

**Classic Vietnam
From South to North
8 days/7 nights
Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang- Hoi An, Hanoi & Ha Long Bay**

Day 1: Ho Chi Minh City

After clearing customs procedures and collecting your luggage at the Tan Son Nhat International Airport, our tour guide will meet you at the airport exit to welcome and transfer you by private vehicle to your Hotel for check-in. The rest of day is at leisure for you to rest and relax or to start the discovery of this fascinating city on your own. Saigon is surely one of the most evocative places in Asia and definitely one of the most extraordinary cities in the world. The most Western of Vietnam's cities, Ho Chi Minh City (also affectionately known as Saigon) has a population of 8 million, and a booming free-market economy. It is a city of amazing contrasts: elegant new international hotels, exclusive restaurants and trendy bars side-by-side with roadside noodle stalls, street children and vociferous motorcyclists. Golf courses, bowling alleys and shopping malls vie for space with fruit and vegetable markets, pagodas and karaoke rooms. Bustling, booming, crowded, noisy - all words that barely scratch the surface of the addictive and often mesmerizing chaos that is Saigon. And yet there are the elegant colonial French boulevards and buildings, the Cathedral, the riverfront, the quiet moments at a sidewalk cafe watching the world literally go by you at breakneck speed. Saigon! A city that is almost indescribable and completely unforgettable. Accommodation in Ho Chi Minh.

Day 2: Ho Chi Minh City

This morning, visit Cu Chi Tunnels where you will discover a vast underground network of tunnels built first as a defense against the French, and later expanded during the American war. It was from here that the North Vietnamese waged their guerrilla warfare and you will marvel at their ingenuity and resilience. See secret trapdoors, underground kitchens, living areas and meeting rooms. The more adventurous may explore the deeper second, and even third level tunnels. For those preferring to remain above ground, there is ample opportunity to view excavated areas from above. Your guide will advise you of the length and level of difficulty of each tunnel before entering although some are easily accessed by stairs. We recommend good walking shoes and sun protection for this tour and advise that you may get a little dirty! Return to Saigon for a late lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon, visit the former Presidential Palace, which is now preserved as a museum, including the underground communications bunkers, headquarters for the Saigon Government during the American War. Continue to the History Museum (*closed every Monday*), which houses an excellent display tracing the origins of the indigenous Vietnamese. Visit Notre Dame, an impressive neo-Romanesque cathedral in the center of city, the 'wedding cake' styled Hotel de Ville and Dong Khoi Street, formerly the center of haute couture in Saigon when it was known as Rue Catinat. Continue with your guide to visit the nearby Central Market (Ben Thanh Market) where you will wander the colorful stalls and stands of this central area of local trade and commerce. We also walk along Le Cong Kieu Street, also known as 'Antique Street' and view the vast array of wares for sale.

Early this evening (6:00pm), take a night excursion, a street food adventure tour by motor scooter. Your motor-scooter driver will pick up you at hotel and first stop at a local Café to "watch the world go by" and enjoy a cocktail and appetizer (included) before venturing into a favorite local eating spot. You will experience the nightlife of Saigon; the way locals do, all from the back of a vintage scooter. The tour will start with a ride to China Town and then heading to District 4 through busy streets and alleys to see the local nightlife of and enjoy street seafood and cold drinks. Leaving district 4 to district 3 the tour pass through downtown district 1 to take in the sights on the way to Banh Xeo, a street snack and a specialty of Saigon. Then the tour will continue to a hidden Vietnamese-style coffee shop to have a taste of Vietnamese live music like locals do. After this the tour will bring you to a lively bar club to enjoy the drinks with live music. Overnight in Ho Chi Minh. [B/L/D]

Day 3: Ho Chi Minh - Da Nang – Hoi An.

