

# EXPLORE!

## TRIP NOTES



### Cycle Saigon to Hanoi (CVIE 2017)



TRIP DURATION

**14**  
DAYS



**Tour Style:** Classic  
**Accommodation**  
**Grade:** Standard

**Tour Type:** Small Groups  
**Cycling Grade:** Moderate

**Trip Code:** CVIE

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## Trip Highlights - Cycle Saigon to Hanoi

- ✓ Saigon - Cycle out to the Cu Chi Tunnels and explore the Mekong Delta
- ✓ Cycle the Central Highlands - Explore Vietnam's lush hill country and cycle over the Hon Giao Pass
- ✓ Beaches of Nha Trang - Take a boat trip out to the tropical islands
- ✓ Halong Bay - Cruise on a traditional junk amongst the bays and islands of one of South East Asia's most beautiful landscapes
- ✓ Hoi An - World Heritage town. Visit My Lai and cross over the Hai Van Pass
- ✓ Hanoi - Visit some of the highlights of the Vietnamese capital, including the city's Old Quarter
- ✓ Hue - Explore Vietnam's old imperial capital by bike

## Trip Essentials

**Accommodation:** 11 nights Standard Hotel  
1 night Simple Overnight Train  
1 night Standard Junk

**Included Meals:** 13 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 1 dinner

**Start Point:** Join trip: Ho Chi Minh City

**End Point:** Trip ends: Hanoi

**Included Bike:** 24 gear Giant or ATX mountain bikes with front suspension.

Electric bikes (e-bikes) are available for an additional cost for the duration of the holiday (£95). You will be required to pay a refundable deposit upon collection of the e-bike in country. Please contact us for more details or to request your e-bike.

**Transport:** Bus, Train, Boat, Bicycle

**Countries:** Vietnam

## Cycle Saigon to Hanoi

On this adventurous trip we bike along the rural backroads and into the highlands of Vietnam. Along the way we discover the cultural highlights of Saigon, Hoi An, Hue and Hanoi. There is also time to explore the Mekong Delta, the tropical beaches and islands of Nha Trang and the majestic beauty of Halong Bay on an overnight cruise.

### Why Book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

### Cycling Information

On this tour we cycle 442 km over eight days (an average of 55 km per day) with further optional rides available. We mostly follow provincial roads with less car traffic but can have some motorbike traffic (90% tarmac roads, 10% earth/gravel roads). The terrain is generally flat except for the sections around Dalat which are in the hills. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour with the exception of part of the Mekong Delta route. We have graded the route as moderate.

### 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.

### Accommodation Grade: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

### Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

### Cycling Grade: Moderate

Medium length rides are suitable for cyclists who are used to undulating routes with occasional energetic climbs. You'll be cycling mainly on trails and quiet roads and you should have a reasonable level of fitness.

## 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 Join tour Saigon; afternoon orientation tour

We arrive in Saigon today and, after a chance to freshen up, this afternoon take an orientation walking tour of the city. The tour includes the prominent sights of the Hotel de Ville (home of the city's People's Committee), Notre Dame Cathedral and the impressive French style architecture of the GPO building. Following the tour we then have some free time, with options available to pay a visit to the Reunification Palace or the emotive War Crimes Museum. Alternatively you might like to explore the bustling stalls of the Binh Tay Market, the largest wholesale market in southern Vietnam.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 2 Cycle to Cu Chi Tunnels; late afternoon free in Saigon

Driving for an hour out of the busy city centre to reach the quieter suburbs this morning, we collect our bikes at Cu Chi bus station and ride about 30 km to Ben Duoc, the site of the infamous Cu Chi Tunnels on the outskirts of Saigon. Originally started during the French occupation of the country, the tunnels went on to achieve notoriety during the Vietnam War, when they formed an amazing underground command base for 10,000 Viet Cong troops. We will explore the tunnels with a local guide this morning. Be warned though, the tunnels are low and narrow and can be claustrophobic. After lunch we continue cycling for about 20 km towards Ben Nay to further explore the area. Drive back to Saigon (c. 2 hours drive) and the rest of the afternoon is free relax or explore the city. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 50 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 50 meters, total accumulated descent 40 metres).

