

Highlights of Vietnam: From South to North | 11 Days



Stretching over 3,200 kilometers in length with countless mountains, rivers, forests and beaches, Vietnam is one of Asia's most diverse and fascinating countries. Introducing you to the country's three main regions and Vietnam's most visited destination – Ho Chi Minh City – Mekong Delta in the south, Hue – Hoi An – My Son – Danang in the centre and Hanoi – Halong Bay in the north. This 11-day Vietnam tour starts with the beauty and the vibrancy of the south and continues to the historic charm of the central provinces before concluding with the natural splendour of the north.

Trip Highlights

- Explore bustling Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City
- Cruise on Ha Long Bay to view otherworldly limestones mountains
- Visit the charming UNESCO town of Hoi An
- Marvel the beauty of Mekong Delta
- Revel in the rustic charm of ancient kingdom of Hoa Lu
- Explore My Son sanctuary – UNESCO Heritage site

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Ho Chi Minh City

Welcome to Vietnam! Upon arrival, meet by *travel-to-nature Asia* representative/guide and transfer to your hotel. Please look out for your name-card once you exit out of arrival area.

The rest of the day is at your leisure.

Accommodation: Paragon Saigon Hotel

Day 2: Mekong Delta Floating Market

The colorful floating market, vast emerald rice fields and lush back waterways; these are the things that make Cai Be such a desired destination. This morning, we leave bustling Ho Chi Minh for the 2 hour drive to the delta town of Cai Be.

On arrival we board a boat for cruise in the Delta's waterways and start our journey by passing by Cai Be's floating market, once a busy place to trade fruits and vegetables and nowadays a more quiet market.

Then, continue to a cottage factory where 'pop-rice', rice paper and coconut candies are made. Return to the boat for the cruise to Dong Hoa Hiep Island; along the way admire the scenery and the daily life of the local villagers. Lunch will be local Mekong style serving specialties of the area. Return to Ho Chi Minh City late afternoon.

Accommodation: Paragon Saigon Hotel

Meal: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 3: Visit Ho Chi Minh City | Fly to Hue

After leisurely breakfast head to Cholon, the Chinatown district, to discover the area's markets, shops and the Cantonese Thien Hau Pagoda - dedicated to the goddess of the Sea. Visit Vietnam's first traditional medicine museum, the FITO Museum, with an amazing collection of 3,000 items relevant to the development of traditional Vietnamese medicine. Implements used to prepare indigenous herbs and objects commonly found in traditional pharmacies can be seen in the galleries as well as ancient books and documents on traditional Vietnamese medicine.

Head back to the city centre to visit Ben Thanh Market where an incredible display of fresh produce is offered. Simply stroll through the market exploring the variety of goods for sale.

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This afternoon we will visit the War Remnants or History Museum (choose which one you would most like to see) and the former Presidential Palace Stroll (your vehicle will be available at all times) to the major sights of colonial Ho Chi Minh City: the Old Saigon Post Office, Dong Khoi Street (formerly Rue Catinat), Continental Hotel, Opera House and City Hall.

At the end of the tour transfer to the airport for the short flight to Hue, the former imperial capital of Vietnam. Overnight in Hue.

Accommodation: Midtown Hotel

Meal: Breakfast



Day 4: In Hue

Today start at the Imperial Citadel where the Nguyen Dynasty ruled between 1802 and 1945. From here take a cyclo through dainoi 'Old City' to Tinh Tam Lake where the Emperors used to come to relax. It is full of lotus flowers in summer and there are many local style coffee shops around the lake where university students come to study.

After exploring the ruins of this wonderful monument depart for Thien Mu (Celestial Lady) Pagoda overlooking the Perfume River Constructed in 1601, the 21-meter tower is the centerpiece of the pagoda and represents seven reincarnations of Buddha. On the pagoda grounds is the famous Austin car a resident monk drove to Saigon in 1963 to protest against the southern regime. The photo of his self immortalization is one of the most well known images of the war.