After breakfast, transfer to the Tan Son Nhat Airport to board a morning flight to Da Nang. Arrival and transfer from Da Nang Airport to Hoi An Ancient Town for lunch at a local restaurant. In the afternoon, enjoy an excursion to the unique trading town of Hoi An a city cut off from civilization because of destroyed rail roads and a silted river, leaving it untouched by war and frozen in time. Visit architecture reminiscent of traders of bygone eras - Japanese, French, Chinese, and Indian, as well as beautifully preserved ancient houses. No cars are allowed to pass through Hoi An, rendering it an excellent walking village. Visit the local center

market, a unique Japanese covered bridge and a Chinese communal house. You may shop for art at one of the numerous galleries and enjoy the riverside ambience. The rest of this afternoon is at leisure for you to relax on the beach, explore the city on your own or go shopping what you like! Overnight in Hoi An [B/L]

Day 4: Hoi An's countryside.

This morning enjoy a bicycle tour into the very heart of rural Hoi An for a special insight into the everyday life of a local village community. The small settlement of Cam Thanh, nestled among seemingly endless rice fields, allows the visitor to experience first hand the very backbone of Vietnam's rural culture. The short bicycle ride through the deepest countryside of the village will be one of the highlights of your time in Vietnam – this unique glimpse into the rural lives of the villagers is a sight that very few visitors will see – and in turn you will delight the local people with your presence on their most favored form of transportation – the humble bicycle! Depending on the season, you will have the opportunity to see the local farming community threshing and harvesting. The afternoon is at leisure for you to relax on beach, explore the city on your own or lose yourself shopping around! Overnight in Hoi An. [B]

Day 5: Hoi An – Da Nang – Hanoi

The morning is at leisure. In the afternoon, a drive to Da Nang Airport for a flight to Hanoi, Vietnam's capital, described by almost all who go there as "an old-fashioned city". Old-fashioned in style, it is a city of lakes, parks, trees, villas, mansions and an area called the Old French Quarter where crumbling houses are crammed into narrow alleyways that are still named after the goods that were traded there - Silk Street, Gold Street, even Fried Fish Street! Old-fashioned in atmosphere, Hanoi has sidewalk cafes, pavement barbers, wide tree-lined bicycle-filled boulevards and elegant colonial French mansions. The grandeur and solemnity of Ho Chi Minh's monumental Mausoleum, the incongruous rustic simplicity of the house in which 'Uncle Ho' lived out his final years, the barely concealed misery of the Hoa Lo Prison, the 'Hanoi Hilton' where so many prisoners of war were incarcerated, the religious pride that constructed the beautiful temple of Literature compound - it's all here in Hanoi, a microcosm of the Vietnamese culture. Arrival transfer by private vehicle to check-in at your hotel. Early this evening, your "cyclo" (Pedi-cab) awaits you for a transfer to the theatre where the ancient and unique art form of water puppetry is enacted. The 'stage' is a pool of water in which the hidden puppeteer must stand (waist deep!) to skillfully maneuver dancing puppets attached to bamboo poles on its surface. Each short skit in the performance relates to the daily life of the people, and, some sketches feature scenes like 'Returning from School after Graduation' or 'Rearing Ducks and Chasing Foxes'. Following the performance, transfer by private vehicle to dinner in one of Hanoi's many superb Vietnamese restaurants. Overnight in Hanoi. [B/D]

