

EXPLORE!



BEST SELLER

Inside Vietnam

VIETNAM - TRIP CODE VN

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

Traveling along 2,000 miles of coastline we experience spectacular landscapes, try fresh and tasty local food, explore UNESCO-listed towns and learn about the ancient and modern history on this epic journey across Vietnam.

- **Hanoi** - Wander through the bustling narrow streets of the Old Quarter
- **Hue** - Explore the magnificent Imperial Citadel and cruise along the Perfume River
- **Mekong Delta** - Take a sampan along palm-lined canals and barter for exotic fruit.



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 12
Lunch: 2
Dinner: 1



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



TRANSPORT
Bus
Boat
Flight
Train



ACCOMMODATION
1 nights simple
homestay
11 nights
comfortable hotel
1 nights simple
overnight train



TRIP PACE:
Moderate



GROUP SIZE:
12 - 18

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join tour in Hanoi

Arrive Hanoi and check-in at the hotel. The remainder of the day is free to make your first impressions of the Vietnam's capital city. You may choose to take a walk around the shores of Hoan Kiem Lake.



ACCOMMODATION:
Nesta Hanoi Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

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

This morning we make a tour of the main sights of Hanoi. 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 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 in the grounds. This walk through the narrow lanes of the fascinating Old Quarter, where the streets are named after various crafts

or specialties: Paper Street, Silk Street, Basket Street and so on. The shops themselves have very narrow frontages but are actually quite deep; they are known locally as tube shops. On the pavements food sellers sell noodles, snacks and stir-fries from shoulder panniers. The smell of food mixes with the smell of incense from small temples dotted around.



ACCOMMODATION:
Nesta Hanoi Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable 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 perhaps to visit some of the many museums or Ho Chi Minh's austere mausoleum, which resembles Lenin's in Moscow. Afterwards we drive out towards the iconic Halong Bay in the Gulf of Tonkin. Thousands of jagged limestone islands 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.



ACCOMMODATION:
New Star Ha Long 2 Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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

This morning we enjoy the romantic scenery of Halong Bay on a cruise amongst the islands. We'll have the chance to stop at a grotto beneath towering cliffs and perhaps visit a beach. It is interesting to see the curious assortment of tourist boats, traditional junks and wooden sampans gliding through the waters. We enjoy a seafood lunch on board the boat, before returning to a hotel in Hanoi to freshen up before boarding the Reunification Express to Hué.



ACCOMMODATION:
Overnight train from Hanoi to Hue



Grade: Simple Overnight Train



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

DAY 5 - In Hué; boat along Perfume River to Thien Mu Pagoda

We arrive in Hué, one of the great cultural and religious centres of Vietnam, a quietly impressive place. The Perfume River divides the city in two and has been the inspiration for poets and painters for many centuries. This afternoon we to take a trip by boat along the Perfume River from Hué to the Thien Mu Pagoda. This serene temple is the oldest in Hué and also the symbol of the city.



ACCOMMODATION:
Thanh Lich Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 6 - In Hué, visit the Imperial Citadel; free afternoon

This morning we appreciate Hué's fascinating history with a visit to the Imperial Citadel. Located on the left bank of the river, this 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. The remainder of the day is free to perhaps explore some of the outlying Tombs of the Emperors.



ACCOMMODATION:
Thanh Lich Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Scenic drive via Danang to Hoi An

Early this morning there is the option to drive out to the peaceful setting of Tu Hieu Pagoda, nestled in a pine forest a short distance outside the city. Here we can witness the morning chanting before taking part in a meditation lesson led by the head monk. The monk will explain how meditation is central to Buddhism, promoting peace of mind and a healthy mental balance. He will then lead a meditation session for us in the quiet back-corner of the temple. We return to Hue for breakfast, before driving on to Hoi An.

We enjoy a scenic drive across the spectacular Col des Nuages, otherwise known as the Hai Van Pass observing rural scenes of thatched, wooden houses and lime-green rice paddies as well as enjoying panoramic sea views. Pausing in Danang, once the centre of the Kingdom of Champa (2nd century AD - 1720) we visit the Cham Museum, home to a fine collection of Cham sculptures. Our next stop is 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. 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. Finally we reach our destination - the UNESCO World Heritage town of Hoi An.



ACCOMMODATION:
Vinh Hung 2 Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - 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 medieval charm today, with many of its old buildings superbly preserved. The day is free to explore at leisure. You may choose to visit the Japanese Bridge or some of the Chinese temples and meeting halls in the Old Town. 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 exhibition of photography.

Another option would be to take a fishing trip out to the Thu Bon River Delta, where we learn how to fish using a traditional cast net. Travelling out by boat we meet local fisherman and try our hand at cast net fishing as well as trying the bamboo winches used to haul in the huge drop nets from the river. We also have a chance to go out in a Vietnamese 'basket boat' - a circular boat constructed from bamboo that takes a little practice to row!



