



VIETNAM - GROUP CYCLING HOLIDAYS

2011/12

VIETNAM – FROM HANOI TO HO CHI MINH CITY (SAIGON)

15-days / 14-nights – inn-to-inn road touring – ancient sites, modern cities, beaches and the highlands

Departs: 7th and 28th November 2011, 2nd January and 13th February 2012

Tour cost: From AU\$3215 per person twin share Single room supplement: AU\$775

Bike hire: From AU\$385 per bike if required

Groups: Minimum of 6 to maximum of 18 cyclists per tour

Rating: Moderate - most roads paved but rough surfaces - mountain bike and road tyres ideal.

The trip can also be split into two sections: **Ancient Vietnam** (9 Days: from AU\$1935 per person + AU\$195 bike hire), which is Hanoi to Nha Trang, and **Beaches and Highlands** (9 Days: from AU\$1835 per person + AU\$195 bike hire) from Nha Trang to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City).

We also offer a Hanoi and Halong Bay 3-day pre tour (from AU\$405 per person, no biking) that includes an overnight on a junk in the World Heritage Park, and a Mekong Delta 4-day / 3-nights extension (from AU\$765 per person + AU\$65 Bike hire) best suited to post-tour, as it starts and ends in Ho Chi Minh City).



Our Vietnam cycling route was created to include quiet roads and an extra day in the Highlands. Journey from Imperial City of Hue to historic Hoi An, the golden beaches of Nha Trang, Dalat - an old French spa resort, to the cosmopolitan city of Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City). We offer you the chance to see this captivating country alongside the friendly locals, as you pedal past rice fields, visit local ethnic villages and explore imperial cities.

We stay at mostly 3 and 4 star hotels and lodges that have been carefully chosen for their character and location. We run many custom tours for groups small or large, using the standard of accommodation of your choice. Groups larger than six cyclists qualify for a discount.

Distances between overnight lodgings in Vietnam are often too far to cycle, so we drive part way and cycle the best and most scenic sections, avoiding the busy highways. The trip is fully supported with drivers and English-speaking guides, who cycle with you, and includes three meals a day most days.



Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for Reservations

Suggested itinerary:

Pre-tour – Hanoi and Halong Bay

We recommend you add a few extra days in Hanoi and the World Heritage Park of Halong Bay before the tour. Hanoi, particularly the Old Quarter, deserves at least a full day even if you are not taking the pre-tour Halong Bay extension. We can arrange for you to be met at Hanoi Airport and transferred to your hotel.

Day 1: Arrival in Hanoi: You will be met at Hanoi Airport (please notify us of your arrival details and look for the driver with a sign). Today is designed to allow you settle in and relax after your journey. The Old Quarter, with its narrow streets where trades people can be seen working on the pavement, is well worth exploring. The Water Puppet show is also highly recommended – it is best to pre-book on arrival in Hanoi.

Day 2 Hue: This morning we take the morning flight from Hanoi to Hue. Hue (population 286,000), is built on the banks of the Perfume River and steeped in 3,000 years of history. After introductions we will fit you to your rental bike, or unpack your own and then explore the Citadel and Forbidden City by cycle. At dinner tonight we will be entertained with traditional music in the garden courtyard. B, L, D (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner)

Accommodation: 4-star grand old French Colonial style hotel by the Perfume River with garden courtyard, in-house restaurant, bar, swimming pool.

Day 3: Hue to Hoi An

Cycling section: 61km or 106km

We drive from Hue (you are welcome to cycle if you would like a long ride) to Lang Co Beach, a superb beach where you may like to have a swim before biking. After a few km of flat road, we tackle the Hai Van Pass, a very quiet road now that there is a tunnel (not open to cyclists). The view from the top and on the descent is outstanding and well worth the effort (the support vehicle will be there should you prefer to drive). After a fabulous descent we reach Danang. From here you may like to visit China Beach where American servicemen went for their R&R during the Vietnam /American War or a marble factory and view the exquisite workmanship. (B, L, D)

Accommodation: Resort with restaurant, bar, tennis court, swimming pool, laundry service. A garden setting on the banks of the Vu Gia River and a short walk from the old town.

Day 4: Hoi An, Rest Day

Today is a day at leisure to explore this delightful town (dating back to 200BC) with its street side cafes, artists and markets. Explore the historic architecture of Japanese and French origin, take in the morning concert of traditional music or take a gentle ride (c.10km return) to fabulous Hoi An beach. There is much to see and do. There are wonderful pastry shops in the old town and excellent tailors who will make any garment to measure in a few hours. Let your guide know if you would like a longer ride. (B - Lunch and dinner are not included today; there are several attractive riverside restaurants).

Day 5: Hoi An to Quang Ngai: 118km

Cycling section: 72km, back road sections: 48km

We leave Hoi An on a delightful little road into the countryside where we will sample a slice of rural Vietnamese life. Approaching Quang Ngai we take another lovely side road, passing a fishing village and a lively local market. The route includes 12km of unsealed road; it is quite rideable but the support vehicle will never be far away. The ride finishes at My Lai where you may wish to visit the memorial site. B, L, D

Accommodation: Modern style hotel in central location (best available) with air-conditioning, TV, restaurant, tennis court, swimming pool





Day 13 Mui Ne to Loc An: 101km

Quiet roads take us to the coastal desert reserve at Phuoc Buu. Lunch will be at La Gi. In the afternoon there will be more coastal riding as we cycle beside large sand dunes and plantations of the bizarre looking Dragon fruit. (B, L, D)

Accommodation: A comfortable hotel built on the banks of the Ray River with a licensed bar and restaurant, swimming pool, with a hotel punt available to cross the river to the ocean beach.

