

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

16-day / 15-night **GUIDED** inn-to-inn road touring – ancient sites, modern cities, beaches & highlands



Our Vietnam cycling route was created to include quiet roads and time in the Highlands. Journey from Imperial City of Hue to historic Hoi An, the golden beaches of Nha Trang, the former French spa resort Dalat, 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.

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, bike mechanics and English-speaking guides, who cycle with you. The cycling is moderate on mostly paved roads but often with rough surfaces and the bikes for hire on this tour are specifically designed for the terrain and road conditions you will encounter, so we do recommend them.

Highlights of any tour to Vietnam are the people, the hospitality and the food. Stay in comfortable, quality hotels and resorts, most with air-conditioning. With most meals included in the tour, enjoy a wide selection of the unique, fresh and flavourful cuisine for which Vietnam is renowned.

Dates: 3rd – 18th December 2020, 3rd – 18th January 2021, 1st – 16th February 2021

Cost from: **US\$3995** per person twin share Single room supplement from: US\$795

Bike hire: **US\$400** per bike if required - all prices are shown in US Dollars – contact us for the AU\$ rate

Includes: 15 nights' accommodation in carefully selected mainly 4 star hotels, resorts and lodges, domestic flights (as mentioned), meals as specified in the itinerary (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner), guided bicycle tours with English speaking guides, support vehicle with driver and bike mechanic, route notes and maps, airport transfers on the official arrival and departure days.

Not included: Travel to Hanoi and from Ho Chi Minh City; Vietnamese visa; meals not listed in the itinerary, drinks, optional excursions and entrance fees, gratuities, and personal expenses.

Group Size: 6 to 18 cyclists per tour. Group bookings of more than 6 cyclists qualify for a discount.



Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or 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. Today is designed to allow you settle in and relax after your journey. The Old Quarter, with its narrow streets where tradespeople 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. (D)

Day 2: Hanoi to Hue

Travel day

This morning we take the morning flight from Hanoi to Hue. Hue 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. Tonight we stay at a 4-star grand old French Colonial style hotel by the Perfume River and at dinner tonight we may be entertained with traditional music in the garden courtyard. (B, L, D)

Day 3: Hue to Hoi An

cycling @ 61km or 106km

We drive from Hue (you are welcome to cycle if you prefer) 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 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 view the exquisite workmanship at a marble factory. The next 2 nights is a resort stay with a beautiful garden on the banks of the Song Bu Thon River and a short walk from the old town. (B, L, D)

Day 4: Hoi An

Rest Day

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

Day 5: Hoi An to Sa Huynh

cycling @ 82km

We leave Hoi An on a scenic backroad into the countryside where we will sample a slice of rural Vietnamese life. We cycle roughly 50km hugging the coastline before a half hour vehicle transfer to Tam Ky for lunch. After lunch we drive to Chau O Town where we start our ride on country roads, 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. We then drive to Sa Huynh for our overnight stay at a resort-hotel set on the white sand beach, surrounded by pine forests, against the backdrop of the Truong Son mountain range. (B, L, D)

Day 6: Sa Huynh to Quy Nhon

cycling @ 88km

We drive to Tam Quan to commence cycling on a minor road through several little villages. The route is mostly flat with two steep climbs. We drive the final 30km to our seaside resort near the charming marina (B, L, D)

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Day 7: Quy Nhon to Tuy Hoa cycling @ 70km

We ride on a delightful quiet road through cassava and sugarcane plantations. We have a picnic lunch at Me Trang café before riding an additional 10km to where we re-join our vehicle and drive to Tuy Hoa city. Our hotel tonight is located at the picturesque northern entrance of Tuy Hoa, nestled into the side of a lush forested hill along a white-sand beach (B, L, D)

Day 8: Tuy Hoa to Nha Trang cycling @ 52km

Today's highlight is the morning ride to the top of Ca Pass, with spectacular views of both jungle and the bay. After lunch, take a rest in the vehicle as we are transferred to Nha Trang. The final short ride is through Nha Trang to the hotel, sharing the road with many local cyclists and school children often doubling up on their bikes. The 4-star hotel for two nights overlooks a magnificent beach and ocean dotted with islands. (B, L, D)

Day 9: Nha Trang Rest Day

Today there is the option of a boat trip to the islands. You will visit a fishing village and be rowed ashore in Vietnamese round boats. There will be time to swim and snorkel, so bring your 'togs'. We may take time to stop at the Oceanographic Institute and Tri Nguyen Aquarium. Enjoy lunch at a lovely bamboo restaurant on an offshore island, returning to Nha Trang mid-afternoon. There may be time to visit an ancient Cham Tower, a relic from the ethnic people who once ruled this part of Vietnam. (B,L) Dinner is at own arrangements.

