

Nature & Cultural Heritage of Vietnam | 15 Days



Southeast Asia has an incredible variety of destinations for nature & culture lovers, and Vietnam is well known for its extraordinary natural diversity, vibrant culture, and remarkable urban landscapes. Vietnam has received increasing amounts of recognition for its dreamlike landscape with natural wonders that sneak up to you. Moreover, Vietnam has been blessed with over 3,000km of coastline, pristine forests, mountain ranges, and some of the planet's most impressive limestone pinnacles and plateaus. Combine all these and you have the best nature and cultural heritage tourism destination in Southeast Asia.

This trip will take you to explore Vietnam's most beautiful natural habitats & some of the vibrant cultural sites. From busy cities, to national parks, to peaceful beaches, top protected reserves, to pristine islands and archipelagos — this trip has every aspect of nature & culture covered.

Trip Highlights

- Explore Hanoi Old Quarter on Cyclo ride
- Enjoy a cruise on Halong Bay
- Enjoy the beauty of karst formation in Tam Coc
- Enjoy bike ride passing by sleepy villages and picturesque countryside
- Cruise on Mekong Delta
- Night excursion at Cat Tien National Park to observe nocturnal wildlife

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Hanoi

Welcome to Vietnam! Upon arrival in Hanoi, Vietnam's bustling colonial capital, meet by *travel-to-nature Asia* representative/guide outside the baggage claim of Noi Bai Airport and take you 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 to recover from your long flight. Evening welcome dinner at local restaurant. Overnight in Hanoi.

Accommodation: La Siesta Ma May Hotel

Day 2: In Hanoi

We begin our day by visiting the Ho Chi Minh Complex. In here, you can see a lot of buildings like Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, where the preserved body of "Uncle Ho" may be viewed; Presidential Government; the lotus-shaped One Pillar Pagoda. We'll also see his nearby house, Quan Thanh Temple, the Temple of Literature, Hoan Kiem Lake, Ngoc Son Temple, and other museums.

Following lunch at a local restaurant, enjoy a one-hour cyclo-ride around the Hanoi Old Quarter and enjoy a traditional Vietnamese water puppet show before dinner.

Accommodation: La Siesta Ma May

Meal: Breakfast

Day 3: Hanoi - Cat Ba Island | Nature Trek

Cat Ba archipelago is made up of 367 islands, the largest of which is Cat Ba, most of which is a national park.

This island has made a name for itself as the adventure capital of Vietnam. The most stunning aspect of Cat Ba is the enthralling green carpet that covers much of the landscape.

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The never-ending hills and mountains also make it a trekker's dream come true, including a 29km trail that rewards with stunning views over Ha Long Bay. Hailed as one of the most biodiverse areas in the country, Cat Ba is definitely one of Vietnam's finest creations.

Depart Hanoi and drive about 2hrs to Hai Phong, the gateway to Halong Bay. Travel like a local; embark on a 30 min local ferry to Cat Ba Island. Another 45 min land transfer takes you to Cat Ba National Park. You will commence a nature trek through the park which possesses a unique variety of flora and fauna. Trek 6 km to Frog Lake to admire the magical landscape of submerged trees. Enjoy a picnic lunch in this serene setting. Continue Hiking for another 3 km to the scenic Viet Hai Village where you can see rice fields, fruit plantations, and experience local life. (Please wear appropriate footwear as this section of the trek is slippery due to walking on limestone).



Afterward, walk around the village for an up-close view. Board a wooden motorboat at Viet Hai Pier for a 1 hr cruise to the Beo Pier where you will transfer to your resort for dinner and overnight. Overnight in Cat Ba.

Accommodation: The Catba Island Resort & Spa
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4: Cat Ba - Halong Bay

Check out of the resort and drive 35mins to Gia Luan Pier where you will board a day boat and cruise approximately 1hr to the Ha Long Pier. Settle on board your main boat to begin a 2 day/1 night cruise through the spectacular Ha Long Bay. Enchanting, Ha

Long Bay is one of Vietnam's most recognizable UNESCO sites.

