

# Vietnam – Ho Chi Minh to Ha Long Bay



## Trip Summary

Lowland tropical rainforest. White sand beaches. A UNESCO-designated bay dappled in limestone. You'll find all these things and more in this astonishingly exotic and utterly compelling country of breathtaking natural beauty. Search for the endangered black-shanked douc (a blue-faced monkey) in Nui Chua National Park. Enjoy a gracious welcome into the homes of the locals at Hoi An. Hike through the jungle in Bach Mã National Park to a thundering, 900-foot waterfall. Visit the Forbidden Purple City, constructed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by Emperor Gia Long. Sample a host of exotic regional specialties – *pho bo*, *nom*, *banh goi*, *banh cuon* – in Hanoi's Old Quarter. Dive deep into Vietnam's scintillating display of diverse natural beauty and cultural delights on this two-week multisport adventure.

## Itinerary

### Day 1: Ho Chi Minh

Welcome to Vietnam! • Upon arrival to Ho Chi Minh City Tan Son Nhat Airport, your driver and guide will meet you and they will transfer you to your hotel • Check-in and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure • *Overnight Park Hyatt Hotel (No meals)*

### Day 2: Ho Chi Minh City / Cat Tien National Park

This morning after breakfast, meet your driver and guide at the hotel and transfer to Cat Tien National Park, located 150 km (90 mi) north from Ho Chi Minh City • Cat Tien National Park has an area of about 720 km<sup>2</sup> (450 mi<sup>2</sup>) and protects one of the largest areas of lowland tropical rainforests in Vietnam • After four hours driving north, arrive at the park, check-in at the lodge and enjoy lunch surrounded by nature • Around 3:00 PM, start cycling towards the ethnic people village, located 13 km (8 mi) away • Visit one of the local families living there and after having refreshments and exploring the surroundings, return to the lodge in the late afternoon • On your way back, keep an eye out for wildlife and birds high up in the forest canopy • Arrive to the lodge, enjoy dinner and the rest of the evening will be free at your leisure • *Overnight The Forest Floor Lodge (B, L, D)*

### Day 3: Cat Tien National Park

After an early breakfast, meet your local guide and follow the *Lagerstroemia Trail*. • From Forest Floor Lodge the trail starts opposite the entrance and takes you through a well-used track with large trees (*Lagerstroemia* or *Banglang* and the well-known *Thung* or *Tetrameles* tree) with palms and cycads in the under-story • If you look up into the canopy you will see ferns and orchids; lianas and strangler vines are abundant • There are good possibilities of seeing pittas, partridge and other bird species • At noon, enjoy lunch and later we will visit the Dao Tien Endangered Primate Species Centre, located on a small island at the entrance of the park • The center specializes in the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of endangered primates naturally found in the surrounding region and resident primates who have been victims of the illegal wildlife trade • Head back to the lodge around 4:30 PM and take the rest of the afternoon free at leisure • Dinner at the lodge • *Overnight The Forest Floor Lodge (B, L, D)*

### Day 4: Cat Tien National Park / Ho Chi Minh City / Danang / Hoi An

Early morning, walk through the Botanic Garden to Heaven Rapids • This walk gives you the good chance to see primates and plenty of opportunities to see a wide variety of birds and other jungle life

The toughest part is going home.<sup>SM</sup>



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• At 8:00 AM, you will return to the Lodge where breakfast will be ready for you • After breakfast you will have a couple of hours to relax at their viewing platform, looking at the river, bird watching, and listening to the gibbons singing • Your guide and transfer will be waiting for you to head towards Ho Chi Minh City airport for your flight to Danang • Upon arrival, you will transfer to your hotel in Hoi An • *Overnight Four Seasons The Nam Hai (B)*

## **Day 5: Hoi An**

At 8:30 am, we will start a walking tour through this charming small town made of hundreds of historic houses, congregation halls, pagodas and other structures • Its buildings and its streets reflect the indigenous and foreign influences this town had, which helped define it as a unique heritage and multi-cultural site • There's plenty to see in this delightful town, such as the Japanese Covered Bridge, the Pottery Museum, the 200 year old Tan Ky House, Chua Ong Pagoda and the vibrant local market • In the evening you will have free time at leisure to relax and discover this beautiful town on your own • *Overnight Four Seasons The Nam Hai (B)*

