

# EXPLORE!

## TRIP NOTES



Comfort Itinerary Version (TMVI1)

TRIP DURATION  
**10**  
DAYS



View type: Standard

Trip Code: TMVI1

### Trip Essentials

**Accommodation:** 4 nights Hotel  
**Included Meals:** 7 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners  
**Transport:**  
**Countries:** Vietnam

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# Tailormade North Vietnam Explorer

## Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

## Your trip itinerary

### Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

### Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

## DAY 1 Overnight flight from the UK to Vietnam

Fly from the UK to Hanoi.

## Why Book this trip?

Extending over 1600 km from north to south, the weather in Vietnam varies according to distinct climate zones hence year round travel is possible. A pleasant time to visit the north is spring and autumn as these avoid any extremes in temperature. The south has a more tropical climate with hot, humid conditions throughout much of the year with June to August registering as the wettest months.



 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 2 Hanoi

Arrive in Hanoi and check-in at the hotel. The remainder of the day is free to make your first impressions of the Vietnam's capital city. You may choose to take a walk around the shores of Hoan Kiem Lake. Situated in the centre of the city and translated as 'Lake of the Restored Sword', Hoan Kiem Lake was named after a legend in which Heaven gave the Emperor a sword used to drive the Chinese from Vietnam; after the war a turtle rose from the water and grabbed the sword taking it to the depths of the lake. If you are lucky you may even spot some turtles in the murky water.

Overnight: **Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 3 Hanoi


Like a French provincial town with tree-lined boulevards, Hanoi is wonderfully nostalgic and a walk through the engaging streets of its Old Quarter provides an ideal introduction. Named after the various crafts and specialities of the city's artisans, each street bears such descriptive monikers as Paper Street, Silk Street and Basket Street. This practice dates back to the 13th century, when the city's original 36 guilds established themselves here, adopting a street each to differentiate them from their neighbours. The maze of alleys presents a fascinating venue to explore on foot and the area is known for its interesting 'tube' houses, whose narrow frontages give way to long rooms that stretch back. Street vendors tempt you with noodles, snacks and stir-fried delights from shoulder panniers, all adding to the charm of Hanoi's historic heart. Explore on foot and on an exciting cyclo ride which will also take you to Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum and The Temple of Literature. Founded in 1070 as a Confucian temple, the Temple of Literature was also Vietnam's first university, the Chinese style architecture and courtyards are not to be missed.

Overnight: **Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 4 Halong Bay

Drive to the incredible setting of Halong Bay, one of Vietnam's most spectacular natural attractions recently voted as one of the eight natural wonders of the world. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Halong Bay boasts hundreds of jungle clad islands (over 1600 at the last count) that rise from the jade green waters of the bay like the scales of some great submerged dragon. Indeed Halong means where the dragon descends to the sea and local legends tells of a time when this rugged landscape was created by the pounding tail of a mighty dragon as he ran from the mountains into the glittering waters of the bay below. On arrival you will board your junk and set sail, threading your way through a flotilla of boats, junks and wooden sampans as they ply their way across the gentle waters of the bay. The plan for today is to sail through this stunning seascape, stopping off to swim and visit some of the limestone caverns that pepper the landscape.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 5 Halong Bay cruise and Hanoi


This morning you enjoy the romantic scenery of Halong Bay on a cruise amongst the islands. You'll have the chance to stop at a grotto beneath towering cliffs and perhaps visit a beach. It is interesting to see the curious assortment of tourist boats, traditional junks and wooden sampans gliding through the waters. In the afternoon you'll return to Hanoi for the evening. Perhaps you may like to see a performance of traditional water puppetry, a practice that dates back to the 15th century. Set on a flooded stage, the stories tell tales of legendary heroes and everyday life, with dragons and unicorns sharing the stage with ducks and frogs, and even fireworks and naval battles.

