



SHORT ESCAPE: VIETNAM

Delve into one of Southeast Asia's crown jewels, on this compact journey from North to South, encountering the people, culture and cuisine that make Vietnam so vibrant.

Tailor-Made Journeys, Suggested Itineraries



Asia, Vietnam



8 days from AU\$5,720 pp



Private

Journey Overview

Experience the irresistible allure of Vietnam on this journey from north to south. Delve into the surprises of sophisticated French-colonial cities and quaint heritage towns, tasting true Vietnam at every turn. Venture through emerald waters to the hidden bays and remote islands of Lan Ha Bay. And encounter the people, culture and cuisine that together make this country so vibrant.

Journey Highlights

- Uncover over 1,000 years of history wonderfully preserved in Hanoi
- Venture into tranquil Lan Ha Bay on a luxury boat
- Seek out chic boutiques, antiques and art in charming Hoi An
- Experience the food scene of Ho Chi Minh City on the back of a vintage Vespa



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Hanoi

Arrive in the elegant Vietnamese capital, greeted by A&K's fast track services and transfer to your hotel.

Hotel de l'Opera Hanoi

Day 2: Hanoi

Spend your morning experiencing the many sides to this enthralling city. Begin your tour at the mausoleum of Vietnam's revered revolutionary leader, Ho Chi Minh. Linger over the iconic One Pillar Pagoda, then, visit Hoa Lo Prison, used to detain political prisoners of the French and later nicknamed "Hanoi Hilton" by prisoners of the Vietnam War. Most of the buildings here were demolished in the 1990s, but the gatehouse remains open for visitors.

After lunch, stroll through the complex of atmospheric halls, pavilions and courtyards of the Temple of Literature, Vietnam's first university. Afterwards, take a cyclo (bicycle rickshaw) into the Old Quarter to explore its network of narrow, 15th century streets. Each street bears a name that reflects the business once conducted there, such as Silk Street, Rice Street, Paper Street and Jeweller's Street.

Next stop is the beautiful Hoan Kiem Lake, or "Lake of the Returned Sword" and Ngoc Son, a temple dedicated to Tran Hung Dao who defeated Mongolian troops on three unique occasions in the 13th century.

Hotel de l'Opera Hanoi | Meals: BL

Day 3: Hanoi - Lan Ha Bay

Today you will transfer by road to Ha Long Bay. Board your deluxe traditional Halong Bay junk and enjoy lunch as you drift over emerald waters past towering rocky outcrops, some more than 100 metres high. Venture south into the maze of Lan Ha Bay, an extension of Halong Bay, to explore the interesting limestone formations at Dark and Bright Caves by bamboo boat or kayak. Then continue to Tra Bau where you can enjoy swimming in the pristine ocean waters. Back on board, enjoy a cooking demonstration before taking your place on the terrace deck to watch the sun sink behind the bay's myriad islands.

Orchid | Meals: BLD

Day 4: Lan Ha Bay - Hanoi - Hoi An

Rise early for an optional Tai Chi class on the deck, or simply drink in the first rays touching the water. Afterwards, hop on a small bamboo boat rowed by locals, or paddle by yourself in a kayak through an endless sea of islands. Back on board, enjoy a leisurely brunch with more spectacular views as you drift back to port. Transfer to Noi Bai airport for the short flight south to Danang and transfer to the UNESCO World Heritage listed waterside town of Hoi An

Anantara Hoi An | Meals: B

Day 5: Hoi An

Spend your morning at leisure. Later, take an afternoon walking tour to discover this charming historic town, a major south-east Asian trading post in the 16th and 17th centuries and now a living museum. Roam narrow cobbled lanes where Dutch and French colonial houses are squeezed between Chinese tea warehouses and Japanese temples – a clue to the town’s mixed heritage. Inhale the aromas and flavours of Hoi An’s lively market stalls. Step inside the Old House of Duc An and Fukia Assembly Hall. After an afternoon wandering beneath the luminous lanterns, it’s time to make your own as you learn the traditional art of lantern making.

Anantara Hoi An | Meals: B

Day 6: Hoi An - Danang - Ho Chi Minh City

Transfer to Danang airport for your flight to Ho Chi Minh City. This evening, see and taste the city from the back of a vintage Vespa. Enjoy a unique view of the city after dark as you weave through buzzing streets. Plunge into the maze of narrow alleyways to savour the sizzling street food at places only locals know. Then, journey downtown for a taste of Banh Xeo, a local delicacy. Stop at a hidden coffee shop for a taste of Vietnamese acoustic music before finishing the evening with a drink at the city's top live music venue.

Hotel des Arts Saigon | Meals: BD

Day 7: Ho Chi Minh City

Skim along the Saigon River this morning on a private luxury speedboat passing mangroves and palm trees on your way to a small community northwest of Ho Chi Minh City and its famous wartime landmark – the Cu Chi tunnels. This incredible network of narrow tunnels was built during resistance to the French colonisation and used extensively throughout the war. Take a guided exploration of the complex network, discovering underground storage, make-shift hospitals and sleeping quarters.

Return to Ho Chi Minh City for lunch before a visit to the Reunification Palace where the official handover of power took place during the Fall of Saigon in 1975. Then choose between the History Museum or the War Remnants Museum. Built in 1929, the History Museum houses a collection of artefacts illustrating the evolution of Vietnamese culture since ancient times, while the War Remnants Museum contains an at-times grisly display of wartime photographs and relics including an American tank, an original 20th century French guillotine and a UH-1 "Huey" helicopter.

