

Full Itinerary

THE ESSENCE OF VIETNAM



TALK TO OUR WELL
TRAVELLED TEAM OF
EXPERTS

0844 3350 197

Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00
GMT



JOURNEY SNAPSHOT

ACTIVITY LEVEL:

Level 2

DESTINATION:

The Essence of Vietnam

DURATION:

11 days / 10 nights

FLIGHT INFORMATION:

Please arrange your flights to arrive at Hanoi International Airport [HAN] on Day 1 and to depart from Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam [SGN] on Day 11

PICKUP LOCATION:

Hanoi International Airport [HAN]

OVERVIEW

Nov 06 - 16, 2027

This wonderfully varied tour of Vietnam takes in the very best of the country's scenery, history and culture as we travel from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City!

The date listed above is for our scheduled group departure. If you'd prefer to travel privately with friends or family, we'd be delighted to arrange a bespoke tour on your preferred dates. Just contact us via email and we'll take care of the rest.

Explore Vietnam's Imperial past through the residences of ancient Emperors as well as its much more recent history at the Imperial War Museum and Cu Chi tunnels as we travel the country from Ho Chi Minh City to Hanoi.

Enjoy a walking tour of ancient town of Hoi An, and experience the sometimes dramatic beauty of the countryside. We travel through rice paddies, witnessing a more traditional, rural way of life and take a spectacular cruise in Halong Bay, 'The Bay of the Descending Dragon' in Vietnamese, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site.

This tour takes in much of Vietnam's rich cultural heritage, from travelling through Hanoi's Old Quarter by cyclo rickshaw to enjoying the uniquely Vietnamese water puppet theatre and much more. Join us as we head off in discovery of this fascinating country!

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAY 1 - Welcome to Vietnam

DAY 2 - Hanoi Heritage & Hidden Streets

DAY 3 - Halong Bay Cruise & Karst Landscapes

DAY 4 - Halong Bay to Hue: From Sea to Imperial City

DAY 5 - Hue's Imperial Heritage & Hoi An

DAY 6 - Discovering the Charm of Hoi An

DAY 7 - Visiting my Son

DAY 8 - Welcome to Ho Chi Minh City

DAY 9 - Cu Chi Tunnels & The Story of Saigon

DAY 10 - Life Along the Mekong

DAY 11 - Goodbye to Vietnam

FULL ITINERARY

DAY 1 - WELCOME TO VIETNAM

Upon arrival, you will be met at Noi Bai Airport in Hanoi and transferred to your hotel for check-in.

Vietnam's capital, Hanoi, blends old-world charm with the dynamic bustle of modern Asia. Its French colonial past is evident in the elegant architecture and enchanting lakes, contrasting with the throng of thousands of motorbikes and the city's cosmopolitan restaurants and boutiques. To the north of central Hoan Kiem Lake lies the frenetic maze of narrow streets that make up the Old Quarter, while to the south, broad, tree-lined boulevards and majestic buildings define the French Quarter.

Spend the afternoon at leisure, allowing you to acclimatise to the energy and bustle of the city before meeting your Big Journey Company Tour Director. In the evening, join your fellow travellers for a welcome dinner, where you will have the opportunity to meet the group and learn more about the exciting journey ahead

Included meals: Welcome Dinner

Accommodation: Pan Pacific Hanoi (or similar)

DAY 2 - HANOI HERITAGE & HIDDEN STREETS

Today, we begin our full-day discovery of Hanoi with a visit to the sixth-century Tran Quoc Pagoda, beautifully situated on the shores of serene West Lake.

We then continue to the renowned Temple of Literature. Founded in 1076, Quoc Tu Giam, Vietnam's first university, was established within the temple grounds to educate the country's royalty, mandarins and members of the elite. Remarkably, the site continued to serve as a centre of learning for almost 800 years and remains an important symbol of Vietnam's rich intellectual and cultural heritage.

Next, we choose one of two fascinating museum experiences:

Vietnam Women's Museum

We explore the museum's engaging exhibitions, which showcase Vietnam's diverse cultural heritage and highlight the important roles and contributions of women throughout Vietnamese society.

Vietnam Museum of Ethnology

We discover Vietnam's rich cultural diversity through an extensive collection of exhibits showcasing the traditions, lifestyles and heritage of the country's 54 recognised ethnic groups. Please note: the museum is closed on Mondays.