## **Day 6: Hoi An**

After breakfast, you will be transferred to Hoi An town for an optional bike tour • Explore the hidden passageways and winding alleyways of Hoi An, stopping to photograph the iconic Japanese bridge in the historic district • Crossing first the canal bridge near the night market we continue to the new metal bike bridge connecting Hoi An proper and its southern villages of Quang Nam Province • Not far from the bridge, we visit a local family making Banh Beo in the traditional method • These small, savory rice flour bowls are a common breakfast staple in the countryside • We continue riding to one of Hoi An's most beautiful villages, stopping at a family home to learn about the tradition of family chapels • Our host is nearly 90 and vividly remembers his experiences in the American war • We pedal past rice fields and vegetable farms along small canals and waterways towards a wooden boat-building site • Fishing is still the lifeblood of the province and the construction of these ships is quite amazing to witness and photograph • If the timing is right, we'll also see families gathered to clean fishing nets between journeys at sea • The roads narrow again to concrete paths and our final stops include a traditional mat weaving shop and a family distillery where rice wine has been produced in the same manner for generations • Of course, samples are provided • It's a short ride from here to where we board a local ferry for a trip back to town • Have your cameras ready for great views of the Hoi An waterfront • Once dockside, it's a short 5-minute ride through alleyways to our end point for the day • *Overnight Four Seasons The Nam Hai (B)*

## **Day 7: Hoi An / Danang / Hue**

After breakfast, check out from your hotel and meet your guide and driver to depart to Hue • Upon arrival to Da Nang, we will visit the Museum of Cham Sculpture, opened in 1915 and the Marble Mountains before continuing on our drive • The trip passes through many spectacular sceneries along the National Highway 1 such as the breathtaking Hai Van Pass • The pass, which once formed the boundary between the kingdoms of Đại Việt and Champa, also forms a boundary between the climates of northern and southern Vietnam • The Hai Van Pass is the highest and longest pass in Vietnam, with the North-South National Highway zigzagging for almost 20 km • Stop somewhere in the Pass, and get your perfect pictures of Lang Co beach, a spectacular landscape or a peaceful fishing vicinity • *Overnight Vedana Lagoon Resort & Spa (B)*

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## Day 8: Hue / Bach Ma National Park

Upon arrival to Hue, your local guide and transfer will meet and take you to Bach Ma National Park, situated in the area of Phu Loc, 60 km (37 mi) south from Hue • This area is well known for its wonderful natural landscape as well as the fresh atmosphere • On arrival at the entrance, visit Bach Ma's information Center to learn about the ecological system of Bach Ma National Park • Trek along the trails to Ngu Ho (Five Lakes), relaxing and swimming in the jungle along the way • Indulge in a picnic lunch and then continue trekking through the forest to Do Quyen – Rhododendron waterfalls (at the height of 300 meters/ 984 feet) • In the afternoon, drive back to the hotel and enjoy the rest of the evening free at leisure • *Overnight Vedana Lagoon Resort & Spa (B, L)*

## Day 9: Hue

After an early breakfast, meet your guide and driver at 8:30 AM for a visit to the Forbidden Purple City, constructed under the Emperor Gia Long in the early 19th century • It is located in the Citadel of Hue, which was badly damaged during the Tet offensive of 1968 • Established as the capital of unified Viet Nam in 1802, Hue was not only the political but also the cultural and religious center under the Nguyen dynasty until 1945 and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1993 • At noon, stop for lunch at a local restaurant and later, board a dragon boat for a pleasant boat trip on the Perfume River to visit the characteristic Thien Mu Pagoda • Then, visit the tombs of the emperors Tu Duc and Khai Dinh • During Tu Duc's reign, Vietnam lost its independence to France • Khai Dinh's tomb represents a fusion of traditional Vietnamese style and modern influence, as it is almost entirely made of concrete and includes many European architectural details • Next, and if time allows, you will have a short cyclo drive to Dong Ba market for shopping and experiencing the local culture at this colorful place • Here you can buy souvenirs, in particular the typical Hue palm-leaf conical hat • *Overnight Vedana Lagoon Resort & Spa (B)*

## Day 10: Hue / Hanoi

After enjoying your morning free at leisure, meet your driver and guide and head to Hue's airport for your flight to Hanoi • Upon arrival, check-in at the hotel and get ready for a half day tour in the city • Vietnam is very well known for its food, so a stop to try some specialties is a must • In the old quarter you will try Pho Bo (Hanoi's excellent beef noodle soup), Nom (green papaya salad with seasoned beef), Banh Goi (pillow-shaped pastry with minced pork and mushroom), Banh Cuon (hot rice paper with pork and fried onion) or Bun Cha (fresh noodle with grilled pork) • After our delicious local lunch, visit the Temple of Literature, which was built in 1076 • Vietnam's first university was established within this temple to educate Vietnam's royalty, mandarins, and members of the elite • The university functioned for 700 years and its gardens and well-preserved architecture offer a fascinating glimpse into Vietnam's past • Next, we will head towards Quan Thanh Temple, a Taoist Temple dated from the 11th Century • We end with the impressive Tran Quoc Pagoda, a Buddhist pagoda located in a small island in the center of the West Lake • *Overnight Sofitel Legend Metropole (B, L)*

