

# EXPLORE!

NEW

**Family Vietnam Encompassed**  
15 days

Vietnam - Trip code FVN



## Family Vietnam Encompassed

Join us on an in depth journey through magical Vietnam, traversing the country from south to north and discovering the many attractions that lie along the way from rice paddy fields of Mai Chau to the intricate network of waterways in the Mekong Delta. Vietnam is a country constantly reinventing itself. Witness the hustle and bustle of Ho Chi Minh City, the old-world charm of Hanoi, ancient neighbourhoods of Hoi An and dramatic limestone pinnacles of Halong Bay. Learn about Vietnam's tumultuous history, vibrant markets, delicious food and truly inspiring scenery on this memorable family holiday.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Hanoi** - Free time to wander through the bustling narrow streets of the Old Quarter lined with shop-houses
- ★ **Halong Bay** - Sea kayaking in one of the most breath-taking limestone landscapes in South East Asia
- ★ **Hue** - Try making a kite and a martial arts lesson
- ★ **Ho Chi Minh City** - Learn about the resourcefulness of the Viet Cong at the Cu Chi Tunnels
- ★ **Hoi An** - Charming ancient merchant's town on the banks of the Thu Bon River

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

**TRIP PACE:****Full on**

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

**GROUP SIZE:****14 - 20**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

# Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

## DAY 1 - Join trip in Hanoi. Stroll around the historic old quarter.

Arrive in Hanoi and drive to our hotel in the heart of the capital. Hanoi is an attractive city, ideal for families, effortlessly combining the vibrancy of Asia with tree-lined shaded boulevards, leafy parks and tranquil lakes where residents can often be seen performance Tai Chi early in the morning. Head out this afternoon to explore the city on a guided walking tour of the Old Quarter, a labyrinth of narrow lanes full of children playing, old men huddled over board games and artisans selling everything from fresh flowers to art work. Pavements are filled with the rich aroma of steaming noodles, snacks, stir-fried delights and 'bia hoi' (fresh draught beer) just waiting to be sampled.



**Accommodation: Anise Hotel Hanoi** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 2 - Hanoi. Watch locals take lakeside yoga classes, explore night markets.

This morning join our Explore leader to see more of Hanoi, visiting the One-Pillar Pagoda, the tranquil Temple of Literatures and the Mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh lying in state. The afternoon is then free to perhaps take an optional cookery class, or explore Hanoi's elegant French Quarter by cyclo. In the evening there is the chance to witness a remarkable performance of traditional water puppetry (optional activity). Set on a flooded stage, the stories tell tales of legendary heroes and everyday life, with dragons and unicorns often sharing the stage with fireworks and naval battles, alternatively head out to sample the delights of Vietnamese cuisine at a local restaurant.



**Accommodation: Anise Hotel Hanoi** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Scenic drive to Mai Chau, bike through paddy fields past tranquil traditional villages.

Hemmed in by hills and set in a tranquil valley, Mai Chau is a world away from the hectic pace of life of Hanoi. The four hour journey provides a glimpse of rural life in the north of the country passing through villages surrounded by paddy fields. On arrival, check-in to our hotel with fine views of local villages distantly related to the tribes in Thailand, Laos and China, lunch is included at the hotel. This afternoon head out on a biking tour along rice terraces of the Mai Chau Valley dotted with stilt houses. The ride provides opportunities for panoramic views of paddy fields, spectacular karst cliffs and verdant valleys around you, a truly spectacular setting. On the way home, pass by Van Village, home to the White Thai people. Enjoy dinner and an overnight stay at our comfortable eco lodge featuring a swimming pool to cool off in after an afternoon of cycling.



**Accommodation: Mai Chau Ecolodge** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 4 - Drive to Xam Khoe Village, home to Thai ethnic minority, home cooked lunch with a local family.

After breakfast, drive to Xam Khoe Village and set off on a walking tour to Buoc Village populated by the Thai ethnic minority people, the terrain is mainly flat, sticking to the valley floor traversing the network of banks separating rice paddy fields. Enjoy local hospitality in a simple stilt-house as a home-cooked lunch of regional specialties such as Goi cuon (spring rolls) or Pho (Vietnam's national dish, a light beef or chicken broth flavoured with ginger and coriander, to which are added broad, flat rice noodles, spring onions and slivers of chicken, pork or beef) prepared by a local Thai family. Short drive back to Mai Chau with a stop en route to explore the magnificent Van Mai Valley.



