

# A World Away Travels

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Phone 1-888-438-3612 ~ email [info@aworldawaytravels.com](mailto:info@aworldawaytravels.com)  
[www.aworldawaytravels.com](http://www.aworldawaytravels.com)

## The Essence of Vietnam

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Our insightful tour explores Vietnam from Hanoi to Saigon. From the north's rugged mountains, the stunning topography of Halong Bay and the bustle of Hanoi's bicycle filled streets we begin our journey south discovering inspiring natural scenery, intriguing history, and vibrant people. Now liberated from years of war and isolation, the Vietnamese are charming and dynamic people with their focus fixed firmly on the future. Influenced by the Chinese and French conquerors of the past, Vietnam now offers a unique blend of culture and history combined with a frenetic enthusiasm for development and new growth. Our trip south follows the stunning coast to the historical treasures of Hue and the UNESCO Living World Heritage city of Hoi Ann. Further south we venture into the China Sea to visit limestone karst islands offshore and the French influenced hill station of Dalat where we venture to the rural hills to hike and visit local villages inhabited by a colorful collage of local ethnic groups. Our journey to Vietnam ends in Saigon and the lush fertile Mekong Delta. Where we enjoy the sites of Vietnam's largest city and enjoy a very special two days exploring the Mekong River Delta, the bread basket of Vietnam. *The following trip is a suggested itinerary. A world of possibilities exist in Vietnam and custom trips are our specialty.*

### **Day 1-2 Arrive in Hanoi**

Arriving in Ha Noi you will be met by your guide and will transfer from the airport to the hotel. Hanoi, the capitol of Vietnam is a tree lined city filled with French-colonial architecture. This evening you will have a welcome dinner at Le Tonkin. One of your first of many great meals in Vietnam. Accommodations: Hilton Hanoi Opera (Deluxe) Sofitel Metropole (Luxury) *Dinner*

### **Day 3 Hanoi**

After breakfast at your hotel, you and your guide will venture into the city. Sites included are the Temple of Literature, One Pillar Pagoda, Opera House and the city's lovely lakes. In the afternoon, you will continue to the old quarter by cyclo. The old quarters encompasses more than a thousand years of history. It remains one of Vietnam's most lively and unusual places. It is here one can buy anything from a gravestone to silk pajamas. Exploring the maze of back streets is fascinating and there are endless things to buy - wool clothes, cosmetics, gold and silver jewelry, silk clothing and herbal medicines. In the evening, you will enjoy a performance of traditional water puppets. Accommodations: Hilton Hanoi Opera (Deluxe) Sofitel Metropole (Luxury) *Breakfast, Lunch*

#### **Day 4 Hanoi-Ha Long Bay**

After breakfast you will be picked up by a local guide and travel from Hanoi through the fertile countryside to Bai Chay. This fishing town is your starting point for the magnificent Ha Long Bay; a natural wonder the bay has stunning limestone pinnacles jutting out of the ocean. Legend holds that the three-thousand limestone pinnacles scattered through out the Gulf of Tonkin were created by a dragon's tail as he slipped into the sea. From here board the Halong Ginger Cruise, a deluxe cruising ship built in the style of a traditional Chinese junk and fitted out with accommodation of the highest standard. Set sail through the bay as lunch is served, passing dramatic limestone islands. In the afternoon, enjoy the possibility to visit some of the many caves and grottos, or simply enjoy swimming or sunbathing in the emerald waters. Enjoy cocktails during sunset, followed by dinner and overnight on board. Accommodations: Onboard *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

#### **Day 5 Halong-Hanoi-Hue**

Morning on board, you will explore the bay and its many karst islands. After disembarking, you will return to Hanoi to catch a flight to Hue. A vibrant modern city, Hue bustles with bicycle, motorcycle and cyclo traffic. Founded as a royal city in 1687, the original citadel city of Phu Xuan was built on the site of present day Hue. Hue is the gateway to the treasures of Vietnam's royal past. The city served as Vietnam's political capital from 1802 to 1945 under the 13 emperors of the Nguyen dynasty and has been one of Vietnam's cultural, religious and educational centers. Upon arrival, you will be met by your guide and transferred to the hotel for the evening. Your evening is free for relaxation. Accommodations: Saigon Morin Hotel *Breakfast, Lunch*

#### **Day 6 Hue**

A full day to explore Hue. Your mooring begins visiting the Forbidden City, once home to the royal family, the Citadel and the Museum of Royal Fine Arts. In the afternoon you take a relaxing journey on the Perfume River passing traditional villages to reach the 17th century Thien Mu Pagoda, high in the green hills, considered Vietnam's most important structure. Continuing along the Perfume River you will stop at Tomb of Ming Mang one of Hue's most beautiful pagodas. In the evening return to your hotel to relax. Accommodations: Saigon Morin Hotel *Breakfast*