The famous bay is composed of roughly 1,600 limestone karsts topped with vivid greenery jutting up from the emerald-green water and boasts a wild beauty of clustered limestone islets and crescent beaches. A boat cruise through Ha Long Bay is an absolute must while in Vietnam. Enjoy a fresh seafood lunch on board. Afterward, take an exhilarating kayak trip through the lagoon, have a refreshing swim or simply relax onboard and enjoy the sunset. Overnight on junk boat.

Accommodation: Glory Legend Cruise
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5: Drive Halong Bay - Ninh Binh (223 km | 3.5 hrs)

The sun rises on Halong in the morning and breakfast is served (also brunch on some boats) while the vessels cruise slowly back towards port. Disembark and afterward, take the 4-hour drive to your hotel in Ninh Binh.

Accommodation: Ninh Binh Hidden Charm Hotel
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6: Day trip to Hoa Lu & Tam Coc

Trang An Landscape complex was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in June 2014 and is a spectacular landscape of limestone karst peaks permeated with valleys, some of which are submerged, and surrounded by vertical cliffs.

Start the trip at Hoa Lu ancient capital. This was the capital of the first centralized feudal state in Vietnam at the end of the 10th century. The ravages of time have destroyed the ancient citadel but some vestiges including the temples of King Dinh and King Le still stand to this day among the rice paddies and are a worthwhile visit to get a glimpse of the ancient Vietnamese past.

Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant in Ninh Binh then continue on to Tam Coc - "Ha Long Bay on Land" for

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a 2-hour row-boat journey. Enjoy the beauty of the karsts formations as you pass along their base and row into several of the many caves carved through the limestone and paddy fields. (Boat is rowed by local workers). Overnight in Ninh Binh

Accommodation: Ninh Binh Hidden Charm Hotel

Meal: Breakfast

Day 7: Visit Nho Quan | Fly Ninh Binh - HCMC (Saigon)

This morning, enjoy a short drive to Tho Ha village in Nho Quan for a leisurely biking trip ranging from 5 km to 15 km (depending on your wish) passing by sleepy villages and picturesque countryside sceneries. Then head to Dong Tam hamlet to experience village life and to take part in some fun agricultural activities such as catching crab, fishing, transplanting and watering plants and more. After an hour or so, return back to the hamlet to join a cooking class and lunch with a local family where you learn how to prepare some local treats such as sweet potato cake and toasted fish.

After lunch, transfer to the airport for your onward flight to Ho Chi Minh City. Upon arrival HCMC, you will be escorted to your hotel in town for a two-night stay. You'll enjoy a welcome dinner at a restaurant recommended by your Tour Leader. You'll then have a relaxing overnight stay in HCMC. Overnight Saigon.

Accommodation: Paragon Saigon Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8: Mekong Delta Excursion

Ben Tre is the best option for a day trip to the Mekong Delta from Saigon, since it is only around 2 hours away, and 15 minutes from My Tho. However, this wonderful destination retains an authenticity which has been somewhat lessened in nearby My Tho.

This picturesque and friendly Mekong Delta town has historically seen very few travellers, but the recent opening of a bridge connecting Ben Tre and My Tho

has made it far easier for day trippers to visit from Saigon.

Our one-day cruise excursion starts at 8:00 am from the lobby of your hotel in Saigon with a drive to Ben Tre. While there, you can take a walk along the waterfront, lined with French era shops and houses, and you'll see plenty of coconuts being unloaded from boats for dispatch around the country. Then, jump on a boat for a couple of hours of cruising on the Mekong River. You will enjoy your delicious lunch at a local restaurant or on board. The excursion will end at around 4:00 pm where the vehicle will await you for your transfer back to Saigon.

