

12 DAYS - VIETNAM STYLE

- Route: Hanoi - Halong - Danang - Hoian - Ho Chi Minh - Cu Chi Tunnels - Vinh Long - Can Tho
- Travel style: History & Culture
- Duration: 12 Days/11 Nights

OVERVIEW

Vietnam has now become one of the most fashionable destinations in Asia. On this itinerary, we combine the highlights with the deep immerse into local life through outdoor activities such as lantern making in Hoi An, farming in Tra Que village and cooking in Ho Chi Minh city. We also add an extra attention to detail and with some of the finest accommodation and services available in the country. The perfect blend of culture, adventure, relaxation and fun activities create the ideal Vietnam experience to satisfy even the most discerning of travelers. Enjoy your time in Halong bay and don't forget to take a cruise along the Mekong river to watch the featured floating market of Mekong Delta.

BRIEF ITINERARY

Day 1: Hanoi Arrival
Day 2: Hanoi - City tour
Day 3: Hanoi - Bai Dinh Pagoda - Trang An
Day 4: Hanoi - Halong - UNESCO World Heritage
Day 5: Halong - Hanoi - Danang - Hoi An
Day 6: Hoi An - City Tour - Lantern making
Day 7: Hoi An - Tra Que herb village
Day 8: Hoian - Ho Chi Minh - City tour
Day 9: Ho Chi Minh - Cooking class
Day 10: Ho Chi Minh - Cai Be - Can Tho (Mekong delta)
Day 11: Can Tho floating market - Ho Chi Minh
Day 12: Ho Chi Minh - Departure

ITINERARY:

DAY 1: HANOI ARRIVAL

Arrive at Noi Bai International Airport, welcome by our guide and transfer to your hotel. Hanoi or "River-bound City" as its name literally means is Vietnam's capital with a thousand-year-old history dating back to 1010. The city's fascinating beauty which is characterized by unique cultural relics, ancient streets of antique houses, elegant French colonial buildings, tree-lined boulevards and romantic lakes has made it one of the most charming cities of Asia.

Accommodation: La Rosa Hanoi hotel or similar in Hanoi

DAY 2: HANOI - FULL DAY HANOI CITY TOUR

Morning, start a full day city tour beginning with Ho Chi Minh Complex which features the life of Ho Chi Minh, the nation's founder. At the complex, visit Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum where the nation's founder's body is preserved (closed on Monday, Friday and through October - November) and the rural style house on stilts where Ho Chi Minh lived and worked. Stop by one of Hanoi's icons, the One Pillar Pagoda, built in the 11th Century in dedication to Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara or Buddha of Compassion and reminiscent of a lotus blossom rising

from a pond. Continue to the Temple of Literature, known as the first university of Vietnam built in 1070 by the Ly Dynasty to honor Confucius, sages and outstanding Vietnamese scholars.

Afternoon, continue the tour to one of the following museums of choice namely the Museum of Fine Arts, the National Museum of Vietnamese, the Museum of Revolution, the Museum of Military History and the Museum of Ethnology. Go to Hoan Kiem Lake, the center point of Hanoi whose name "The Return Sword Lake" originated from a legend of a sacred sword and home to a rare endangered giant turtle species and visit Ngoc Son Temple on the lake. Next, take a one-hour cycle tour of the Old Quarter of Hanoi with its ancient streets representing traditional trades from the past. Finish the tour at the Thang Long Opera Theatre with a traditional Vietnamese water puppet show.

Meals: Breakfast / Lunch

Accommodation: La Rosa Hanoi hotel or similar in Hanoi

DAY 3: HANOI – BAI DINH PAGODA – TRANG AN

Morning, welcome by our guide and transfer to Ninh Binh province (120 Kms) to visit Bai Dinh pagoda and Trang An. Buddha Prayer place in Bai Dinh Pagoda, the biggest pagoda in Vietnam with 500 La Han statues, biggest bronze Buddha statue in Vietnam with 10 meters in height, 100 tons in weight. Have lunch in local restaurant with some local special dishes such as Goat meat with elderberry, pork storage vessel

Afternoon, continue to visit Trang An tourist attraction has over 310 species of higher plants, many algae and fungi. In particular, there have some rare woods and amount of valuable trees using for food, medicine. In addition, there has about 30 species of mammals, 50 species of birds, dozens of species of reptiles and some rare animals such as: chamois, leopard, phoenix... take boat trip to visit cave complex: Sang Cave, Toi Cave, Ba Giot Cave, Nau Ruou in mystery and wildness, see scenery of mountain and rivers Ha Long on land of Ninh Binh.