Following our museum visit, we enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before continuing our exploration of Hanoi.

We then visit the iconic Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum Complex, an important site dedicated to the life and legacy of Vietnam's founding leader. We view the Mausoleum from outside before exploring the surrounding grounds and learning more about Ho Chi Minh's life.

We continue to the traditional 'House on Stilts', where 'Bac Ho' lived from 1958 to 1969, before strolling through the peaceful gardens and visiting the One Pillar Pagoda. Built in 1049, this distinctive pagoda is one of Hanoi's most recognisable landmarks and an enduring symbol of the city.

Later, we explore Hanoi's atmospheric Old Quarter on foot. We wander through its maze of narrow streets and discover the local way of life in the historic '36 guilds', each traditionally associated with a particular trade or craft.

Following our introduction to Hanoi's highlights, we return to our hotel.

Included meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Accommodation: Pan Pacific Hanoi (or similar)

DAY 3 - HALONG BAY CRUISE & KARST LANDSCAPES

Following breakfast, we leave Hanoi and journey towards Halong Bay, travelling through the scenic countryside towards Halong City.

On arrival at the pier, we complete our check-in formalities before stepping aboard our cruise. Once we have settled into our cabins, we enjoy

lunch as we begin cruising through the spectacular landscapes of Halong Bay.

As we sail deeper into the bay, we take part in a selection of activities and visits, depending on our boat's itinerary. Surrounded by towering limestone karsts and emerald waters, we have the opportunity to experience the beauty of this UNESCO-listed landscape from the water.

Later, we anchor for the evening among the dramatic karst formations. We enjoy the sunset from the deck before dinner and a relaxing evening on board, surrounded by the tranquil beauty of Halong Bay.

Overnight on Halong Bay.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Indochine Premium Cruise, Junior Suite with Full board

DAY 4 - HALONG BAY TO HUE: FROM SEA TO IMPERIAL CITY

We wake to the peaceful beauty of Halong Bay and enjoy breakfast, or brunch depending on our cruise, as we take in the spectacular limestone formations surrounding us.

As our cruise returns towards the harbour, we complete our check-out before disembarking and meeting our driver. We then enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before continuing to Hanoi Airport for our flight to Hue.

Upon arrival at Phu Bai Airport in Hue, we meet our local guide and transfer by private, air-conditioned vehicle to our hotel for check-in.

This evening, we enjoy dinner at the hotel's restaurant before settling in for the night.

Overnight in Hue.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Indochine Palace Hue (or similar)

DAY 5 - HUE'S IMPERIAL HERITAGE & HOI AN

We begin our day with a visit to Hue's UNESCO World Heritage-listed Imperial Citadel. We explore the expansive grounds while hearing stories of the magnificent buildings and the emperors who once called them home, including Kien Trung Palace, the former residence of Vietnam's last emperors, which has been beautifully restored in recent years.

We then continue by cyclo to a tranquil lake where the Nguyen emperors once sought respite from the summer heat. From here, we visit a private museum showcasing a magnificent collection of royal possessions and artefacts, offering a fascinating insight into the lavish life of Vietnam's imperial court.

Next, we visit Thien Mu Pagoda, perhaps Hue's most iconic landmark, beautifully situated on the banks of the Perfume River. We take in the pagoda's peaceful surroundings and sweeping views while learning about its spiritual importance and the fascinating story behind the vintage vehicle on display.

We then pause to enjoy a delicious lunch inspired by the local flavours of Hue.

In the afternoon, we leave the city behind and travel through the picturesque outskirts of Hue to visit the tomb of Emperor Khai Dinh. Unlike the other royal tombs in Hue, this impressive complex combines traditional Vietnamese design with European influences, creating a unique and striking architectural style.

Following our visits, we continue our journey towards Hoi An, travelling by private, air-conditioned vehicle with our driver and guide.

This evening, we enjoy dinner at our hotel before settling in for the night.

Overnight in Hoi An.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Allegro Hoi An, Hoi An

DAY 6 - DISCOVERING THE CHARM OF HOI AN

Today, we discover the timeless charm of Hoi An, one of Vietnam's most picturesque and atmospheric towns.

