

EXPLORE!

On Foot in Vietnam

14 days

Vietnam - Trip code WVN



On Foot in Vietnam

Vietnam is one of the most diverse and exciting destinations in South East Asia and this trip is the perfect way to discover it if you like to make your explorations on foot. We enjoy both walking tours around the must-see city sights in Hanoi, Hue and Ho Chi Minh City, and easy walks in the countryside. Rural rambles take us from the stilted tribal villages of the north, to ancient temples in the jungle and the heat and quiet of the sleepy Mekong Delta. A junk cruise among the karst landscapes and still waters of Halong Bay is an undoubted highlight.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Pu Luong Nature Reserve** - Trek in the Reserve and stay in a stilt house
- ★ **Halong Bay** - Cruise among breathtaking limestone landscapes aboard a junk
- ★ **Hoi An** - Discover this charming ancient merchant's town
- ★ **Walking tours** - Explore the streets of Hanoi, Hue and Ho Chi Minh City on foot
- ★ **Village hikes** - Encounter village life along the Perfume River and in the Mekong Delta
- ★ **Culinary delights** - Enjoy Vietnam's amazing street food

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:**Simple**

These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, sometimes with en suite facilities.

WALKING GRADE:**Easy To Moderate**

This grade is ideal if you want to enjoy both easy and moderate level walks on the same tour. You'll be walking mainly on good paths and at low altitude, with occasional more demanding ascents or descents.

GROUP SIZE:**10 - 16**

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: explore the Old Quarter on foot

This afternoon we are introduced to life in Vietnam on a walking tour through the bustling streets and markets of Hanoi's Old Quarter. The maze of fascinating alleys is known for its interesting 'tube' houses, whose narrow frontages give way to long rooms that stretch back from the road. Street vendors tempt you with noodles, snacks and stir-fried delights from shoulder panniers, all adding to the charm of Hanoi's historic heart. We can expect today's four kilometre walking tour to take around one-and-a-half to two hours.



Accommodation: Flower Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Drive to Pu Luong; hike to our stilt house retreat

Leaving Hanoi behind this morning, we drive west to the Pu Luong Nature Reserve, a beautiful region of limestone cliffs, forests and terraced fields that is richly biodiverse. This area is a home to the Thai ethnic minority tribe who live in villages of stilt houses. We will be staying in the heart of the Reserve at the Pu Luong Retreat, an eco-friendly lodge built from traditional materials in a 'boutique' style, with breathtaking views all around. There is even an infinity pool in the former fish pond! At the Retreat we will be staying in its unique stilt house, a beautifully appointed and traditional structure where we sleep on comfortable mattresses in one very large room that can be divided into sections by curtains. The shared bathrooms are connected to the stilt house and open to the elements. See <http://puluongretreat.com/house-on-stilt/>. On arriving at the Nature Reserve, we hike across the paddy fields to our accommodation while the bus continues there with our luggage. We can expect today's eight kilometre walk to take around two-and-a-half hours across gently undulating terrain.



Accommodation: Pu Luong Retreat (or similar)



Simple Stilt House



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 3 - Hiking in Pu Luong Reserve; lunch with Thai family

We spend today hiking among the beautiful landscapes of the Reserve and will enjoy plenty of stops along the way, planning to spend time in some of the villages of the Thai minority tribe and have a traditional lunch at a local house en route. Today's leisurely paced hike of approximately 10 kilometres will take around five hours across gently undulating terrain.



Accommodation: Pu Luong Retreat (or similar)



Simple Stilt House



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 4 - Morning walk and bamboo raft trip; return to Hanoi

In the morning we enjoy another walk, rambling alongside the bubbling river with its vast wooden waterwheels which transport its waters to irrigate the terraced paddy fields. Ending at spot where we take to the river on simple bamboo rafts, we float along in this tranquil place and will no doubt feel rejuvenated and ready for our adventure ahead! We return to the hustle and bustle of Hanoi later today with time in the evening to enjoy a performance of traditional water puppets (optional). These puppet shows date back to the 11th century, and performances took place in the flooded rice fields of the villages in the Red River Delta. This morning's walk covers approximately five-and-a-half kilometres and is expected to take around two-and-a-half hours.