Meals: Breakfast / Lunch

Accommodation: La Rosa Hanoi hotel or similar in Hanoi

DAY 4: HANOI – HALONG – UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE

Morning pickup at 8:00 AM from your hotel for transfer to Ha Long Bay, which is about 160 km or 3.5-hour drive away. On the way, you will see some rural areas of the Red River Delta with plenty of chances to take photos of Vietnamese farmers working in paddy fields. Stop half way to visit a handicraft workshop of fine clothes and embroidered paintings. Arrive in Ha Long City at 11:30 AM and check in aboard the booked junk right after the welcome drink is served. Start cruising while having lunch on board and enjoy the mighty bay view. Ha Long Bay meaning Descending Dragon Bay in Vietnamese as legend has it that it was where a holly dragon landed down from sky. The bay, famous as one of the world's wonders and heritage sites whose formation dates back 500 million years, consists of around 2,000 karst islands and islets scattered over an area of 1,553 km². The bay cruise will continue with up close sighting of Dinh Huong Island, Ga Choi Island, Dog Island, Sail Island, a visit to Sung Sot Cave and swimming stop at Titov Beach. Relax to enjoy the bay view at sunset, have dinner after, go *fishing at 09:00 PM and spend a night on board.*

Meals: Breakfast / Lunch/ Dinner

Accommodation: overnight on Bai Tho Halong Cruises or similar in Ha Long Bay

DAY 5: HALONG – HANOI – HOIAN

Wake up at 06:30 AM and refresh your body and mind with a Tai Chi exercise on the sundeck. Tai Chi is an ancient internal martial art often practiced in soft and gracefully slow moves to enhance internal harmony and vitality. Have tea and coffee onboard before proceeding to Titov Islet or Soi Sim Island to trek and swim. Check out at 09:30, have a buffet brunch while cruising back to shore. Disembark at 11:00 AM to transfer to Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi for flight to Danang.

Arrive in Danang, welcome by our guide and transfer hotel for check-in and time at leisure.

Meals: Brunch

Accommodation: Kim An Hoi An Hotel or similar in Hoian

DAY 6: HOI AN - CITY TOUR - LANTERN MAKING

Morning, take a half day Hoi An city tour to discover the charm of Hoi An as a renowned World Heritage Site. Once a bustling maritime commercial port of Asia between 15th and 19th centuries, Hoi An is now a peaceful town of exceptionally well-preserved architecture, lifestyles and traditions. The town exemplifies a fascinating fusion of cultures between Vietnam and the outside world including China, Japan, Thailand and the Philippines. Highlights for sightseeing include the town's iconic 400-year-old Covered Bridge with a small temple attached to one side as a prominent example of Japanese architecture, the Museum of Trade Ceramics which is an elegant Vietnamese style wooden house built in 1858 showcasing antique ceramic artifacts, the 200-year-old Tan Ky House typifying an ancient Chinese merchant residence, the Ong Temple built in 1653 by Chinese settlers to worship Guan Yu, an ancient Chinese general whose character stands for loyalty, bravery and justice and the local market vibrant with colors and activities.

Afternoon, go to a lantern-making family for a half-day visit. Colorful lanterns are an unmistakable part of Hoi An's visual identity as the craft of lantern making has been passed down to present town dwellers from generations of their ancestors. Spend half a day observing and learning how to make lanterns the traditional way under the guidance of friendly and skilled hosts. You will practice all production steps including whittling bamboo into splints and bending them into a frame, cutting fabric to size and gluing it to the frame to complete a lantern. The meaningful souvenirs the host family will present you when saying goodbye are just what you made with your own hands.

Meals: Breakfast / Lunch

Accommodation: Kim An Hoi An Hotel or similar in Hoian

DAY 7: HOIAN – TRA QUE VEGETABLE VILLAGE

Meet our guide at your hotel and transfer out about 3 km Northwest of Hoi An town to visit Tra Que herb village. Well known for an organic farming method strictly without chemicals, the village produces very clean vegetables of high quality. After walking around to see the local vegetable gardens, you will join the vegetable-growing farmers in their daily work. Get dressed in farmer clothes and start tilling the soil, planting vegetables and fertilizing them with seaweed from a local river and engage in many other activities of gardening. Take a break to prepare lunch of some local specialties with the host family. Enjoy the lunch with shrimp spring rolls "Tam Huu" which are herbs, shrimps and meat tied together into clumps and the "Xeo" pancakes which are served with various herbs and fish sauce.

Afternoon, after a nap just as part of the local farmers' regime, continue your farm work by learning how to harvest and package vegetables. Around 3 PM say goodbye to the host family and ride back to Hoi An. Stop on the way to visit the tomb of a Japanese merchant built in 17th Century and an ancient square water well named Ba Le built by Cham settlers in 8th Century. The tour finishes around 4 PM.

Meals: Breakfast / Lunch

Accommodation: Kim An Hoi An Hotel or similar in Hoian

DAY 8: HOIAN – DANANG – HOCHIMINH

Morning, transfer to Airport in Danang for flight to Ho Chi Minh city.

Arrive in Ho Chi Minh, welcome by our guide and transfer to hotel for check in and time at leisure.

Afternoon, take a city tour to visit the Saigon Notre-Dame Basilica a neo-Roman cathedral built by the colonial French with materials entirely imported from Marseilles, the Saigon Central Post Office, which was designed and constructed in the early 20th Century by the famous French architect Gustave Eiffel, Cho Lon area or the city's China Town and the Jade Emperor Temple (Phuoc Hai), a rare Taoist structure in Vietnam built by the Cantonese community in the area in 1909.

