



VIETNAM AT A GLANCE

2024 - Classic Tour | 13 Days | Physical Level 1

Saigon - Mekong Delta - Hoi An - Hue - Hanoi - Halong Bay

Want to experience Vietnam's top sights? With this tour, you can explore all the highlights in just under two weeks, with visits to charming Hoi An, historical Hue, spectacular Halong Bay and much more.

- Uncover Saigon's fascinating history
- Discover the Cu Chi Tunnels
- Explore the Mekong Delta
- Soak up the charms of Hoi An
- Marvel at Hue's Imperial Citadel
- Take a two-day cruise on Halong Bay

TOUR MAP



VIETNAM AT A GLANCE TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals (from dinner on the day of arrival until breakfast on the day of departure)
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escorts (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Vietnam visa fees for New Zealand passport holders (please see visa section below for further information)
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with IATA

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

CLASSIC TOURS:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Southeast Asia on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people.

The tours are on a fully inclusive basis, so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts or local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

PHYSICAL LEVEL 1:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

'Vietnam at a Glance' is rated as a **physical level 1** tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it's more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You'll be getting on and off coaches, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time
- Throughout the tour you will be required to get on and off varying sizes of boats, sometimes without Assistance

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

JOINING YOUR TOUR:

The tour is 13 days in duration including international flights. Please note, due to flight schedules passengers may depart/arrive on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only', the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to Reservations so we can arrange your transfers accordingly.

Join the tour on Day 2 in Saigon and end the tour on Day 12 in Hanoi. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1-2: Saigon

Meals: D

Our representative will meet you in the Arrivals Hall at Ho Chi Minh City Airport ahead of the 45-minute transfer to the hotel.

Check into your room, or store luggage if arriving earlier than the check-in time. This evening, meet your group for dinner and a welcome briefing with your Vietnamese Local Guide or National Escort.



Destination Information

Saigon – Formally renamed Ho Chi Minh City, but still locally known by its older name of Saigon, this exuberant city is driving Vietnam forward into the modern world while preserving a wealth of fascinating heritage and French colonial architecture. It was a major base of the American military during the Vietnam War and was the seat of the South Vietnam government until the city was captured by North Vietnamese forces in April 1975.

Day 3: Saigon & the Cu Chi Tunnels

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, visit the fascinating Cu Chi Tunnels to learn the history of the Viet Cong and their guerilla tactics during the Vietnam War. Sightseeing here involves two hours on foot on wide but uneven paths through the forest, seeing examples of reconstructed bamboo traps, Viet Cong kitchens, and tunnel entrances.

Should you choose, you will also have the opportunity to spend a few minutes underground, on a short, crouched walk through an example section of the tunnel network, which has been slightly enlarged for visitors' safety.



Stop for lunch at an organic farm en route back to Saigon. Explore the city's heady mix of local culture and colonial influences. See the Notre-Dame Cathedral and visit the Central Post Office, the Reunification Palace and the poignant War Remnants Museum. The latter is an emotional visit; you will be given time to explore independently.

Please note: The Cathedral will be under renovation until 2027. During this time, we are unable to enter.

Destination Information

Cu Chi - The tunnels of Cu Chi are an immense network of connecting underground tunnels located in the Cu Chi district of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam, and are part of a much larger network of tunnels that underlie much of the country.

Central Post Office - Located next to the Notre-Dame Cathedral. The Central Post Office building was constructed in the late 19th century. It counts Gothic, Renaissance and French influences.

Reunification Palace - Built on the site of the former Norodom Palace, this is a landmark in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. It was the home and workplace of the President of South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. It was the site of the end of the Vietnam War during the Fall of Saigon on 30th April 1975, when a North Vietnamese Army tank crashed through its gates.

Notre-Dame Cathedral – The 60-metre bell towers of Saigon’s Notre-Dame Cathedral overlook downtown Saigon. It was consecrated in 1880 by the Roman Catholic Church to provide religious services for French colonialists. All the building materials were imported from France, including the red bricks, which came from Toulouse and have retained their vivid colour

War Remnants Museum - Comprised of numerous buildings displaying military equipment, photographs and artefacts relating to the Vietnam War from 1961-1975.

Day 4: Mekong Delta

Meals: B, L, D

Drive 2 and a half hours down to the picturesque province of Ben Tre, situated along the mighty Mekong Delta. This area is known as the ‘Rice Basket of Vietnam’, because its rich and fertile lands produce huge amounts of rice, coconuts, vegetables and tropical fruit.



Spend the day cruising and exploring, travelling by motorised, wooden boats between the islands and changing to smaller, paddleboats in the canals. Sightseeing involves hopping on and off these boats, often on unsteady and slippery surfaces, sometimes without handrails or assistance. Return to Saigon.

Destination Information

Mekong Delta - Although primarily rural, the Mekong Delta is a densely populated area where life progresses around its fertile banks. The Mekong Delta is the 12th longest river in the world, and people live, trade, travel and go to school on the riverbanks.

