EXPLORE!

Book with confidence



Why book this trip?

This exciting introduction to Vietnam hits all of the so-called 'Five H's' as you travel privately with your family from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City. Along the way, cruise around Halong Bay, take part in a martial arts lesson in Hue, discover historic Hoi An and stay in a traditional homestay in the Mekong delta.

- Hanoi Free time to wander through the bustling narrow streets of the Old Quarter lined with shophouses
- Hoi An Charming ancient merchant's town on the banks of the Thu Bon River
- Ho Chi Minh City Learn about the resourcefulness of the Viet Cong at the Cu Chi Tunnels, visit an underground weapons bunker and explore old Saigon's bustling back alleys





INCLUDED MEALS Breakfast: 10 Lunch: 2 Dinner: 1

TRIP STAFF Activity Guide(s) Boat Crew Driver(s) Local Guide(s)



TRANSPORT

Bicycle

Boat

Car

Flight



ACCOMMODATION

1 nights

comfortable

homestay

9 nights comfortable hotel



TRIP PACE: Moderate

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Trip begins in Hanoi

Arrive in Hanoi. Vietnam's bustling capital is architecturally styled like a French provincial town, with tree-lined boulevards and low-rise buildings. It's a wonderful city to explore on foot.

You will be met on arrival at Hanoi's Noi Bai International Airport (HAN) by a local guide, and driven to your centrally-located hotel, approximately a 30 minute drive away. There are no activities planned today, so feel free to arrive in Hanoi at any time. For those booking their own flights, you will just need to let us know your flight details no later than three weeks prior to departure, in order to be met on arrival.

If your flight arrives earlier in the day, perhaps you might choose to head to the Old Quarter, a maze of narrow lanes named after the various crafts and specialities of the city's artisans. The pavements are filled with food sellers tempting you with steaming noodles, snacks and stir-fried delights.



ACCOMMODATION: La Belle Vie Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



DAY 2 - Tour of Hanoi; free afternoon with optional cooking class

This morning, take a guided sightseeing tour of Hanoi, visiting the One-Pillar Pagoda, the Temple of Literatures and the Mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh. The afternoon is then free to perhaps take an optional cookery class, or explore Hanoi's elegant French Quarter on foot. In the evening there is the chance to witness a remarkable performance of traditional water puppetry. 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.



ACCOMMODATION: La Belle Vie Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Free morning; afternoon drive to Halong Bay

With a free morning in Hanoi, visit the Ethnology Museum or Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum and museum (closed on Mondays).

In the afternoon, transfer by road towards the Bay of Tonkin on Vietnam's northeast coast. Your destination is the breathtaking setting of Halong Bay, one of Vietnam's, and indeed Southeast Asia's, most spectacular natural attractions, whose staggering beauty has seen it listed as one of the eight natural wonders of the world. A UNESCO World Heritage site, Halong Bay presents a quite extraordinary vista of hundreds of limestone islands (over 1600 at last count) that rise from the jade green waters of the bay like the scales of some great submerged dragon. Indeed Halong means 'where the dragon descends to the sea' and local legends tells of a time when this rugged landscape was created by the pounding tail of a mighty dragon as he ran from the mountains into the glittering waters of the bay below.



ассоммодатіоя: Royal Lotus Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Cruise the island-studded waters of Halong Bay; fly to Hue

Today, raise anchor and head out of Halong Bay on one of its famous junk boats. Cruise past towering limestone cliffs and take the opportunity to drop anchor, exploring eerie caves, gottos, floating villages and even beaches. Enjoy a traditional seafood lunch on board, before disembarking and returning to Hanoi. This evening, transfer to the airport for a flight south to Hue, where a local guide will meet you to take you across to your hotel.



ACCOMMODATION: Thanh Lich Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Visit Royal Tombs; martial arts lesson; kite making and flying

This is a full day of fun as you experience the beating heart of Vietnamese culture. Do a little historic exploration first, driving out of the city this morning and visiting the enormous Royal Tomb of Tu Duc, set in a palatial landscape of lakes, pine trees and well-maintained grounds.

Next up, take a martial arts lesson with a visit to a dedicated martial arts school that practices the Vietnamese art of Kinh Van, the countries equivalent to Kung Fu. This ancient art is based upon defence techniques from the actions of a tiger, cobra, and bird. The owner of the school's ancestors were chosen to guard the Vietnamese king and he now teaches this ancient art.

In the afternoon, visit the house of a national champion kite flier for Vietnam where we are shown how to make traditional Vietnamese kites. Taking time to decorate our kites with iconic symbols such as dragons, birds and peacocks, we take our completed kites to the nearby Citadel grounds to try them out. The Citadel is an impressive monument that is almost 10 km in circumference with the Imperial City located in the centre of the Citadel which is more than 600m long on each side. Access to the Imperial City can be made by four entrance gates although the Noon Gate is only used for the King.

