Vietnam: Hanoi to Saigon

Hanoi - Ha Long - Hoi An - Nha Trang - Ho Chi Minh City - 11 days / 10 nights

Sample itinerary - Subject to availability

Travel style: tailor made

Overview

The country's full span, north to south - bay, lantern town, beach arc and the delta.

The journey

Eleven days down the country's spine - Hanoi's Old Quarter and the bay of limestone karsts, the lantern lanes of Hoi An, Nha Trang's beach arc, and Saigon's river-fronted energy, with the Mekong Delta to finish. Flights inside Vietnam are short and frequent, so the route moves without a single long drive; it also pairs naturally with a China journey for clients combining the two.

Highlights

- Overnight junk cruise among Ha Long's limestone karsts
- Hanoi's Old Quarter, Hoan Kiem Lake and a water-puppet evening
- Hoi An's lantern lanes and the Japanese covered bridge
- Nha Trang's bay islands, Po Nagar towers and mud-bath afternoon
- Cu Chi tunnels and Saigon's French quarter
- A day on the Mekong Delta's canals and market arms

Day by day



Day 1 - Arrive Hanoi

Met at Noi Bai and driven into the Old Quarter - 36 streets that still trade by their old guild names, motorbike rivers included. The first evening is deliberately loose: a walk around Hoan Kiem Lake as the locals do their evening laps, then dinner wherever the guide's queue rule points - usually a bun cha counter with plastic stools and no menu. Early night; the country starts tomorrow.

Meals: - - Hotel: Hanoi, Old Quarter

Day 2 - Hanoi

The city in layers: the Temple of Literature's courtyard gates, the Hoan Kiem lake circuit with the Tortoise Tower mid-water, and the Old Quarter's ladder houses and street vendors at working pace. Afternoon tea in a French-quarter cafe, then the water-puppet theatre - a farm-worker's art form turned stage craft - before a street-food style dinner through the night market streets.

Meals: B, D - Hotel: Hanoi, Old Quarter



Day 3 - Ha Long - aboard the junk

East out of the Red River delta to the bay where 1,600-odd limestone towers stand in green water. Board at midday: cabin check, a slow cruise through the karst field, a kayak or sampan gap in the cliff-line caves, and dinner aboard as the day-boats thin out. Squid-fishing off the stern with the crew, or the top deck in the dark - the bay at night is the whole point of sleeping here.

Meals: B, L, D - Hotel: Ha Long, aboard cruise

Day 4 - Tai chi, grotto, then south

Early tai chi on deck for anyone awake, a grotto visit before the day-tripper wave, and brunch back through the karsts to port. Transfer to Hanoi for the short flight to Da Nang, then the coast road into Hoi An - lantern-lighting hour if the traffic kind, which it usually is. First walk through an old town that shuts its lights and glows on paper and silk.

Meals: B, L - Hotel: Hoi An, old town



Day 5 - Hoi An

Morning market walk with the cooking-class chef - herbs by the bundle, river fish still moving - then a hands-on session covering the town's signature Cao lau and the spring-roll canon. Afternoon free for the Japanese covered bridge, the merchant houses and the tailors; the evening a riverside lantern float. The town rewards the second walk even more than the first.

Meals: B, L - Hotel: Hoi An, old town

Day 6 - South to Nha Trang

The mid-morning flight down the coast lands in Vietnam's beach arc. Settle into the beachfront, then ease in: the Po Nagar cham towers above the river mouth - older than most of the countries on the map - and the long sand by the fishing fleet. Evening along the beach road's seafood grills, choosing dinner by the ice tables out front.

Meals: B - Hotel: Nha Trang, beachfront



Day 7 - Bay islands and mud

Boat day among the bay islands - a snorkel stop, a floating village call, lunch onboard or over the water - then the afternoon's genuine Nha Trang ritual: the hot-spring mud baths, therapeutic by reputation and hilarious by reality, and better booked for the late-day cooling-off. The evening free; most clients re-book their own favourite grill.

