Red Dao and Black Hmong people. The rest of the day is at your leisure and this evening we return to Hanoi on the overnight train.

Sleeper Train (Breakfast included)

### **Day 7 Hanoi - Halong Bay**

We arrive at Hanoi Train Station in the early morning. After breakfast at a local restaurant we make our way to Halong Bay for our Junk cruise. Sip on a refreshing welcome drink as you check in before we begin your cruise through the bay. Feast on a delicious lunch as you cruise among hundreds of islets (Dinh Huong islet, Ga Choi - Fighting Cock islet, Dog islet, Finger islet, etc.) to discover unspoilt pockets of Halong Bay. We will visit Sung Sot cave, one of the most imposing grottos of the bay. Swim at Soi Sim beach or Titov beach or take a short trek to the top of Titov Mountain for magnificent panorama scenery. Enjoy your dinner with fresh seafood onboard. After dinner try some squid fishing or just relax and chat with your new friends.

Huong Hai Junk (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner included)

### **Day 8 Halong Bay - Hanoi**

A light breakfast of tea, coffee, fruit and cake is served onboard. Today we visit Luon cave on a small bamboo boat paddled by the crew. Enjoy the quiet atmosphere enclosed by high islets and mountains. We'll return to the junk and sail past rock formations such as Man's Head islet, Tortoise islet, Butterfly cave, Lion islet and Bai Tho Mountain. Enjoy the tranquil scenery as the boat meanders its way through the bay on the way back to Ha Long city. Enjoy a wholesome brunch as your boat weaves through strange-shaped limestone rock formations. We will arrive back at Ha Long city just before noon. Our driver will take us back to Hanoi Noi Bai Airport where we will fly to Danang and transfer to Hue.

Romance Hotel (Breakfast and Brunch included)

### **Day 9 Hue**

After breakfast at the hotel, we take a boat cruise on Perfume River to visit Thien Mu Pagoda. Our driver will take us to Imperial Citadel and then to the Mausoleum of former King Tu Duc - King Khai Dinh. We will end the tour of Hue with a visit Dong Ba market.

Romance Hotel (Breakfast included)

### **Day 10 Hue - Hoi An**

We will have day on the road as we transfer to Hoi An via Hai Van Pass. We'll visit Marble Mountains and Cham Museum and some of the most scenic countryside in Vietnam. Our driver will stop for lunch en route at a local restaurant. Tonight, there's a group dinner to enjoy the cuisine of central Vietnam.

Golden Sand Resort and Spa (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner included)

### **Day 11 Hoi An**

Enjoy some much deserved free time today. Explore Hoi An, spend a day on the beach or spend the day by the pool. Your choice!

Golden Sand Resort and Spa (Breakfast included)

### **Day 12 Hoi An**

Start your day with breakfast at the hotel and then a morning city walk, the best way to become accustomed with historical Hoi Ann. The tour includes, Assembly hall of the Fujian Chinese Congregation, Japanese Bridge and Phung Hung House. In the afternoon, there's a leisurely bike tour to get know the city further afield. Or if you prefer, some free time to do some shopping, have some clothes tailored or soak up the atmosphere of Hoi An.

Golden Sand Resort and Spa (Breakfast included)

### **Day 13 Hoi An**

This morning you will attend cooking class. For lunch, you'll enjoy your cooking creations. In the afternoon, enjoy some leisure time. Relax by the resort pool, wander around Hoi An or visit the local beach.

Golden Sand Resort and Spa (Breakfast and Lunch included)

### **Day 14 Hoi An - Ho Chi Minh**

Today we transfer to Danang for our flight to Ho Chi Minh. Upon arrival, our driver will take us to our hotel for check in. Enjoy the rest of the day at your own leisure.

Vissai Saigon Hotel (Breakfast included)

### **Day 15 Ho Chi Minh**

A road trip today takes us 70 km to Cu Chi Tunnels. A maze of special architecture lying deep underground with many stratoms, nooks and crannies as complex as a cobweb, the tunnels were dug with simple tools and bare hands during the French occupation in the 1940s and expanded during the Vietnam War. This gave a defensive advantage over the American soldiers as the Cu Chi people were able to continue their lives beneath the soil. In the afternoon we will visit Reunification Palace (former Presidential Palace), War Remnant Museum, Notre Dame Cathedral and the Central Post Office. We will finish the tour with some shopping at Phuong Nam Lacquerware Center and the famous Ben Thanh market.

Vissai Saigon Hotel (Breakfast included)

### **Day 16 Hi Chi Minh - Cantho**

After breakfast we will start with an excursion to the Mekong Delta. We'll stop at Cai Be town and take a boat cruise along the Mekong River. We will walk through beautiful orchard island, visit a farmer's house, enjoy a traditional music performance and take a row boat along the narrow channel lined with water coconut trees. Enjoy lunch provided in a local restaurant and sample the fresh products of the Mekong Delta.

