

Complete Vietnam

Comprehensive 15-day itinerary covering North, South and Central Vietnam



Day 1 – Arrive Hanoi

You'll be met on arrival in **Hanoi** and transferred to your hotel in the city centre. The rest of the day is at leisure.

Day 2 – Explore Hanoi

Your full-day tour of Vietnam's capital begins with its central landmark, the **Ho Chi Minh mausoleum**, a huge marble edifice housing the embalmed body of North Vietnam's first president. In an Orwellian, quasi-religious display, visitors to the site form a silent procession as they are led to the central chamber where the body rests. It's a ritual that attracts pilgrims from across Vietnam, as well as curious travellers.

From the mausoleum, continue to the **Temple of Literature**, Vietnam's first university, established in 1070. This temple / university complex is located at the very heart of the city, but it's easy to forget where you are once you enter its gates; enclosed within high walls and beautiful gardens, it's a peaceful retreat that feels far removed from the hustle and bustle outside. At its centre are a series of 82 stelae dating to the 15th century and recording the names, achievements and dates of the Temple's most famous students—the near-



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deification of great men and former leaders is a Vietnamese tradition, you'll learn, that didn't begin with Ho Chi Minh.

After lunch, visit the **Hoan Kiem Lake**. This is Hanoi's central landmark, as well as a lively public space where local residents gather in the mornings to perform t'ai chi. On an island at the centre of the lake is the Ngoc Son Temple, accessed via a traditional red wooden bridge.

End the day with a one-hour 'cyclo' tour of Hanoi's **Old Quarter**.



Day 3 – Ha Long Bay

Today you leave Hanoi for **Ha Long Bay**, a drive of approx. 4 hours to the coast.

At Ha Long, board a traditional Vietnamese sailing boat, or 'junk', and set off on a cruise of the hundreds of islets that line the Bay. You'll enjoy a seafood lunch on the ship, before disembarking in the afternoon to visit some of the islands and a floating market. If the weather permits, take a swim in the calm waters or go kayaking. Of course, you may prefer to just lounge on the deck of the ship—when the weather's right, there's nothing more relaxing!

In the evening, drop anchor and retreat to your cabin for a night in the Bay (full-board).

Ha Long Bay is generally best visited in the summer, when the waters are warm enough to swim in. But some prefer the winter, when the Bay is chill and misty, and wonderfully atmospheric.



Day 4 – Ha Long Bay to Hue

Spend the morning in Ha Long Bay before returning to dock around lunch time. Back on land, you'll be met by your driver and guide and transferred to Noi Bai Airport for your flight to **Hue**, in central Vietnam. On arrival in Hue, meet with your guide and transfer to your hotel. Evening at leisure in Hue.



Day 5 – Hue

Start the day with a morning cruise on the Perfume River to **Thien Mu Pagoda**, situated just outside Hue. The Pagoda is part of a Buddhist monastery and you may, if interested, tour the monastery and learn more about the monastic life.

From Thien Mu, travel to the **royal tomb of Tu Duc**, Vietnam's emperor from 1829 to 1883. Tu Duc's mausoleum is one of several royal tombs in Hue, formerly the Imperial capital of Vietnam, but it stands out from the others for its sheer scale. The tomb itself is part of a much larger complex, comprising manor and gardens, which was built during the emperor's lifetime as a private retreat. It tells a fascinating story. Tu Duc reigned through a difficult era in Vietnam's history, which saw the imperial family lose its hold over its kingdom through successive concessions to both colonial powers and internal rivals. As he grew older, Tu Duc is said to have become increasingly isolated within his mausoleum-cum-palace, writing sombre poetry while his kingdom disintegrated.

In the afternoon, explore the **Imperial Citadel**. Enclosed by a moat and 2m-thick ramparts, the citadel is a staggering complex housing within its walls the ruins of numerous palaces, libraries and halls. Sadly, many of the citadel's original structures were destroyed by bombing during the Vietnam War, but some remain and work has begun to repair the damage elsewhere. Even in its dilapidated state, the citadel is a wonder; walking among its ruined walls you gain an appreciation for the elaborate ritual that underpinned the authority of the Vietnamese Emperors right up until the dying days of Imperial Vietnam.

Day 6 – Hue to Hoi An

Depart Hue this morning and drive south along a beautiful coastal route—perhaps the most scenic in all of Vietnam—taking you over the **Hai Van Pass** and to the town of **Hoi An**. There will be time to stop along the way for snapshots; on a clear day, the Pass offers wonderful views. The route also travels through **Da Nang**, Vietnam's third city. If of interest, you can stop here to visit the **Cham Museum**, which houses a small but fascinating collection of artefacts from Vietnam's Cham period, when much of central Vietnam was governed by a Hindu dynasty of Indian descent.