## Day 11: Hanoi / Ha Long Bay

After breakfast, you will be picked up by private van to take the highway to Dinh Vu Port in Haiphong • You'll be greeted by the crew of Orchid Cruise as you take tea in the lounge • On the way to the main boat, you will have a chance to see Cai Trap canal • Embark the Orchid Cruise and then check-in, enjoy a welcome drink • Orchid Cruise is anchored in the south of Ha Long Bay, one of the "New Seven Wonders of Nature" in worldwide survey • Steeped in culture from hundreds of years



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ago, the bay has remained unchanged for centuries, with beautiful seas and impressive islands • The cruise proceeds to Da Chong islet, where you can see a lighthouse built by the French over 100 years ago • Enjoy lunch before continuing our journey via the islets of Con Vit and Gia Luan • These amazing limestone karst formations rise up out of the sea in an impressive manner • In the afternoon, we progress to Ba Trai Dao beach area of Lan Ha Bay a separate part of Ha Long Bay, a quiet tourist paradise in Vietnam known for pristine beaches and its spectacular beauty • Alternatively, you may prefer to try your hand at kayaking or simply just enjoy a swim and immerse yourself in the crystal clear waters of the bay • Late afternoon, returning your cruise boat you can watch the magnificent sunset over the Gulf of Tonkin • Onboard you may join a traditional cooking class • Our chef will instruct you in the making of some Vietnam dishes • In the early evening the boat has its Happy Hour deal or enjoy a massage • Have delicious dinner prepared and served for you by our wonderful onboard catering staff • Relax whilst enjoying drinks from the bar. Try your hand at night squid fishing, watching a movie in the restaurant • *Overnight Orchid Cruise (B, L, D)*

## **Day 12: Ha Long Bay**

Today, start the day early onboard your Ha Long Bay Cruise boat with a Tai chi session • Next, embark on the day boat for a visit to Viet Hai village • Bike through rain forests and dark tunnels along the village path You'll get a chance to see the local life as you stop at an ancient local house made from straw, mud, and bamboo • Enjoy lunch back on the day boat • In the afternoon, explore the pristine landscape on Bai Tu Long • Kayak or swim at Ba Ham Lake • *Overnight Orchid Cruise (B, L, D)*

## **Day 13: Ha Long Bay / Hanoi**

Early birds can attend a Tai Chi demonstration on the sundeck at the break of dawn • Then, by canoes we to explore the bay and head to Toi Sang cave • Later in the morning enjoy a delightful brunch while we head back • Upon arrival to Tuan Chau Pier, meet your driver and guide and head towards Hanoi • Upon arrival, check- in at the hotel and enjoy the rest of the evening free at your leisure • *Overnight Sofitel Legend Metropole (Brunch)*

## **Day 14: Hanoi**

Enjoy the morning free at leisure until your driver and guide meet and transfer you to the airport for your flight back home • We hope you had a great time in Vietnam! • *No overnight (B)*

*\* This trip is offered in partnership with Khiri Travel.*

*\*\*Trip itineraries are subject to change without notice due to road, weather and other factors outside of our control, for the safety and enjoyment of our guests, as deemed necessary and appropriate by Austin Adventures and Khiri Travel.*

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## Activities

**Walking** – 1 to 4 hour guided walking excursions to view rainforests, wildlife, national parks, tombs, ruins and city splendors.

