



Christmas In Vietnam

Classic Group Tour | 14 Days | Physical Level 1

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

December is a perfect month to visit Vietnam, so why not celebrate Christmas with us? Explore the historic cities of Saigon and Hanoi and immerse yourself in the charms of Hoi An and imperial Hue. Come Christmas Eve, embark on a wonderful two-night cruise into the waters of Halong Bay.

- Delve into historic Saigon
- Discover the astonishing Cu Chi Tunnels
- Explore the Mekong Delta
- Be charmed by lantern-lit Hoi An
- Marvel at Hue's Imperial Citadel
- Celebrate Christmas Eve and Christmas Day swimming, kayaking and sailing in Halong Bay
- Experience the beauty of Lan Ha Bay – Halong's lesser-known twin!

TOUR MAP



CHRISTMAS IN VIETNAM TOUR INCLUSIONS

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

The only things you may have to pay for is personal expenditure, e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout 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 Vietnam 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 and 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.

‘Christmas in Vietnam’ 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 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 14 days in duration including international flights.

Travellers booked on a ‘Land Only’ package, 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 our reservations team.

Join the tour on Day 2 in Saigon and end the tour on Day 13 in Hanoi. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

We intend 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 dictated by local conditions. In these circumstances, we will endeavour to make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

DETAILED ITINERARY – CHRISTMAS IN VIETNAM

Days 1-2: Saigon

Meals: D

Fly to Saigon, where you will be met at the airport in the arrival hall by your Local Guide or National Escort. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer 45 minutes to your hotel.



The rest of the day is at leisure until this evening's welcome briefing.

Early check-in is not included. Additional nights before and after your tour can be arranged. Please contact our Reservations team to book.

Destination Information

Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) – The exuberant city of Saigon is driving Vietnam forward into the modern world but is also a treasure trove of fascinating heritage. During the 1960s and early 1970s, there were many different subcurrents of emotion in response to the American occupation. Today, the old mixes seamlessly with the new.

Day 3: Saigon and the Cu Chi Tunnels

Meals: B, L, D

Discover the story of the Viet Cong at the Cu Chi Tunnels. These cramped tunnels were central to some of the Vietnam War's strategic operations, including the famous 1968 Tet Offensive. Hear about their use by VC soldiers during combat, and learn about their role as underground hospitals, food and weapon caches and living quarters.



You will also see recreations of some of the infamous bamboo traps of the VC. If you choose, you can also crouch or crawl through a short section of the tunnels.

This afternoon, explore modern day Saigon and its heady mix of local culture and colonial French influences. See the Reunification Palace and Notre Dame Cathedral, visit the impressive Central Post Office, and spend some time at the poignant War Remnants Museum, which displays military equipment, photographs and artefacts of the Vietnam War from 1961-1975. This museum can be emotional; you will have time to explore independently.

Please note: The Notre Dame Cathedral will be under renovation until further notice. During this time, we are unable to enter the Cathedral; however, it can be viewed from the outside.

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.

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 two and a half hours down to the picturesque province of Ben Tre, situated along the mighty Mekong. 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. There may be unsteady and slippery surfaces, sometimes without handrails or assistance. Return to Saigon this afternoon.

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

Fly 1 hour and 15 minutes to Danang and transfer to the charming town of Hoi An, which wins the hearts of all its visitors through its atmospheric, lantern-lined streets.

This afternoon, enjoy a walking tour of Hoi An's narrow ancient streets. Visit one of the town's oldest homes, built by a merchant family over 200 years ago and still owned by their descendants.



You will also visit the traditional Hoi An Market, the Quan Cong Chinese Temple and the Japanese Covered Bridge.

You may also wish to visit one of Hoi An's famous 24-hour tailors or sandal-makers, who are famous for creating custom pieces overnight – they can even deliver them to your hotel.

Destination Information

Hoi An - With its famous lanterns and traditional ochre buildings, 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 town, this iconic pink-hued bridge has been restored to its former splendour.

Day 6: Hoi An

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, visit a local community farming project just outside of Hoi An – Tra Que village, where the community has come together to create a large vegetable farm. Learn the traditional methods the farmers use to plant, fertilise and harvest the crop, then try your hand at raking the ground and sowing seeds.

The remainder of the afternoon is free at your leisure to explore the ancient town, or perhaps go to the beach.



Destination Information

Tra Que Village - Located a few kilometres from Hoi An, this picturesque village is renowned for its agriculture. Witness local farming techniques and learn about different exotic Vietnamese produce.

Day 7: Hoi An - Hue

Meals: B, L, D

Drive approximately 4 hours to Hue; a journey that will take you over the famously scenic Hai Van Pass. Hue is considered a scholarly city, and the embodiment of Vietnam's dynamic imperial era.

Upon arrival, explore the Royal Tomb of Emperor Minh Mang; the beautiful complex comprises of almost 40 monuments and is surrounded by gardens and pools.



Later, visit the Imperial Citadel and the Forbidden Purple City, heavily influenced by the Forbidden City in China. Continue by road to Thien Mu Pagoda and take a cruise on the Perfume River.

Destination Information

Hue - Having been the imperial capital from 1802 until 1945 after the last emperor abdicated; Hue is still regarded as the centre of Vietnam's culture and religion. The city is dominated by the Imperial Citadel that is 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.

Imperial Citadel - A walled fortress accompanied by cannons, artilleries and surrounded by a moat for protection. Inside the Citadel are numerous gates, courtyards and the Forbidden Purple City.