Continue to Hoi An, arriving in time for lunch. Once you've checked-in to your hotel, the rest of the day is at leisure. Relax at the beach or venture into central Hoi An, with its lively night market and excellent restaurants.



Day 7 – Hoi An

In the morning, visit one of Hoi An's famous lantern workshops, where you'll learn how to make a lantern from scratch (families might like to allow an hour or two here, as children usually love this experience!) Afterwards, explore Hoi An's old town on foot, visiting its ancient merchant homes, assembly hall, four centuries old Japanese bridge and river market.

In the afternoon, enjoy a boat cruise on the **Thu Bon River**.

Day 8 – Hoi An to Nha Trang

Morning transfer to Da Nang airport for your flight to **Nha Trang**, the beach capital of Vietnam. You'll be met on arrival in Nha Trang and transferred to your hotel. The afternoon is at leisure to enjoy the beach and ocean.



Day 9 – Nha Trang

A morning boat cruise will take you to Nha Trang Bay's beautiful offshore islands, where you can enjoy fine beaches and clear waters.

The afternoon is free to relax on the beach. If you prefer to explore, we can arrange a visit to the **Po Nagar Cham Towers**, one of the oldest Cham sites in Vietnam. Other local sights include the hilltop **Long Son Pagoda**, with its giant stone Buddha, the famous salt fields, and Nha Trang market.

Day 10 – Nha Trang to Da Lat

Leave Nha Trang this morning for **Da Lat**, in the Central Highlands, travelling via the scenic **Hon Giao Pass**. There will be photo opportunities en-route, and you'll also have the chance to stop at a remote hill village.

Da Lat is a former French colonial town situated amid stunning hill country. You'll quickly appreciate the cooler climate, a marked contrast to the stifling heat of the coast.



Arriving in the afternoon, take a tour of Da Lat and its surrounds, including **Xuan Huong Lake**, the **Summer Palace**, and the **Da Lat Crémallère Railway**, with its wonderful art deco station.

Day 11 – Da Lat

Today is free for you to explore Da Lat and its surrounds at leisure. There's much to do: shop at the market, take the cable car, or follow one of the many forest trails out of town. Ask your guide in advance if you'd like to arrange any additional activities; otherwise, take today at your own pace.

Day 12 – Da Lat to Ho Chi Minh City

Explore the flower market in Da Lat before visiting the **Truc Lam Zen Buddhist temple** and tranquil **Tuyen Lam Lake** on the outskirts of town. Late morning, depart Da Lat for **Ho Chi Minh City** (5-6 hours), with a stop along the way at a tea and coffee plantation.

Arrive Ho Chi Minh City late afternoon and transfer to your hotel. Evening at leisure.

Day 13 – Ho Chi Minh City

This morning visit the **Cu Chi Tunnels**, situated just outside of Ho Chi Minh City. A labyrinthine network of passages and hideouts, the tunnels are a testament to the ingenuity of the guerrilla fighters who built and lived in them during the Vietnam War. You can enter some of the tunnels (mercifully, they have been widened to make the experience a bit more comfortable!)

Return to the city in the afternoon for a tour of its highlights, including its major temples, Thien Hau and Quan Am, the Reunification Palace, Binh Tay market, and Chinatown.

Day 14 – Mekong Delta

Depart Ho Chi Minh City after breakfast for a full-day tour of the **Mekong Delta**. It's a short drive to **My Tho**, where you'll board a river boat and begin to journey along the Mekong River, before exiting onto one of its many tributaries. You'll be hopping on and



off boats throughout the day, as you explore the lush plantations and sleepy settlements of the Delta region. While on land, you'll travel by foot. You'll also have the chance to board a traditional wooden sampan (a pole driven boat), as you explore the narrow canals and tributaries of the Mekong.

Return to the city after lunch at a restaurant in the Delta.

Day 15 – Departure

Transfer to the airport for your international flight home or onward transfer.



Price Guide:

*The cost of this itinerary is from **£1,689 per person**, based on two travellers in mid-range accommodation. For more information, or if you would like to enquire about a tailor-made holiday combining part or all of the above itinerary, please [contact us](#).*

Includes:

- Twin/double accommodation on B&B basis (full-board in Ha Long Bay)
- All transfers as described, including internal flights and airline taxes
- Private transportation throughout
- All entrance fees
- Activities mentioned in itinerary
- Experienced regional guides

Excludes:

- International flights – please ask us for a quote
- Visas
- Personal travel insurance
- Personal expenses and tips
- Lunch and dinner to own account unless stated otherwise in itinerary