Meals: Breakfast / Lunch

Accommodation: Elios Hotel or similar in Ho Chi Minh

DAY 9: HOCHIMINH – COOKING CLASS –CITY TOUR

Morning, let us take you on a quick adventure into the wonder world of Vietnamese cuisine. Start the morning with a delightful wander around Ben Thanh market with your cooking instructor, an experienced local chef. He / she will help you to a real shopping experience, providing you with knowledge on ingredients and how to select the best. Transfer to the Cookery Center with bags full of vegetables, meat, tropical fruits and exotic herbs and seasonings, you will begin practice cooking the Vietnamese way. The chef will share her / his secrets with you from recipes to techniques of processing the ingredients, mixing them in the right balance and cooking them into fine dishes. You will be surprised to find out how much you can do in making typical main dishes, desserts and drinks. After finishing, sit back relaxed and enjoy your self-cooked lunch feeling accomplished.

Afternoon, take a sightseeing tour of Ho Chi Minh City that includes the War Remnants Museum, which features a comprehensive collection of the machinery, weapons, photos, and documentation of Vietnam War with the both the French and Americans, former Presidential Palace and Ben Thanh market.

Meals: Breakfast / Lunch

Accommodation: Elios Hotel or similar in Ho Chi Minh

DAY 10: HOCHIMINH – VINH LONG – CAN THO

Morning, transfer about 136km to Vinh Long, a riverside town located in the Mekong Delta. Enjoy a boat cruise to the Cai Be floating market with sellers and buyers bargaining and exchanging goods from their boats, and then to Hoa Binh Phuoc islet where the maze of shady creeks will surely fascinate you. You will have a chance to mingle with local peasants, learn the secrets of their bonsai gardening. Visit local homes where the families produce tiles and ceramics; drop into rice-paper kiln and coconut-candy kiln; and observe daily country life. A typical Vietnamese lunch at a local home will be arranged.

Afternoon, drive to Can Tho & check in and free at leisure.

Meals: Breakfast / Lunch

Accommodation: Saigon Can Tho Hotel or similar in Can Tho

DAY 11: CAN THO – HOCHIMINH

Morning, depart Ninh Kieu wharf by shuttle-boat, you can see bustling activities along Can Tho riverbanks. Particularly, you may know how local people go fishing with plenty of fish traps and how they transport passengers as well as products by the waterway. Approaching Cai Rang floating market, you can reappear the selling activities in the past using a traditional “offering pole” exchanging consumer goods hanging on the pole for Mekong fruit and vegetables with local sellers. To understand more about lifestyle over here, keep on going into the small creeks called Rach Nho in which the Southern countryside can be seen clearly before cruising back to Ninh Kieu Wharf.

Meals: Breakfast / Lunch

Accommodation: Elios Hotel or similar in Ho Chi Minh

DAY 12: HOCHIMINH – DEPARTURE

Leisure time until transfer to Tan Son Nhat Airport in Ho Chi Minh City for departure

Group Size	1	2	3 – 4	5 – 6	Single supplement
Value (3 stars)	1,853	1,043	905	796	249

IMPORTANT NOTE:

- All prices are quoted in USD/ per person, based on Double/Twin occupancy
- Supplement for standard Vietnamese menu meals: US\$ 10 for lunch & US\$ 15 for dinner
- Private services & daily departure
- Surcharge for Compulsory dinner for Xmas and New Year Eve
- Surcharge for booking during Chinese New Year from 18 – 24 Feb 2015: 25% of adult prices
- Surcharge for domestic flight tickets with taxes:
 - Flight from Hanoi – Danang: US\$ 110/ person
 - Flight from Danang – Ho Chi Minh: US\$ 110/ person

SPECIAL OFFER

- [Free] Mineral water is available.
- [Free] Vietnam visa approval letter on arrival
- [Free] Vietnam Traditional Gift

WHAT IS INCLUDED

- Accommodation in a double or twin room with daily breakfast
- One night cruise on a wooden junk in Halong Bay
- Services of a driver and private air-conditioned vehicle during all tours and transfers
- Experienced English-speaking guide during all tours and transfers
- Private board for sightseeing in Hue, Hoian & My Tho
- Entrance fees for all visits as mentioned in the itinerary
- Lunch or dinner as specified in the itinerary

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

- International & Domestic flight tickets
- Visa Approval letter & Vietnam visa stamping fee at the airport
- Meals, if not specified in the itinerary
- Travel insurance (we highly recommend that you purchase adequate insurance)
- Gratuities for guides and drivers
- Personal expenses, such as laundry, telephone, drinks, etc.
- All other services not specified in the itinerary

HOTEL CATEGORY

Place	3star hotel	Website
Hanoi	Larosa Hanoi hotel <i>or similar</i>	www.hanoilarosahotel.com
Halong	Bai Tho Junks <i>or similar</i>	www.victoryhalong.com
Hoian	Kim An Hoi An hotel <i>or similar</i>	www.kimanhoianhotel.com
Can Tho	Saigon Can Tho hotel <i>or similar</i>	www.saigoncantho.com.vn
Ho Chi Minh	Elios hotel <i>or similar</i>	www.elioshotel.vn