Day 5: Saigon – Hoi An

Meals: B, L, D

Take a 1h20min flight from Saigon to Danang and transfer 45 minutes through the countryside to the enchanting town of Hoi An. Head out on a walking tour of the Old Town, with visits including Chua Ong Chinese Pagoda, a 200-year-old merchant house, and the spectacular Japanese Covered Bridge.



With its charming yellow buildings and vivid silk lanterns, a stroll through this traditional town feels like stepping back in time.

Destination Information

Hoi An - Perhaps more than any other place in Vietnam, Hoi An retains the feel of centuries past. Once known as Faifo, Hoi An was an influential port along the Silk Road. For over 500 years merchants from China, Japan, France and Portugal settled in the prosperous town resulting in a distinctive blend of culture, cuisine, religion and architecture.

Japanese Covered Bridge - First constructed in the 1590s to link the Japanese and Chinese quarters of the Merchant town.

Day 6: Tra Que Village

Meals: B, L, D

Head out into Hoi An's peaceful countryside to visit an organic farming community.

Here you can enjoy the lush green landscapes and stroll through the gardens to see the farmers at work. You'll even have an opportunity to try the techniques for yourself!

The afternoon is at leisure to head to the beach or explore the Old Town's charming shops and boutiques.



Day 7: Hue

Meals: B, L, D

Leave Hoi An for Hue, taking a scenic drive over the dramatically beautiful Hai Van Pass.

This afternoon, discover Hue's imperial history, beginning at the Imperial Citadel and Forbidden Purple City.

Continue to Thien Mu Pagoda, the symbol of the city.



Destination Information

Hue – The imperial capital from 1802 until 1945, after the last emperor abdicated, Hue is still regarded as a centre of Vietnamese culture. The city is dominated by the Imperial Citadel, modelled on the Forbidden City in China. There are many wonderful pagodas and temples of high significance, and it contains the Grand Tombs of the Nguyen Emperors.

Thien Mu Pagoda – This seven-storey octagonal tower is built on a hillock overlooking the Perfume River. Dating back to 1601, it is Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda, and considered the unofficial symbol of the city. Wander the grounds where bonsai, ponds and the smell of incense set a peaceful backdrop.

Forbidden Purple City - Constructed for the personal use of the Imperial family, their concubines and eunuchs. This royal structure is still being restored many years after the destruction caused by street fighting and bombing during the Vietnam War but retains its historic atmosphere.

Day 8: Hanoi

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, visit the Royal Tomb of Emperor Minh Mang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This funerary complex comprises dozens of monuments set in beautiful surroundings with gardens and pools. Later, fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to the charming city of Hanoi.



Please note that as you have multiple days in Hanoi, your National Escort may change the order of touring based on local flights and schedules. No touring will be missed.

Day 9: Hanoi

Meals: B, L, D

Discover the sights of Hanoi. Visit the Ho Chi Minh Quarter for an insight into the Vietnam War. Visit the Humble House on Stilts, where Ho Chi Minh lived in the grounds of the Presidential Palace and see his Mausoleum in Ba Dinh Square.



Visit the serene Temple of Literature, Hanoi's first university, before taking a cyclo tour of Hanoi's Old Quarter. Each cyclo (rickshaw) takes one passenger and is operated by a cycle driver behind the carriage. Wrap up your ride with an opportunity to taste some 'egg coffee' – a local speciality

Destination Information

Ba Dinh Square – Ba Dinh Square was named after a Vietnamese uprising against colonial rule in the 1880s. It was here that President Ho Chi Minh read the Proclamation of Independence in 1945, when North Vietnam declared its independent status. It had previously been part of French Indochina, though it was under Japanese control for a number of months in 1945. Its dominant landmarks are Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum, where his body lies embalmed and on display, and the National Assembly Building.

Presidential Palace – This yellow, distinctly European building was built by the French as the Palace of the Governor-General of Indochina in the early 1900s. When Vietnam achieved independence, President Ho Chi Minh refused to live in the grand structure, instead building the **Humble House on Stilts** in its grounds. He used the Palace only to receive guests; it is still used for major political meetings

One Pillar Pagoda - Rebuilt in 1955 after damage during the French evacuation, the pagoda is made of wood and sits on a single pillar. Designed to reflect the shape of a lotus flower emerging from the water, it has become a popular spot for locals to enjoy the tranquil surroundings.

Humble House on Stilts - In the grounds of the Presidential Palace sits the two-storey wooden home of Ho Chi Minh, who ruled Vietnam from here until his death in 1969.

Day 10: Halong Bay

Meals: B, L, D

Drive around 2 and a half hours from Hanoi to Halong, where you will take an overnight cruise to the far-most corners of the bay.

Enjoy lunch on board as you cruise out into the bay, stopping to anchor for an afternoon of activities.