Continue to former emperor Minh Mang's tomb located in a tranquil setting of gardens and ponds. Journey on to Khai Dinh's Tomb designed in traditional Vietnamese style with a European touch making it unique from the other tombs in Hue.

Before heading back to your hotel take time to stroll around Dong Ba Market with your guide. The market is another of the must see sites in Hue, the stalls are teeming with color and a great place to catch a glimpse of everyday life. Overnight in Hue.

Accommodation: Midtown Hotel

Meal: Breakfast

Day 5: Drive Hue - Hoi An (150 km | 3 hrs)

Enjoy this morning at leisure before leaving Hue for Hoi An, a major Asian trading port in the 17th and 18th centuries whose architecture and relaxed lifestyle has changed little over the years.

Drive through the wonderfully photogenic fishing village of Lang Co before climbing over the Pass of Ocean Clouds and dropping down to Danang en route visit the Cham Museum, which contains the finest collection of Cham sculptures in the world. Overnight in Hoi An.

Accommodation: Koi Resort & Spa

Meal: Breakfast

Day 6: Day trip to My Son

Today, take a half day to visit the capital and religious centre of the former Champa Kingdom, My Son. Here, 40 km southwest of Hoi An in a lush green valley, are dozens of red brick towers and sanctuaries dating from between the 7th and 13th centuries. On the way back to Hoi An stop to visit TraKieu, formerly known as Simhapura or the Lion Citadel, the capital of Champa between the 4th and 8th centuries. Some of the finest sculptures in Danang's Cham Museum originated from here.

Upon return to Hoi An, take a walking tour of the ancient town centre to visit former merchants' houses, the 400 year-old Japanese Covered Bridge, a

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Chinese communal hall and the colorful market. Hoi An is a destination with two faces – the charming, old-world trading port of narrow streets and traditional houses, and the beach with its new resorts and long stretch of clean white sand. In keeping with Hoi An's heritage as a trading port, the town's tiny shop houses now host a range of craft shops and artisans including some of Asia's best bespoke tailors. Despite the passing of 200 years and the ravages of weather and war, the centre of Hoi An remains much the same as it was in its heyday. Overnight in Hoi An.

Accommodation: Koi Resort & Spa

Meal: Breakfast

Day 7: Fly Hoi An - Hanoi

After breakfast transfer 40 minutes to Danang airport for the short flight to Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, a city that celebrated its 1000 years in 2010.

This afternoon visit the fascinating Ethnology Museum (closed Mondays), a research centre and public museum exhibiting the ethnic groups of Vietnam. As an alternative to the Ethnology Museum, visit the highly acclaimed Vietnam Women's Museum (closed on Mondays). The museum is located near Hoan Kiem Lake and offers wonderful insight into the lives of Vietnamese women. Displays highlight Vietnam's vast cultural diversity and educate on the significant role Vietnamese women play in Vietnamese society. Learn historic and modern-day traditions centered around births, weddings, motherhood, spirituality and more.

Next, visit Hanoi's Old Quarter, also known as the '36 streets'. Take a walking tour through charming Hang Be Market and around Hoan Kiem Lake. This bustling area of narrow streets and alleys is home to literally thousands of small businesses and shopkeepers. It's a great place to explore with plenty of photo opportunities all around you.

Finish the day with a Water Puppet show. This is a uniquely northern Vietnamese art form depicting scenes from rural life and episodes of national history. Overnight in Hanoi.

Accommodation: La Siesta Classic Ma May

Meal: Breakfast



Day 8: Day trip to Hoa Lu (100 km | 2 hrs)

Depart your hotel early this morning for the 2-hour drive through rural northern Vietnam to the site of Vietnam's first capital, Hoa Lu. Visit the temples dedicated to Emperor Dinh Tien Hoang of the Dinh Dynasty (968-80) and Emperor Le Dai Hanh of the Le Dynasty (980-1009). The ancient Hoa Lu Citadel (most of which has since been destroyed) once covered an area of three square kilometers. If time permits after visiting Hoa Lu take a half-hour walk up one of the surrounding limestone karst hills, the climb is rewarding with spectacular views.

