

Hanoi to Saigon

Bike tour in Vietnam | 13 days Hanoi to Saigon | US\$1990
Hanoi - Hue - Hoi An - beautiful coastlines - back road route - Saigon

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General Introduction

Vietnam is a place that has become so much a part of Western culture that it remains a 'must see' for many people. While this existed mostly from the Vietnam War experience, Vietnam now attracts visitors for its vibrant culture, long history, village life and great travelling experiences. And, of course, cycling Vietnam is the best way to explore this country dominated by two wheels.

One of Asia's classic cycling journeys, riding from Hanoi to Saigon seems to have captured the travelling world's imagination so much so that even people not interested before in cycling tours have taking up the ultimate way to travel. Our Hanoi to Saigon is unashamedly a coastal journey and what makes it different from other tours is that you will ride from hotel to hotel without ever transferring in the bus. We have designed an amazing back roads route that avoids Highway One for all but 60km of the 500+km of the ride.

With thousands of kilometres of stunning beaches and dramatic coastal roads as well as some of the freshest seafood going this trip is an indulgent experience. We are never far from a beach and stay in comfortable hotels to make this trip our most cushy adventure tour.

Itinerary

Days 1-2 | Hanoi

After arriving into Hanoi take to the countryside tracks just outside Hanoi for a warm up ride. On the evening of Day 2 fly south to the ancient city of Hue.

Day 3 | Hue Explore the former capital of Vietnam on two wheels including a visit to the Forbidden Purple City and emperor's tombs.

Days 4-6 | Cycling to Hoi An

Cycling up and over the famous Hai Van Pass, the geographic north-south divider of Vietnam, is a great challenge to take you to picturesque Hoi An where you have a day to enjoy this historic town.

Days 7-11 | Cycling to Quy Nhon Taking the coastal route you'll pass beautiful beaches, friendly villages and thousands of waving children. Our route avoids the traffic of Highway One and follows a fantastic route that is unique in Vietnam. In Quy Nhon enjoy a free day on the beach, the perfect way to end a ride!

Days 12-13 | Saigon After a short flight arrive into Saigon, now known as Ho Chi Minh City, where we celebrate the end of an amazing journey down the country. The tour ends after breakfast on day 13.

Facts and Information

Dates 2010 Jun 14 - 2010 Jun 26

2010 Aug 23 - 2010 Sep 04

2010 Dec 20 - 2011 Jan 01

2011 Jan 03 - 2011 Feb 15

2011 Jan 24 - 2011 Feb 05

2011 Feb 21 - 2011 Mar 05

2011 Sep 12 - 2011 Sep 24

Stylefully supported cycling

Inclusionssupport vehicle, local guides, tour leader, most meals, entry fees

Group Sizeminimum 4, maximum 16

Accommodation12 nights comfortable hotel

Meals Included12 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 9 dinners

Days Cycling7

Kilometres Cycledapprox 520km

Difficultymoderate (customer rating: 3.2 out of 5 - the hardest being 5)

Cycling ConditionsWe cycle on well made back roads for most of this tour. There are some short sections on well surfaced dirt roads. This is a generally flat ride apart from Hai Van Pass and some undulating coastal roads.

Feedback and Reviews

"Best adventure for me so far!! Great riding, fantastic scenery, fabulous (& healthy) food, loved the local people, very friendly and loved to joke."

- Marriane, January 2007

Detailed cycle tour information Itinerary

Day 1 | Hanoi

Today group members will be arriving throughout the day so the day will be free to explore the sights of this charming city. We'll all meet in the evening for group meeting and head out for our first dinner together. (D)

Day 2 | Hue | 20km

In the morning we will take a ride around the country side just outside Hanoi. This is a great introduction to the rural face of Vietnam, friendly locals and villages that will be a feature of your cycling in Vietnam. In the late evening we head out to the airport for he flight to Hue. (B)

Day 3 | Hue | 30km

Our first day on the bikes is a gentle ride in the historic city of Hue. Our bikes will take us to the ancient Forbidden Palace where emperors of the past ruled Vietnam. We will explore the Palace on foot before riding on to the tomb of Emperor Tu Duc which is more like a park than tomb. (B L D)

Day 4 | Cycle to Lang Co | 80km

Our first full day on the bikes takes us out of Hue and south riding along the coast past many bays and alongside the famous Reunification Express. The ride is flat and easy and we stop early in the day to stay the night in the beach side town of Lang Co. With its relaxing each you'll enjoy a pleasant seaside afternoon. (B L D)

Day 5 | Cycle to Hoi An | 70km

The morning begins with a challenging 10km uphill ride to the top of Hai Van Pass, the geographic divider of north and south. While a test of endurance, the road sits ominously overlooking the ocean and the scenery is your motivation to keep you going up the climb. From the top there is a thrilling downhill before riding through busy Danang and onto the beautiful town of Hoi An. Hoi An was once a major trading port and now the World Heritage protected old town is a wonderfully preserved area. (B L D)

Day 6 | Hoi An

Enjoy a full day to relax in Hoi An. Explore the old town, spend the day shopping or head down to the beach for a relaxing afternoon - there's plenty to do. (B)