**Accommodation: Mai Chau Ecolodge** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 5 - Continue to Ninh Binh, likened to an inland Halong Bay.

This morning is left free to enjoy a leisurely breakfast. Drive to Ninh Binh in the afternoon. Whilst the town itself is fairly unremarkable, the area around Ninh Binh is beautiful, known for its impressive cave formations and network of waterways, lakes, temples and towering limestone peaks.



**Accommodation: Ninh Binh Legend Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Bike ride through paddy fields to visit Dong Tam Village. Afternoon boat trip to explore cave complex.

This morning stretch our legs as we cycle the back roads through picturesque local communities to Dong Tam village. After a break at a temple we head through the countryside towards the spectacular limestone peaks of Van Long, surrounded by paddy fields and meandering waterways. The landscape is truly spectacular. Our destination is the nearby village of Vuon Thi, where we enjoy a delicious traditional lunch prepared by friendly hill tribe villagers. After lunch, take a sampan ride along the charming Ngo Dong River to a cave complex, with time to explore the network of caves in the area. Return to Ninh Binh.



**Accommodation: Ninh Binh Legend Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

## DAY 7 - Cruise Halong Bay on a junk boat, sea kayak around the bay.

Leaving Ninh Binh after breakfast, we drive approximately four hours to the Gulf of Tonkin and the breath-taking scenery of Ha Long Bay. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, and one of the most visually impressive landscapes in South East Asia, Ha Long Bay is the setting for our overnight cruise. There are between 10-18 en-suite cabins (all bedding is provided) with a restaurant, bar and sundeck area. Boarding the boat in time for lunch, we set sail and visit Sung Sot Cave which means 'Amazing Cave' which is the largest of its kind in the area with numerous stalactite and stalagmite limestone formations in an impressive cavern. We then spend the rest of the afternoon exploring the bay before our Junk boat finds its mooring for the evening. Please be aware, the boat may not be exclusive to Explore and consequently we may be sharing with other travellers.



**Accommodation: Halong Bay Junk** (or similar)



Standard Junk



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 8 - Sea Kayaking & take the Reunification Express sleeper train to Hue.

After a morning's sea kayaking and cruising around the bay, we head back to shore and disembark the boat at Bai Chay Beach before driving back to Hanoi. In the evening board the Reunification Express overnight sleeper train to Hue, Vietnam's old imperial capital. Travelling by train with a family is often cited as a real highlight, we travel in soft sleeper class, with four passengers sharing each compartment with all bedding provided; watch the world go by as we slowly make our way south passing villages, rivers and vast plains along the way. Please note, breakfast will not be provided on the train, so there will be time to pick up snacks for the morning before boarding the train.



**Accommodation: Overnight train from Hanoi to Hue**



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 9 - Travel to the Tu Duc Royal Tombs. Try kite making (and flying!) and visit the Imperial Palace.

Arriving in Hue this morning, seek out many of the highlights of this former imperial capital of Vietnam including a visit to the Royal Palace with its Terracotta Warriors guarding the entrance and the Thien Mu Pagoda, home to the oldest monastery in the city. We also visit Mr Cu's house who was a national champion kite flier for Vietnam who shows us how to make traditional Vietnamese kites which you make and decorate with symbols such as dragons, birds and peacocks. Once assembled, we fly them at the nearby Citadel.



**Accommodation: Park View Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 10 - Hoi An. Martial arts lesson. Make traditional wood paintings, cruise on the Perfume River.

Journey to Trieu Son village, located by the Perfume River on Hue's outskirts for a guided walk and boat ride. First stop is Sinh village where we meet a local family that specializes in making wood paintings. Later in the morning, take to the open road on a leisurely cycle ride around the village and along countryside lanes to Thanh Tien village, famous for paper flowers. Criss crossing an intricate network of paddy fields, we arrive at Tien Non village where we board our cruise boat, taking us back to Hue (total cycling distance is approximately 6km). An included martial arts lesson is our next stop with a visit to a dedicated martial arts school that practices the Vietnamese art of Kinh Van, Vietnam's equivalent to Kung Fu, based upon defence techniques from the actions of a tiger, cobra, and bird. The owner's ancestors were chosen to guard the Vietnamese king; knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation to our host, who has been intrusted with teaching this ancient art. Travel over the Truong Son Mountains and through the Hai Van Pass as featured on the TV programme, Top Gear, to the historic merchant seaside town of Hoi An.