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 3 Drive to Mekong Delta then cycle backroads to Cai Be

Today gives us an opportunity to journey down into the Mekong Delta, to explore the fertile hinterland between the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand. Leaving Saigon, we drive first for two hours out of the busy city into the countryside to Binh Duc (My Tho), from where we begin cycling through a rich landscape of bustling markets, orchards and riverside villages. Here we can see local cottage industries and watch rice paper and coconut sweets being made as they have been for generations. After a tasty lunch of local produce we cycle on through Tan Phong and visit a beautifully restored traditional house in Ut Kiet, before finishing our ride at Cai Be's famous market. From here we drive for about three hours back into the centre of Saigon. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 51 kilometres, flat cycling.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 4 Exploring Vietnam's Central Highlands

Departing Saigon this morning we head north into the southern Central Highlands towards the mountain town of Dalat (set at 1500 metres elevation). After an initial two hour drive to reach the countryside, we commence today's cycling from Trang Bom with a picturesque 35 kilometre ride through the hills of the Langbiang Plateau, negotiating our way along quiet back roads to the town of Gia Kiem and then Bao Loc. After a relaxing lunch in Bao Loc we board our bus again for a longer (around 4 hours) very scenic drive right across the mountains, giving us stunning views over the forested hills, to reach the bustling old French city of Dalat. The city has a European feel in its architecture and a cooler climate due to the higher altitude. Here, depending on the weather we may take to our bikes again to explore the back streets on a 20 kilometre ride, before checking into our hotel for the night. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 30 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 210 metres, total accumulated descent 150 metres).

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 5 Cycle over Hon Giau Pass then drive to Nha Trang

Driving out of Dalat City this morning we then begin cycling up to the Hon Giau Pass (1,700m), a challenging ride that takes us up through forests of pine and across a landscape of dramatic mountain scenery. After a chance to rest at the top and take in the views, we then descend towards the town of Khanh Vinh, where we meet our bus and finish the rest of the journey to Nha Trang by road. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 80 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 1460 metres, total accumulated descent 2962 metres).

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

**Swimming Pool Available** 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 6 Boat trip to tropical islands

Nha Trang is well known for its beautiful bays, golden beaches and turquoise waters. Weather permitting, this morning we take a cruise out to explore some of the surrounding islands. We aim to stop and visit one of the islands where you have the option to have a swim or hire snorkelling equipment (weather and conditions dependant). There will also be the option to enjoy a seafood lunch on the island (at your own expense). Returning to Nha Trang late this afternoon the rest of the day is free to enjoy the sights and sounds of this lovely coastal town. No cycling today - rest day.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

**Swimming Pool Available** 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 7 Cycle and drive from Nha Trang to Quy Nhon

Using a combination of bus and bicycle this morning we continue along the coast to the city of Quy Nhon. We commence our ride from the hotel in Nha Trang and head out along the Pham Van Dong road and continue on to Ninh An toll fee station (a journey of some 50 kilometres). From here we then take the bus to Dai Lanh, where we have a chance to swim and relax, before continuing by bus over Ca Pass to Bai Tien Song Cau. From here we resume our journey by bike with a 30 km ride to complete the final leg to Quy Nhon and our hotel for the night. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 60 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 640 metres, total accumulated descent 775 metres).

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 8 Pedal over the Thi Nai sea bridge; drive to Hoi An

Departing Quy Nhon this morning we cycle out across Thi Nai Bridge, the longest sea bridge in Vietnam, which connects the city with the Phuong Mai Peninsula. Once across, we continue by bike along the Quy Nhon lagoon towards Phu My some 50 kilometres away. From Phu My we then travel by bus to Quang Ngai, the scene of the My Lai massacre - one of the most infamous episodes of the Vietnam War. We complete the final leg of our journey to Hoi An by bus. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 59 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 395 metres, total accumulated descent 390 metres).

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

**Swimming Pool Available** 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 9 Morning walking tour of Hoi An; free afternoon

First colonised by the Portuguese in the 16th century, Hoi An went on to become one of the busiest trading outposts in South East Asia. This morning we take a walk through the historic heart of this World Heritage Site, taking in the city's famous Japanese Bridge and its museum, before wandering amongst its traditional wooden houses and Chinese temples. This afternoon is then free to perhaps take a gentle river cruise or pay a visit to one of Hoi An's renowned tailors' shops, or maybe explore further afield by bike. No cycling today - rest day.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

**Swimming Pool Available** 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 10 Cycle and drive to Hue via the Hai Van pass

Leaving Hoi An after breakfast, we start with a morning cycle ride to Xuan Thieu alongside the beaches of Danang and across Thuan Phuoc Bridge (a ride of about 45 km). From Xuan Thieu we drive up to the lofty heights of the Hai Van (Sea Cloud) Pass. This stunningly scenic region once marked the boundary between Vietnam and the Champa Kingdom to the south and, as we reach the summit of the pass, the panoramas before us are simply spectacular. Descending by bus we head next for Lang Co where we will stop for lunch. We drive on to Tu Hien Bridge before cycling along scenic back roads as we wind our way along the Cau Hai Lagoon to Thuan An (a ride of approximately 30 km). Meeting our bus in Thuan An, we then drive on to Hué on the shores of the Perfume River. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 80 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 52 metres, total accumulated descent 50 metres).

