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TRIP NOTES



Cycle Vietnam (CVN 2017 MEKONG)



TRIP DURATION

14
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Tour Type: Small Groups
Cycling Grade: Easy

Trip Code: CVN

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Trip Highlights - Cycle Vietnam

- ✓ Bike Vietnam - Cycle through Vietnam's fascinating sites and villages
- ✓ Hanoi - Discover the colonial charms of Vietnam's capital
- ✓ Halong Bay - cruise amongst the beautiful landscapes of Halong Bay
- ✓ Hue, Hoi An and My Son - Cycle the Imperial sights and World Heritage monuments
- ✓ Cycle the Mekong Delta - Discover life on the canals and waterways
- ✓ Saigon - Visit the infamous Cu Chi Tunnels by bike and explore bustling Saigon on foot

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 12 nights Standard Hotel
1 night Simple Overnight Train

Included Meals: 13 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 0 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Hanoi

End Point: Trip ends: Saigon

Included Bike: A mix of Giant, ATX and Trek mountain bikes are used during the trip, please refer to trip notes for more details.

Electric bikes (e-bikes) are available for an additional cost for the duration of the holiday (£105). 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, Bicycle

Countries: Vietnam



Cycle Vietnam

On this trip we discover the highlights of Vietnam by bike. Explore the charming cities of Hanoi, Hue, Old Saigon and Hoi An and experience the natural beauty of Halong Bay. Visit the ancient capital of the Cham Empire at My Son and discover the thriving Mekong Delta by boat and on two wheels.

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 232 km over ten days (an average of 23 km per day). The route follows mainly level terrain with about 90% on tarmac and 10% on earth/gravel. A support vehicle accompanies the rides on days 3, 5, 8, 12 and 13. Around 75% of the route is on quieter roads and the busiest sections are when we cycle in Hanoi and Hue. You should be comfortable cycling in traffic. We have graded the route as easy.

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: Easy

Suitable for cyclists who enjoy easy and relatively short rides on flat or gently undulating terrain. Ideal if you simply want to explore a region by bike at a relaxed pace.

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 Hanoi. PM orientation of Hanoi's Old Quarter

After a chance to freshen up, this afternoon has been set aside to explore something of Vietnam's vibrant capital. Architecturally styled like a French provincial town, with tree-lined boulevards and low-rise buildings, the city is wonderfully nostalgic and a walk through the engaging streets of its Old Quarter provides an ideal introduction to its fascinating heritage. 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 food sellers tempt you with all manner of noodles, snacks and stir-fried delights from shoulder panniers, all adding to the charm of Hanoi's historic heart.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available



Included Meals: None

DAY 2 AM Hanoi city tour. PM cycle ride around West Lake

After breakfast we will have the opportunity to check out our bikes and complete any necessary fine tuning. We then continue by bus for a morning sightseeing tour of the city in the company of our local guide. We will include visits to the 11th century Quan Thanh Taoist Temple, the charming One-Pillar Pagoda, the temple of literature and the Presidential Palace. Ho Chi Minh himself was a spartan living and scholarly who chose not to reside in the Presidential Palace itself, but himself preferred a simple teak, 2 - storey still house especially built for him in the grounds. We'll have a chance to visit this simple structure today, before heading back to the hotel. After lunch we will enjoy an afternoon's cycle ride around the nearby West Lake. A journey of some 17-20 kms, the ride takes us around the largest fresh water lake in the capital, a place steeped in legend and lying in the bustling heart of the city. Covering some 500 ha and surrounded by gardens, temples and some of Hanoi's most opulent real estate, the lake provides us with an ideal venue to test out our bikes. Our circuit will include stops at the Buddhist library of Thu Sacha and the Phu Tay Ho Temple, an especially lucky place for women who come here to ask for blessings. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 17 to 20 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available



Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Drive to Dong Ho; cycle through villages of the Red River Delta