Kim Tho Hotel (Breakfast and Lunch included)

### **Day 17 Cantho - Ho Chi Minh**

We are up early for a boat tour to see the best of the local trade on the Mekong Delta. Enjoy great photo opportunities this morning of the floating market and a walk in a local village of Cantho. If you prefer to lie in, you can make your own plans for the morning. In the afternoon we transfer back to Ho Chi Minh City for the night

Vissai Saigon Hotel (Breakfast and Farewell Dinner included)

### **Day 18 Ho Chi Minh - Hanoi**

Today we fly to Hanoi to connect with our overnight flight to North America. (Breakfast included)

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## Price

\$3685.00 (land only)

\$788.00 (add for single room)

Pricing is an estimate only and is subject to change based on availability and other factors. You can use this tour as the basis for a custom tour if you would like but pricing for custom tours may differ depending on changes made. Please note below what is included and not included below:

### Included:

- ✓ All hotel accommodation
- ✓ All meals as per itinerary
- ✓ All sightseeing tours as specified by the itinerary
- ✓ Entrance fees as per the itinerary
- ✓ Private, knowledgeable English speaking guides
- ✓ Private air-conditioned transportation with licensed drivers
- ✓ All domestic flights: Hanoi - Hue, Danang - Ho Chi Minh, Ho Chi Minh - Hanoi including airport taxes
- ✓ All hotel and airport transfers)
- ✓ Mineral water 2 bottles/person/day

### Not included:

- ⊗ Travel insurance
- ⊗ International Flights
- ⊗ Excess baggage charges
- ⊗ Visa fees (if applicable)
- ⊗ Meals and beverages not specified on itinerary
- ⊗ Items of a personal nature such as laundry and gratuities

# Map



Hanoi

Sapa

Halong Bay

Hue

Hoi An

Ho Chi Minh

Cantho



# Travel Guide

Socialist Republic of Việt Nam (Việt Nam)

Location: Asia

Status: UN Member Country

Capital City: Hanoi

Main Cities: Ho Chi Minh (Saigon), Hai Phong, Da Nang

Population: 90,000,000

Area: 331,690 km<sup>2</sup>

Currency: Đồng (VND) Languages:

Vietnamese, Chinese Religions:

Buddhist, Roman Catholic Calling

code: +84

Drive on the right



Vietnam is a small majestic country, offering travellers an exciting mix of adventure and culture. The country's captivating natural wonders span from the mountainous north and the fertile plains of the Mekong Delta, to the spectacular coastline of central Vietnam and the imperious Halong Bay. With an intriguing history spanning back over 4,000 years, including occupations from both the Chinese and French, strong cultural influences can be found in the architecture and cuisine.

## Best time to go

Generally, the best time to visit Vietnam is November through April with May through August being hot and humid. September and October are generally the rainy season.

## General Information

### Passport and visa

Passports should be valid for six months from the date of entry into Vietnam. We recommend you make a photocopy of your passport and keep it somewhere separate, or scan it and keep it in an accessible email account. Visitors must have a visa before entering Vietnam. A visa on arrival can only be obtained with a letter of approval.

### Money

The official currency in Vietnam is the Dong (VND) which is a non-convertible currency. American dollars are widely accepted in larger stores and supermarkets. Visa and MasterCard are becoming more accepted in hotels, restaurants and large stores, especially in the bigger cities. ATM's are widely available throughout the country, and there are a number of international banks in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.



### **Post and telecommunications**

The Vietnamese postal services reliable and there are also courier services widely available. Do not put postcards into letter boxes; give them to your hotel to post or go to a post office. Telephone connections to the rest of the world are widely available, however they aren't cheap. A Vietnamese SIM card is a less expensive way of calling other countries, however your phone will need to be unlocked in order for it to work. Internet access is available in all major tourist places and you will find WiFi in most cafes in built up areas.

### **Transportation**

The traffic in Vietnam is busy, but slow. It may look like chaos but don't be frightened to cross the road. Simply make your way shaking your whole hand at waist height. You'll soon see other people doing the same. Taxis are a popular way of getting around Hanoi but make sure you use a reputable company such as Mai Linh or Capital Taxis. A typical 10 minute journey should cost around 50,000 VND but prices tend to increase at night. If you are in a built up area, a cyclo is a fun form of transport and should cost no more than 100,000 VND per journey.

Motorbike taxis: Travel by motorbike is not safe and under no circumstances is this sanctioned or recommended. Please note that this form of transport is not usually covered by insurance. Please check the fine print of your travel insurance policy to be sure of your coverage.

### **Health and Safety**

#### **Climate**

Vietnam has a diverse climate that varies significantly from region to region:

##### **The North** (Hanoi to Sapa)

April to October: temperatures between 30-35°C with occasional bursts of heavy rain.

