

MENU



Vietnam

Few countries have changed so much over such a short time as Vietnam. Only thirty-odd years after the savagery and slaughter of the American War, this resilient nation is buoyant with hope. It is a country on the move: access is now easier than ever, roads are being upgraded, hotels are springing up and Vietnam's raucous entrepreneurial spirit is once again alive and well as the old-style Communist system gives way to a socialist market economy. As the number of tourists finding their way here soars, the word is out that this is a land not of bomb craters and army ordnance but of shimmering paddy fields and sugar-white beaches, full-tilt cities and venerable pagodas - often overwhelming in its sheer beauty.

Ho Chi Minh City provides a head-spinning introduction to Vietnam. Set beside the broad swell of the Saigon River, the southern capital is rapidly being transformed into a Southeast Asian mover and shaker to compete with the best of them. Da Lat, the "capital" of the southern and central highlands, is chalk to Ho Chi Minh City's cheese. Life passes by at a rather more dignified pace at this altitude, and the raw breezes that fan this oddly quaint hillside settlement provide the best air-conditioning in Vietnam.

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Destinations Covered

Hanoi, Halong, Hue, Hoi An, Saigon

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival Hanoi

Transfer - Sightseeing in Hanoi

Although it is the modern-day capital of Vietnam, Hanoi still retains the mystery and charm of past centuries. Narrow lanes and traditional shophouses invite exploration by walk, while its many beautiful public spaces - lakes, parks, tree-lined boulevards and monuments - give the city an air of elegance and harmony with nature unique among Asian capitals. Begin your day visiting the Temple Of Literature, a peaceful series of walled courtyards and graceful gateways, and one of the best surviving examples of traditional Vietnamese architecture. Founded in 1070 and dedicated to Confucius, this was also the site of Vietnam's first university.

Continue to the miniature One Pillar Pagoda. Also dating from the 11th century, this monument was rebuilt after being destroyed by the French in 1954. Today it stands near the vast Ho Chi Minh Memorial Complex, a lovely park setting which is home to Ho Chi Minh's final resting place, as well as a museum and other memorials. Stroll past the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum (closed to visitors on Mondays and Fridays), where visitors can pay respects to the embalmed body of Ho Chi Minh. Continue through the park to Ho Chi Minh's Stilt House, the simple two-room dwelling where Ho Chi Minh lived from 1948 until his final days. Preserved in the same condition as during his life, it may be viewed through the windows.

Finally, discover the Old Quarter of Hanoi by walk. This fascinating network of narrow alleys and shophouses is also known as 'The 36 Streets,' each street being named after the merchandise traditionally sold there, ranging from fabrics to crafts to medicines to tombstones. A handicraft-lover's paradise and a endlessly interesting place to explore local life. Overnight in Hanoi.

Day 02: Halong

By vehicle from Hanoi to Halong with sightseeing at Thay and Tay Phuong Pagodas.

Thay Pagoda, the Master's Pagoda, also known as Heavenly Blessing, is dedicated to Thich Ca Buddha. Eighteen arhats appear on the central altar. Water puppet shows are performed on a small stage which is raised on stilts above a pond. Overnight in Halong.

Day 03: Hanoi

Excursion by boat through Halong Bay (4 hours, private)

Cruise on a traditional wooden boat among the emerald waters and craggy limestone cliffs of Halong Bay, stopping to explore one of the many caves in this area. Sail past picturesque islands, floating villages, fishermen casting their nets and pearl fisheries and observe the rhythms of daily life on the bay. Return to Halong pier.

By vehicle from Halong to Hanoi. Overnight in Hanoi.

Day 04: Hue

Flight from Hanoi to Hue - Transfer - Sightseeing in Hue.

Hue served as the capital of Vietnam for more than 140 years. It houses ancient temples, imperial buildings and French-style edifices. It was established in the 17th century. Visit the Imperial Tomb of Emperor Tu Duc. Emperor Tu Duc, who ruled Hue more than 100 years ago, built his tomb when he was still alive and used it for meditation, reading and theater performances. There are pavilions in a tranquil setting of forested hills and lakes. The tomb was constructed between 1864 and 1867. Tu Duc was the longest reigning Emperor and lived a luxurious life.

Located in the heart of Hue is the Imperial Citadel, a vast complex built in the early 19th century and modelled after the Forbidden City of Peking. The original walls stretched for 10 km and were surrounded by a wide moat. Today, most of the buildings have been destroyed due to bombing during the Vietnam-American War, but the monuments that remain provide a fascinating glimpse into the court life of the Nguyen Dynasty. Approach the city past the striking Flag Tower, where a giant Vietnamese flag waves proudly overhead, to the imposing Ngo Mon Gate, the main entrance to the Imperial Enclosure. Enter into an area of spacious courtyards and serene lotus ponds, and visit Dien Tho Residence (Dien Tho palace), where the Queen mother lived. Visit Thai Hoa Palace, the magnificently decorated reception hall, the Halls Of The Mandarins, and the original Nine Dynastic Urns, among other sites. Overnight in Hue.

Day 05: Hoi An

Excursion to Thien Mu Pagoda and Tomb of Emperor Minh Mang with boat trip

Enjoy a leisurely boat ride down the Perfume River, stopping first at the iconic Thien Mu Pagoda, an elegant seven-tiered octagonal tower which has become Hue's most widely recognizable monument. Continue cruising into the countryside to the Imperial Tomb Of Minh Mang, a majestic complex of courtyards, pavilions and temples in a beautiful natural setting.