Day 7 | Cycle to Tam Ky | 50km

First things this morning we board a boat to get us across the river the Hoi An sit alongside. Then we ride a wonderful coastal road with next to no traffic that passes through small villages, sand dunes and the beach of course. The entire route is on quiet roads so this will be one of the most relaxing rides of the trip. Tam Ky is a small town that receives few visitors so expect a bit of attention. (B L D)

Day 8 | Cycle to Quang Ngai | 90km

Our morning takes us down Highway One before we turn off and take a fantastic back road around the coast that takes us to the site of one of the many dark moments of the Vietnam War - the My Lai Massacre Memorial. The Monument stands as a great antiwar statement. Quang Ngai is another town well off the tourist route. (B L D)

Day 9 | Cycle to Binh Duong | 100km

Our route today stays inland away from the coast but it is not less interesting. With a few hills to climb, lots of farming land and small back roads to ride this is a real experience of a region rarely seen by visitors. Binh Duong is a non-descript town on Highway One and spending a night here gives a great insight into a regular Vietnamese town. (B L D)

Day 10 | Cycle to Quy Nhon | 100km

We consider this one of the best days of riding of the trip. This beautiful back road takes us past some magnificent deserted beaches - definitely one of the highlight rides in Vietnam. Quy Nhon is a quiet beachside town and the perfect place to celebrate the end of the riding part of the tour. And you can happily celebrate today knowing that tomorrow is a rest day on the beach. (B L D)

Day 11 | Quy Nhon

Enjoy a full day relaxing at the resort. (B L D)

Day 12 | Saigon

Flight times vary out of Quy Nhon but we will take the first available flight south to the big smoke of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City, often still referred to by its old name Saigon. You'll have free time to explore the city before we gather for our final night dinner together. (B D)

Day 13

You are free to depart anytime today. Hotel checkout time is midday. (B)

Style

Fully supported bicycle tour.

Inclusions

Entrances, local guide, tour leader, most meals, support vehicle.

Group Size

Minimum 4, maximum 16.

Accommodation

13 nights comfortable hotel, 1 night sleeper train. In the towns with some hotel choice we use very comfortable 3 or 4 star hotels while in the smaller towns we have the selected the best hotel available - these are generally 2 to 3 star. This tour is our most comfortable with a great standard of hotels available throughout the Vietnam.

Single Room

Single travellers do not have to pay any extra to join our trips - we will match you up with another same sex, single traveller. However, should you wish to choose to take a single room we are happy to book rooms for you for an extra charge. This single supplement is completely voluntary and only applies to hotel accommodation, on overnight train trips there are no single rooms available. We should point out that on occasion single rooms may not be available and in these instances you may need to share for a night or two - we will refund part of your single supplement in these cases.

Please contact us for the price of a single room.

Arriving in Hanoi

Upon your arrival at Hanoi International Airport you will need to make your own way to the starting point hotel. The easiest way is to take a prepaid taxi which is US\$12-15. Sometimes the taxis try to drop you at their friend's hotel rather than the one you requested so be sure to only get out when you are sure it is our hotel (they usually don't try this when you have a reservation).

We will advise you as to the location of the starting point hotel closer to the start of the tour.

Finishing point hotel in Saigon

Depending on availability we use either the Continental or Grand Hotel - both are beautiful historic hotels in the heart of Hanoi and a great place to finish the tour.

Additional Accommodation

Should you require extra accommodation in Hanoi before the trip or Saigon after the trip we can offer you competitive rates at our hotel. Please book extra nights when you book your trip. Prices available on request.

Food

Included meals: 12 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 9 dinners, plus water, fruit and biscuits on cycling days. You should consider bring some of your favourite energy snacks and electrolyte powder for the cycling days.

Cycling Details

Cycling Days and Distance

8 days - 540km

Difficulty

Moderate—this trip involves some riding uphill and longer

days over 80km. Riders should be of reasonable cycling fitness but feel free to hop in the support vehicle if any of the riding is too hard.

Cycling Conditions

Road conditions in Vietnam are good. Apart from some short sections on dirt the entire ride is on sealed roads. We will spend a little time on Highway One so be prepared for traffic that can (and probably) will include trucks, buses, motorbikes, bicycles, pedestrians, children, dogs, chickens, and other fun things. You will need to stay alert at all times.

Bikes

You will need to bring your own bike for this trip. The best bike for conditions in Vietnam would be a good working mountain or hybrid bike with 21 gears or more and hybrid tyres to cope with the varying conditions. You should have your bike serviced by a professional bike mechanic before travelling to ensure that it is in good working order. While we do provide mechanical assistance and carry some spare parts during the trip you will need to bring spare parts (including tubes) for your bike as different bikes use different parts and we cannot guarantee that we will have a part to suit your bike.

Bike Hire | US\$130

If you don't have a bike or don't want to bring your own you can hire a bike from us for the entire trip. We provide well maintained imported mountain bikes in sizes 13" and 21" and will be responsible for any maintenance required during the trip for these bikes. Please note, renters will be liable for any damage caused to rental bike which is a result of riding accidents. For added comfort you should consider bringing your own seat and pedals which we can easily fit to your rental bike.