Day 6: Hanoi's countryside

For early risers there is an opportunity to depart the hotel very early and visit the fresh vegetable wholesale market named Cho Rau Dau Cau, which operates daily from 04:00-06:00am. This is where the farmers from the countryside bring their produce to the city for sale. Next visit the lively and very colorful flower market (Cho Hoa), which is a photographers' delight. Continue into the center of Hanoi to the famous Hoan Kiem Lake, and take an early morning walk around the lake, a popular place for the Hanoi locals to socialize and enjoy their early morning exercises. There is an opportunity for the energetic to join with the locals in some Tai Chi – a form of martial art also used for health exercises. Wander through the streets of Hanoi's old quarter as the city comes to life, and take a break for a traditional Vietnamese coffee, by the lake, with the locals before returning to your hotel for breakfast. After breakfast, visit Ho Chi Minh's complex including the outside of the Mausoleum*. The tomb is monumental, built of marble, granite and precious wood. Behind the Mausoleum is Ho Chi Minh's house. The simple house where Ho Chi Minh lived and worked is made of wood and enjoyed a tranquil setting, with a view of a lotus pond. Ho Chi Minh's belongings are on display and visitors can walk up the steps of his house to see his bedroom. Close by, you will see a famous pagoda built in the 11th Century named the One Pillar Pagoda.

Continue to visit the Temple of Literature, founded in 1070, an excellent example of traditional Vietnamese architecture. The pagoda housed Vietnam's first university, which was established in 1076 to educate the sons of Mandarins. The temple, dedicated to Confucius, consists of 5 walled courtyards leading to a pavilion where 82 stelae of an original 117 record the names and places of birth of successful candidates of the grueling mandarin examinations from 1498 to 1787, the years of the Ly dynasty. The stelae sit on the backs of giant turtles, symbol of longevity; these emblems along with the crane, another creature denoting longevity, are also found in the main red-lacquered temple nearby.

In the afternoon, enjoy an orientation tour along the tree-lined streets of Hanoi, resplendent with French colonial architecture, including the recently restored Opera House, a magnificent 900-seat Municipal Theatre built in 1911 and the jewel of French colonial architecture. Originally modeled as a smaller version of the Great Paris Opera House, it was from the balcony of this wonderfully restored French colonial building that the Viet Minh-run committee of citizens announced that it had taken over the city on 16 August 1945. Pass by Hoan Kiem Lake, also known as Lake of the Restored Sword, from the legend that surrounds it, en-route to one of the city's fascinating museums (Army, History or Fine Arts, depending on your preference).

Then enjoy a walking tour (approx. 1 hour) of the Ancient Quarter or 36 Streets District. This densely populated corner of the city was once a center of commerce where goods were sold under the street name of a particular guild. Still a thriving community of sellers today, you will see street names such as Sugar Street, Tin Street and Paper Street. Ancient homes and temples are interspersed with stores in this souvenir hunter's paradise! Overnight in Hanoi. [B/D]

**Note: the mausoleum is only open in the mornings and is closed all day on Mondays and Fridays. It is also closed to all visitors during the months of October & November)*

Day 7: Hanoi, Ha Long Bay

After breakfast at your hotel, drive to Ha Long Bay for an overnight cruise on the Bay (Note: the transfer from Hanoi to Ha Long Bay takes approx. 3.5 hours. All boats' embark time is approx. 12:30pm)

Ha Long Bay is often called Vietnam's eighth wonder of the world and once visited, it is hard to dispute that claim. Three thousand spectacular limestone outcroppings, cliffs, arches and coves compete for space in an area that is without doubt the most outstandingly naturally beautiful in the country - an incomparable coastal scenery. We hire a traditional sailing junk (joining basis) and meander through the area whose name translates as 'Where the Dragon Descends into the Sea', stop off at an islet and climb through a series of breathtaking caves and grottoes, marveling at some of the most impressive stalactite and stalagmite formations anywhere in the world. Upon arrival at Ha Long City, embark on a traditional junk boat and enjoy a delicious fresh seafood lunch on board while cruising on the Bay. During the cruise, enjoy the solitude and beauty of the bay, marveling at its formations before watching the sun go down on the deck of the boat. Pause for a swim and kayaking (not included). Dinner is served onboard. Your accommodation tonight is on board the junk boat allowing for a peaceful night sleep and a memorable morning out on the bay. [B/L/D]