**Biking** – 10 miles cycling through Hoi An town with many stops along the way to check out local sights.

**Kayaking** – 2 to 3 hour paddle on calm waters surrounding Luon Cave.

**Discovery** – A long, narrow country squeezed in between the Laos and Cambodia borders and the South China Sea, Vietnam is a land of stunning landscapes that range from the lush rice terraces and forested mountains of the north to the fertile delta and lovely beaches of the south. Enter into Vietnam's high-octane Ho Chi Minh, a city driven by commerce and culture and pulsating with energy. Keep a watchful eye out for the varied flora and fauna of Cat Tien National Park with its 100 different species of mammals and 350-plus birds. Trek, swim and relax in the jungles of Bach Ma National Park on the hunt for a special backcountry waterfall. Discover the sweeping boulevards, tree-fringed lakes and ancient pagodas of Hanoi while watching the ebb and flow of motorbikes and pedestrians in this animated city. Listen to the legend of the dragon that created the 2,000 islands of Ha Long Bay with sweeps of its flailing tail. Seek out mischievous monkeys jiggling up and down the cliffs of Luon Cave by kayak. Come experience Vietnam with the leaders in adventure travel. Your guides will take the time to explain the details of each activity, answer any questions and demonstrate the use of all equipment. Each activity has been carefully planned to include options for all levels. Most importantly, your guides will help you select the distance that's right for you.

## Meals

The hallmark of an Austin Adventures vacation is our exceptional dining. Meals are included as indicated in the daily itinerary. (B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner). Alcoholic beverages and related gratuities are not included in the trip price.

## Our Partner – Khiri Travel

Austin Adventures is proudly offering this trip in conjunction with Khiri Travel. Khiri Travel was founded in 1993 and now has offices and specialist teams in Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos). Khiri prides itself in authentic connections, adaptability, and innovation and offers intimate, personalized travel experiences for any budget from Family Travel and Regional Highlights to Community-based Tourism and Discovery Excursions. Khiri aims to maximize the positive effects of tourism on individuals and local communities, while minimizing negative social, environmental and economic impacts. The company strongly advocates that sustainability is no longer a luxury, but a must-do so we can leave behind a world that is livable for our children. You'll find responsible travel practices at the core of all product development and operations. Khiri travel wants you to rave about your Asia experience and will be certain to provide a trip you'll always remember.



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## Distinctive Accommodations

### Night 1: Park Hyatt Saigon

Experience the essence of the modern Vietnamese lifestyle at Park Hyatt Saigon, a 5-star hotel in Ho Chi Minh City situated at Lam Son Square. This grand hotel in Saigon majestically rises nine stories above District 1, steps from the elegant Opera House, Notre Dame Cathedral, Reunification Palace, Ben Thanh Market, and other Saigon main tourist attractions. Hyatt's 244 Ho Chi Minh hotel rooms & suites redefine urban luxury, blending sophisticated design and décor with the latest modern comforts as the leading Ho Chi Minh hotel.

### Nights 2 & 3: Forest Floor Ecolodge

Overlooking the Ben Cu Rapids, your deluxe tropical tent at the Forest Floor Lodge is constructed on elevated wooden platforms and reached via a network of walkways, lightly touching the forest floor. Each tent provides one double or twin bedrooms with well-fitted bathrooms, mini-bar, fan and air-conditioning. Walk out to the balcony in the morning to watch the sun rise and hear the gibbons calling.

### Nights 4 – 6: Four Seasons The Nam Hai

Shining a light on Vietnam's cultural heartland, Four Seasons Resort The Nam Hai offers an illuminating connection to three extraordinary UNESCO sites from a private kilometer-long stretch of one of Forbes' "best beaches in the world." All sumptuously appointed villas are thoughtfully positioned to optimize views, beach breezes and phong thuy (feng shui) principles.

### Nights 7 – 9: Vedana Lagoon Resort

Nestled on the shore of a peaceful and serene lagoon, Vedana Lagoon Resort & Spa showcases the first over water villas in Vietnam. With stunning views across one of the largest lagoons in Southeast Asia, the resort embodies the subtle connection of modern art concept and high-end lifestyle. Each of the bungalows is individualized and has its own private sundeck and a balcony that leads out onto the immense lagoon or into a private garden.

### Nights 10 & 13: Sofitel Legend Metropole

Step back into history at Hanoi's most storied 5-star hotel. A Grand Dame of Southeast Asia, Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi welcomes guests to experience her colonial grandeur and timeless elegance. Located steps from the Opera House in Hanoi's French Quarter this legendary property brings guests into intimate contact with the opulence of another era.

### Nights 11 & 12: Orchid Cruise

Visitors looking for both comfort and adventure in Ha Long Bay will appreciate the Orchid's friendly crew and understated elegance. The Orchid is built in the style of a traditional Vietnamese junk, with three tawny sails and dark wood-cladding. The interior, like the exterior, is covered in polished wood, lending the stately air of an Indochina-era cruising boat. Guests can convene in the formal dining room, enjoy casual barbecues on the terrace and marvel at the bay's moonlit beauty on the Orchid Cruise's wide Sundeck.