Day 14: Loc An Beach to Saigon:

Cycling section: 60km

We cycle by rubber, cashew nut and black pepper plantations. On reaching a road side temple we load up to avoid the busy highway into Ho Chi Minh City and take the Cat Lai car ferry across one of the many branches of the Mekong. There is the option of not cycling today in order to spend more time in Saigon. (B, L, D)

Accommodation: A comfortable, centrally located, French style hotel close to good shopping, a local market and a selection of restaurants. It offers satellite TV, Swimming pool, fitness centre, laundry.

Day 15: Ho Chi Minh City

The tour finishes after breakfast. We will gladly take you to the airport should you depart this morning. We hope you have enjoyed your holiday and wish you a safe journey home.

Note: Cycling distances given are entirely optional; a support van will be available at all times

As an optional pre-tour extension we recommend you add a few extra days in Hanoi and visit the World Heritage Park of Halong Bay – ask for details.

Inn-to-inn cycling holidays are available from **Outdoor Travel** in many destinations around the world including Vietnam, India, China, Australia, New Zealand and in most countries across Europe including France, Italy and Ireland.

Bike and Boating cruises are available in Vietnam and in many regions of Europe including the **Dalmatian Coast** of Croatia, the Aegean Island and **Santorini** in Greece, the Southern **Lycian Coast** of Turkey, the **Amalfi Coast or Venice** in Italy, and along the canals and rivers of France, Belgium, Germany and Holland.

For reservations or further information call OUTDOOR TRAVEL Pty Ltd

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Comments on this tour from our Outdoor Travel Reservations Manager: Susi Texler



“Vietnam is an amazing, chaotic, vibrant and friendly place, not to mention hot and sticky...” That was the first thing I wrote in my trip diary. As I was to discover, a cycling trip in Vietnam has more facets than a diamond and I was to discover many of them over the next 2-weeks or so.

The scenery was glorious, food was fantastic, drinks were usually cold and the accommodation delightful, from 4-star beachside resorts to quality, centrally located hotels. The cycling was varied and as challenging as required (Hooray! for the air-conditioned Mercedes mini-coach...), the bikes good quality and excellently maintained, the group really fun and the guides quite fabulous, if occasionally misinterpreted. A smile always got one by, when words failed. The guide's service level was exceptional and they are always on hand with a cool towelette, cold bottled water, peanut brittle, bananas and other snacks.

The group comprised of 15 Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders and Americans. The common factors were a desire to cycle, a convivial temperament and a desire to celebrate at the end of each day. Those with a 'Tour de France' cycling mentality were well balanced by the photo-taking, recreational members of the party. There was a definite need to be fit enough to cycle – I had prepared with weekend rides of 45km over undulating terrain and perhaps should have done a few longer distances, if only to enjoy the scenery more. The total daily distances varied from 68km to over 100km, usually done in two or three sections. However, there was always the support vehicle sweeping past, so while the desire to complete each leg was strong, one only had to make a simple 'hand on helmet' gesture, and quickly, there was a cool drink in hand and you were on an informative and entertaining coach ride to the next stop.

Half the fun of cycling in Vietnam was swerving around the plethora of cows, dogs, water buffalo, motorbikes (by the thousand - they have largely replaced pushbikes), carts, chickens and wandering children - all with big smiles and waving 'Hello's. Each little village (and there were many!) was a chaotic mix of market stalls, shacks, concrete pastel houses, school kids on bikes, old ladies in conical straw hats and outrageously overloaded scooters carrying everything from a family of four to steel pipes to pigs in baskets!

The landscapes changed regularly, from flat rice paddy country, to sweeping, roller coaster, coastal dunes and seascapes, to jungle and plantation covered hills and mountains. The roads were usually good, asphalt or concrete. Although due to our desire to discover the secrets of rural Vietnam, there were sections of quiet, back country roads that required skilful negotiating of potholes or were unsealed. Cycling these was optional, of course, but most of us were excited by the challenge.

November is cycling season in Vietnam, but of course the only thing we can't control is the weather.... As luck would have it, we were met by the most unexpected floods of the season, which meant it rained often and there was a fair bit of mud. This made for some good cycling temperatures and we soon got used to speedy donning of rain jackets and carried on, regardless. It also made for some fascinating experiences, including having our bikes and selves loaded onto wooden canoes to be poled across flooded causeways.

The weather returned to sunshine for our extension to Halong Bay. This was a huge highlight of the tour and I would urge anyone doing this tour to take it – it was an exceptional reward. Our junk was as funky and oriental as could be hoped for, complete with dragons on every corner and loads of dark timber and bamboo thatch. As well as comfy beds and doonas, ensuite cabins, pressed table linen, fine crystal glassware, good wine and multi-course meals to die for. Halong Bay is the most extraordinary place I have ever been to and the vista from the deck was absolutely awe-inspiring.

Would I cycle in Vietnam again? Absolutely!

Give me a call if you have any questions on (03) 57501044.....**Susi**