In the late morning depart for Tam Coc Town for a Vietnamese lunch. Along the way stop to take photographs of local villages and the stunning landscape.

After lunch board your private sampan* (see alternative options for Tam Coc sampan trip below). As the boat gently slices through the water notice the enormous limestone karsts jutting out from the green rice fields giving rise to the area's other name, 'Halong on Land'.

Should you feel adventurous, climb up to Bich Dong Pagoda on nearby NguNhac Mountain, dating to 1428 and comprised of three structures: Ha, Trung, and Thuong Pagodas, in ascending order. Return by sampan to Tam Coc town before returning to Hanoi.

*Option 1:

Trang An Boat (in place of Tam Coc): Trang An is a

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less visited nature reserve similar to Tam Coc. Limestone hills surround a peaceful river which passes through a series of caves (one which takes 15-minutes to pass through in darkness). An 'eco tourism' area, the only interruptions here are the sound of birds and the gentle paddle of the oar upon the crystal clear river.

*Option 2:

Thung Nang Boat Option (in place of Tam Coc): Similar to Tam Coc though not as spectacular, Thung Nang is off the tourist trail and a pleasant alternative. Pass through a cave, fields of lotus (in summer) and reach a quaint pagoda before returning on the same route.

Note: Please be aware that some women on boats may try to sell local products to tourists. Guests should refer to their guide if this situation makes them uncomfortable. Overnight in Hanoi.

Accommodation: La Siesta Classic Ma May

Meal: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 9: Drive Hanoi - Halong Bay (160 km | 3.30 hrs)

The scenery of Halong Bay where thousands of limestone islands jut out of the emerald sea, sculpted into bizarre shapes is truly an iconic image for Vietnam. An overnight boat trip is the best way to enjoy this Vietnamese must-see. After breakfast leave Hanoi for a 3 hrs 30 mins drive to Halong Bay including a 20-minutes stop on the way .

Arrive at your jetty in Halong City towards noon and proceed with check-in formalities. After your welcome onboard, a lunch will be served while cruising towards the bay itself. In

In the afternoon, enjoy some visits and/or activities (depending on each boat's itinerary) or just spend some time relaxing on board.

Towards the end of the day the boat sets anchor for the night among the karst formations. Dinner is served on board. Overnight on Halong Bay.

Accommodation: Glory Legend Cruise

Meal: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 10: Drive Halong Bay - Hanoi (172 km | 2.65 hrs)

The sun rises on Halong in the morning and breakfast is served (also brunch on some boats) while the vessels cruises slowly back towards port. Upon disembarkation, your driver will meet you for the transfer to Hanoi.

In the afternoon, visit the Temple of Literature. In 1076, Vietnam's first university Quoc Tu Giam, was established within a temple to educate Vietnam's royalty, mandarins and members of the elite. The university functioned for an incredible 700 years and its gardens and well-preserved architecture offer a fascinating glimpse into Vietnam's past.

Visit The One Pillar Pagoda, founded by King Ly Thai To in 1049, next. This structure is one of Vietnam's most iconic temples. Close by is the mausoleum of the historic father figure of modern Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, and the former presidents house on stilts where he lived from 1958 to 1969. His former home illustrates the modesty of this Vietnamese revolutionary. (viewed from outside; closed Mon and Fri and from Oct-Nov)

Continue to picturesque West Lake and the sixth century Tran Quoc Buddhist Pagoda. From here transfer (or stroll along the lakeside) 700 meters to the nearby Taoist temple of QuanThanh dedicated to Tran Vu, one of the principal deities in Taoism. Overnight in Hanoi.

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Accommodation: La Siesta Ma May

Meal: Breakfast

Day 11: Depart Hanoi

Transfer to airport for your homeward-bound flight.