#### **Day 7 Hue-Hoi Ann**

Breakfast followed by a spectacular drive over Hai Van Pass and along the beautiful tropical coastline to Hoi An. The ancient town of Hoi An lies on the banks of the Thu Bon River. Known to early Western traders, Hoi An was one of the major trading centers of Southeast Asia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In 1999 UNESCO labeled Hoi An as one of the Cultural Heritages in the World. Hoi An has a distinctive Chinese atmosphere with low, tiled-roof houses and narrow streets; the original structure of some of these streets is still intact. Many of the houses were constructed of rare timbers and decorated with lacquer panels engraved with Chinese characters and pillars carved with ornamental designs. During a leisurely discovery tour on foot you will visit some of the historic merchant and community houses, places of worship and famous bridges. Accommodations: Victoria *Breakfast*

**Day 8 Free Day**

Enjoy a relaxing day at the ocean or independently exploring Hoi An. Optional tours available. Accommodations: Victoria *Breakfast*

**Day 9 Hoi An -Danang-Nha Trang**

Journey north along the coast to Danang where you will catch a flight to Nha Trang as pleasant sea side town. Afternoon to relax at the ocean. Accommodations: Ana Mandara Resort *Breakfast*

**Day 10 Nha Trang-Dalat**

A highlight of a visit to Nha Trang is a trip out on a boat exploring the islands of the South China Sea. This morning enjoy a boat ride before continuing to Dalat. En route you will stop at Po Klong Garai Cham Towers. The Hindu kingdom of Champa was a significant power, which evolved in the 2nd century. Many relics of this empire are to be found in this central coastal area. Arrival in Dalat. Dalat, one of Vietnam's most charming towns. The drive offers fantastic views. The influence of the French is prevalent as Dalat was founded as a hill station to enable the colonials to escape the heat and chaos of Saigon. The city is set around a lake and surrounded by forests, waterfalls and rolling countryside. Evening at leisure. Accommodations: Sofitel Dalat Palace *Breakfast*

**Day 11 Dalat**

A morning to enjoy the sites in Dalat by foot. Enjoy a walk around the central lake, in lovely gardens and through the French District. After lunch you will continue to the nine hamlets of Lat Village at the base of Lang Bian Mountain. The ethnic groups to be found here are the Lat, Chill, Ma and Koho. Enjoy a walk in the country side while exploring this unique ethnic area. Late afternoon return to Dalat. Accommodations: Sofitel Dalat Palace *Breakfast*

**Day 12 Dalat- Saigon**

Morning to relax before transferring to the airport for your flight to Saigon. Saigon is the largest of Vietnamese cities, with the hustle and bustle of Vietnamese life visible everywhere. There are street markets, sidewalk cafes and sleek new bars. The city churns and bubbles. Yet within this teeming metropolis are 300 years of timeless traditions and the beauty of an ancient culture. To the west of the city is District 5, the huge Chinese neighborhood called Cholon, which means 'Big Market'. The evening is free to explore this exciting city on your own. Accommodations: Renaissance Riverside (*Deluxe*) Park Hyatt (*Luxury*) *Breakfast*

**Day 13 Saigon**

Morning to see the sites of Saigon. Visit Independence Palace, Notre Dame Cathedral, Thanh Market and the busy Cholon District with its myriad of shops, stalls and vendors. In the afternoon continue to the infamous CuChi Tunnels. The 1968 Tet Offensive was launched from Cu Chi with surprising effect. A section of the tunnels has been widened to allow tourists to get a feel for what the life underground must have been like. Return to

Saigon in the evening. Accommodations: Renaissance Riverside (*Deluxe*) Park Hyatt (*Luxury*) *Breakfast*

**Day 14 Saigon-Mekong**

Today journey to the Mekong Delta. A rich land mass that produces enough rice to feed the entire country. This part of tropical Vietnam is covered with terraces, orchards and dense rain forests. Travel past My Tho and across the river by ferry from Vihn Long to Can Tho. Overnight in Can Tho. Accommodations: Victoria *Breakfast*

**Day 15 Mekong – Saigon**

Morning to visit Phong Dien Floating Market by boat. One of the Mekong's most interesting floating markets. Return to Saigon for a final evening in Vietnam. Accommodations: Renaissance Riverside (*Deluxe*) Park Hyatt (*Luxury*) *Breakfast*

**Day 16 Depart Vietnam**

Morning transfer to airport. *Breakfast*

**Including:**

- Superb Guides
- All Tours and Entrance Fees, Permits
- Vietnam Accommodations in deluxe and superior hotels
- All Breakfasts and Welcome Dinner
- Ground Transportation in Private A/C vehicle (*complimentary cold towels and drinking water*)
- 3 Internal Flights *Hanoi-Hue, Danang-Nha Trang, Dalat-Saigon*

**Price does not include:**

- International Flights
- Visa Fees
- Domestic and International Airport Taxes
- Alcoholic and Bottled Beverages
- Tips
- Personal expenses (telephone, email, laundry, etc.)