**Accommodation: Vinh Hung 2 Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 11 - Free day in Hoi An, opportunity to spend the day on the beach.

The morning is free to wander through the historic heart of this World Heritage Site, taking in the wonderfully preserved buildings of what was once one of the busiest trading outposts in South East Asia. Discovering this delightful town, we recommend an early morning visit to Hoi An's fish market which presents the perfect setting for some great photographs. Wander through Hoi An's historic collection of traditional wooden houses and Chinese temples. This afternoon you could hire bicycles and explore the surrounding countryside, experience a gentle river cruise, or grab the chance to visit some of Hoi An's famous tailor shops. Alternatively take a 20 minute taxi ride to the nearby coast to spend the day on the beach.



**Accommodation: Vinh Hung 2 Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 12 - Fly to Ho Chi Minh City. Explore the old quarter in cyclos (cycle carriages with a seat).

Drive to Danang Airport this morning, past the five peaks of the Marble Mountains, originally believed to have been islands that were said to represent the five elements of water, wood, fire, gold and earth. Board the morning flight to Ho Chi Minh City. Upon arrival, head out on a walking tour of Saigon with a local guide plus a cyclo tour (cycle carriages with a seat at the front) around Saigon's China Town and the Binh Tay Market areas.



**Accommodation: Liberty 4 Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 13 - Discover the Cu Chi Tunnels which the Viet Cong used as a hideout during the Vietnam War.

After breakfast this morning drive to visit the infamous Cu Chi tunnels. First constructed by the Vietnamese during their colonial war with the French, the tunnels were later greatly expanded and went on to achieve notoriety during the Vietnam War, when they served as an underground command base for 10,000 Viet Cong troops. Exploring Cu Chi gives some idea as to the conditions that the Vietnamese had to endure (the tunnels are narrow and can be quite claustrophobic). The afternoon allows for more time in the city including an optional visit to the waterpark, a great way to cool off from the mid-day sun.



**Accommodation: Liberty 4 Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 14 - Drive to the Mekong Delta, overnight homestay, explore villages by bike.

Leaving the city, journey to the Mekong Delta and board a boat to the start point of our cycle ride. We cycle for around 10-12 km along the flat Cai Thai village path with constant views of the delta as we wind our way around its many tributaries. The route is often shaded which is helpful to combat the humidity (the boat can pick up cyclists at various stopping points if required). Along the way, we visit Mrs Nani's home who will show us how to make rice paper in the traditional way and Mr and Mrs Chin's home who will provide refreshments that include her famous 'Banh Tieu' (traditional doughnut). Returning to our cruise boat for lunch on-board, we continue sailing along the delta to our night stop. Transferring from our cruise boat to a sampan craft, a small traditional boat regularly used by the villagers to travel along the delta, make the short journey to a traditional homestay, set in a lovely garden setting with a main lounge area and dining room, accommodation is en-suite (shower and toilet) with traditional décor throughout. After settling into our simple but clean accommodation, embark on a gastronomic experience as we take part in a Vietnamese cooking lesson. Typically our hosts usually give a traditional dancing and singing show to accompany the evening meal.



**Accommodation: Ut Trinh Homestay** (or similar)



Simple Homestay



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 15 - Explore delta by boat, visit Cai Be floating market. Trip ends at Ho Chi Minh City airport.

Leaving the homestay behind, cruise along the delta to the famous Cai Be Floating Market. One of the most colourful attractions of the Mekong is its floating markets and we visit one of the biggest in the Delta at Cai Be. Spend some time cruising through the market and soaking up the atmosphere of this unique trading point. After our visit, we drive back to Saigon where the trip ends at the airport in the afternoon. A four day extension to the tropical island of Phu Quoc is available with this tour.

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

## Family information

Minimum age

7

## Why book this trip

This extended holiday to Vietnam spends additional time in the north of the country, known for its rich heritage and beautiful scenery. Spend time in Mai Chau riding along the pathways dividing rice paddy fields and Ninh Binh known as an inland version of Halong Bay with its steep limestone pinnacles and intricate network of inland waterways to explore. An ideal destination for families who want to explore the best of South East Asia and enjoy travelling on a variety of transport options - bus, train, boat, flight and bicycle. Vietnam is an incredibly welcoming country, and caters extremely well to families of all ages. There are a number of easy active elements to this adventure including trying out Vietnams answer to Kung Fo, sea kayaking in the stunning Halong Bay, kite flying and cycling along the Delta - this adventure also allows us to meet local people and visit their homes including when we make kites and rice-paper. A great trip from one end of the country to the other. At the end of your trip you can extend your tour with a four night tropical beach extension to Phu Quoc (trip code VB) known for its expansive white sand beaches. Located off the south west coast of Vietnam, enjoy three nights at the for star Amarin Resort and Spa from £249 per person based on twin share including return flights from Ho Chi Minh City, transfers and daily breakfast.

# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 14  
Lunch: 5  
Dinner: 4



## Transport

Bicycle  
Boat  
Minibus  
On Foot  
Rickshaw  
Train  
Tuk Tuk



## Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader  
Driver(s)



## Accommodation

1 nights simple homestay  
11 nights standard hotel  
1 nights standard junk  
1 nights simple overnight train

# Trip information

## Country information

### Vietnam Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

As Vietnam is a long, narrow country from north to south climate conditions vary considerably. The climate can be divided into three distinct patterns between the north, central and south regions. The climate in the north is generally humid and subtropical, although the winter months from November to March can be colder with temperatures from 10 - 15 degrees. Summer months, May to September can be quite hot with temperatures from 30 - 35 degrees. Meanwhile south Vietnam enjoys a tropical climate all year round, with little variation throughout the year (around 27 - 32 degrees), however May to November is the rainy season when short, heavy downpours are quite frequent. Central Vietnam lies somewhere in between. The coastal strip is usually dry and hotter from April to October while November to March is wetter and cooler. A light rain jacket and small umbrella are recommended year round.

#### Time difference to GMT

+7

#### Plugs

2 Pin Round

#### Religion

Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism

#### Language

Vietnamese

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

Hanoi - Water Puppets show from US\$ 5; Ho Chi Minh's Stilt House US\$ 1; Museums US\$ 1; Waterpark US\$ 15 Hoi An - Half day



cooking classes from US\$ 39-45 Hue - Dong Ba Market US\$ 18.00 - US\$ 23 Ho Chi Minh City - Reunification Palace US\$ 2

## Clothing

Pack essentially for hot weather although December through to February warmer clothing is needed for the North. Bear in mind that the region is tropical (humid) and can be hot. Lightweight rainwear is advisable at all times. The north is cold at night during the winter. Casual clothes are the most practical.

## Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes and sandals.

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

## Equipment

Binoculars for wildlife viewing, torch, water bottle, insect repellent, high factor sunscreen, good quality sunglasses and a lip salve with sun protection. An overnight bag and swimming gear and towel is also recommended.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 35.

## Country Information

### Vietnam Holidays & Tours

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

##### Dinner price

£9

##### Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

##### Water price

£0.5

#### Foreign Exchange

##### Local currency

Dong.

##### Recommended Currency For Exchange

Carry your money in US\$ Dollars cash. You can also take GBP but US\$ are easier to exchange. (Dollar bills can be used in some hotels and shops; change is often given in local currency).

##### Where To Exchange

Most towns.

##### ATM Availability

There are ATMs virtually everywhere in Vietnam and in Cambodia, though we also recommend bringing cash.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Some shops in Hanoi, and Hoi An. The occasional restaurant.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers cheques can usually be changed in the towns, but only during bank opening hours.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bicycle, Boat, Minibus, On Foot, Rickshaw, Train, Tuk Tuk

## Essential information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

**Under 18 immigration guidance**

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa Information

Vietnam: Until 30th June 2018 'British Citizen' passport holders can visit Vietnam for up to 15 days without a visa. A visa will be required if you enter after this date or if you wish to re-enter within 30 days of your departure. For visits of up to 30 days, you can get an e-visa before you travel from <https://evisa.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn/> For visits of longer than 30 days you must get a visa from the nearest Vietnamese embassy before travelling to Vietnam. If you want to make a second visit within 30 days of leaving Vietnam, you'll need to get a multiple entry visa to re-enter. Please note that it is a pre-requisite for entry into Vietnam that your passport is valid for a minimum of 6 months from your date of entry All visa related issues including information for other nationalities should be confirmed with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

### Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

### Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

**Booking a land only package with Explore**

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

**Joining Tour Abroad**

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Non refundable permits

## Vietnam Holidays & Tours

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on Malaria and Zika Virus. Although not compulsory travellers may also wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.