ACCOMMODATION:
Vinh Hung 2 Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 9 - Visit to ancient My Son; free afternoon in Hoi An

A further day is spent based in this lovely historic town. This morning we take an excursion to the holiest and most evocative of Vietnam's Cham sites, My Son. The Chams were dynastic lords who rejected the authority of China in 2AD and established their own kingdom. Although they benefited from strong sea links with the rest of Southeast 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 track that leads to the site is slow and bumpy through wooded hills, but the site is certainly impressive with several groupings of Cham temples to be visited. Nowhere are the fine masonry skills of the Chams more evident than at My Son, despite the fact that much of the site was bombed in the 1960s. The afternoon is free to enjoy Hoi An further. A cookery class at one of Hoi An's restaurants is a popular choice, as is the lantern-making workshop where you can learn how to make the beautiful lanterns that are ubiquitous in Hoi An. The beach is only a short drive by taxi alternatively a boat trip on the river as the late afternoon sun lights up the riverfront is a treat.



ACCOMMODATION:
Vinh Hung 2 Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 10 - Fly to Ho Chi Minh City; drive to Mekong Delta

After a short drive to Danang Airport we fly to Ho Chi Minh City, from where we drive further south to Ben Tre in the Mekong Delta. Surrounded with lush and fertile land the area is home to small villages and

swaying coconut palms. We take a local ferry to a nearby village, which we explore by trishaw. Later we board sampans, which are small Chinese wooden boats, and cruise along the narrow canals that shoot off the main vein of the Mekong River. After lunch at a local house we have some free time to explore the area further. Finally we return to Ben Tre by boat where we spend the night in a local homestay, with shared facilities and dorm-style accommodation.



ACCOMMODATION:
Local House in Ben Tre (or similar)



Grade: Simple Homestay



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 11 - Mekong Delta cruise, then drive to Ho Chi Minh City

We spend the morning exploring the Nuoc Trong canal in the Mekong Delta, meeting some hard working locals, perhaps with time to see coconut processing and trading. We also have options to walk or cycle along the canal to explore further. Later on we drive back to Ho Chi Minh City.



ACCOMMODATION:
Alagon Central Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 12 - In Ho Chi Minh City; explore Old Saigon, and discover 'Secret Weapons Bunker'

This morning we walk around the central sights of Old Saigon, now 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 drive to the Independence Palace (renamed the Reunification Hall) and the graphic War Remnants Museum.

This afternoon we will experience a different side of Ho Chi Minh City, away from the major sights where we take a walk through Old Saigon's back alleys. We make our way to District 3 and turn off the main thoroughfare and into the maze of narrow streets of this bustling district. Our walk takes us past ramshackle shopfronts, through local markets selling anything from colourful fruit to bootleg DVDs, and past 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. We stop at a local stall for a traditional Vietnamese coffee (brewed coffee served sweet with condensed milk) where we can also 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 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. We have some time to explore the house and bunker, filled with decommissioned weapons and photographs, news clippings and memorabilia from the wartime.



ACCOMMODATION:
Alagon Central Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 13 - From Ho Chi Minh City, visit Cu Chi Tunnels

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 remainder of the afternoon is free.



ACCOMMODATION:
Alagon Central Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 14 - Tour ends in Ho Chi Minh City

Tour ends after breakfast. If you have time you may wish to pick up some last minute bargains at one of the city's markets.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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\$ 6; 'Cyclo' tour of Old Quarter US\$ 8

Hue - Morning meditation Class in Tu Hieu Pagoda US\$ 50

Hoi An - Cookery class - US\$ 30, Half day cycle through the countryside - US \$ 22, Half day fishing experience - US \$48 , Full day trip to the UNESCO temples of My Son : US\$ 24

The prices stated are based on a minimum number of participants (usually 5-6). Please be aware that the optional excursions can run with fewer people but the price may be higher. Likewise, a slightly reduced price may be applicable where the participation greater. The prices listed are generally only entrance fees and do not include the price of transport to and from the excursion, Your Explore Leader will quote this when you are on tour, as the price for transport will depend on the number of participants.

These excursions are generally run via our agent in the country. Local companies may offer similar excursions at a cheaper price. Should you want to use these companies please be aware that a lower price may mean that not all costs are included (entrance fees etc.) or services will not operate at the same safety and quality standards.

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, an overnight bag for your trips to Halong Bay and the Mekong delta when your main luggage is left behind and a daypack.

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\$ 35.

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

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 [\ul \ulnone](#)

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 [\ul \ulnone](#)

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.³

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 now 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.

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.

Additional Information



Why not extend your trip?

Our **Inside Vietnam with Cambodia extension** combines this trip with the highlights of Cambodia in a 3 week adventure through Indochina. Or if you'd prefer some rest and relaxation after your trip, why not add on the **Phu Quoc beach extension?**

Why book this trip

As one of our best selling holidays this classic highlights tour takes you from North to South through this enormously diverse country. You will discover the contrasting five 'H's of Vietnam which include Halong Bay, Hanoi, Hue, Hoi An and Ho Chi Ming City as well as head into the Mekong Delta, where you can experience local life in the region with a night in a homestay. We include plenty of sightseeing as well as some free time for you to fill as you please as you journey through this increasingly popular destination.

Reviews



AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS



PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE



AIRPORT
TRANSFERS