Accommodation: Flower Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Walking tour in Hanoi; drive to Halong Bay

This morning we will discover more of Hanoi outside of the Old Quarter on a walking tour. Architecturally styled like a French provincial town with tree-lined boulevards and substantial low-built houses, the city is wonderfully nostalgic. Among the interesting sights that we will visit are the charming One-Pillar Pagoda, Confucius Temple and the Presidential Palace. Ho Chi Minh himself, a spartan-living and scholarly man, chose not to live in the Presidential Palace; he preferred instead a simple teak stilt-house specially built for him and which we will see in the Palace grounds. In the afternoon we drive to our hotel at Halong Bay in the Gulf of Tonkin. We can expect today's seven kilometre walking tour to take around four hours including sightseeing.



Accommodation: Heritage Halong Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Junk Cruise around Halong Bay; overnight train to Hue

This morning we enjoy the romantic scenery of Halong Bay on a junk cruise amongst the thousands of jagged limestone islands that rise out of the jade green waters like the hairy scales of a submerged dragon! In fact Halong means: 'Where the dragon descends to the sea'. As legend has it the rugged seascape was created by the pounding tail of a dragon as he ran from the mountains into the sea, carving the islands in his wake. During our cruise we'll have the chance to stop at a grotto beneath towering cliffs and perhaps visit a beach and enjoy a delicious freshly caught seafood lunch on board the boat. After disembarking, we return to our hotel in Hanoi to freshen up before boarding the 'Reunification Express' to Hue. We travel 'soft sleeper' class on the train, with four people to a compartment with all bedding provided.



Accommodation: Overnight train from Hanoi to Hue



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 7 - Afternoon walking tour around Hue Citadel

Awaking aboard the train, we pass through a rural landscape of seemingly endless rice paddies before arriving in the city of Hue mid morning. This afternoon we will discover Hue's fascinating history on a walking tour around the Imperial Citadel. Located on the left bank of the river, the palace was built by the Nguyen dynasty, Vietnam's ruling emperors from the early 1800s to 1945. The Citadel has formal moats and impressive ramparts that were constructed by 20,000 men and was a copy of the Forbidden City in Beijing. Although most of the inner part of the city was totally destroyed during the month-long Tet Offensive in 1968, the vast outer walls and the west wing remain an eloquent reminder of the palace's former glory. We can expect today's seven kilometre walking tour to take around three-and-a-half hours including sightseeing.



Accommodation: Thanh Lich Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 8 - Hike through villages; cruise on the Perfume River

This morning we drive out of the city to enjoy a hike through some of the villages that lie along the banks of the Perfume River. Exploring on foot enables us to observe rural life up close and our leader is always on hand to explain what we see. The river supposedly got its name from the aromas carried by the river downstream from the forests and mountains of its source. After our walk, we will catch a boat for a short cruise along the river back to our bus. Today's leisurely-paced hike of approximately seven

kilometres will take around three hours. We will walk along village footpaths and the terrain is flat.



Accommodation: Thanh Lich Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Drive to the laid-back town of Hoi An

Today we enjoy a scenic drive south to Hoi An, crossing the spectacular Hai Van Pass en route and passing through rural scenes of thatched, wooden houses and lime-green rice paddies as well as panoramic sea views. The UNESCO World Heritage town of Hoi An was one of the busiest international trading ports of Southeast Asia in the 17th and 18th centuries. First colonised by the Portuguese in the 16th century, it still retains its medieval charm today, with many of its old buildings superbly preserved. The afternoon has been left free to explore Hoi An at your own pace. You may choose to visit the Japanese Bridge or some of the Chinese temples and meeting halls in the Old Town. There are also many shops, bars and restaurants and it is a great place to buy souvenirs, have clothing tailored or simply watch the world go by in a riverside cafe.



Accommodation: Van Loi Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Hike to the Cham temples at My Son

Today we drive for around an hour from Hoi An and enjoy a hike through a hilly landscape of pine forest and grasslands to the ancient Cham site of My Son. The Chams were dynastic lords who rejected the authority of China in the second century and established their own kingdom in what is now Vietnam. Although they benefited from strong sea links with the rest of South East Asia, the kingdom's interior could not supply sufficient food for a strong military force. For 1000 years they managed to stave off attacks by the Vietnamese and Chinese, before being overcome by the Vietnamese in the 15th century. The site is impressive, despite the fact that much of it was bombed in the 1960s and there are several groupings of Cham temples which we can visit. We can expect today's eight kilometre hike to take around four-and-a-half hours across undulating terrain with a high point of 168m.



