

# EXPLORE!

## TRIP NOTES



### Comfort Itinerary Version (TMVI3)

TRIP DURATION  
**14**  
DAYS



**Tour Type:** Tailormade

**Trip Code:** TMVI3

### Trip Essentials

**Accommodation:** 7 nights Hotel  
1 night Simple Homestay  
3 nights Premium Hotel

**Included Meals:** 13 breakfasts, 1 lunch,  
1 dinner

**Transport:**

**Countries:** Vietnam

## Tailormade Classic Vietnam

### 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 to Vietnam

Fly to Hanoi on an overnight flight from the UK.

### 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 sightseeing tour


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. In the evening watch a performance at the popular water puppet theatre.

Overnight: **Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 4 Halong Bay overnight junk cruise

This morning you drive out towards the magnificent Halong Bay in the Gulf of Tonkin. Thousands of jagged limestone islands rise out of the jade green waters like the hairy scales of a submerged dragon. In fact Ha Long means 'where the dragon descends to the sea' as legend tells that the rugged seascape was created by the pounding tail of a dragon as he ran from the mountains into the sea, carving islands in his wake. Enjoy the romantic scenery while cruising among the islands. You may have the chance to stop at a beach where you can take a dip in the water. It is also interesting to see the curious assortment of boats, junks and wooden sampans, their sails hoisted, gliding through the waters.

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

## DAY 5 Overnight train to Hue

Spend the morning sailing, stopping to visit colourful grottos and swimming near deserted beaches. In the afternoon you'll transfer back to Hanoi and to the train station in time for your overnight train to Hue. We love an overnight train, it's a great way to take in the scenery and get chatting to the locals. However, we are aware it's not everyone's cup of jasmine tea. You could always upgrade to a flight between Hanoi and Hue. The extra cost of the flight and an extra nights hotel in Hue starts from £80 per person based on two sharing.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 6 Perfume River cruise

You arrive in Hué, one of the great cultural and religious centres of Vietnam, a quietly impressive place and a major highlight of your holiday. The Perfume River divides the city in two and it has been the inspiration for poets and painters for many centuries. In the afternoon take a trip by boat on the Perfume River to the Thien Mu Pagoda. This lovely monastery is the oldest in Hué.

Overnight: **Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 7 Explore Hue's Citadel

To appreciate Hue's fascinating history you have a tour of the Old Citadel in the morning. The citadel/palace built by the Nguyen dynasty (early 1800's to 1945) has formal moats and impressive ramparts and was an exact copy of the Forbidden City in Beijing. Although most of the Inner City was destroyed during the Tet Offensive (1968), the vast outer walls and the West Wing remain and are an eloquent reminder of the palace's former glory. The afternoon is free to wander at your own pace. You may choose to hire a bike or wander the back streets and lively markets.

Overnight: **Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 8 Visit Cham Museum and Marble Mountains en route to Hoi An

This morning you enjoy a scenic drive across the spectacular Col des Nuages (the pass of Ocean Clouds) to Danang, once the centre of the important Kingdom of Champa (2nd century AD - 1720). You'll visit the Cham Museum to see the extraordinary Cham sculptures. Not far from Hoi An are the magnificent Marble Mountains which are dotted with Buddhist pagodas and shrines, and were a haven for the Vietcong troops and the scene of many battles. After, continue to the historic merchant town of Hoi An.

Overnight: **Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 9 Free day in Hoi An

Today has been left free for you to explore at your leisure, bicycles in Vietnam are inexpensive and a great way to get out into the surrounding countryside or perhaps take a trip to the nearby beaches. Hoi An is also renowned for its many craft and tailors' shops. You may wish to take an excursion to Quang Ngai, the site of the My Lai Massacre Memorial. The massacre was a significant turning point in the Vietnam War and the horrific story is told through a photo presentation - an emotional experience.

Overnight: **Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 10 Visit My Son

A further day is spent in this lovely historic town. This morning we take an excursion to the holiest and most evocative of Vietnam's Cham sites, My Son. The Chams were dynastic lords who rejected the authority of China in 2AD and established their own kingdom. Although they benefited from strong sea links with the rest of Southeast Asia the kingdom's interior could not supply sufficient food for a strong military force. For 1000 years they managed to stave off attacks by the Vietnamese and Chinese, before being overcome by the Vietnamese in the 15th century. Travelling along the track that leads to the site is slow and bumpy and through wooded hills, but the site is certainly impressive with several groupings of Cham temples to be visited. Nowhere are the fine masonry skills of the Chams more evident than at My Son, despite the fact that much of the site was bombed in the 1960s. The afternoon is free to enjoy Hoi An further.

Overnight: **Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 11 Fly to Ho Chi Minh and travel to the Mekong Delta

After a short drive to Danang Airport you fly to Ho Chi Minh City, from here your journey continues south to Ben Tre in the Mekong Delta. Surrounded by lush and fertile land the area is home to small villages and swaying coconut palms. Taking a local ferry to a nearby village, you'll explore by cycle rickshaw. Later you'll board sampans, small Chinese wooden boats, and cruise along the narrow canals that shoot off the main vein of the Mekong River. After lunch at a local house you have some free time to explore the area further. Finally you return to Ben Tre by boat where you spend the night in a local homestay. Don't fancy a homestay? Why not upgrade to a Bassac boat for the night. Common in the Mekong Delta, your Bassac boat will be either a converted rice barge or modern version based on a traditional design. Comfortable cabins and plenty of areas to relax, this is a lovely way to explore the river. Extra cost - £85 per person, based on two sharing a cabin.

Overnight: **Simple Homestay**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 12 Mekong Delta to Ho Chi Minh

Spend the morning exploring the Nuoc Trong canal in the Mekong Delta, meeting some industrious locals, there may be time to see coconut processing and trading. You also have the option to walk or cycle along the canal to explore further. Later on you'll drive back to Ho Chi Minh City

Overnight: **Premium Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 13 Ho Chi Minh City tour

Formerly known as Saigon, Ho Chi Minh is the largest city in Vietnam following its growth in the 1960s and 70s under the American occupation. In more recent times it was the seat of the South Vietnam government until the events that led to the country's reunification. This morning you have a guided tour of the city. Sights include a visit to the Reunification Palace, where the first communist tanks arrived into Ho Chi Minh City in April 1975. You will also visit the War Remnants Museum which provides an interesting though extremely emotive documentary of the Vietnam War and its atrocious war crimes. You'll also visit the Notre Dame Cathedral and take in some of the lovely French colonial architecture of the city. The afternoon has been left free.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 14 Visit the Cu Chi Tunnels

Travel out of the city to the Cu Chi Tunnels. During the war this network of over 250 km of tunnels stretched from Saigon to the Cambodian border, and included living and storage areas, first aid centres and command centres. The hidden tunnels allowed the Viet Cong to launch surprise attacks on American troops and disappear unnoticed through the disguised trapdoors. You will have the opportunity to explore the tunnels and learn more of this amazing underground base, before returning to the city. The afternoon has been left free for you to do some last minute souvenir shopping.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 15 Arrive UK

Transfer to the airport for your return flight to the UK.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## Accommodation and Meals

### Food & Drink

Included meals: 13 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 1 dinner 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

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## 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: 3 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 3. 4/ itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 4.

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