Overnight: **Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 6 Mai Chau

Departing frantic Hanoi, your journey continues west to Mai Chau and Xam Khoe village. The fertile landscapes of Mai Chau are home to the minority White Thai people, who live in stilt-housed villages surrounded by rice paddies. The White Thai constitute one of the largest minority groups in the region and your time here will give you a chance to get to learn a little more about the traditions and customs of your hosts. After lunch you'll depart Xam Khoe village and walk to Buoc Village, enjoying the magnificent scenery as you go.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 7 Mai Chau

Today you head out into the Mai Chau countryside on two wheels. Your easy cycle ride takes you alongside rice paddies and through pretty villages that lie in the shadow of the surrounding mountains. There will be the opportunity to dismount and wander amongst the friendly villages to meet the locals.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 8 Hanoi

After breakfast you depart Mai Chau and return back to Hanoi for your final night.

Overnight: **Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 9 Hanoi

Free time in Hanoi for any last-minute sightseeing and shopping, before transferring to the airport for your flight to the UK.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 10 Arrive UK

Arrive back in the UK.

 **Included Meals:** None

## Accommodation and Meals

### Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

## Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

### Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

#### Vietnam

**Lunch £:** 5.00 - 7.00

**Dinner £:** 9.00

### Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

#### Vietnam

**Bottle of Beer £:** 2.00 - 4.00

**Water £:** 0.50

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## Foreign Exchange

### Vietnam

**ATM Availability:** There are ATMs virtually everywhere in Vietnam and in Cambodia, though we also recommend bringing cash.

**Credit Card Acceptance:** Some shops in Hanoi, and Hoi An. The occasional restaurant.

**Travellers Cheques:** Travellers cheques can usually be changed in the towns, but only during bank opening hours.

**Local Currency:** Dong.

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Carry your money in US\$ Dollars cash. You can also take GBP but US\$ are easier to exchange. (Dollar bills can be used in some hotels and shops; change is often given in local currency).

**Where to Exchange:** Most towns.

## Joining your Trip

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at [www.explore.co.uk](http://www.explore.co.uk), in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Important Information

### Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

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Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers [www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore](http://www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore) who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

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## Travel Aware

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at [www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety](http://www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety)

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting [cr@explore.co.uk](mailto:cr@explore.co.uk) or 01252 379438.

## Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

## Vaccinations & Protection

### Vietnam

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on Malaria and Zika Virus. Although not compulsory travellers may also wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

## Preparing for your Trip

### Climate

#### Vietnam

As Vietnam is a long, narrow country from north to south climate conditions vary considerably. The climate can be divided into three distinct patterns between the north, central and south regions. The climate in the north is generally humid and subtropical, although the winter months from November to March can be colder with temperatures from 10 - 15 degrees. Summer months, May to September can be quite hot with temperatures from 30 - 35 degrees. Meanwhile south Vietnam enjoys a tropical climate all year round, with little variation throughout the year (around 27 - 32 degrees), however May to November is the rainy season when short, heavy downpours are quite frequent. Central Vietnam lies somewhere in between. The coastal strip is usually dry and hotter from April to October while November to March is wetter and cooler. A light rain jacket and small umbrella are recommended year round.

Luggage allowance on trip:

Unfortunately it does occasionally happen that luggage does not always reach its destination on the same flight as its owner, or possibly it may be damaged in transit. If you are unlucky enough for this to occur, it is important that you file a PIR (Property Irregularity Report) with the airline before leaving the airport. This is essential when you come to make a claim either against the airline or from your travel insurance company

## General Information

### Country details

#### Vietnam

**Population:** 90,549,390

**Size of Country:** 331,698 sq km

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**Major Language:** Vietnamese

**Religion:** Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism

**Time Difference to GMT:** +7

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## Electric Supply & Plugs

### Vietnam

2 Pin Round

## Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award-winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family-run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

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### Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

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### Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group ([www.tourismconcern.org.uk](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk)) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

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## Booking Your Holiday

### Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

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### Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

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## 100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

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## Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 1 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 1. 2/ itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2.

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