Forbidden Purple City - Constructed for personal use by the former 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 war.

Royal Tomb of Minh Mang - Emperor Minh Mang reigned in the Nguyen Dynasty, the last of the Vietnamese dynasties, from 1820-1840. The construction of his mortuary complex is said to have taken approximately 10,000 workers to complete.

Thien Mu Pagoda - This seven-storey octagonal tower, built on a hillock overlooking the Perfume River, is Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda. Wander the grounds, where bonsai, ponds and the smell of incense create a peaceful backdrop.

Day 8: Hue - Hanoi

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to the charming city of Hanoi. The afternoon is at leisure to explore this historic capital.



Day 9: Hanoi

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, we delve into the story of Ho Chi Minh, the 'father of Vietnam'. Visit the Ho Chi Minh Quarter, passing Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum en route to the One Pillar Pagoda. Visit the Humble House on Stilts, Ho Chi Minh's simple house in the grounds of the Presidential Palace.



Next, drive to the serene Temple of Literature: Hanoi's first university, now a temple to figures like Confucius. Later, experience an exhilarating cyclo ride through Hanoi's Old Quarter. Each cyclo takes one passenger and is operated by a cycle driver behind the carriage. This afternoon, you will also have the opportunity to taste some traditional egg coffee – a Hanoi specialty!

Destination Information

Ho Chi Minh Quarter - Dedicated to the father of modern Vietnam and where Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum stands in Ba Dinh Square. Ho Chi Minh first declared independence from French rule in 1945.

Humble House on Stilts - In the grounds of the Presidential Palace sits the 2-storey wooden home of Ho Chi Minh who ruled Vietnam from here until his death in 1969.

Temple of Literature - Hanoi's first university, dating back to 1070; now dedicated to Confucian worship.

Day 10: Christmas Eve in Halong Bay

Meals: B, L, D

Travel to Halong and embark on an unforgettable adventure – a two-night cruise out to the far-most corners of the bay. Settle in with lunch on board and enjoy the passing scenery as you journey out into the waters.



This afternoon, enjoy the included activities on offer, such as swimming and sunbathing at Trinh Nu Beach, or exploring Trinh Nu Cave. End the day on deck with a drink in hand, watching as the sun sets over the bay.

Tonight, relax and enjoy Christmas dinner - Vietnamese style! The festive meal is served on Christmas Eve in Vietnam as a result of French influences left over from the Indochina period. Enjoy the celebrations with newfound friends and your National Escort as the stars glimmer over the bay.

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 may delay the departure time of your cruise, or in extreme cases your cruise may be cancelled. This is rare, but such delays 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.

Destination Information

Halong Bay - Compared to the landscape of the limestone islets of Guilin in China and Phang Nga in southern Thailand, Halong Bay 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.

Day 11: Christmas Day in Halong Bay and Lan Ha Bay

Meals: B, L, D

Begin a Christmas Day like no other – with sunrise over Halong Bay. Set sail into Lan Ha Bay – Halong’s equally beautiful but quieter, lesser-known twin!

Today, choose from included activities such as kayaking at Ho Ba Ham (Three Tunnel Lake). Here, limestone tunnels connect three peaceful lakes within the bay – an extraordinary place where time seems to stand still.

Alternatively, join a boat tour of Cua Van Fishing Village, a colourful floating village inhabited by multiple generations of fishermen and their families. Exact excursions will be known on board based on current weather and sailing conditions.

Later, enjoy a relaxed Christmas cocktail reception before dinner on board.

**Day 12: Boxing Day - Halong Bay Caves and return to Hanoi**

Meals: B, L, D

Begin the morning with a choice of activities – a revitalising Tai Chi session on deck at sunrise, or an early morning adventure to Sung Sot Cave! This vast grotto has two impressive chambers filled with stalactites and stalagmites and is one of the biggest and most beautiful caves in Halong Bay.

Return to the ship and enjoy brunch on board as you sail back to the embarkation point. Drive back to Hanoi, where the rest of the day is at leisure before this evening’s farewell dinner and The Quintessence of Tonkin show, a famously artistic open-air performance celebrating the rich history of northern Vietnam.

**Day 13 -14: Depart Hanoi**

Meals: B

Transfer from the hotel to the airport, according to the departure time of your onward flight. Any time before your flight is at leisure to enjoy the city.

Check out is usually at noon – please contact our Reservations team if you would like to prebook a Late Checkout. Please note: Only breakfast is provided on the group's day of departure.

VIETNAM TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

Entry visas are required by all visitors to Vietnam and 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.

Currently a visa is required for New Zealand Passport holders. Your travel consultant will inform you if any changes are applicable prior to your departure.

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 many local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region actually has its own distinct characteristics. Vietnam, for example, is perhaps best known for its fresh and aromatic dishes – relying heavily on flavours from fresh herbs such as mint, basil and dill.

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, dishes are normally placed in the centre and people serve food for themselves with their own chopsticks and bowl. 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 fairly casual with not too many rules. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Please read your travel guide, which you will receive with your final documents for more information about eating in Southeast Asia. We recommend that when it comes to Asia food, you stay open minded and try to be adventurous!

Please inform us of any allergies and/or special dietary requirements at time of booking

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.

PORTERAGE:

Please be aware that portage is not included on our tours in Southeast Asia. You will therefore need to be able to handle your own luggage within the hotel and when using transportation like trains and coaches.

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 need

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 (2013 onwards) 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.

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