Departing Hanoi this morning, we head first for the village of Dong Ho, situated to the east of the city. Famed for its folk paintings, the village has existed on the banks of the Duong River since the 16th century and its art reflects centuries old traditions. Hand printed on papyrus-like paper, the paintings traditionally reflect feelings of prosperity and happiness, their colours generated from locally acquired materials such as charred bamboo leaves and finely ground oyster shells. We will have an opportunity to spend some time with the artisans this morning, before continuing our journey from here by bike, cycling along the dyke of the Duong River. The dyke system in the North of Vietnam is the longest in Indochina, stretching over 2400 kilometres. Cycling atop the dikes we will pass through commercial vegetable gardens providing much of the capitals fresh produce and encounter plenty of grazing cattle. After a distance of around 8kms we will arrive at But Thap, where we will visit the 17th century Pagoda before continuing on our bikes through lush landscapes to Kim Son. Here we will visit the Sui Pagoda, where novice monks are trained in the art of meditation. Nearby a small vegetable market will provide us the opportunity to see some of the produce from the dike gardens. Re-joining our bus here we then drive on to Phu Thi in the Red River Delta, for a home cooked lunch and a chance to learn a little about local customs and traditions from our hosts, before continuing by bus towards the Gulf of Tonkin and the stunning karst landscapes of Ha Long Bay. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 15 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available



Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 4 AM Ha Long Bay cruise. PM drive to Ninh Binh via Nhan Muc

One of South East Asia's most spectacular settings, where thousands of limestone islands rise from the jade green waters of the bay like the scales of some great submerged dragon, Ha Long Bay is a World Heritage site of natural majesty. Ha Long translates as the place 'where the dragon descends to the sea' and local legend 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 sea. This morning we will board a charter boat for a cruise amongst its limestone islands, threading our way through a flotilla of boats, junks and wooden sampans as they ply their way across the gentle waters of the bay. The plan is to spend the morning sailing through this stunning seascape, stopping off to visit some of the limestone caverns that pepper the landscape and enjoy a delicious seafood lunch on board. This afternoon we then continue by road to the village of Nhan Muc, where we will enjoy a traditional water puppet show (a practice that dates back to the 15th century) and have a chance to interact with the locals, before we complete our journey to the town of Ninh Binh. We arrive to our hotel in the evening after a long yet rewarding day. No cycling, rest day.



Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5 Exploring rural scenes of Ninh Binh by bicycle. Overnight Reunification Express to Hué

Cycling the back roads to Hoa Lu this morning, we visit the country's ancient capital. Once the political and cultural centre of Dai Co Viet (Vietnam), the city ruled over the region's first centralised feudal state. Whilst many of its ancient monuments are long gone, we will get a chance this morning to visit the temple of King Dinh Tien Hoang, the man who unified the country and founded Vietnam's first feudal dynasty. From here we cycle along narrow concrete paths through picturesque local communities on to the 12th century Nguyen Saint Temple. After a break at the temple we head through rural countryside towards the spectacular limestone karst formations of Van Long, and finally on to the nearby village of Vuon Thi, where we enjoy a delicious traditional lunch. There may be an opportunity to try some traditional farming and fishing instruments in the yard. After lunch we cycle the short distance to the nearby dock for a tranquil sampan journey around the stunning caves and Karst scenery of the Van Long Reservoir. Returning to Ninh Binh later this afternoon by bus, there will be some free time in the city and to freshen up in our hotel dayroom before we board the Reunification Express for the overnight journey to Hué. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 34 kilometres

Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6 Arrive Hué. PM biking tour of Hué.

Arriving in Hué this morning we transfer to the hotel and check in, after checking and adjusting our bikes the rest of the morning is free to relax and enjoy at your leisure. Once the capital of Vietnam and an inspiration for poets and artists alike for centuries, Hué is divided by the waters of the Perfume River, which separate the city's 19th century citadel from the suburbs that radiate from the eastern shore. Even today, its easy air of leisurely ambience makes it one of the most engaging cities in the country to explore and, after lunch, we will cycle our bikes on a tour of the imposing Citadel. Built by the Nguyen dynasty (Vietnam's ruling emperors from the early 1800s to 1945), the Citadel still dominates the left bank of the Perfumed River. Its formal moats and impressive ramparts were constructed to be an exact copy of the Forbidden City in Beijing, and whilst much of the inner city suffered badly during the heavy bombardments of the Tet Offensive in 1968, the huge outer walls and the West Wing remain an eloquent reminder of the palace's former glory. Later today we will cycle out to the lovely tile-roofed bridge at Thanh Toan. Built over two centuries ago, the arched wooden bridge spans a canal that runs through the village and has long been an iconic and cultural landmark in the area. Late in the afternoon the old folk gather on the bridge to talk and reminisce. After enjoying the tranquil atmosphere around the bridge we will cycle back to our hotel. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 18 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 7 AM Exploring around Hué by bicycle. PM Perfume River optional.