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## Arrival & Departures

An Austin Adventures representative will meet you upon arrival at the Ho Chi Minh City Tan Son Nhat Airport. Upon clearing customs, transportation to the Park Hyatt Hotel will be provided. On Day 14 you will be transferred from the Sofitel Legend Metropole to the Hanoi Airport in accordance with your morning or afternoon flight schedule.

## Trip Price

Call for 2019 Pricing

## Trip Length

14 days/13 nights

## 2019 Dates

Departs weekly, Call for Availability

## Host City

Begin: Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam (SGN)  
End: Hanoi, Vietnam (HAN)

## Reservations & Availability

1-800-575-1540

*Kayak the island-speckled waters of Ha Long Bay, home to countless caves and fishing villages, before retiring to the comfort of your private small ship*



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## Trip Reservations

### Reservations, Deposits and Balances Due

To make a reservation, contact Austin Adventures with your choice of trip and dates. A \$750 per person deposit is required to confirm your reservation. **Some Custom and International programs may require additional deposits.** Full payment is required at the time of booking if your trip departs within 90 days. Choose one of the following contact methods:

**Toll free:** 800-575-1540

**Phone:** 406-655-4591

**Online:** [austinadventures.com](http://austinadventures.com)

**Email:** [reservations@austinadventures.com](mailto:reservations@austinadventures.com)

**Mail:** Austin Adventures, P.O. Box 81025, Billings, MT 59108

\* You may also book your Austin Adventure with your preferred travel professional.

\*\* We accept most major credit cards and personal checks (U.S. funds made payable to Austin Adventures). Please do not send cash.

### Included in the Trip Price

- Double occupancy rooms with private baths.
- All meals as listed in detailed daily itinerary (B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner).
- Fully trained, English-speaking professional guides and knowledgeable local partners.
- Bikes, helmets and other necessary equipment – all safe and well maintained.
- Vehicle support and land transportation during the trip.
- Austin Adventures T-shirt, luggage tags and luggage service.
- Pre-departure and packing information.
- All entrance fees.

### Not Included in the Trip Price

- Gratuities.
- Alcoholic beverages and related gratuities.
- Meals as not designated in daily itinerary.
- Visa fees and/or visa authorization.
- All internal flights within Vietnam.
- Pre-and post-trip accommodations and associated expenses.
- Air and land transportation to/from host cities.
- All types of personal insurance.
- Personal expenses.

### Pre-departure Information

After receiving your reservation and deposit, we'll send you a pre-trip planner with general information about the area you'll be visiting, a packing list, exercise guidelines, a guest information questionnaire and a liability release agreement for you to sign and return within 10 days.

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## **Private Custom Trips**

Maybe your vacation schedule doesn't fit our list of trips and dates. Or perhaps you'd prefer a slightly different itinerary or level of luxury and activity. A Custom Adventure is the perfect answer. You pick the date and destination and brief us on the size of your group, what activities you want, your "must haves" and just how you like to relax and unwind. No detail is too small, no idea too outrageous. Our staff of experts will help create a tailor-made vacation that's just right for you and your group. In short, if you can dream it, we can make it happen.

## **Room Occupancy, Single Supplements, and Shared Room Assignments**

All trip prices are based on double occupancy. Single rooms are available for an additional charge, referred to as a "single supplement." If you're traveling alone and wish to share a room, make the request at the time of booking. Austin Adventures will attempt to find a suitable roommate for you.

## **Minimum Age**

The minimum age on our non-family designated adult and teen adventures is sixteen years old.

## **Cancellations and Refunds**

The following cancellation policies and cancellation fees are in effect:

\*\*\*As with deposits on some international and custom programs, refund schedule may vary, speak with your Adventure Consultant for details.

**Cancellation 91 days or more before trip departure** – Full trip payment refunded less a \$300 per person administration fee

**Cancellation 61-90 days before trip departure** – Full trip payment less 25% per person is refunded

**Cancellation 31-60 days before trip departure** – 50% of the trip payment is refunded

**Cancellation 0-30 days before trip departure** – No refund is given

## **Our Guarantee**

Exceeding your expectations is our number one priority. In the unlikely event that you are dissatisfied with something during your trip, immediately notify your guide(s). If he or she is unable to resolve the issue, call our main office and give us the details of the problem, and a chance to correct it. We will do our best to find a resolution. If we are unable to do so during your trip, we will work with you upon your return home to arrive at a fair and equitable solution, including up to a full refund.