Meal: Breakfast

Includes

- Airport (pick up/drop off) transfers by private A/C vehicle
- Accommodation in a shared twin or shared double room
- Meals as mentioned in the itinerary
- English speaking guide
- Tours and transfers as mentioned by private air conditioned vehicle
- Entrance fees for mentioned visits
- Boat trip as mentioned in the itinerary
- Government taxes

Excludes

- International flight tickets
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance & vaccinations
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Personal clothing and equipment
- Tips for trip leader/guide, driver, hotel staff, and porters
- Items of personal nature such as alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, laundry, telephone calls and other unforeseen expenses
- Items/services not listed in the "included"
- Compulsory gala dinner on Christmas or New Year (if applicable)
- Extra expenses/payment for 'Optional' activities/programs if participated

Accommodation

Paragon Saigon Hotel, Ho Chi Minh

Paragon Saigon Hotel is a leading 4-star hotels in heart of Ho Chi Minh, supporting for the business or for pleasure. With a diversified system of utility services, modern as well as professional service, Paragon Saigon Hotel wants to bring a complete and memorable holiday for guests during the stay.

Midtown Hotel, Hue

Located in the heart of the ancient capital, UNESCO world cultural heritage site – Hue, Midtown Hotel Hue – a Four star International Hotel guides the visibility distance to the most famous tourist sites, boasting the enchanting view of the city. With the modern design, suitable luxurious equipment system and hospitable services your stay will be most enjoyable and memorable one.

KOI Resort & Spa Hoi An

KOI Resort & Spa Hoi An was inspired from the area's timeless cultural heritage and charm. Taking this into consideration, the design and natural green setting has evolved into a luxurious setting. Nestled on an isolated oasis beside the De Vong River, the resort offers peace and privacy.



La Siesta Classic Ma May, Hanoi

With its imposing white exterior and warm Asian-inspired interior, La Siesta Classic Ma May is situated in the heart of the Old Quarter, close to Hoan Kiem Lake providing a luxuriously quiet oasis within the busy maze of streets. The property has 75 bespoke-designed guestrooms and suites, the Moonlight Sky Bar on the rooftop, La Spa and gym on the 2nd

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level.

Glory Legend Cruise, Ha Long

Glory Legend Cruise offers a gentle and cozy space in classic Asian design. Clean and spacious rooms with simplicity and comfort in mind. The private bathroom with a bathtub is a great place to relax after a day of sightseeing. The large sundeck adjacent to the elegant bar is the best place to watch the sunrise and sunset.



Group/Individual

On this trip you will be traveling privately with your family & friends. Our representative/tour partner will look after your transfers to and from the airport and will be around to answer other questions you may have about your trip.

Accommodation – Hotel, Resort

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a fine heritage hotel in another or a family-run guesthouse or lodges in a smaller town. Accommodation in remote areas tend to be basic and may not have western amenities.

Single Accommodation

Single (room) supplements are provided on request (single supplement charge applies) and are subject to availability.

Food & Transport

All breakfasts, 8 lunches and 6 dinners are included.

Thanks to the tropical climate, the long coast and the gigantic range of mountains, Vietnam is blessed with numerous varieties of culinary offerings and consequently maintains its reputation as one of the healthiest cuisines in the world that still packs a punch with delicious, fresh and fiery flavours.

Food is cheap in Vietnam and you can generally avoid the spicier food if you wish. Western food is readily available almost everywhere, with the exception of the night in the Mekong Delta.

Vegetarian food is widely available; however, the offering will be fairly similar in most places. Please advise at time of booking if you have any dietary requirements.

For airport, sightseeing transfers, and for long drives we use a private air-con car, jeep, van depending upon group size.

Weather

The weather will be hot and humid throughout with temperatures during the day usually 28C-34C (82F-93F). It is only a little cooler at nights.

There is quite a range of seasons between the north and the south: the south up to Hue has a distinct dry season between December to April and then a rainy season from May to November when it tends to come in short heavy bursts with bright sunshine in between. Hanoi is cool in autumn, and even gets chilly between November and February (with drizzly rain).

There is no ideal time to visit Vietnam; it is quite pleasant any time of year, though due to the shape of the country it is unlikely the weather will ever be perfect for the entire duration of any trip.

The dry season is as it sounds, with hot days and generally clear skies, though you can expect the odd shower. The monsoon is characterised by short, sharp bursts of rain and is generally overcast all day though this does not detract from the enjoyment of the place;

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you just need to take an umbrella or buy a cheap local poncho.