Activities are subject to change due to cruise selection and weather conditions. Sightseeing usually includes visiting underground caves on the islands which involves climbing up and down lots of steps. End the day on deck with a drink in hand to watch the sunset over the bay followed by a freshly prepared dinner, before retiring to your cabin for the night.



Please note: You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for your trip to Halong Bay. Main luggage will be left in safe storage at the hotel in Hanoi and picked up your return.

Please note: Weather conditions such as mist, fog, wind, rain and storms may delay the departure time of your cruise, or in some cases your cruise may be cancelled. Notifications of any delays or cancellations may not be known until your group's arrival in Halong Bay. If your cruise is cancelled after your arrival in Halong Bay, you will have lunch in Halong City and return to Hanoi. If notification of the cruise cancellation is given prior to your departure for Halong Bay, an alternative day trip will be arranged to Hoa Lu and Tam Coc or 'Halong Bay on Land', an area located approximately 2 hours from Hanoi. Our guides will make every effort to inform the group at the earliest possible moment should there be any itinerary changes.

Destination Information

Halong Bay - Halong Bay shares a common border with China in the north and harbours some of the most stunning scenery in Vietnam. Unique rock sculptures jut out dramatically from the clear emerald waters of the Gulf of Tonkin and numerous grottoes have created an enchanting, timeless world, looking out onto the horizon with the sails of the junks and sampans completing the picture.

Day 11: Halong Bay - Hanoi

Meals: B, L, D

After a night anchored out on the bay, rise early to enjoy a Tai Chi lesson on deck as the sun rises. Cruise back to port, stopping en route to visit one of the bay's impressive caves.

Return to Hanoi, where your afternoon is at leisure ahead of this evening's farewell dinner.



Day 12: Depart Hanoi

Meals: B

Any time before your flight is free is at your leisure today. You will be transferred for 1 hour from the hotel to the airport, according to the departure time of your international flight.

Please note: Only breakfast is provided on the group's day of departure; no refund will be given for meals missed.

VIETNAM TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

Vietnam visa for New Zealand passport holders is required to enter Vietnam for a stay of up to 30 days. Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into New Zealand.

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate, Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa.

INSURANCE:

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original.

EATING IN VIETNAM:

Southeast Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in most local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region actually has its own distinct characteristics.

Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from dinner on the day of your groups' arrival until breakfast on your day of departure. When dining in Southeast Asia, although some restaurants have adopted a western approach to dining, expect some restaurants to follow the traditional communal style of eating. Typically, this will mean each diner has their own small bowl and may serve themselves from a variety of shared dishes. At some local restaurants, appetizers and main courses might be served when they are ready instead of following a particular order.

Determining when it's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs.

In Vietnam and some countries in Southeast Asia, fork and spoons are used for most dishes and chopsticks are typically provided to eat noodles. Usually, chopsticks or other utensils are provided to scoop the food into your bowl to prevent your own chopsticks from touching the food that remains on the table. Dining in Southeast Asia is casual with not too many rules. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Those with dietary requirements will be well catered for - just make sure to inform your booking agent of any specific requirements well in advance of your trip.

We recommend that when it comes to Asia food, you stay open minded and try to be adventurous!

DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM:

Although Southeast Asia is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in New Zealand. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in New Zealand; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday, so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides.

TIPPING POLICY:

Local tipping is customary in Asia. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in US Dollars and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy, but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour, we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

LUGGAGE:

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable.

ACCOMMODATION:

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between New Zealand and Southeast Asia.

All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

EXCHANGING CASH:

It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling outside major cities in Vietnam. US Dollars are easily exchanged throughout Vietnam however other currencies such as New Zealand Dollars can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are undamaged. We suggest for your convenience that you ensure your US Dollars are from the new series to avoid any difficulties exchanging money during your trip. Old series notes can be difficult to exchange.

We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

PERSONAL EXPENSES AND OPTIONAL TOURINGS:

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you.

Optional Tours - May be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available.

Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

CLIMBING STEPS:

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps.

These palaces were built to provide defence against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

APPROPRIATE DRESS:

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques.

Religious sites and homes throughout Southeast Asia – for Hindus, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory, so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove your shoes, you will have to remain outside.

We recommend shoes that easily slip on and off and carry a pair of thick socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces. The following itinerary will indicate when you need to consider this.

TRANSPORT:

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. However, minibuses may be used for smaller groups (under 10 passengers).

Roads in Southeast Asia have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

Seatbelts: Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in Southeast Asia and therefore the local people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason, some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts, or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving. If you have any concerns, please notify your National Escort/Local Guides.

Air: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Pre-flight seat allocation is not available on internal flight sectors.

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

We recommend that you contact either your doctor or local Health Centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Safe Travel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.safetravel.govt.nz

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.safetravel.govt.nz as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.

Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements.

You can also access the New Zealand Government's travel advisory service for up-to-date information about your destination on the same website.

AFTER YOUR BOOKING:

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice including a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

Updated: May 2024