Day 8: Ha Long Bay – Hanoi - USA

Enjoy breakfast on board in the still of the morning before cruising the more outer reaches of Bai Tu Long Bay and exploring its numerous caves and channels. After checkout (at approx. 10:00am to 11:00am), return to shore and journey back to Hanoi's airport for your departure flight**. [B]

[B] = Breakfast | [B/L] = Breakfast and Lunch |

[B/L/D] = Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

** Notes:

- *Above cruise itinerary is subject to change without prior notice and depends on weather condition!*
- *Transfer from Ha Long Bay to Hanoi Airport takes approx. 3.5 hours and check-in time for International flights is normally minimum 2 hours prior to departure.*

Remark: *Itinerary and activities are subject to change depending on road, weather conditions, river water levels, local condition and confirmed flight.*

Tour includes:

- Private transfers as listed
- 7 nights accommodation:
 - Ho Chi Minh City – 2 nights
 - Hoi An – 2 nights
 - Ha Long Bay- 1 night
 - Hanoi – 2 nights
- Meals
 - Breakfast daily
 - 4 lunches
 - 3 dinners
- All entrance fees for included sightseeing
- 2-days Ha Long Bay junk cruise (sit-in basis)
- Land transportation as described
- English speaking local station guides
- Bottle of water and cool towel provided during transfers
- Vietnam Government tax and services charges.

Price does not include:

- International and domestic airfares*
- Vietnam visas & processing fees (\$45 & \$20 net per person including photo)
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Drinks with meals or others
- Travel Insurance or expenses of a personal nature (minibar, phone call, laundry, etc.)
- Hotels' early check- in (before 2pm) or late check-out (after 12:00 pm)
- Peak season surcharge and compulsory meals on Christmas and New Year Eve (to be advised)
- Entrance fees or extra charges for any optional activities or extra sightseeing not mentioned as included in the above itinerary.
- Tips to guides, drivers, crew and hotel/restaurant staff



Hotels in your tour

City	Hotel Name	Room Type	Tripadvisor
First Class (4 star)			
Ho Chi Minh City	Grand Hotel	Premium Deluxe	4
Hoi An	Hoi An Essence Hotel	Deluxe with Balcony	5
Ha Long Bay	Pelican Cruise Vessel	Deluxe cabin	4.5
Hanoi	Silk Path Hotel in Hanoi	Premium Deluxe	4.5
Deluxe (5 star)			
Ho Chi Minh City	New World Hotel	Deluxe	4
Hoi An	Hotel Royal Hoi An	Deluxe	5
Ha Long Bay	Paradise Luxury Vessel	Deluxe cabin	5
Hanoi	Pan Pacific Ha Noi	Luxury	4.5

Hotels may be substituted by others of similar category at time of reservation

Tour Prices:

Category	Season	Double	Triple	Single
First Class	01 November '17 - 31 March '17 & 01 - 31 October '17	\$1,529	\$2,035	\$1,365
	01 April - 30 September '17	\$1,455	\$1,895	\$1,289
Deluxe	01 November '17 - 31 March '17 & 01 - 31 October '17	\$1,835	\$2,629	\$1,675
	01 April - 30 September '17	\$1,745	\$2,465	\$1,579
Domestic airfares*	Saigon to Da Nang & Da Nang to Hanoi*	Economy class		\$290
		Business class		\$360

Prices are per person and may change without notice.

* Domestic airfares may be partially absorbed within the international itinerary. Check with your travel agent or Holidays with Downtown

Supplements:

Compulsory Dinners	
Christmas Eve (24Dec16)	\$129
New Year's Eve (31Dec16)	\$129
Peak Season Supplements	
Hotel Royal Hoi An - From 24 Dec. 2016 to 1 Jan. 2017	\$25
Paradise Luxury Boat in Ha Long Bay - From 20 Dec. 2016 to 5 Jan. 2017	\$85
Pelican Cruise in Ha Long Bay - 24 & 31 Dec. 2016	\$25

Tour Code: VT01SGN17DA