Baggage Allowance

The standard baggage weight limit on international flights (generally from Europe) is one checked baggage of 25kg (55lb) and hand baggage 7kg (15lbs). However, if your journey involves domestic connecting flights weight limit can be limited/restricted. We recommend packing only one piece of checked baggage. Luggage allowances for both hand and checked luggage are subject to change, we suggest you check the airline's website for the latest information prior to your departure or purchasing your flight tickets.

ESSENTIAL/PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Passport & Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information below is primarily for EU passport holders, and other nationalities should check with the relevant embassies. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Visas are not required to enter Vietnam for German nationals for up to 15 days. However, some other European nationals still need to obtain a visa.

An electronic visa (e-Visa) is also available and you can find further information on this link: <https://www.evisagov.vn/official/en-us/>. Please note, e-Visas are not accepted at all border checkpoints when travelling overland.

Please note: Visa regulations can change without notice, therefore please check the current

regulations or contact us.

Vaccination & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad and enjoy holidays to the fullest.

There are no required vaccinations. However, recommended vaccinations include hepatitis A, tetanus, typhoid, cholera, hepatitis B, Japanese encephalitis, rabies and tuberculosis. You will also need a yellow fever vaccination certificate if you're arriving from a country with risk of yellow fever transmission or transiting for more than 12 hours through a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. Please confirm your vaccine recommendations and requirements with your doctor or travel clinic.

Dengue fever, a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes, is a known risk in places visited. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available, so take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

Local Time

GMT/UTC + 7 hours.

Electricity

220 volts AC, 50 Hz. There are three plug types in Vietnam - A, C, & F. Plug type A is the plug which has two flat parallel pins, type C & F plug has two round pins.

ATM | Credit Cards

ATMs are a common sight in Vietnamese cities, and you should have no trouble locating one in most destinations. International cards such as Visa are accepted at more than 20,000 ATMs nationwide. Withdrawal limits per transaction range between 2 million VND (just under 100 dollars) and 3 million VND

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with local bank ATMs; and between 5 million VND to 10 million VND with international bank ATMs.

While using ATM please be mindful of your surroundings.

Credit cards are not widely accepted, but some hotels and businesses in larger cities will accept them.

To get the best exchange rates for Dong, bigger denominations Euro/US\$ that are in pristine conditions (no fold, no mark, no tear, no stain) are required.

Extra Expenses & Spending Money

You will need to bring some extra money to cover drinks, laundry, souvenirs and any other personal expense, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Though it totally depends on individual but generally an approximate (rough estimate) amount of Euro 150 (US\$165) per person, per week should be sufficient (more if you enjoy a few beers); however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount. Or if you are the one frugal with money probably allocating less would also be suffice.

Optional Tours may be offered in some city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available. Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each optional tour/activity will be arranged locally by our local partner/guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

Tipping

Tipping isn't mandatory or customary in Vietnam, but it is always appreciated. If you're happy with the services provided by waiters, drivers and other service workers, leaving a small tip is a good way to show your appreciation.

Itinerary Change

In case of some unusual events/incidents the order of programs (sightseeing, excursions etc.) might have to change in order to accommodate the local situations. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements while maintaining the overall integrity of your trip.

The domestic airlines (if your program includes) may change their schedule frequently and, in such cases, our local partner/guide will inform you about the changes.

Travel Insurance

We highly recommend to choose/get an insurance plan/policy that covers your requirements/needs. And please make sure to keep/carry a hard-copy of your travel insurance documents on your person while on tour. It's prudent to check thoroughly the inclusions and procedure to file claims prior to purchasing insurance coverage. *travel-to-nature Asia* will not be responsible for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to purchase appropriate travel insurance from the date of booking.

Important Information

On all guided trips although our guides (leaders) are well trained to deal with different capabilities, if they have any concerns about someone's ability to safely partake in an activity, or their impact on other people's enjoyment, we authorize them to take necessary action which, in some circumstances, may involve asking someone to miss that activity.