By vehicle from Hue to Hoi An. Journey from Hue over scenic mountainous roads with spectacular views over the coastline. Halfway between Danang and Hue lies the dramatic Hai Van Pass, the high dividing line between the climate zones of north and south Vietnam. Continue southwards passing Lang Co, a lovely stretch of beach curving outwards between a clear blue lagoon and the South China Sea, and the large coastal city of Danang before arriving in Hoi An.

Visit Cham Museum. This houses probably the best collection of Cham art to be found anywhere in the world. There are more than 300 artifacts in the museum, many dating to the 4th century. There are beautiful sculptures reflecting the 1000 year Cham period. Overnight in Hoi An.

Day 06: Hoi An

Sightseeing in Hoi An with a boat trip on the Thu Bon River

The exquisitely preserved merchant town of Hoi An was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999. Its colorful shophouses and temples reflect a diverse heritage, dating back to the 16th and 17th century, when it was a major port for Western, Chinese and Japanese traders. Today it is a thriving center of traditional crafts and a shopper's paradise, best explored on foot.

Wander through the cobbled streets, past low tile-roofed buildings, the bustling central Market and the small Harbour where colorfully painted boats are moored. The walking tour will include visits to a Private House, where members of the same family have lived continuously for centuries in a traditional setting; to one of the Family Chapels built by prominent merchant or official families as centers for ancestor worship; and to a typical Chinese-Style Pagoda or Assembly Hall. Finally, continue to the famous Japanese Covered Bridge, first constructed in 1593 by the Japanese community of Hoi An to link the town with the Chinese quarters across the stream.

In the afternoon, board a local boat and cruise down the Thu Bon River, enjoying the unspoiled countryside and stopping to visit a Pottery Village and a Woodcarving Village before returning to Hoi An harbour. Overnight in Hoi An.

Day 07: Saigon

By vehicle from Hoi An to Danang - Flight from Danang to Saigon - Transfer - Excursion to Cu Chi Tunnels

Never discovered by American forces, the Cu Chi Tunnels were an important Vietcong base during the American War. Stretching over 200 km, this incredible underground network, dug by hand out of hard laterite, connected command posts, hospitals, shelter and weapon factories. Today, you can walk through the area and learn about the day-to-day life of the VC, see the cleverly disguised entrances and elaborate booby-traps, and even venture inside the tunnels, some of which have been modified to

accommodate tourists. Overnight in Saigon.

Day 08: Saigon

Excursion to Cai Be Floating Market, with a boat trip to Vinh Long

From Saigon, drive into the heart of the Mekong Delta to Cai Be, and embark on one of the local boats to explore Cai Be Floating Market, a lively market of fruit and vegetable barges with a picturesque Catholic cathedral on the riverside. Continue along smaller waterways and canals, stopping at the Mekong River Islands to visit orchards and local cottage industries. Enjoy watching how the delta residents make traditional treats such as dried longyans, rice pancakes and puffed rice candies, with the chance to sample the local delicacies. Disembark at Vinh Long and return to Saigon. Overnight in Saigon.

Day 09: Saigon / Departure

A vibrant metropolis, Saigon teems with energy, activity and motion. Everywhere you look, you see the meeting of traditional and modern life. The emerging modern skyline stands cheek by jowl with colonial buildings and traditional temples. Outside on the streets, young professionals zip by on motorcycles, chatting on cellphones; inside the quiet temple courtyards, worshippers pray amidst clouds of incense. Begin your tour of this exciting city with a tour of the historic center, strolling along Dong Khoi Street, formerly known as the Rue Catinat, the main shopping thoroughfare and heart of old colonial Saigon. Pass by classic European-style landmarks such as the ornate City Hall (Hotel De Ville), the old Opera House (both may only be viewed from the outside), and pay a quick visit to the neo-Romanesque Notre Dame Cathedral and the Central Post Office.

Afterwards dive into modern history with a tour of the Reunification Palace. Formerly the Independence Palace of the South Vietnamese president, this 60s style building was famously stormed by tanks on April 30, 1975 signifying the fall of South Vietnam. It has been preserved in its original state, and the original tanks remain on display near the entrance gates. Continue to the harrowing War Remnants Museum, which comprehensively documents the travails of the long Vietnam-American War. Inside are detailed photographic exhibitions; outside is a collection of tanks, planes and weapons. A powerful experience, this museum is guaranteed to provoke strong emotions.

Finally, end up at the central Ben Thanh Market, where vendors display a vast array of goods and handicrafts, appealing to every taste. Transfer.

Exclusions:

- » Pre-registration or late check-out of rooms
- » Any item of personal nature like portorage & tips, laundry, telephone calls, beverages, mineral water etc.
- » Any services or meal other than the ones mentioned above
- » Any other expense/changes due to unforeseen circumstances while in country
- » Any other thing not mentioned in program or 'cost includes'

Terms and Conditions:

- » The above offer is subject to RBI/GOI Regulations
- » The above offer including Hotels, Itinerary, sightseeing subject to change without prior notice
- » Early check in is subject to availability
- » Surcharge for Hotel during New Year / Festive season / Conventions / High Occupancy may apply accordingly upon hotel's advice at time of booking made
- » We are not holding any accommodation as of now

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