This morning we will enjoy the peaceful leafy backstreets of this charming city, cycling out to explore the countryside around Hué. We begin with a visit to the Ho Quyen amphitheatre, where the emperor presided over duels between tigers and elephants. Continuing on to the 19th century Nguyen Tomb of Tu Duc, we will enjoy the beautiful complex of ornate temples, pavilions and tombs built beside a picturesque lake. After a visit to the eunuch tombs at the Tu Hieu Pagoda, a gentle ascent of Vong Canh Hill rewards us with spectacular views. From the pine forest atop the hill we can look over the Perfume River and the surrounding countryside and tombs of the Nguyen dynasty. We finish our morning cycling further out to the vast 19th century tomb of Minh Mang, possibly the finest of all the imperial tombs. Returning to Hué by bus around lunch time, the rest of the day is then free. There is the option to take a half day excursion along the Perfume River, visiting the iconic Thien Mu Pagoda, home to the oldest monastery in the city, whose 21m high tower has become something of a symbol for Hué. Dedicated to the Manushi-Buddha, the existing temple was constructed in the middle years of the 19th century, under the auspices of the Emperor Thieu Tri, and within its confines you can find a number of superb Buddhist statues, as well as an enormous cast bell that weighs in at over 2000 kg and is reputed to be audible over 10 km away. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 35 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 8 Bus and bike to Hoi An, via Hai Van Pass and Danang

This morning we drive south, stopping at Lang Co, a section of the famed China Beach, to enjoy a spot of swimming. Known locally as My Khe, the name China Beach was accorded by US troops who came here for R & R during the Vietnam War. After our break to relax here we follow the coastal road towards the Truong Son Mountains and the lofty heights of the Hai Van (Sea Cloud) Pass. This scenic region once marked the boundary between Vietnam and the Champa Kingdom to the south and as we reach the pass itself the views before us are simply spectacular. Mounting our bikes we begin the seven kilometre descent from 500 metres down to the South

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China Sea, accompanied by stunning panoramas of mountains, islands and ocean. After pausing to catch our breath at sea level, we continue cycling alongside China beach towards Danang and the Thuan Phuoc Bridge. The longest suspension bridge in the country, this impressive structure measures some 1850 metres in length and spans the flowing waters of the lower Han River. Only officially completed in July 2009, the bridge cost a staggering 42 million US dollars to build and provides us with a spectacular end point for today's cycle ride. From here we rejoin our bus for the onward journey to the bustling port of Hoi An. First colonised by the Portuguese in the 16th century, by the 17th and 18th centuries Hoi An had become one of the busiest international trading posts in South East Asia and, even today, it still retains the engaging charm of a medieval port, with many of its old buildings superbly preserved. The rest of the day has been left free to wander through the historic heart of this World Heritage Site at your leisure. You might like to pay a visit to the Japanese Bridge, Hoi An's emblematic symbol, believed to have been constructed to quell the violent rumblings of a restless monster, or perhaps explore the traditional wooden houses and Chinese temples that line the streets. Other alternatives include visits to the local cloth mill and the hire of rowing boats to explore the landscapes along the river. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 28 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 9 Around Hoi An: river trip, cycling and free time

This morning we board another boat, for a cruise down the river to the busy village of Kim Bong. However, in the company of an appointed village guide, we will uncover a hive of cottage industries amongst old colonial houses and temples. Biking through lush rural landscapes we will see local people producing boats, straw matting and rice noodles. Continuing by river on to the pottery village of Thanh Ha, we then have an opportunity to visit a traditional workshop and watch local artisans continuing a tradition that has existed in this village since the 16th century. We cycle the few kilometres back to Hoi An with the rest of the day free for more personal sightseeing. There is an opportunity to extend today's cycling with an optional visit to Tra Que village to learn about organic vegetable and herb farming. Here you can also enjoy a delicious lunch and even a herbal footbath and massage (at your own expense) in a local house in the village. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 8 kilometres with an additional optional 12 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 10 Visit to My Son