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ACCOMMODATION: Thanh Lich Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Cycle around the countryside, traditional wood painting lesson; drive to Hoi An

Travel to Trieu Son village with your local guide, located by the Perfume River on Hue's outskirts. Take a short walk in the village before bording a boat to travel 15 minutes upstream to Sinh Village. Hear, meet a local family that specializes in making wood paintings - they will teach you how to make these traditional artefacts. Take a leisurely cycle ride around the village and along countryside lanes to Thanh Tien village which is famous for paper flowers. Continuing through paddy fields and the Vietnam countryside, arrive at Tien Non village and board a cruise boat to journey back to Hue (total cycling distance is approximately 6km). In the afternoon, travel over the Truong Son Mountains and through the Hai Van Pass, as seen on the TV programme, Top Gear, to the historic merchant seaside town of Hoi An.



ACCOMMODATION: Hoi An Ancient House Resort (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Free in Hoi An; optional bike hire or visit the town's famous tailors

The day 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 and some priceless interaction with the locals. Visit the city's famous Japanese Bridge, before wandering through its 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, spend time at the beach, or grab the chance to visit some of Hoi An's famous tailor shops.



ACCOMMODATION: Hoi An Ancient House Resort (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Drive to Danang, fly to Ho Chi Minh City. Explore Old Saigon, and discover 'Secret Weapons Bunker'

The drive to Danang this morning takes you 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. On arrival in Danang, board the morning flight to Ho Chi Minh City, and meet your Ho Chi Minh guide at the airport.

Experience a different side of Ho Chi Minh City to the classic Old City tour. Cyclo drivers (cycle carriages with a seat at the front) will take you to District 3, turning off the main thoroughfare and into the maze of narrow streets of this bustling district. Descend the cyclos and walk through this eclectic area, navigating local markets selling anything from colourful fruit to bootleg DVDs, and ambling past

ramshackle shopfronts, houses, churches and schools, all squeezed into the small buildings that line the narrow alleys. It's a fascinating inter-connected community here that is a stones-throw from the city centre, yet feels a far cry from the modern buildings and throngs of tourists. Stop at a local stall for a traditional Vietnamese coffee (brewed coffee served sweet with condensed milk) and sample 'Banh Mi' - a Vietnamese take on the humble French baguette - freshly baked and packed with a combo of traditional and more exotic, aromatic ingredients.

The walk ends at the so-called 'secret weapons' bunker'. A small unassuming 'tube house' nestled in a quiet neighbourhood hides a trap door in the floor, concealing a basement stocked full of rifles, grenades and ammunition. The bunker played a key role in the TET Offensive of 1968, it was the base from which the Viet Cong's "Team 5" launched their assault, and its location was only revealed after the end of the war. Explore the house and bunker, filled with decommissioned weapons and photographs, news clippings and memorabilia from the wartime.

ACCOMMODATION: Huong Sen Annex Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

DAY 9 - Morning visit to Cu Chi Tunnels; Afternoon free with optional visit to a water park

After breakfast this morning, head out 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 and their American adversaries 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: Huong Sen Annex Hotel (or similar) Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 10 - Drive to the Mekong Delta, homestay and boat trip

Leaving the city, drive to Ben Tre, in the Mekong Delta. Surrounded with lush and fertile land the area is home to small villages and swaying coconut palms. Take a local ferry to Tam Hiep island where you will spend the night in a local homestay. After lunch, explore the local village by trishaw (a sort of rickshawstyle bike where the carriage is on the front of the bike), relaxing in the carriage as you move along the island roads to a farm that grows Suong Sam - a native plant in South East Asia which is used mostly in local refreshments. Pick the leaves and learn how to make a typical dessert jelly. After visiting the village, boart a sampan craft, a small traditional boat that is regularly used by villagers to travel along the delta, and return to the homestay via the coconut palm-lined canal. This evening, relax by the Mekong River before enjoying a typical Mekong delta dinner.

with shared facilities and dorm-style accommodation

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. Your local guide will also be staying with you in the homestay.



ACCOMMODATION: Ut Trinh & Ut Quynh Homestay (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Homestay



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

Leaving the homestay behind, cruise back along the Mekong delta passing small floating markets and soaking up the atmosphere of this unique trading point, a vast network of rivers and islands that crisscross agricultural villages, paddy fields and mangrove swamps. Bidding farewell to your boat crew, drive back to Ho Chi Minh City.

The aim is to be back at Ho Chi Minh City around 3pm, and as such the earliest that your flight can depart is 5pm. For those of you with later evening flights, a day use room will be provided before your transfer to the airport.