We meet our local guide for an introduction to Hoi An, learning about its fascinating history as an important trading port. As we explore the town on foot, we admire its remarkably well-preserved traditional houses, many of which have withstood centuries of weather, trade and war.

We continue to the iconic Japanese Bridge, one of Hoi An's most recognisable landmarks. Built more than 400 years ago, the bridge once connected the Japanese community with the Chinese merchants living on the opposite side of the waterway. We admire its intricate carvings and paintings while learning more about their symbolism and cultural significance.

Next, we visit a Chinese communal hall, where colourful gates, ornate rooftops and intricate dragon statues create a striking setting. Here, we gain an insight into the traditions of ancestor worship as we visit the family altar and observe local devotees making offerings.

We then wander through Hoi An's smaller laneways and local neighbourhoods, discovering the quieter side of the town and gaining a deeper appreciation for its enduring charm.

Following our exploration, we return to the hotel, with the remainder of the afternoon at leisure to relax or continue discovering Hoi An at your own pace.

Overnight in Hoi An.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Allegro Hoi An, Hoi An

DAY 7 - VISITING MY SON

Today, we leave Hoi An behind and travel through the countryside to one of Central Vietnam's most fascinating cultural treasures, the ancient temple complex of My Son.

Granted UNESCO World Heritage status in 1999, My Son was once the spiritual and political centre of the Champa Kingdom, with its magnificent tower temples built between the 4th and 13th centuries.

We wander among the atmospheric ruins, learning about the Cham people, their rulers and the remarkable civilisation that once flourished here. As we explore the crumbling temples and intricate remains, we take a moment to soak up the peaceful surroundings and imagine My Son in its heyday.

Before leaving the site, we visit the small museum, where we discover more about the history and culture of the Cham era.

We then return to Hoi An and enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before spending the remainder of the afternoon at leisure. Take the opportunity to relax at the hotel or continue exploring the charming streets and riverside atmosphere of Hoi An at your own pace.

Included meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Accommodation: Allegro Hoi An

DAY 8 - WELCOME TO HO CHI MINH CITY

We enjoy breakfast at our hotel before making the most of some free time in Hoi An. At the arranged time, we meet our guide in the hotel lobby and transfer by private, air-conditioned vehicle to Danang Airport for our flight to Ho Chi Minh City.

On arrival, we meet our guide outside the airport terminal and transfer to central Ho Chi Minh City by private, air-conditioned vehicle.

This evening, we experience Ho Chi Minh City from the water as we enjoy a dinner cruise along the Saigon River. As the city lights up after dark, we take in panoramic views of the skyline while enjoying dinner on board.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner Cruise

Accommodation: Grand Hotel Sagon, Ho Chi Minh

DAY 9 - CU CHI TUNNELS & THE STORY OF SAIGON

We leave Ho Chi Minh City behind and travel through the surrounding urban landscape towards the Cu Chi Tunnels, arriving early to experience this fascinating site before the crowds.

With our local guide, we explore the rugged grounds of Cu Chi and discover the extraordinary underground network of tunnels constructed by local residents during Vietnam's wars. We have the opportunity to crawl through sections of the tunnels, should we wish, and gain an insight into the tiny chambers and challenging conditions in which people once lived and worked.

Above ground, we discover some of the ingenious methods used to protect the tunnels, including bamboo traps and camouflaged pits, while learning more about the impact of the war on the local community and Vietnam as a whole.

Following our visit, we return to Ho Chi Minh City for lunch before continuing our exploration of the city.

We visit the Reunification Palace, one of Ho Chi Minh City's most significant landmarks. Preserved much as it was during the war, we explore its grand interiors and fascinating underground war rooms, gaining a deeper understanding of this pivotal period in Vietnam's history.

We then stroll through 30 April Park to the historic Central Post Office, while also catching a glimpse of the former CIA building, the site of one of the final helicopter evacuations from Saigon in 1975.

To finish our day, we step away from the usual tourist trail and settle into a traditional Vietnamese coffee shop. Here, we sample the local coffee culture and enjoy a moment to relax like the locals do.

Following our exploration, we return to the hotel, where we enjoy dinner this evening.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Grand Hotel Sagon, Ho Chi Minh

DAY 10 - LIFE ALONG THE MEKONG

This morning, we head out to Tan Cang Pier, where we board our luxury speedboat and cruise along the Saigon River towards the Mekong Delta. As we travel, we enjoy the fresh air and take in views of everyday life along the riverbanks, gaining an insight into the communities that depend on these waterways.

