

BIKE & BOAT - DISCOVER NORTH, SOUTH & CENTRAL VIETNAM

See Ha Long Bay, Hoi An, Hanoi, Saigon and the Mekong Delta Islands

Departs: 4th April, 31st October 2010
Duration: 14-days / 13-nights - 203km of cycling
Cost per person: AU\$4995 (twin share) – single cabin/room supplement on request

This is a vibrant and unique country full of splendid natural beauty and of history. It is a country of contrasts with bustling, vibrant cities, fascinating towns and villages, places where time seems to have stood still.

We will cycle through lush green rice paddies and water buffalo, visit temples and pagodas we will explore the fascinating scenery of Ha Long Bay sailing aboard a traditional yet modernised junk and explore this unique landscape by bike and sea-kayak. This is a trip where the emerald-green waters of the South China Sea and the incredible cave formations overwhelm you. In Central Vietnam we explore impressive monuments of Vietnamese emperors, the historic World Heritage town of Hoi An and in South Vietnam the the water labyrinth that is the Mekong Delta.



Carved dragon heads decorate the prow of the junks in the Ha Long and Bai Tu Bay. Dragons belong to the circle of four sacred animals of Vietnam. Proudly they guide the traditional wooden boats through the fairytale cliffs of the South China Sea. It is easy to feel at home on the junks: The saloon with its upholstered wicker furniture and colourful carpets feels like a living room. For each meal the tables are lovingly set and the folded cloth napkins are a piece of art. The crew in their brilliant white uniforms greet you warmly with a welcome drink - hospitality is rated very highly in Vietnam.

The boats have 5 - 9 guest cabins furnished in Far Eastern Style to give off the right Asian flair. All cabins have individually regulated air conditioning. The cabins are located between decks, with doors opening to the outside. The large cabin windows guarantee a good view at all times. Each cabin has its own tiled bathroom with shower and WC. On the large sundeck you can avail yourself of deckchairs with comfortable padded matting. Here you can relax while the boat cruises through the fascinating island world and Vietnam's red flag with the yellow star flutters above your head.



Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations



In the Mekong Delta we sail on the "Conchinchine", one of the largest and most modern traditional styled ships in the region. Its shape is reminiscent of the travelling barques of southern Vietnam. This 27m long and 6.5m wide, wooden boat is protected by the watchful dark painted eyes of the dragon on the prow. The generously proportioned saloon is a comfortable place to relax, it is also the dining room with beautifully set tables for local and regional cuisine

This comfortable ship has 10 wood-panelled double cabins with French style or two single beds. Each cabin has a tiled bathroom with a shower and WC. There is also a large sundeck with padded deckchairs - probably the best place to relax and watch the activities of the fishermen in the many tributaries of the Mekong Delta.

Suggested itinerary – subject to change:

Day 1 (Sunday) Arrival in Hanoi

Arrive at Hanoi airport and transfer to your hotel in the heart of the old city centre. Hanoi appears provincial and traditional and the historical Old Town quarter is considered one of the best preserved in all of Southeast Asia. Meet your fellow travellers during our first dinner. Overnight at the hotel. (D)

Day 2 (Monday) Hanoi - Island of Van Don (approximately 33km cycling)

After breakfast our bus will take you through tiered rice plantations to Van Don Island. After lunch we cycle to Van Don along unsealed paths through the heavily wooded centre of the island and then the coastal road which offers you a first glimpse onto the bizarre rock formations of Bai Tu Long Bay. Later you check in on your junk for the first cruise on our classic wooden boat with its carved wooden dragon on the prow. (BLD)

Day 3 (Tuesday) Islands of Tra Ban and Quan Lan (approximately 10 + 29km cycling)



In the morning our boat takes us to the island of Tra Ban where you cycle on narrow paths through lush green rice fields. During lunch we cross to Quan Lan Island and cycle to its brilliant white sand and the extensive, totally untouched beaches. Enjoy the unique beauty of Bai Tu Long Bay as we pass the famous "floating villages" with an insight into the traditional life of the fishing families. Afterwards the boat sails for Ha Long Bay. (BLD)

Day 4 (Wednesday) Ha Long Bay (sea-kayaking day)

Today begins with a visit of the "Amazing Cave", one of the largest and most beautiful caves in Ha Long Bay. In the afternoon we explore this craggy fairytale world by sea-kayak – by far the best way to reach caves, lagoons and bays. From the lookout at Titop Island the view in the evening is unforgettable across the natural wonders of Ha Long Bay. (BLD)

Day 5 (Thursday) Ha Long Bay and Lan Ha Bay (sea-kayaking day)

We cross to Lan Ha Bay for another kayak excursion that takes us to a picturesque beach for lunch. There is time to swim in the emerald-green sea. In the afternoon we are picked up at the beach and taken to a small landing on Cat Ba, from where a coach transfers us to our resort. (BLD)

Day 6 (Friday) Island of Cat Ba (approximately 20km cycling)