Today we start our day with a short bus journey to a place called Nam Phuoc from where we will cycle our way through to My Son. My Son has been dubbed as a UNESCO World Heritage site and has ruins of structures from ancient Champa Kingdom which flourished between the 2nd and 15th Centuries. For those hankering for culture and history, this presents an ideal opportunity to explore the most evocative of Vietnam's Cham sites at My Son. The Chams were dynastic lords who rejected the authority of China in 2AD and established their own kingdom. For 1000 years they managed to stave off attacks by the Vietnamese and Chinese, before being overcome by the Vietnamese in the 15th century. The site contains several impressive groupings of Cham temples and present probably the finest example of Cham masonry skills in the country. We take a bus back to our hotel in Hoi An. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 30 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 11 Fly to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City); afternoon downtown orientation

After first transferring to Danang airport this morning, we fly south to Vietnam's largest and most vibrant city - Ho Chi Minh City. Still commonly referred to by its old colonial title, Saigon is an eclectic mix of the traditional and the new, where pagodas and markets compete alongside the trappings of Vietnam's newly discovered entrepreneurial spirit. After a short flight from Danang, we'll transfer to the hotel and check in, after which we will take a brief orientation tour of the city on foot. As part of our tour we will include the prominent sights of the Hotel de Ville, whose ornate grandeur is today the home of the People's Committee. We also take in the Opera House (formerly the National Assembly building), the Romanesque Notre Dame Cathedral and the impressive French style edifice that is the GPO building. Afterwards you will be free to enjoy some personal exploration, affording a chance to visit some of the many temples that lie dotted around the city, or perhaps to do some shopping amongst the bustling stalls of the Binh Tay Market, the largest wholesale market in southern Vietnam and a fabulous place to stroll and meet the locals. No visit to Saigon would be complete without exploring something of its tragic recent history too and this afternoon also offers a chance to visit the remarkable Reunification Palace and the emotive War Crimes Museum, where you can find some poignant and moving reminders of Vietnam's colonial wars. No cycling, rest day.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

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DAY 12 Cycle to the Cu Chi Tunnels. Freetime in Saigon

This morning we drive out of the city to Cu Chi (1.5 hours), from where we cycle out visit to the infamous Cu Chi Tunnels. 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 and were a major part of the Tet Offensive. This area was the centre of intense fighting during the war, much of it falling prey to the incessant carpet bombing, napalm and defoliants utilised by the Americans in an attempt to dislodge the Viet Cong from their underground shelters. There is little evidence of any of that now and the landscape has returned to something of its pre-war beauty, but exploring the tunnels of Ben Dinh and Ben Bihn gives some idea as to the conditions that the Vietnamese and their American adversaries had to endure. Be warned, the tunnels are low and narrow and can be claustrophobic. Driving back to Saigon after lunch, the remainder of the afternoon is free to enjoy a last look at this remarkable city. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 25 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 13 Cycling in the Mekong Delta

Today we journey by vehicle, boat and bike into the Mekong Delta to explore these fascinating waterways. Firstly we make our way by bus from Saigon to Cai Lay (2 hours), where we start cycling alongside calm canals and rivers. Along the way we will learn more about local life, taking in the verdant gardens and orchards as we go. After an included lunch we take a boat trip to see local cottage industries making such things as rice paper, coconut sweets and rice cakes, before returning to Saigon later in the afternoon (3-4 hour drive). Our total cycling distance today is approximately 20 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 14 Tour ends Saigon

The tour ends in Saigon 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.

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, 4 lunches, 0 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

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.

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.

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.

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.

EXPLORE!
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 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 Introducing Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

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

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 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.

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 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		19km
Day 3		15km
Day 4		
Day 5		33km
Day 6		18km
Day 7		35km
Day 8		28km
Day 9		20km
Day 10		30km
Day 11		
Day 12		25km
Day 13		25km

Bike Details

Your included bike for most of the trip is a 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. For the section around Hanoi your bike is a 27 gear Trek mountain bike or Giant Anyroad bike. This bike is provided with a water bottle holder, but does not have a pannier fitted. Again you can fit your own saddle or pedals. A support vehicle accompanies the rides on days 3, 5, 8 and 13. 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.

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.

Clothing

Bear in mind that the area is tropical with high humidity. Lightweight clothing are needed all year round. Other additions that you may find useful are a swimming costume, cycle gloves, cycling shorts/trousers and quick drying cycle tops. You may wish to bring a swimming costume. Please note shorts are not permitted in certain temples.

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.

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.

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

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 & 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.

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

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) 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.

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.

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 2016 and 31st December 2017.

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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