Finish the day on a peaceful note as you venture into Cao Dai Temple, to learn about a unique religion of Southern Vietnam, the result of a colourful range of several religious philosophies. You may wish to stop for a complimentary refreshment at a local place along the way. Return to the hotel driving past Notre Dame Cathedral and the Central Post office en route.

Hotel des Arts Saigon / Meals: BL

Day 8: Depart Ho Chi Minh City

Transfer to Tan Son Nhat Airport for your onward flight.

Meals: B

Map



Accommodation

Hotel de l'Opera Hanoi



Located in the heart of the enchanting city, known for its serene lakes and scenic boulevards, is L'Hotel de l'Opera Hanoi - MGallery. As the name suggests, the 107-room boutique hotel is within walking distance of the famous Hanoi Opera House, along with the city's Old Quarter and Hoan Kiem Lake.

The drama of 'a night at the opera' is captured in the rich décor of each guest room and suite. Stay in the sophisticated L'Opera Suite and enjoy views across the Vietnamese capital from the spacious lounge. The beds deliver a sense of elevation with an extra layer of mattress for the perfect night's sleep. Suite benefits include breakfast, a complimentary drink at La Fée Verte and a late checkout. Each of the deluxe rooms provide warm, homely touches with wooden floors and fine linens.

Hanoi is known for its exquisite cuisine, and this is reflected within the hotel's two French-inspired restaurants. Café Lautrec, named after the 19th-century painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, offers à la carte and buffet dining. Dishes on the menu include wok fried *Nha Trang* seafood in spicy sauce and Hanoian *Pho*. Satine offers classic Vietnamese cuisine with many local favourites and is dramatically set within the eight-storey atrium.

The signature bar La Fée Verte, or the 'Green Fairy', is a nod to the

decadence of a bygone era where absinthe was the drink of choice among Parisian artists. Today, you can choose from cocktails, aged spirits and imported wines.

After a day exploring, you can relax in Hanoi's only heated semi-outdoor swimming pool found on the third floor. From the warm waters you can enjoy views of the vibrant Trang Tien Street known for its bookshops and ice-cream. A well-equipped fitness centre, with TechnoGym, cardio and strength-training equipment is adjacent.

Why we like it

- Located in the heart of the city within walking distance of Hanoi Opera House and Hoan Kiem Lake
- Encapsulates the best of Hanoi with outstanding features of French colonial architecture and operatic interior
- Two French-inspired restaurants with fusion of international cuisine and Vietnamese dishes
- Absinthe cocktails served in the signature bar, La Fée Verte
- Heated swimming pool and gym
- **Our top tip:** relax in Hanoi's only heated semi-outdoor swimming pool and enjoy views of the opera house and vibrant Trang Tien Street

Ginger Cruise



The gracious Ginger is Heritage Line's newest vessel cruising Lan Ha Bay, a tranquil part of the famous Halong Bay in Vietnam. With just 12 large suites, Ginger exudes a private atmosphere on board, making it feel almost like you have the whole vessel to yourself. There are two Regent Suites in the highest room category, four Signature Suites and six Junior Suites. Each room is naturally light-flooded, with a well-sized balcony, warm timber floors, marble bathrooms and distinguished design themes that marry the long-lasting traditions of Northern Vietnam with contemporary accents.

Begin your day with a private balcony breakfast as the boat sails through a mystical landscape of karsts and islands. After an adventure-filled day onshore, recline in your spacious room, head out to the pool deck for sundowners, or choose from the cultural menu of activities, including hands-on cooking classes, tai chi, kayaking and more. There's also a vast spa occupying the whole stern of the ship, with three treatment rooms all offering views of the bay. Later, take your place at the restaurant to watch the chefs prepare your feast of Vietnamese or Western cuisine, before finding a spot in the indoor bar for a digestif - the perfect end to your day.

Why we like it

- Exclusive atmosphere with only 12 suites
- All suites are light-filled with a spacious balcony
- Vast spa with treatment rooms overlooking the tranquil bay

Anantara Hoi An



Nestled in a lush garden just steps away from the town centre, Anantara Hoi An promises a memorable stay for discerning travellers. The resort is located on the banks of the Thu Bon River and a five minute walk from the historic ancient town of Hoi An.

The resort incorporates East Asian and European design elements, reflecting the town's colourful past as a trading port. Choose from superior rooms, junior suites or grand suites each of which boasts uninterrupted views of the gardens or the river. Appointed with white linens, ceiling fans and generous windows, the inviting and airy rooms showcase the property's natural surroundings. Likewise, the swimming pool is surrounded by plants and trees and the renowned spa is a haven of relaxation, relying on natural products to relieve stress and fatigue.

Why we like it

- 93 rooms and suites in split level design with daybed porches
- Vietnamese cooking, language, painting and lantern making classes
- Swimming pool and children's pool enclosed in a garden courtyard
- Five dining options
- Boat trips on the Thu Bon River

Hotel des Arts Saigon



Hotel des Arts Saigon is as much a 5-star boutique hotel as it is an art museum. The owner's personal collection of paintings and antiques are proudly showcased throughout the building, bringing an added element of old-world charm and style to the modern building.

Hotel des Arts Saigon's rooftop swimming pool is the perfect place to take in the views of the city below, whilst sipping a refreshing cocktail at the rooftop bar. A vibrant restaurant, a lounge-bar and a relaxed art-café all offer up a variety of culinary delights, handcrafted drinks and late night snacks to suit any pallet.

Le Spa des Artistes boasts 6 treatment rooms offering guests a perfect retreat from the fast pace of the city outside.

Why we like it

- Rooftop pool and bar serving tailor-made cocktails
- Located 2 minutes from the town centre, shops, bar and restaurants
- Social Club located on 23rd floor serving handcrafted drinks and food

Abercrombie & Kent

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