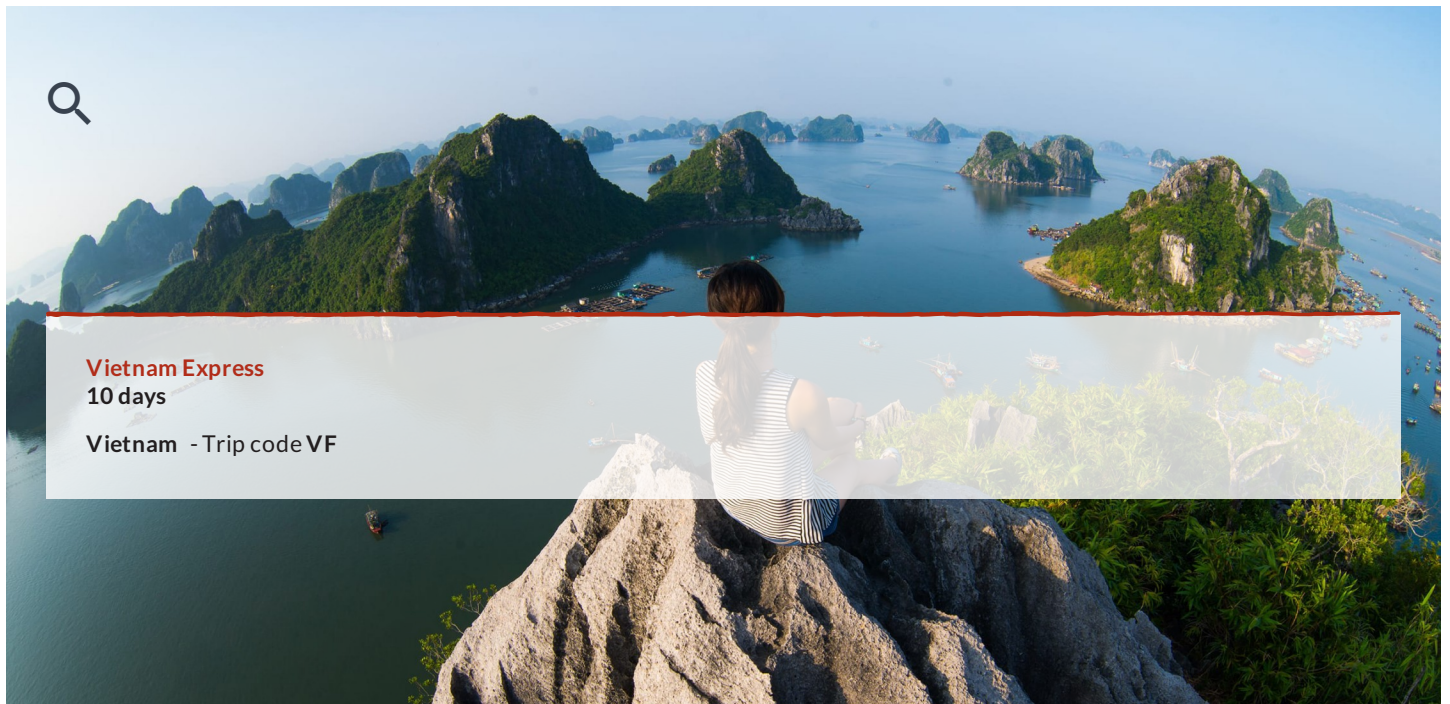


# EXPLORE!



**Vietnam Express**

10 days

Vietnam - Trip code VF

## Vietnam Express

Experience the highlights of this fascinating country on a fast-paced trip that travels the length of Vietnam. Wander through the streets of the charming Old Quarter of Hanoi, experience travel on an overnight train, discover ancient Hoi An and cruise through the myriad of waterways in the tropical Mekong Delta, all inside of 10 days.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Halong Bay** - Cruise through the towering limestone cliffs on a traditional junk boat.
- ★ **Hue** - Discover the Imperial Citadel and take a boat along the Perfume River.
- ★ **Hoi An** - Stay in this charming merchant's town with its Chinese-influenced architecture.
- ★ **Ho Chi Minh City** - Explore modern Saigon before stepping back in time in the traditional Mekong Delta.