Early in the morning, the bus takes us back to the small landing, where we left the boat the previous day. A one-hour crossing brings us to another small landing place from where we cycle to a remote village inhabited by the Viet Hai, an ethnic minority. We leave our bikes here and continue on a fascinating guided walk through the forest with its wild pristine flora and giant colourful butterflies. The destination is one of the island's highest mountains, which, on a clear day, presents a grandiose view across Ha Long Bay and the entire island. Then we cycle back to the boat and end the day quietly on the private beach at the Sunrise Resort. Overnight at the hotel. (BLD)

Day 7 (Saturday) Islands of Cat Ba and Cat Hai (26 + 8km cycling)

This morning we cycle along the panoramic coastline of the island to the western end of Cat Ba where a small ferry takes us to Cat Hai. We cross this fascinating, flat island on a narrow asphalt road, passing extensive salt flats. We then take the ferry back to the mainland where a bus drives us back to Hanoi.

In the afternoon you have time to relax or go shopping, perhaps the opportunity to watch the traditional water puppet theatre in the Vietnamese capital. (BL)

Day 8 (Sunday) Hanoi – Hue (approximately 10km cycling)



In the morning we fly from Hanoi to Hue located between hills and rice fields at a bend of the Perfume River. The spiritual heart of Vietnam beats here in more than 300 temples and pagodas. In the afternoon we will cycle through this ancient imperial city to visit the citadel with the "Forbidden Purple City" once exclusively reserved for the Nguyen royalty. (BD)

Day 9 (Monday) Hue – Perfume River – Hoi An

The day begins with a spectacular boat trip on the Perfume River and along the way you visit an imperial grave monument. After lunch we continue by coach to Hoi An. En route we make a brief stop at the Cloud Pass, the weather line between North and South Vietnam. Hoi An, once the most important harbour town of Southeast Asia, has a lovely old centre inviting so take the chance for an evening stroll. Overnight at our hotel. (BL)

Day 10 (Tuesday) Hoi An (approximately 17km cycling)

The sightseeing tour of Hoi An, a World Heritage site, is the highpoint of this morning. Your guide will show you its historical buildings, many dating back to the 16th century, and the old market on the banks of the Tu Bon River. In the afternoon cycle to the old pottery village of Thanh Ha where we can admire the artistic dexterity of the local Vietnamese potters, perhaps try your hand at pottery making. Overnight at the hotel. (BD)

Day 11 (Wednesday) Ho Chi Minh City

Early in the morning transfer to Da Nang and fly to Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon. The city is the vibrant heart of South Vietnam. On a guided tour through the rapidly growing metropolis we visit the town hall, Notre Dame Cathedral, the Reunification Palace and Vietnam War Remnants Museum. Overnight at the hotel, (BD)

Day 12 (Thursday) Ho Chi Minh City – Mekong Delta (approximately 20km cycling)

After breakfast transfer to Can Duoc for an interesting cruise along the Cho Gao Canal and the Mekong River. In the afternoon we tie up at My Tho and explore Thoi Ton Island with its exotic fruits and all sorts of handicrafts. In the evening we travel by boat to Cai Be to spend the night. (BLD)

Day 13 (Friday) Mekong Delta – Islands of Vinh Long and Traon (approximately 30km cycling)

In the morning we cross over to Vinh Long Island and under palm-tree shaded paths we cycle around the island. We rejoin the boat to Traon Island where we have more time to explore. Later on you we can enjoy the excellent cuisine on board our boat and the wonderful atmosphere in the water labyrinth of the Mekong Delta at sunset. (BLD)

Day 14 (Saturday) Can Tho - Ho Chi Minh City

Whilst we breakfast the boat cruises to Can Tho, where we transfer to a small boat to Cai Rong, the most famous floating market of the Delta. We cruise through the small tributaries of the Delta and after lunch on board the Conchinchine we transfer back to Ho Chi Minh City, arriving at around 6.00pm. (BL)

Saturday evening individual return flight from Ho Chi Minh City or additional overnight at the hotel.



Services included:

- 14 day trip / 13 nights of which 6-nights on comfortable boats in spacious, conditioned double cabins and 7-nights in carefully selected hotels (at least 3 - 4-stars)
- Catering as specified in the itinerary (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner)
- Domestic flights (as described)
- Guided bicycle tours, walks and sea-kayaking tours
- All city tours and entrance charges to National Parks, museums, etc as shown in the itinerary.
- English speaking guides
- Bike hire 21-speed (trekking or MTB)

Services not included:

- Outward flight to Hanoi and return flight from Ho Chi Minh City
- Meals not listed in the itinerary
- Drinks on board and in hotels
- Single room or single cabin surcharge (prices upon request)

Bike and Boating or Hiking cruises are also available in other regions of Europe – the Dalmatian Coast of Croatia, Greece – including the Aegean Island and Santorini - the Southern Lycian Coast of Turkey from Bodrum to Kusadasi and on the canals and rivers of France, Belgium, Germany and Holland. Bike & Boat trips are also in Canada on the St Lawrence River system between Montreal and Quebec.

Contact Outdoor Travel direct for more details, travel brochures and reservations

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