Accommodation: Paragon Saigon Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 9: Cu Chi Tunnel | Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) Tour

After breakfast at hotel, we will drive to the Cu Chi Tunnels, which consist of more than 200 km of underground tunnels. This main axis system has many branches connecting to underground hideouts, shelters, and entrances to other tunnels. The network included innumerable trap doors, specially constructed living areas, storage facilities, weapons factories, field hospitals, command centers and kitchens. Today the remaining tunnels have become a major tourist attraction giving the visitor a unique experience and a feel of what underground life was like during the US-Vietnam War.

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After lunch we will embark on a city tour of Saigon, including the Reunification Palace, Notre Dame Cathedral, the Old Post Office, the War Remnants Museum and bustling Ben Thanh Market. Overnight in HCMC.

Accommodation: Paragon Saigon Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 10: Drive Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) - Nam Cat Tien National Park (160 km | 3.5 hrs)

Leave busy Saigon behind for the serenity of the lush forests of Cat Tien National Park, one of Vietnam's top national parks. Those wanting to find out about Vietnam's flora and fauna will find a trip to Nam Cat Tien National Park to be a rewarding experience. Located 160 km from Ho Chi Minh City, Nam Cat Tien is reported to have 600 varieties of plants, 240 types of birds and 50 species of mammals, including the one-horn Javan rhinoceros, one of several endangered mammals from Vietnam listed in the World Red Book. It is a four-hour drive to the national park from Ho Chi Minh City. After a local ferry to the other side of the Dong Nai River to your lodge.

After lunch transfer by the lodge buggy to the National Park Centre to begin your short trek through the jungle to observe wildlife up close. Return to the lodge for dinner before heading back to the National Park Centre where you'll transfer to a car for an exciting night excursion deep into the park using a spotlight to see the nocturnal wildlife. Return to your lodge by buggy where you'll enjoy a good night's rest with the sounds of the jungle as nature's soundtrack.

Nam Cat Tien National Park

This is probably the best site in Vietnam for seeing wildlife. It consists of two sectors: Cat Loc and Cat Tien, each about 35,000 ha and harbours the last remaining sizeable lowland forest in southern Vietnam comprising of a wide variety of habitats (primary and secondary). There are Dipterocarpaceae dominated tropical evergreen lowland forest, semi-evergreen lowland forest dominated by Lagerstroemia, bamboo and open grassland, seasonal floodplains, flooded forest. While Cat Loc features the only few remaining individuals of Javan rhinos outside Java, Cat Tien is easy to access with good facilities and trail networks for wildlife watching. Bird watching (more than 300 recorded species) is best on the main road through the park to HQ to Dak Lua as well as forest trail heading off the road such as the Lagerstroemia, Crocodile Lake and Ecological Trails. At Crocodile Lake (Bau Sau), the ranger's watchtower is like a tree house overlooking the rising mist. The forest walk to the lake passes through a volcanic rockfield with undisturbed lowland evergreen rainforest with strangling figs and giant trees with buttresses reaching beyond your head. To watch the park's nocturnal animals hire a vehicle after dusk and drive with a spotlight southward following to the main road. Sambar Deer, Barking Deer, Wild Pigs, Porcupines, and Common Palm Civets are commonly seen. Check out the beautiful well the paintings of Cat Tien's ecosystem in the room next to the tourist reception.

Accommodation: Forest Lodge Floor

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11: Nam Cat Tien Nature Trek

After breakfast, take the buggy to the National Park Centre followed by a 30 min drive through the forest to the starting point of our nature trek. We trek 5 km (3 mi) to the crocodile lake, stopping often to view the myriad varieties of birds and possibly larger mammals. The lake is home to the endangered Siamese crocodile and is one of the last places in the world where they can be seen in the wild. Enjoy a packed lunch along the way. Return to the lodge by buggy or trek your way back before settling in for a well-earned rest and dinner.