### 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:**

**12 - 18**

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

Arrive in Hanoi and after checking into the hotel, the rest of the day is free at leisure. You may wish to take a gentle stroll around the beautiful Hoan Kiem Lake, or perhaps negotiate the narrow streets, shops and noodle stands of the Old Quarter.



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



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 2 - Discover the sights of Hanoi including the Old Quarter

This morning we set off to discover Vietnam's capital. Hanoi is a multifaceted city offering a wealth of experiences, we find wide tree-lined boulevards with charming colonial buildings and trendy shops in the French Quarter, whilst the Old Quarter offers up a distinctly more Vietnamese experience - narrow streets filled with street-food vendors, craft stalls, and of course Hanoi's most famous form of transport - mopeds! After some time spent discovering the Old Quarter and its various streets, named after the goods sold there (Basket Street, Paper Street, Silk Street) we continue onto the precarious one-pillar Pagoda, before visiting the Presidential Palace. Interestingly, 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 in the grounds.

After finishing our tour we make our way to back to the hotel, where the remainder of the afternoon is at leisure.



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



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Free time in Hanoi, then drive to Halong Bay

We have some free time in Hanoi this morning, you may wish to visit Ho Chi Minh's austere mausoleum, an interesting piece of architecture resembling Lenin's in Moscow, or perhaps dive into one of the city's many noodle bars to sample Vietnam's favourite dish - Pho (a tasty rice noodle soup made with meat, fresh chillies and vegetables) . You could also choose to explore the city via one of its more traditional methods; on a cyclo-rickshaw ride through the narrow streets and lanes of Hanoi.

Later this afternoon we head out of the city and onto the coast as we drive to Halong Bay.



**Accommodation: Royal Lotus Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Cruise Halong Bay; from Hanoi overnight train to Hué

We head out on a traditional junk boat this morning for a cruise amongst the towering limestone karsts and jade-green waters of Halong Bay. Legend has it that a furious dragon descended down from the mountains to chase out northern invaders, and the action of the mammoth creature diving into the sea caused this remarkable geological seascape. In fact the word Halong literally translates to descending dragon. We have chance to learn the stories and folklore that adds to the mystical atmosphere of the Bay, as well as stopping at a grotto beneath towering cliffs and perhaps visit a beach. We will stop for a fresh seafood lunch before disembarking and returning to a hotel in Hanoi to freshen up before boarding the Reunification Express to Hue.

Overnight trains are an enjoyable and efficient way to travel across Vietnam, and you will stay in either 4 berth or 6 berth cabins, dependant on availability. Bedding is provided and toilets are available at either end of each carriage.



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



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

## DAY 5 - In Hué; visit Imperial city and cruise on the Perfume River

We arrive into the central city this morning, with some time to relax and re-energise before heading out to learn about Hue's fascinating history. We will start with a visit to the Imperial Citadel which was built by the Nguyen dynasty, Vietnam's ruling emperors from the early 1800s to 1945. Much of the citadel has been copied from the Forbidden City in Beijing, and the formal moats and impressive ramparts were thought to be constructed by some 20,000 men. 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 then make our way to the Perfume River, cruising down the river to the towering seven storied Thien Mu Pagoda.



**Accommodation: Thanh Lich Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 6 - Scenic drive over Hai Van Pass to Hoi An; explore the old town on foot

This morning we continue south, this time by road as we enjoy a scenic drive across the spectacular Col des Nuages, otherwise known as the Hai Van Pass. This winding mountain road passes scenes of thatched wooden houses and lime-green rice paddies as it snakes its way across the mountains before we catch our first glimpse of panoramic sea views. We stop at the nearby five peaks of the Marble Mountains, said to represent the five elements of water, wood, fire, gold and earth. Naturally formed grottoes have been transformed into heavily carved Buddhist sanctuaries here. A short distance from the mountains we find the white sands of My Khe Beach (nicknamed China Beach by American troops) - an ideal spot for a brief rest before reaching our destination - the UNESCO World Heritage town of Hoi An.

This afternoon we have planned an orientation walk of this charming merchant town, taking in the wonderful architecture of the Japanese Bridge, as well as visiting some of the Chinese temples and meeting halls in the Old Town.



