EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Authentic Itinerary Version (TMVI5)

TOURDURAT
20
DAYS

Tour Code: TM

Tour Essentials

Accommodation: 1 night Basic Overnight Train
Included Meals: 17 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 1 dinner
Transport:
Countries: Vietnam

Tailormade Vietnam In-Depth

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 tour 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.

DAY 1 Fly to Vietnam

Fly to Hanoi on an overnight flight from the UK.

Why Book this tour?

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 Vietnam's capital city, Hanoi, where you will spend your first evening.

Included Meals: None

DAY 3 Hanoi sightseeing

Today you explore Hanoi’s history with your guide, including 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. You will also have an exciting cyclo ride through the tangled streets of the Old Quarter where the road names historically indicate the merchandise sold in the street, from pickled fish to sweet potato and baskets to leather. Your tour continues to Hoan Kiem Lake situated in the centre of the city. 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.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 Halong Bay

Today you depart the city for Halong Bay. Here you will board a refurbished wooden junk for a cruise through the stunning limestone cliffs and emerald waters. Halong 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. This evening you will drop anchor for the night near a remote island.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5 Halong Bay cruise

This morning will be spent sailing around the bay. You will have the opportunity to visit colourful grottos and swim near deserted beaches before returning to Hanoi for your overnight train to Hue.

Overnight: **Basic Overnight Train**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Hue

Arrive this morning in Hue, the former imperial capital of Vietnam. Hue was home to generations of the country’s most powerful emperors who built many pagodas, tombs and the royal citadel, and today the city is an UNESCO World Heritage Site. The rest of the day is spent visiting the spectacular citadel, which was built in 1804 and based upon the same design as Beijing’s Forbidden City.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Perfume River

Today you take a boat cruise on the Perfume River where you will see elegant pagodas, elaborate tombs, ornate bridges and museums. This afternoon you have a scenic drive to Hoi An via Danang, with an optional stop en-route at the five peaks of Marble Mountain; originally believed to have been islands that were said to represent the five elements of water, wood, fire, gold and earth.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 Hoi An

Today you embark on a walking tour of this quaint town with its vibrant riverside market, ancient Chinese inspired low-rise houses and nearby beach. Hoi An was relatively unaffected by the Vietnam war (or the American War as it is referred to locally) and therefore still retains much of its traditional charm, although you may spot the odd bullet hole in a wall or wooden beam. Your guided walk takes you to a lantern workshop to see how the local produce these delicate handicrafts. This evening take a romantic sunset boat trip.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 9 Drive to Kon Tum

Drive through sublime mountain passes to Kon Tum. Located on the original Ho Chi Minh trail this is a relatively unvisited town, inhabited mainly by hilltribes it is an area of magnificent scenery and panoramic views of the lowlands. Village life revolves around the thatched roof communal rong houses, on stilts. The rest of day is at your leisure.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10 Kon Tum

Take a short tour to a unique wooden church in the village. You also visit a local orphanage for children of ethnic minorities. Afterwards your journey continues to Kon Jri for a 3 km easy trek through local villages, forests, rivers and cassava plantations. Enjoy a picnic lunch by the Dakbla River where you can relax and take a dip in the water. You then have a boat ride downstream to the Konkotu Hamlet to meet the Bahnar minority people, known for their wood carvings.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11 Drive to Buon Ma Thuot City

This morning you visit a Catholic seminary which also houses a small museum about the local hilltribes. You then depart for Buon Ma Thuot City, the capital of Dac Lac province. Take an afternoon trip to visit the Ako Dhong Village of the Edeh tribe, who live traditionally in stilt longhouses. The Edeh are a matriarchal society where the women wear colourfully embroidered vests and jewellery made of copper, silver and beads. You will also visit Trung Nguyen Coffee Village, famed for its coffee cultures, followed by the Ethnographic Museum. The rest of the afternoon is at your leisure.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 12 Lak Lake

This morning you drive through vast coffee plantations to the scenic Lak Lake. Here you meet your elephant and trek through forests to the Mnong hilltribe village. You will then enjoy a dugout canoe ride on the pristine Lak Lake, before transferring to Dalat for the night.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 13 Dalat

Dalat is located in Vietnam's cooler central highlands surrounded by lakes and evergreen forests. Today you explore Dalat's flower and vegetable market before visiting the Truc Lam Buddhist Monastery which is located above the serene Tuyen Lam Lake, the Dalat Cremaillere Railway and Xuan Huong Lake, created by a dam in 1919. You also visit the summer palace of the last ruler, Emperor Bao Dai, of the Nguyen Dynasty. Emperor Bao Dai was the last monarch of Vietnam and his colourful if somewhat garish, 1930's villa is interesting insight into the recent past.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 14 Drive to Nha Trang

Leaving the highlands behind, you travel east to the coastal resort of Nha Trang and enjoy the magnificent landscape at Hon Giao Pass along the way. You also stop en route to visit a hilltribe village, near Cau Ba - Khanh Vinh. The rest of the afternoon is at your leisure.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 15 Nha Trang

Enjoy Nha Trang's turquoise waters and white sandy beaches with a morning boat cruise to offshore islands in Nha Trang Bay. In the afternoon, visit the Po Nagar Cham Towers dating back to the 7th century, the Dam Market, the Nha Trang Stone Cathedral and the Long Son Pagoda with its ornately dragon-decorated roof and nearby giant Sakyamuni Buddha statue.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 16 Fly Ho Chi Minh City

Drive to Nha Trang airport for your flight to Ho Chi Minh City. 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 afternoon has been left free for you to explore the city at your leisure.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 17 Ho Chi Minh City

Today 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 will also 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.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 18 Mekong Delta

This morning you depart Ho Chi Minh City for the Mekong Delta. Upon arrival in My Tho, enjoy a boat cruise along the river and take a short walk to a handicraft workshop. You will experience an exciting horse-drawn cart ride to visit a local house where you will enjoy tea and taste home grown fruits. Board a sampan (a flat-bottomed Chinese-style wooden boat) and drift along the narrow, tree-lined canals for further exploration of the Mekong Delta. After lunch, visit a family-run business that makes coconut candies. On the return journey to Ho Chi Minh City, visit the Vinh Trang Pagoda if time permits.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 19 Depart Ho Chi Minh

Transfer to the airport for you departure flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 20 Arrive UK

Included Meals: None

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 17 breakfasts, 1 lunch,1 dinner included in the price of this tour. 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 Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour 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 £: 4.00

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 £: 1.50

Water £: 0.50

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 Tour

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, 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.

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.

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

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 joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment,

personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited. who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

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 different prophylaxis available against malaria. 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 Tour

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.

General Information

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

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 & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one 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, elephant, 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.

Our commitment to the environment

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 and traditional, 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), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

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.

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

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

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 LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â 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.

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

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 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour 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: 5 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 5. 6/ itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 6.

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