Helmets

For safe cycling we highly recommend wearing a helmet whilst cycling on our trips.

Support Vehicle

For the cycling days we will have the backup support of a small bus that will carry our luggage, snacks, water, and anybody not cycling.

Travel Details

Visas

In Vietnam 30 days visas need to be obtained in advance from your embassy. Make sure that you enter the correct dates for your visa as they are quite restrictive and need to be detailed properly.

Before you travel check your passport to ensure that there is room for a visa and entry/exit stamps (at least 3 pages) and that it has at least 6 months validation remaining.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of participating in a tour that you hold travel insurance for the duration of the trip. Insurance must include comprehensive medical and emergency evacuation. Your travel insurance details will be checked by your group leader on arrival at the starting point hotel.

If you are looking for an insurer we can recommend World

Nomads.

Flights

International flights to the starting point and from the finish point are not included in the price of this tour. We can assist with the purchase of inter-Asia flights and provide advice if you are considering overland travel.

Money

The official currency of Vietnam is the dong which should be

used for most transactions. Vietnam now has a modern banking systems with ATMs and money changers in every large town. In Vietnam it is possible to use Visa/Mastercard or Cirrus/Maestro cards to access cash at an ATM at the airport and in the larger towns and cities that we visit. You should, however, carry travelers cheques as a backup. Most international currencies can be exchanged so it is not necessary to bring only US dollars—AUD, EUR, CAD, NZD are all accepted at banks in major centres.

For current exchange rates visit:

www.xe.com

Costs

We recommend that you allow approximately US\$10 for food and general living costs per day. Shopping money should be considered extra to this amount. It is customary to tip the guides and drivers in Vietnam. You should allow approximately US\$20 for tips. Note: this is a guide only, feel free to tip more or less (or nothing) depending on your satisfaction.

Important

All information in these tour notes is researched with care and provided in good faith. The information is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and the tour provider.

Positive Impact

An integral part of traveling is to have a positive impact on the country that you are visiting. On this trip there are a number of things you can do to have a positive impact on the communities that we visit.

Phrase Book

A highly memorable part of your travels will be the local people that you meet. In the tourist areas some people will speak English but away from these areas you should learn a few words of Vietnamese. We will teach you some of the basics but if you want to really interact we recommend bringing a phrase book.

Donations

Often when coming on trips overseas people like to bring items such as sweets, pens and books for children or old clothing for families. While this is a fantastic idea, if distributed in the wrong way it can actually create more problems. Giving items away to local people can create an expectation that a visiting foreigner equals free give away's. In some communities in Asia this has created whole villages where the only interaction is the locals asking for things. If you would like to donate anything to the communities that we visit we suggest that you give the items to development organizations. In this way items are distributed by those working in the communities who understand better the local needs.

Poverty

There is poverty in Vietnam which you will see, particularly in tourist areas. If you choose to give something to a beggar you must bear in mind the value of money in the country you are visiting. Many beggars can earn more than those who work unskilled jobs. There are organisations in Vietnam who are working to alleviate this poverty issue and may be able to do more good with donations that you might like to make. Your Tour Leader will be able to provide more information about this.

Electricity

Vietnam works on a 220 volt system and uses two flat pin plugs which is standard in South East Asia. You can easily buy an adapter for much cheaper than home when you arrive in Hanoi.

Plugs look like this: ||

Health

There are no specific health requirements for traveling in Vietnam, however, we recommend that you visit a travel medicine doctor before traveling. You should carry a well stocked first aid kit with you when you travel. All the Vietnam Group Leaders are first aid trained, however, they are not permitted to distribute any medications.

Climate

Most of Vietnam is a classic tropical climate with generally warm to hot days and warm nights. The north is sub-tropical so if visiting in winter (Dec-Feb) expect cool days and nights

(January average is 14 to 19 degree).

In the Vietnamese winter (December-February) it can get quite cold in Hanoi so bring something warm to wear.

Packing

While we do have a support vehicle to carry your luggage during the cycling days, you will be required to carry your own luggage at times. Luggage will need to be loaded on and off buses and up and down stairs at hotels. For this reason we recommend that you pack as lightly as possible in a backpack or small wheeled suitcase.

Packing list

You should consider bringing the following items:

Personal

Backpack

Long trousers

Shorts

Shirts

Hat

Sandals/Light Shoes

Swimming Costume

Sunglasses

Light Rain Coat

Toiletries

Small Towel

Sunscreen

First Aid Kit

Mosquito Repellent

Camera and Film/Memory

Alarm Clock

Travel

Passport with 6 months validity and spare pages

Passport photo

Travel insurance details

Flight tickets

Money - cash/credit cards/travellers cheques

Phrase book

Bicycle

Bicycle

if renting - your own seat & pedals (optional)

Something to carry your personal belongings in while cycling, eg. day pack, bum bag, handlebar bag

Helmet

Cycling gloves

Bicycle water bottle

Bike shorts with something to put on over the top while off the bike

Booking Form

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