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

**Swimming Pool Available** 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 11 **Cycling around Hue then overnight train to Hanoi**

Once the capital of Vietnam and an inspiration for poets and artists alike for centuries, Hué's tranquil villages and picturesque countryside make it an ideal place to explore by bike. Today we spend some time cycling through bamboo groves and rural villages to the historic tile-roofed bridge at Thanh Toan. We also visit the 19th century Nguyen Tomb of Tu Duc and the Old Citadel that still dominates the left bank of the river. Returning to the hotel to freshen up we then drive to the railway station to catch the overnight train to Ha-noi. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 32 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 130 metres, total accumulated descent 115 metres).


Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 12 **Arrive in Hanoi; Drive to Halong bay for overnight cruise**

Arriving in the Vietnamese capital early this morning we drive to the hotel in time for breakfast. Later this morning we then drive to the Gulf of Tonkin and the breathtaking scenery of Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most visually impressive landscapes in South East Asia. Boarding the boat in time for lunch we set sail and visit Sung Sot Cave, spending this evening aboard the junk in twin-share, en suite cabins. Be aware the boat is not exclusive to Explore and we may be sharing with other tourists. No cycling, rest day.

Overnight: **Standard Junk**  
**Single Room Available**

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

## DAY 13 **Morning cruise then drive to Hanoi then city tour**

This morning we continue cruising through this wonderfully scenic landscape, enjoying the serenity of its limestone islands and visiting some of the caves (the optional cave visits can involve climbing some slippery steps). Returning to the shore we then drive back to Hanoi, a four hour journey that gets us into the capital in time to enjoy a short tour of the city. Our afternoon tour includes a visit to the Ba Dinh Square and the Temple of Literature, as well as a chance to explore a little something of the city's fascinating Old Quarter. No cycling, rest day.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 14 **Tour ends Hanoi**

The tour ends in Hanoi this morning after breakfast.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## Accommodation and Meals

### Accommodation Notes

Standard - Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

The overnight Junk has twin share, en-suite cabins. It is not exclusive to Explore travellers.

Simple - The overnight train has soft-sleeper four berth cabins, bunk bed style and bedding is provided. Both Western and Asian style toilets are at the end of each carriage.

### Food & Drink

Included meals: 13 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 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.

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## 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

### Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

### Optional Excursions

Hanoi - Water Puppets from USD 8. Cyclo ride around Old quarter USD 6.

Nha Trang - All beaches are private and you will need to pay for access, parasols and sun loungers if using. Snorkel equipment hire 10 USD.

Hue - Perfume River half day boat trip from USD 6; Trip to countryside from USD 12.

Hoi An - Cookery class from USD 25, Vegetable Village visit USD 3.

### Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

### Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 35.

### 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.

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## 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>.

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## 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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The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE  
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



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

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

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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.

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## 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.



## Visa Information

Vietnam: Until 30th June 2018 'British Citizen' passport holders can visit Vietnam for up to 15 days without a visa. A visa will be required if you enter after this date or if you wish to re-enter within 30 days of your departure.

For visits of up to 30 days, you can get an e-visa before you travel from <https://evisa.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn/>

For visits of longer than 30 days you must get a visa from the nearest Vietnamese embassy before travelling to Vietnam. If you want to make a second visit within 30 days of leaving Vietnam, you'll need to get a multiple entry visa to re-enter.

Please note that it is a pre-requisite for entry into Vietnam that your passport is valid for a minimum of 6 months from your date of entry

All visa related issues including information for other nationalities should be confirmed with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.




## 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

### DAILY DISTANCES

Day 2		50km
Day 3		51km
Day 4		30km
Day 5		80km
Day 6		
Day 7		60km
Day 8		59km
Day 9		
Day 10		80km
Day 11		32km

### Bike Details

Your included bike is an 24 gear Giant or ATX mountain bike and will be the correct frame size for your height. A rear pannier bag and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

E-bikes are available upon request. We can offer a 21 gear Giant Lafree 970 hybrid e-bike with front suspension. Only available in a 17 inch size frame (size small). A rear pannier bag and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

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## 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.

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## Clothing

Bring cycle shorts, quick drying cycle tops and gloves. From December through to February warmer clothing is needed for the North and the highlands. Days are hot and humid. Lightweight rainwear essential at all times. The northern region and highlands are cold at night during the winter.

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## Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Even though clean bed linen is provided on the train journey, you may want to bring a cotton sleeping sheet (it can be purchased in Hanoi) and a small travel towel. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

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## Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

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## Luggage: On Tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

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# General Information

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## Country details

### Vietnam

**Population:** 90,549,390

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

**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

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# 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: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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