Day 10: Nha Trang to Buon Ma Thout cycling @ 82km

Today we cycle through the mountainous Central Highlands, featuring the long houses of the Edeh and M'Nong people (the two main ethnic groups in the Central Highlands). Our morning ride takes us on quiet roads through a village with a local market and around a national park. After lunch there is a climb to the Phuong Hoang Pass before a final drive to Buon Ma Thout, the coffee capital of Vietnam, where we stay at a comfortable 3-star hotel in the city. (B, L, D)

Day 11: Buon Ma Thout to Dalat cycling to Lien Son @ 60km (uphill)

We cycle through a variety of scenery, through hills and broad valleys as we head for Lien Son, the summer palace of the late Emperor, with sweeping views of Ho Lak and the surrounding countryside. We also stop at an ethnic village with long houses and may have the opportunity to meet working elephants. Our two night stay in Dalat is in a 3-star hotel in the French colonial style, close to the lake and town centre. No air conditioning, but Dalat enjoys milder temperatures than on the coast. (B, L, D)

Day 12: Dalat Rest Day

Dalat, at 1475 metres above sea level, is a temperate region of lakes and waterfalls, surrounded by lush forests. It was once a French hill station known as 'Little Paris'. The surrounding hills offer cooler-climate flowers, fruit and vegetables such as strawberries, carrots and apples. In the morning we visit a silk embroidery village with a unique architecture and Art Deco summer palace built for former emperor Bao Dai in 1933. The afternoon is free to explore Dalat, perhaps cycle around Xuan Huong Lake or take the cable car to the Zen Pagoda. A half-day tour to an ethnic village is an option – ask your guide to arrange this. (B)

Day 13: Dalat to Phan Thiet cycling @ 80km

We descend the Prenn Pass, and then take a minor road through isolated country to a K'Ho ethnic minority village where we have lunch. From here we continue to descend gently to the coast and our overnight stay at a beautiful resort with a combination of French colonial and Vietnamese country house styles, on the golden sands of Mui Ne (near Phan Tiet). (B, L, D)



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Day 14: Phan Thiet to Loc An

cycling @ 121km

Quiet roads take us to the coastal desert reserve at Phuoc Buu. Lunch is at La Gi. In the afternoon ride along the coast with large sand dunes and plantations of Dragon fruit. We spend tonight in a comfortable hotel set in beautiful grounds on Ho Tram Beach (B, L, D)

Day 15: Loc An Beach to Saigon

cycling @ 64km

We cycle by rubber, cashew nut and black pepper plantations. On reaching a roadside temple, we take a transfer to avoid the busy highway into Saigon, officially known as Ho Chi Minh City. Celebrate your ride with a group farewell dinner at a local restaurant. Our last night stay is at a comfortable, centrally located, French style hotel close to good shopping, a local market and a selection of restaurants (B, L, D)

Day 16: Ho Chi Minh City

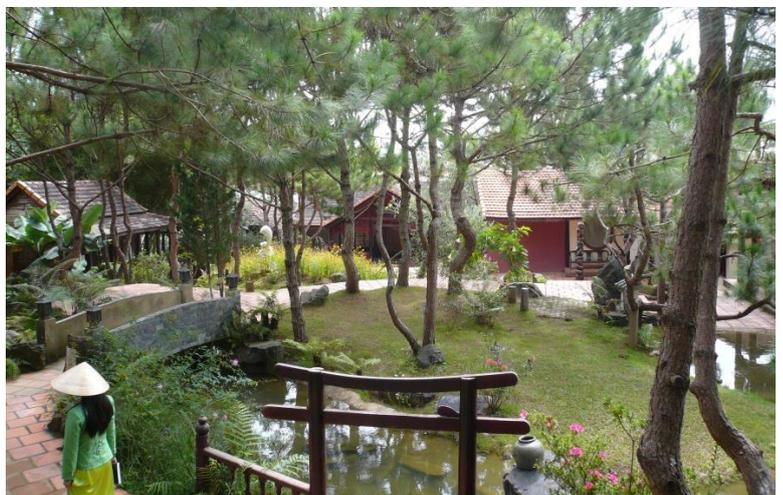
The tour finishes after breakfast. We will gladly take you to the airport should you depart this morning.

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. We offer a **Hanoi and Halong Bay 3-day / 2-night pre tour** (from US\$435 per person, no biking) that includes an overnight on a junk in the World Heritage Park.

You may also like to join our post-tour **Mekong Delta 4-day / 3-night extension** (from US\$925 per person + US\$120 Bike hire) which starts and ends in Ho Chi Minh City. Ask for more details on either of these options.

The trip can also be split into two sections: **Ancient Vietnam** (10 Days: from US\$2795 per person + US\$270 bike hire), which is Hanoi to Nha Trang, and **Beaches and Highlands** (9 Days: from US\$2395 per person + US\$243 bike hire) from Nha Trang to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City).



For reservations or further information call OUTDOOR TRAVEL Pty Ltd

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Comments on this tour from Outdoor Travel's 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, and 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! Call me if you have any questions on (03) 57501044.....**Susi***

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