December to March: temperatures between 10-15°C. February and March can be damp with drizzle and overcast skies.

##### **The Centre** (Hue to Nha Trang)

Nha Trang: sunshine all year round apart from November and December when the area has heavy rain.

Dalat: cooler than the coastal area, particularly from November to March.

Da Nang and Hue: typhoons from mid October to mid December

##### **The South** (Ho Chi Minh City to Phan Thiet)

May to October: hot and wet

November to April: hot and humid

### **Health and wellbeing**

Please be aware that your health can be at risk in Vietnam due to poor sanitation and lack of effective medical facilities. Rural areas may not have pharmacies and hospitals so make sure you travel with a full supply of any prescribed medicine you take. If you need medical assistance, we suggest The Family Medical Practice in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Every traveller is responsible for his or her own health. First and foremost, make sure that you have travel insurance for your trip. You should also consult your doctor or local travel clinic for the latest information and advice on travelling to Vietnam before departure.

If you have a medical condition or allergy which requires particular attention, carry a doctor's letter with you that describes the nature of the condition and treatment needed. We also recommend you pack a medical kit, including paracetamol and a diarrhoea remedy.

### **Vaccinations**

Before travelling, please ensure you have adequate protection against disease. Contact your doctor for the latest medical advice on the vaccinations you need, no less than two months before your departure. Be aware that there is a malaria risk in rural parts of Vietnam.

### **Travel insurance (compulsory)**

We do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. However, travel inevitably involves some risk and this should be recognised by holiday-makers. Travel insurance is a cost effective way of protecting yourself and your equipment should any problems occur such as cancelled trips, delays, medical emergencies, baggage loss or damage. It also gives you peace of mind. Please also make sure your travel insurance covers all activities planned on your trip.

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## **Culture & Customs**

### **Etiquette and cultural differences**

Experiencing different cultures is one of the joys of travelling, and it is important that these differences are respected. Knowing a few important customs of the Vietnamese people will help make your visit more enjoyable:

Try not to get angry. Showing any frustrations or annoyances by shouting or becoming abusive is extremely impolite and unlikely to achieve a positive outcome.

Pointing your finger is seen as offensive. Try to gesture using your whole hand instead.

Refrain from public displays of affection, they are considered offensive. It is extremely rare to see couples holding hands.

Wear shorts to the knees and cover your shoulders, particularly at religious sites.

Always remove your shoes when entering a temple or somebody's home.

Nude sunbathing is considered completely inappropriate, even on beaches.

Remove your hat when entering a religious site, addressing the elderly or encountering esteemed people such as monks.

It is improper to pat children on the head.

When using a toothpick, it is polite to cover your open mouth.

Don't leave chopsticks sitting vertically in a rice bowl as it looks very similar to incense sticks that are burned for the dead.

When passing something to another person, use both your hands together or just your right hand. Never use just your left hand.

### **Food and drink**

Vietnamese food is fragrant, exciting and healthy. Around the country, you will find a delicious variety on offer, influenced from France, Thailand and even India.

The most popular dish is called Pho and is often referred to as the "soul of the nation". It's quite simply a noodle soup dish eaten every day, predominantly for breakfast. It is served in most Vietnamese restaurants and street food vendors. Don't be afraid to try the street food, there are plenty of options, including:

Nem Ran or Cha Gio (fried spring roll)

Banh Chung (sticky rice cake)

GioLua (lean pork pie)

BanhCuon (rice flour steamed rolls)

Banh My (pate and egg rolls)

Mivoithitbo/ga (noodles with beef/chicken)

### **Water**

It is not advisable to drink tap water in Vietnam. Bottled water is cheap and widely available.

### **Public holidays**

TET (Vietnamese New Year): generally takes place at the end of January or early February and lasts for three days.

Liberation of Saigon: 30 April

International Worker's Day: 1 May

Hung King's memorial day: 10 March (lunar calendar)

Vietnamese National Day: 2 September

### **Pre-departure checklist**

Travel insurance

Passport with at least six months validity from date of entry

Photocopy of passport

Visa

Vaccinations

Foreign currency (US\$) and/or ATM card

All relevant tickets

Reconfirmed flights

Light weight clothing (summer months and the south)

Warm clothing (mountainous regions and Hanoi in winter)

Appropriate shoes for trekking, cycling or walking

Insect repellent

Medication

First aid kit

Adaptor – 220V, 50Hz; 2 pin plugs

Small daypack (for day and overnight trips)

Water bottle and helmet (for cycling trips)

**Please note:** *Domestic airlines do impose restrictions on baggage at approx 20kg maximum, so travel lightly where possible. Train cabins around the country, and boat cabins –in Halong Bay have limited space so consider this when packing.*

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