



CYCLING HOLIDAYS IN VIETNAM

2012

BIKE & BOAT - DISCOVER NORTH, SOUTH & CENTRAL VIETNAM

15-days / 14-night cycling and cruising to Ha Long Bay, Hoi An, Hanoi, Saigon and the Mekong Delta

Departs: 4th, 18th March, 1st April, 28th October, 11th & 25th November 2012

Cost: AU\$4140 per person twin share Single cabin / room supplement on request

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

On this tour we cycle through lush green rice paddies, past water buffalo, temples and pagodas. We explore the fascinating scenery of Ha Long Bay sailing aboard a traditional yet comfortable junk. We explore by bike and sea-kayak in a place where the emerald-green waters of the South China Sea and the incredible cave formations will overwhelm you. In Central Vietnam we explore impressive monuments of Vietnamese emperors, the historic World Heritage listed town of Hoi An and in South Vietnam the the 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 islands and rocky cliffs and outcrops of the South China Sea. The spacious saloon with its upholstered wicker furniture and colourful carpets feels like a homely living room. For each meal the tables are lovingly set and the folded cloth napkins are a work of art. Hospitality is rated very highly in Vietnam and onboard our crew in their brilliant white uniforms greet you warmly with a welcome drink.

The boats offer 5 to 9 comfortable cabins furnished in a Far Eastern style to give just the right Asian atmosphere. Cabins have individually regulated air-conditioning and are located between decks, with doors opening to the outside. The large cabin windows guarantee good views at all times. Each cabin has its own tiled bathroom with shower and toilet. On the large sundeck there are comfortable deckchairs where you can relax while the boat cruises through a fascinating island world, with Vietnam's red flag with a yellow star fluttering above your head....



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In the Mekong Delta we sail on one of the larger, modern but 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 serving 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 toilet. There is again a large sundeck with padded deckchairs - probably the best place to watch life along the river and the activities of the fishermen along 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. We cross to Quan Lan Island and cycle to its untouched brilliant white sandy beaches. We explore the unique beauty of Bai Tu Long Bay with its famous floating villages and gain an insight into the traditional way of life of these fishing families. We continue towards the fabled and World Heritage listed Ha Long Bay. (BLD)

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

Today we cruise into the breathtaking beauty that is Ha Long Bay. In the afternoon we explore the islands by sea-kayak – visiting caves, lagoons and picturesque bays. At sunset we climb to the lookout at Titop Island for an unforgettable view across spectacular Ha Long Bay. (BLD)

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

After breakfast we leave our junk crossing by smaller boat to Lan Ha Bay for a 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. Our overnight accommodation is at the hotel. (BLD)

Day 7 (Saturday) Island of Cat Ba (approximately 35km cycling)

After visiting the local market we cycle to the centre of Cat Ba and back along the panoramic coastal road. A hydrofoil takes us back to the mainland where a bus drives us back to Hanoi.

In the evening there is time to relax or go for a stroll through the city streets and laneways. Perhaps there is an 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 Ngyen royalty and visit the Thien Mu Pagoda. The day finishes with a leisurely boat cruise on the Perfume River. (BD)

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

The day begins with a transfer by bus to one of the famous Emperor's tombs. 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)

Today we take a closer look into the lives of the rural people cycling to Tra Que – a small village near Hoi An – where our hosts will prepare a meal using traditional ingredients including the unique sweet and spicy vegetables grown in the area. The afternoon is free to relax or to explore the white beach of Cua Dai (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 we transfer to My Tho for a cruise along the Mekong River to Cai Be. We visit Ben Tre with some relaxing cycling and return to the boat for lunch. In the afternoon visit the island of Ngu Hiep with its exotic fruits and traditional local handicrafts. (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 our junk we transfer back to Ho Chi Minh City, arriving after 8.00pm. (BL)

Day 15 (Sunday) Departure - Ho Chi Minh City Airport transfer for flight from Ho Chi Minh City Airport (B)



Services included:

- 14 nights accommodation with 5-nights on comfortable boats in spacious, air-conditioned double cabins and 9-nights in carefully selected 3 or 4-star hotels
- Catering as specified in the itinerary (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner)
- Domestic flights (as described)
- Guided bicycle tours, walks and sea-kayaking tours with English speaking guides
- All city tours and entrance charges to National Parks, museums, etc as shown in the itinerary.
- Bike hire (trekking or MTB) – bike styles may vary depending on destination

Services not included:

- Outward flight to Hanoi and return flight from Ho Chi Minh City
- Vietnamese visa – check with us for latest requirements & costs
- Meals not listed in the itinerary, drinks on board and in hotels or any personal expenses
- Single room or single cabin surcharge (prices upon request)

Bike and Boating cycling cruises are available in other regions of Europe – the Dalmatian Coast of Croatia, Greece – including the Cyclades, the Aegean Islands and Santorini - the Southern Lycian Coast of Turkey from Bodrum to Kusadasi. Bike & Barge cruises are offered on the canals and rivers of France, Belgium, Germany and Holland.

Outdoor Travel also offer a 15-day / 14-night **inn-to-inn** guided cycling tour in Vietnam (without using boats) departing 2nd January, 13th February, 12th November & 3rd December 2012 – ask for a detailed itinerary

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

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