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



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 7 - Free day to explore Hoi An; optional visit to My Lai

The historic, merchant town of Hoi An had become one of the busiest international trading ports of Southeast Asia by the 17th and 18th centuries. First colonised by the Portuguese in the 16th century, it still retains its old world charm today, with many of its old buildings superbly preserved. The day is free to explore at leisure. There are many shops, bars and restaurants in this charming town and it is a great place to buy souvenirs, have clothing tailored or simply watch the world go by in a riverside café. You may wish to take an optional excursion out to the site of the My Lai village massacre memorial. The massacre was a significant turning point in the American War and the horrific story is told through a very emotive photographic exhibition.



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



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 8 - Fly to Ho Chi Minh City; Afternoon walking tour

This morning we transfer to Danang, where we take our flight to the south of Vietnam, into Ho Chi Minh City. Heavily bombed during the Vietnam war, Saigon (as it is still often referred to by locals) displays a curious mix of old and new, with French colonial buildings and traditional Vietnamese architecture vying for space with gleaming new skyscrapers. We plan to visit some of these buildings this afternoon, including the beautiful Notre Dame Cathedral and GPO office, as well as some of the old French Colonial hotels such as The Rex. We will also have the chance to visit the graphic War Remnants Museum, offering up a very different side of the story compared to Hollywood's depiction of the Vietnam War.



**Accommodation: Asian Ruby Luxury Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 9 - Full day exploring the Mekong Delta by boat, trishaws and on foot.

Today we leave city behind as we drive into the myriad of waterways that make up the Mekong Delta. Offering a rich and fertile plateau upon which to farm, the Mekong Delta is hubbub of activity, with farmers exploiting its lush agricultural properties, and fisherman catching the Mekong's plentiful supply of freshwater fish. We plan to visit a floating market in the town of My Tho, a wonderful experience where traders offer their fresh produce of exotic fruits, vegetables and fish from a variety of sampans (small Chinese wooden boats) placed along the river. We take a ferry to a nearby village which we explore by trishaws, and later we board sampans to cruise along the narrow, palm-tree lined canals that run off from the main veins of the Delta. Finally we plan to visit a local family-run business based around produce from the humble coconut, before driving back to Ho Chi Minh City late in the afternoon.



**Accommodation: Asian Ruby Luxury Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

## DAY 10 - Trip ends in Ho Chi Minh City

Trip ends in Ho Chi Minh City after breakfast.

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

## Why not extend your trip?

Top off your Vietnamese experience with 3 nights on the beautiful white sand beaches of Phu Quoc Island, when adding on our [Phu Quoc Beach extension](#).

### Why book this trip

This trip is ideal if you are limited on time but still wish to experience the highlights of this fascinating and diverse country. It is a fast-paced tour that takes in the '5 H's' of bustling Hanoi, beautiful Halong Bay, imperial Hue, ancient Hoi An, and modern Ho Chi Minh City. We also visit the Mekong Delta, with a chance to experience rural Vietnamese life, virtually unchanged for centuries. The trip is based in our standard range of accommodation, and contains a good mix of included excursions, with some free time to relax or explore at your own pace.



# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 8  
Lunch: 2



## Transport

Bus  
Boat  
Flight  
Train



## Trip staff

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



## Accommodation

8 nights standard hotel  
1 nights simple overnight train

# Trip information

## 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

+7

#### Plugs

2 Pin Round

#### Religion

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.

Hanoi - Water Puppets Show from US\$ 5; Cyclo tour of Old Quarter US\$ 6  
Hoi An - Cookery class US\$ 30  
Hoi An - Full day trip to the UNESCO temples of My Son US\$ 24  
Hoi An - Half Day cycle through countryside - US \$22

## Clothing

From December through to February warmer clothing is needed for the North. Days are hot and humid. Lightweight rainwear essential at all times. The northern region is cold at night during the winter.

## Footwear

Comfortable shoes, trainers and sandals.

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main lockable bag/case, a soft-sided holdall will be easier due to the variety of transport on this trip.

## Equipment

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); torch, and don't forget mosquito repellent (no need for a mosquito net as when necessary, it is provided).

## 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\$ 30.

## Country Information

### 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

£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**

Credit cards are widely accepted throughout Vietnam

**Travellers Cheques**

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

## 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.

### 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

Vietnam: 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.

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.

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 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, 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.

## 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.