Why not extend your trip to Indochina with three nights on the tropical white sand beaches of Phu Quoc Island? Nestled in the warm waters of the Gulf of Thailand this Vietnamese island is 90% national park, a thick-rainforest interior framed by idyllic white sand beaches. Easily accessible by a short flight from Ho Chi Minh City, this is a great way to unwind after an action-packed trip in Indochina.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Climate and country information

Vietnam

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 | Plugs | Religion |
|------------------------|-------------|--|
| +7 | 2 Pin Round | Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism |
| Language | | |
| Vietnamese | | |

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Day 1 or 2: Hanoi Discover a unique part of Vietnamese culture at the Thang Ling water puppet theatre. Duration: Approx. 1 hour. USD \$7 per person

Day 7: Hoi An

Taking part in a cookery lesson is a great way for the whole family to get involved in learning about the complex flavours that makes Vietnamese food so delicious. Choose from a morning or afternoon cookery class. USD \$ 39 to USD \$45 per person.

Day 9 or 11: Ho Chi Minh City

Visit the Reunification palace USD \$2 per person.

Dam Sen Water Park, 31 slides and shoots and a large wave pool. Ideal for cooling down. Height restrictions apply for children. USD \$7 per person (entrance only, excludes transport to the park)

Clothing

From December through to February warmer clothing is needed for northern Vietnam, particularly at night. Throughout the rest of the year, days are typically hot and humid, so lighweight clothing is best. Rainwear is essential at all times of year. When visiting religious sites you will need to dress respectfully by covering your knees and shoulders.

Don't forget your swimsuit, as many of the hotels have swimming pools.

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, water bottle, insect repellent, high factor suncream, good quality sunglasses and a lip salve with sun protection. An overnight bag and swimming gear and towel is also recommended.

Tipping

Local crew

In Vietnam, tipping is a recognised part of life. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided, and if you feel the service warrants it then it is useful to keep some small denomination notes for tipping and small purchases.

With that in mind, we have provided some guidelines below which are, of course, discretionary:

Driver for a full day - \$5USD per family member Local guide for a full day tour - \$5-\$7USD per family member Local guide staying overnight (eg at the homestay) - \$7-\$10USD per family member Boat riders and hotel porters - \$1USD Local homestay - \$3USD per family member

Vietnam

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 | Beer price | Water price |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| £9 | £2.00 - 4.00 | £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

Credit card's are widely accepted throughout Vietnam

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are not recommended as they can be difficult to exchange

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bicycle, Boat, Car, Flight

Accommodation notes

During this trip we use a range of beautiful hotels with perfect locations to discover Vietnam' historic cities.

In Hanoi, the hotel is just a few steps away from the Old Quarter, with a rooftop pool, WiFi, restaurant and bar.

In Halong Bay, your hotel has a swimming pool, bar and all the amenities you'd expect such as a TV, WiFi, coffee/tea and restaurant.

In Hue, the centrally-located hotel has a swimming pool, WiFi, restaurant and is decorated in a traditional Vietnamese style.

In Hoi An the hotel has an adjoining spa, perfect for relaxing, as well as an infinity pool, traditional gardens and located halfway between the beach and the historic city, with shuttle buses available in both directions.

In Ho Chi Minh City, stay in the middle of the city, just a short walk away from markets, bars and restaurants. The hotel has a rooftop pool, WiFi, restaurant and bar.

Family swimming

It is possible to swim at many of the hotels during this trip, including Hoi An, Halong Bay and Ho Chi Minh City.

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety 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 citizens, check the latest Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office advice.

Please refer to our COVID-19 entry requirements page for any country-specific conditions of entry. Whilst we strive to update this on a regular basis we recommend you also check the FCDO website for the latest advice on entry requirements in this fast-evolving situation. Information can change at any time.

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.

Price Guarantee

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 and Passport Information

Until 30th June 2021 '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.

Visa's are required for citizens of the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. eVisa's can be applied for via https://evisa.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn

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 be able to apply 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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

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 receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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.

Ability to swim

An ability to swim is essential for your safe enjoyment of the water based activities on this trip. If you wish to participate in these activities then we insist that you are able to swim.

Vietnam

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. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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 Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

HANOI 🕀 City tour, optional cooking class HALONG BAY Junk boat cruise Limestone caves VIETNAM **GULF OF TONKIN** Hai Van Pass HUE 🕀 Historic Martial arts. Danang port kite flying and making HOI AN Boat ride. LAOS wood painting, cycle ride

Additional Information



Tour Staff

Unlike our group tours our private journeys do not have a Tour Leader. However, you are still in safe hands as we work closely with our expert local suppliers on the planning and organisation of your holiday to ensure that you have a fantastic time. You'll be met on arrival in Hanoi by one of our english-speaking local guides, who will go through your holiday details and answer any questions you may have. The guides at each location throughout your trip are excellent, and will help to bring the destination to life. At times you may travel unaccompanied, for example when on domestic flights, but you will have all the information that you need to explore and there is always the reassurance that you have someone on hand with our 24/7 emergency contact number.

Why book this trip

This holiday is designed for families who want to explore a specific country in South East Asia and enjoy travelling on a variety of transport options - bus, boat, flight and bicycle. There are a number of easy active elements to this adventure including trying out Vietnam's answer to Kung Fo, kite flying and cycling through paddy fields - 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.