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Accommodation: Forest Lodge Florr

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12: Drive Nam Cat Tien - Phan Thiet (156 km | 3.5 hrs)

In the morning, be transferred by lodge buggy to the National Park Centre for a short trek around the Dao Tien Endangered Primate Species Centre, a rescue and rehabilitation centre for endangered primates including gibbons with the aim of returning them to the wild. Nam Cat Tien National Park is home to several species of gibbon, including the gold-cheeked and black-crested varieties. Return to the lodge by buggy around midday for lunch.

Take a local ferry ride to return to the other side of the river where your driver awaits to bring to Phan Thiet Beach today, where endless white dream beaches await you. Spend a dream holiday among palm trees, sun and sea for next couple of nights. After check-in at the resort, the rest of the day is yours to swim and relax.

Accommodation: Victoria Phan Thiet Beach Resort

Meal: Breakfast



Day 13-14: Relax at Phan Thiet Beach or Excursions

The next two days we will be relaxing at the beach, pool or spa. Optionally, you can take part in various excursions, such as a visit to the sand hills and the pink river or a trip to the Ham Tien coconut forest and much more. For all adrenaline seekers, a wide variety of leisure sports activities are offered, such as surfing

and kite surfing on the beach. Overnight in Phan Thiet Beach.

Phan Thiet: While Phan Thiet remains one of Vietnam's busiest coastal towns, it maintains its unique attractions from the bustle of urban development, making it the perfect retreat from its nearby business epicenters, Hanoi and Saigon. Though it still receives the bulk of its income from fishery and fish product manufacturing, its beautiful beaches and resorts are slowly transforming it into Vietnam's latest tourist attraction.

The area now known as Phan Thiet first existed under the rule of the ancient kingdom of Champa before eventually transferring to Vietnamese rule. In 1697, the area – then known as Binh Thuan – became its own district before officially being recognized as a "dao." It would take two more centuries before it would become a province in 1825 under the reign of Emperor Minh Mang.

Accommodation: Victoria Phan Thiet Beach Resort

Meal: Breakfast

Day 15: Drive Phan Thiet - Saigon (214 km | 4.5 hrs) | Depart Saigon

Today we will drive from Phan Thiet directly to Saigon Airport to catch our homeward-bound flight.

Meal: Breakfast

Includes

- Airport (pick up/drop off) transfers by private A/C vehicle
- Twin-Sharing accommodation in all Hotel/Cruise as mentioned or similar
- Daily breakfast and other meals as mentioned in the itinerary
- Transportation by private air-condition vehicle
- English speaking local guide
- Boats/Cruise as mentioned in program
- Monument entrance fees
- One bottled water per person per day

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- 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

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 level.



The Catba Island Resort & Spa, Cat Ba

The Catba Island Resort & Spa, ranked as one of the best hotels in Catba, the Catba Island Resort & Spa

is a the best option when looking for a Catba beach resort. With its rich dark woods, well-appointed ocean view accommodations and attentive staff, a stay at the resort provides casual luxury.

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.



Ninh Binh Hidden Charm Hotel, Ninh Binh

Ninh Binh Hidden Charm is one of the best boutique hotels and resorts that lead you to the picturesque beauty of vast rice fields curving round the rolling limestone karsts. Rooms are designed in warm colors, decorated with mosaic ceramic tiles, fine-art items, offer a stunning view of rice fields and limestone mountains.

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.

Forest Floor Lodge

Forest Floor Lodge is a unique Eco Hotel and Resort situated in Cat Tien National Park. Forest Floor Lodge offer wonderful tented and lodge accommodation inside the National Park with splendid views of the rapids and the forest. It is the

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perfect escape from hectic city life, designed with nature at the forefront with a touch of unexpected luxury.

Victoria Phan Thiet Beach Resort, Phan Thiet

Victoria Phan Thiet Beach Resort & Spa is a lovely 57 bungalow Resort located 200 km North of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. The four star Beach Resort & Spa is located at one of the most idyllic destinations on the Vietnamese coastline, a traditional fishing village and remnant of the Cham Empire.



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 dominations 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.