

## General Trip info

## Map

**Trip Code:** ITVKT

**Trip Length:** 15

**Trip starts in:** Ho Chi Minh City

**Trip ends in:** Hanoi

**Meals:** 14 Breakfasts included

4 Lunches included

4 Dinners included

**Accommodation:** Guesthouse (1 nt), Hotel (11 nts), Overnight boat (1 nt), Overnight sleeper train (1 nt)

**Transport:** Boat, Overnight sleeper train, Plane, Private Bus, Private vehicle, Taxi

## Daily Itinerary

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### Day 1

#### Ho Chi Minh City

Xin chao! Welcome to Ho Chi Minh City, a French-infused city with a dynamic atmosphere. Your adventure begins with a welcome meeting at 6 pm where you will meet your tour leader and fellow travellers. You can arrive at any time during the day as there are no planned activities until this important meeting. Please look for a note in the hotel lobby or ask reception where it will take place. If you arrive early, perhaps head to Pham Ngu Lao Street to see the local open-air market or visit Vinh Nghiem Pagoda. If you can't arrange a flight that will have you arrive in time for today's welcome meeting, you may wish to arrive a day early so you're able to attend. We'll be happy to book additional accommodation for you (subject to availability). If you're going to be late, please inform the hotel reception. We'll be collecting your insurance details and next of kin information at this meeting, so please have these on hand. An arrival transfer is included. In order to book this service please provide your booking agent with your flight details at least 2 weeks prior to your departure.

### Day 2

#### Mekong Delta

Start the day with a buffet breakfast at KOTO Restaurant, an Intrepid Foundation-supported program that teaches street children hospitality skills. Next, drive for about three hours to Cai Be. Here you'll board a boat to explore the canals of the Mekong Delta. The delta is known as 'Vietnam's rice bowl' for its abundance of rice paddies, fruit and flower orchards. During the boat trip, you'll stop to sample some of the fresh tropical fruit and visit some cottage industries in the area. Around sunset, make your way to your local guesthouse to spend a night with the locals and enjoy a wonderful meal of local specialties.

## Day 3

### **Ho Chi Minh City**

Return to Ho Chi Minh City and take a walking tour in town. Experience the hustle and bustle of former Saigon and explore some of the city's more interesting sights such as the War Remnants Museum and Reunification Palace.

## Day 4

### **Phan Rang**

Make a day trip to the famous Cu Chi Tunnels. This former Viet Cong stronghold provides an insight into the resourcefulness and tenacity of the Vietnamese people, and offers a glimpse of what life was like during the war. There's time for lunch, then make tracks for Phan Rang. First, take an afternoon flight to Cam Ranh. From there, travel 1.5 hours by bus to the historic city of Phan Rang, your base for the next two days.

## Day 5

### **Phan Rang**

Take a day trip to Vinh Hy Bay, a picturesque, crescent-shaped harbour between Phan Rang and Nha Trang. Along the way, you'll stop at the Bau Nai fish market for a glimpse of the bustle of activity as fish are unloaded and locals hurriedly shop for the best deal. Continue to a salt field. Rivalling the beauty of the Vietnamese countryside, central Vietnam's sprawling salt fields are a sight to behold. Witness workers raking and collecting salt that has evaporated from the salty waters of Vietnam's coast, which has been funnelled inland into shallow fields. Next, visit another place of great natural beauty – the moss-covered rock formations and fossilised coral reefs of Hang Rai. Finally, arrive at Vinh Hy Bay, where you'll have plenty of time to swim and snorkel in its warm, coral-filled waters.

## Day 6

### **Phan Rang/Overnight Train**

Enjoy a free day in Phan Rang. Perhaps use this time to see some of the grand remnants of the Cham dynasty - an ancient kingdom that had control of central and the southern coastal region of Vietnam from the 2nd to the 17th-century – scattered throughout the region. Take an optional visit to the nearby Po Nagar Cham Towers, an archaeological site from the middle ages dedicated to the indigenous goddess, Yan Po Nagar. Alternatively, gain an insight into an ancient tradition with a visit to the oldest pottery village in South East Asia, Bau Truc. This evening, board an overnight train to Da Nang. Conditions are basic on these trains and hygiene standards may be lower than what you're used to at home, however overnight trains are the best way to brush shoulders with the locals and make the best use of your time. Most trains have a dining carriage serving simple food, but some travellers like to take some food for the journey.

## Day 7

### **Hoi An**

Arrive early into Da Nang, then travel by minibus for one hour to Hoi An. Upon arrival, your leader will take you on a walk around the World-Heritage-listed Old Town. The city was a major trading port with the west during the 16th and 17th-century, and has various architectural influences from Europe, China and Japan. Today the city is being restored and looks exactly like it did over a century ago. You'll see Chinese temples, Japanese pagodas, French-colonial houses, wooden shop-houses and old canals during your walk. After lunch, enjoy free time to participate in optional activities or simply soak up the ambience of the place. You may like to wander Hoi An Market and the street stalls selling paintings, woodwork, ceramics, lanterns and much more. It's also famous for its talented tailors who can make beautiful items to order within a few hours.

## Day 8

### Hoi An

Enjoy a free day to further explore Hoi An and its beautiful surrounds. Perhaps rent a bicycle and take a trip out to the nearby beach. If you're after a little more structure, our sister company, Urban Adventures, offers a guided tour that includes a countryside bike ride and finishes up with a sunset cruise along the Thu Bon River. Vietnam is known for its delicious food, and Hoi An is no exception. Unlock the flavours of Hoi An's vibrant Old Town on an Urban Adventures food tour. Your leader can help arrange optional activities and tours.