Meals: B, L - Hotel: Nha Trang, beachfront

Day 8 - On to Saigon

The flight into Tan Son Nhat and straight into the city's rhythm: the Reunification Palace's preserved command rooms, the Central Post Office's iron-and-map interior, and Notre-Dame's brick facade from the square. The afternoon bends through District 1's arcades and the Book Street lane; dinner around Ben Thanh's market edge, where the haggling is part of the menu.

Meals: B - Hotel: Ho Chi Minh City, District 1



Day 9 - Cu Chi and the city's quieter hours

Out to the Cu Chi tunnels early - a section of the stabilized visitor tunnel for anyone who wants it, and the docent-led explanation of how the network worked, which is the part that stays with people. Back in the city by mid-afternoon: the War Remnants museum for those who ask, and the rooftop hour at dusk when Saigon's skyline does its best work over the river.

Meals: B - Hotel: Ho Chi Minh City, District 1

Day 10 - The Mekong Delta

A day into the delta's arms - My Tho or Ben Tre depending on the week's water - by sampan through the coconut-canal lanes, a honey-tea and fruit stop, and lunch at a riverside house with the elephant-ear fish done the local way. Back in Saigon for the last evening; the recommendation list runs from sidewalk cà phê to the skyline bars, and the group splits happily.

Meals: B, L - Hotel: Ho Chi Minh City, District 1

Day 11 - Depart

Transfer to Tan Son Nhat timed from check-in, with the morning free - a last Ben Thanh flower-stand lap or one more pho counter is usually how it ends. The Vietnam ground team and the UK desk stay reachable until boarding; the route extends naturally to the Mekong's deeper branches, the central highlands, or a Cambodia crossing for whichever brief comes next.

Meals: B - Hotel: -

What makes this journey different

- An overnight junk cruise among Ha Long's karsts - outside cabins, a real night on the water rather than a day-trip turnaround.
- Hoi An at lantern-lighting time, plus a riverside cooking session with a market walk first.
- Nha Trang built in as a rest arc - bay islands, the Po Nagar towers and the mud-bath afternoons - instead of an unbroken city run.
- Cu Chi and the Mekong Delta both included, timed on separate days so Saigon's evenings stay free for the client's own discoveries.

Where you stay

Four-star hotels inside the historic quarters - Hanoi's Old Quarter, Hoi An's old town, Nha Trang beachfront and Saigon's District 1 - with one night aboard a Ha Long cruise ship. Five-star and resort upgrades quoted per city.

Food & local life

Pho at the breakfast counter, bun cha in the alley it made famous, Cao lau noodles that only work with Hoi An's well water, Nha Trang's seafood grills on the beach road, and Saigon's banh mi and sidewalk cà phê evenings - menus travel with the route, so every eating day is a different region.

Included

+ Accommodation in the agreed grade, with breakfast
+ Private guide and private vehicle on touring days
+ All internal transport between cities as stated - high-speed rail, internal flights and transfers
+ Entrance fees for the sites named in the itinerary
+ Meals as stated (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner)
+ Drinking water in the vehicle, and a 24-hour emergency contact while the group is in China
+ Ha Long overnight cruise (outside cabin) and three internal Vietnam flights

Not included

- International flights to and from China
- Chinese visa or visa-application costs
- Travel insurance, including medical and cancellation cover
- Meals not marked in the itinerary, drinks and personal spending
- Anything listed under subject to confirmation until it is confirmed
- Vietnam e-visa fees and domestic flight baggage add-ons

To be confirmed with suppliers

- Ha Long cruise vessel, cabin deck and sailing date - bay-port departures shift with the tide tables
- internal flight times (Hanoi-Da Nang-Da Nang-Nha Trang-Nha Trang-Saigon) - set with the airline schedules for the travel dates
- My Son sanctuary access and cooking-class venue days in Hoi An
- Cu Chi tunnel-visit slot and Mekong day routing (My Tho or Ben Tre)

Customisation

Every framework can be re-built around your client's dates, party size, hotel grade, pace and interests - or combined with scheduled small group departures where budget matters. Send us the brief and we will quote in writing.