Upon arrival in Ben Tre Province, we immerse ourselves in the peaceful atmosphere of the Mekong Delta. We board a traditional small boat and row through the narrow canals, surrounded by lush vegetation and the tranquil scenery of the water region.

Along the way, we make local stops to visit a traditional coconut candy workshop and a local bee farm, discovering some of the region's unique products and traditions.

We then return to the mainland and continue to Diem Phuong Restaurant, where we enjoy a traditional Vietnamese lunch featuring seven delicious courses, including the local speciality of Elephant-Ear fish, served with rice paper and fish sauce.

After lunch, we make our way back to our hotel in Ho Chi Minh City, where we have time to freshen up and relax.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Farewell Dinner

Accommodation: Grand Hotel Sagon, Ho Chi Minh

DAY 11 - GOODBYE TO VIETNAM

We enjoy breakfast at our hotel before saying farewell to Ho Chi Minh City. We then transfer by private, air-conditioned vehicle to Ho Chi Minh City Airport, accompanied by our driver and guide, for our onward journey.

Alternatively, why not extend your stay in Asia and join us on the tour extension to Cultural Cambodia and Angkor Thom.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: None

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Meet & Greet at Hanoi Airport (HAN) on arrival
- Transfers included (subject to arriving/departing at the designated airport and staying at the tour hotel on the official tour dates)
- Accommodation as detailed in the itinerary
- Meals as detailed in the itinerary
- 2 domestic flights: Hanoi [HAN] – Hue [HUI] (VN1545); Danang [DAD] – Ho Chi Minh City [SGN] (VN127)
- Transportation in private, air-conditioned vehicles
- Luxury speedboat journey along the Saigon River to the Mekong Delta
- All activities, visits and excursions as detailed in the itinerary
- All entrance fees as detailed in the itinerary
- Experienced English-speaking local tour guides
- Tour Director from The Big Journey Company, as well as local tour guides (subject to minimum group size being reached)

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International flights arriving at Noi Bai International Airport, Hanoi [HAN] on Day 1 and departing from Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Ho Chi Minh City [SGN] on Day 11
- Transfers on arrival or departure to/from airports outside of the official tour dates
- Drinks
- Gratuities
- Visas, travel or medical insurance
- Any personal items and anything not mentioned under Included in the Price Above
- Any meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Any optional activities offered
- Any COVID-19 tests or related entry and exit requirements

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- **Flights:** International flights to/from your chosen destination are not included in this package. The Big Journey Company will be happy to provide a quotation for your flights—please contact us for further details.
- **Vaccinations & Health:** Vaccinations may be recommended depending on your destination. Please consult your doctor or travel clinic for the most up-to-date medical advice.
- **Visas & Entry Requirements:** Entry requirements vary by destination, and a visa may be required. Please refer to the travel tips section for full details. It is your responsibility to ensure you have the necessary travel documentation prior to departure.
- **Medical Needs:** Please inform The Big Journey Company prior to travel of any medical conditions or medications you take that we should be aware of to help ensure a safe and enjoyable experience.
- **Accommodation Check-in/Out:** Unless otherwise stated in your itinerary, check-in is after 2–3pm and check-out is before 10am. Please note that hotels may be subject to change to the same or similar standard due to availability.
- **Cancellation Policy:** Cancellations made within 90 days of departure are subject to a 100% cancellation fee. Deposits are non-refundable, and balance payments are due 14 weeks prior to departure. It is your responsibility to ensure adequate travel insurance is in place to protect against the need to cancel your holiday.
- **Minimum Numbers:** The Big Journey Company host will accompany the tour should minimum guest numbers be met. We will confirm this closer to the departure date.
- **Terms & Conditions:** Further terms and conditions apply and will be provided upon request or at the time of booking. The Big Journey Company reserves the right to withdraw any offer prior to accepting a reservation. This does not affect your statutory rights. All offers are subject to availability and space is limited.

BOOK YOUR JOURNEY

Choose from the list of dates below

BOOK NOW!

06 NOV - 16 NOV 2027

FROM \$4,889 PER PERSON.

Call to Book

0844 3350 197

Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00 GMT