Accommodation: Van Loi Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Travel to Binh Hoa Phuoc Island in the Mekong Delta

After a short drive to Danang Airport first thing this morning, we fly to Ho Chi Minh City, from where we drive further south to Cai Be in the Mekong Delta. Surrounded with lush and fertile land the area is home to small villages and swaying coconut palms. We take a walk on Tan Phong Islands to see local Delta life. Later we travel by boat to the island of Binh Hoa Phoc where we spend the night in a local homestay-cum-guesthouse. At the homestay we will be accommodated in a mix of twin and triple rooms with attached bathrooms. The rich soil of the Mekong provides an abundant harvest, including coconut, fruits, rice and of course fish and tonight we will enjoy a dinner of local produce. We can expect today's four kilometre hike to take around one-and-a-half hours.



Accommodation: Ut Trinh Homestay (or similar)



Simple Homestay



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 12 - Walk in the Mekong Delta; drive to Ho Chi Minh City

This morning we plan a walk on the island, stopping off along the way to observe some of the traditional cottage industries of the Delta such as the production of rice paper and coconut sweets. Other glimpses of everyday life may include seeing people catching fish from the river, or mending baskets and repairing tools by the river bank. Departing by boat once more we meet our bus in Vinh Long and drive to our final destination of the trip, Ho Chi Minh City. Still unofficially referred to as 'Saigon', the city is the largest in Vietnam with a population of around eight million. You will find an eclectic mix of the traditional and the new, where pagodas and markets compete alongside the trappings of Vietnam's newly discovered entrepreneurial spirit. We can expect today's eight-and-a-half kilometre hike to take around three hours across at a leisurely pace. The terrain of the Delta is flat.



Accommodation: Ho Sen 2 Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Walking tour of Old Saigon; free afternoon to explore

This morning we walk around the central sights of Old Saigon, now known as District 1 of Ho Chi Minh City. We see the Notre Dame Cathedral and the GPO building as well as some of the old French Colonial hotels such as The Rex. We then continue to the Independence Palace (renamed the Reunification Hall) and the War Remnants Museum. The afternoon is free for you to explore the city further, perhaps with a visit to the huge Ben Thanh market for some shopping. We can expect today's five kilometre walking tour to take around four hours including sightseeing.



Accommodation: Ho Sen 2 Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available

DAY 14 - Visit Cu Chi tunnels; return to Ho Chi Minh City where trip ends

This morning we take a short drive out of the city to the infamous Cu Chi Tunnels, which formed an incredible underground command base for 10,000 Viet Cong troops and were a major part of the 1968 Tet Offensive. The site is a fascinating insight into the resourcefulness of the Vietnamese. There is the opportunity to crawl through a small specially adapted section of the tunnels should you wish to sample the claustrophobic conditions in which the Viet Cong lived. Returning to Ho Chi Minh City the trip ends back at our hotel.

Walking and Trekking information

Walking grade

Easy to moderate

Trek details

Walks on 11 days for between 1.5 to 5 hours each day. City walks include sightseeing within these timings. Rural walks are on village footpaths and trails. There are no significant ascents and descents but you should be prepared for heat and humidity. We have graded the walking as Easy to Moderate.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 12
Lunch: 2
Dinner: 3



Transport

Bus
Boat
Flight
Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Boat Crew
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

1 nights simple homestay
4 nights simple hotel
5 nights standard hotel
1 nights simple overnight train
2 nights simple stilt house

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 Hoi An - Cookery class US\$ 15

Clothing

Lightweight breathable clothing of loose cottons and technical fabrics is ideal for Vietnam's generally warm and humid conditions although during the winter, (December through to February), some warmer clothing is needed for the North. Lightweight rainwear is essential year round. You will need a sunhat and may like to bring a swimming costume as some of the hotels have pools.

Footwear

We recommend you take a pair of lightweight walking boots or trail shoes. For the city walking tours and some of the walks, sports sandals will also be fine.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main lockable bag/case, an overnight bag for your trip to Halong Bay (when your main luggage is left behind in Hanoi) and a daypack.

Equipment

Bring a high factor sun cream, sunglasses, water bottle and a torch for use in power cuts and in dimly lit streets at night. Even though bed linen is provided on the train journey, you may want to bring your own sleeping sheet, (it can be purchased in Hanoi), and don't forget mosquito repellent. There is no need for a mosquito net as when necessary, it is provided.

Tipping

Explore leader

Explore Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore 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

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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

Bus, Boat, Flight, Train

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 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.

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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.