## Day 9

### Hoi An

Enjoy a free day in Hoi An. If you can muster an early rise this morning, head to the local produce market to watch animated shoppers haggling over fresh fish, spices and vegetables. Your leader can help you arrange an optional Vietnamese cooking course. Perhaps visit the ruins of My Son, Vietnam's most important Cham site. Set in a verdant valley, surrounded by hills and overlooked by the massive Cat's Tooth Mountain, the elaborate World Heritage-listed temples here reflect the rich cultural traditions of the Cham civilisation that flourished in this region between the 4th and 12th-century.

## Day 10

### Hue

Continue on your journey today and drive over the spectacular Hai Van Pass, an incredibly scenic and mountainous stretch of highway with views of Lang Co Beach. Make a stop at beautiful Lang Co for an optional lunch. Arrive in Hue, Vietnam's former Imperial capital. Here you'll visit the Imperial Citadel and the Forbidden Purple City which was almost entirely destroyed by bomb blasts during the war.

## Day 11

### Hue

After a local breakfast of bun bo hue take a cruise along the Perfume River. You'll stop off at the Thien Mu Pagoda, and see an active Buddhist monastery dating back to 1601. One of the most poignant displays is a car belonging to a former monk who set himself alight to protest against the treatment of Buddhists. You'll also visit one of the royal tombs, that of Emperor Tu Duc, with its lake, frangipani and pine trees.

## Day 12

### Hanoi

Fly from Hue to Vietnam's charming capital of Hanoi. This afternoon, take a half-day tour of Hanoi that captures the beauty and the history of the laid-back, tree-lined capital. You'll visit major sights including the Temple of Literature and One Pillar Pagoda. You'll also pass by the Hoan Kiem Lake and enter the '36 Streets' of the historic Old Quarter. Today the group will also enjoy a unique water-puppet performance hosted by a family, who are experts in this art form.

## Day 13

### **Halong Bay**

Travel by private minibus for about four hours to the spectacular World Heritage site of Halong Bay. This is one of Vietnam's most beautiful places, a secluded bay of emerald waters flecked with sandstone islands and caves. Go on a cruise to explore the rock formations and caves and in the warmer months, go for a swim or perhaps go kayaking out on the bay. You'll spend the night on the boat. The sailing junk has twin-share cabins with air-conditioning and private facilities. There's also a dining room and bar where you'll enjoy all of your meals, including a lavish seafood buffet for lunch.

## Day 14

### **Hanoi**

Drive for about four hours back to Hanoi. Along the way, you'll stop at Dong Trieu Factory to watch locals creating ceramic art pieces. If you have some free time this afternoon, you may like to visit the Vietnam Fine Arts Museum. This Museum plays a crucial role in maintaining and promoting the cultural heritage of Vietnam's ethnic communities. Enjoy a final dinner with your fellow travellers.

## Day 15

### **Hanoi**

Bid a fond farewell to Vietnam after breakfast when your trip comes to an end. There are no planned activities for this final day.

## Additional Information

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### Included Activities

Ho Chi Minh City - KOTO breakfast  
Ho Chi Minh City - War Remnants Museum  
Ho Chi Minh City - Cu Chi Tunnels  
Phan Rang - Vinh Hy Bay snorkelling  
Phan Rang - Hang Rai fossilised coral reefs  
Phan Rang - Bau Nai fish market & salt fields  
Hoi An - Old Town walking tour  
Hue - Imperial Citadel  
Hue - Perfume River cruise & Thien Mu Pagoda  
Hue - Royal tomb  
Hanoi - Temple of Literature  
Hanoi - Old Quarter Tour  
Hanoi - One Pillar Pagoda & HCM stilt house  
Hanoi - Local water puppet performance  
Halong Bay - Overnight boat cruise with seafood lunch and dinner

### Optional Activities

Ho Chi Minh City - Reunification Palace  
Hoi An - Food Adventure Urban Adventure  
Hoi An - Hoi An Boat & Bike Urban Adventure  
Hoi An - My Son Cham day trip  
Hoi An - Hoi An Walking & Cooking Class Urban Adventure  
Hanoi - Hoa Lo 'Hanoi Hilton' Prison  
Hanoi - Museum of Ethnology  
Hanoi - Fine Arts Museum  
Hanoi - Hanoi Street Food By Night Urban Adventure  
Hanoi - Citadels, Karsts & Cycle Urban Adventure  
Hanoi - Village Discovery by Bike Urban Adventure

## Notes for Vietnam

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Tracing a curve down the eastern edge of South East Asia - Vietnam is a long, thin land of extraordinary natural beauty. Marvel at its beautiful deserted beaches, magical rock formations in Halong Bay, the lush, steamy waterways of the Mekong Delta and dramatic mountain ranges. Ho Chi Minh City is a place that crackles with energy 24 hours a day, and the capital of Hanoi has a distinct charm where old colonial buildings overlook avenues buzzing with motorbikes. Vietnam was once in the headlines for all the wrong reasons, but today you'll discover incredible scenery, technicolour sunsets, fascinating cultures, incredible food, and charming locals.

Citizens of the UK, Germany, France, Denmark, Italy, Norway, Spain and Sweden will not need a visa to enter Vietnam as a tourist for up to 15 days. Citizens of the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and all other European countries will need a visa, and this will need to be obtained in advance. Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a visa is required, it will need to be obtained in advance.

## **Important Notes**

The routes, activities and places visited as described in these trip notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only.

These trip notes have been compiled to help you prepare for your journey once you have booked. They include the full itinerary and dates, and information about kit lists, meeting hotels, insurance, vaccinations, visas, and other information that will help you get ready for your trip.

These notes are updated regularly, so please ensure you have an up-to-date version of these trip notes.

The planned route and itinerary is the intention, but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed. It occasionally happens that there must be a change to our planned itinerary - this may be for a variety of reasons, such as climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions. By their very nature, adventure travel needs to be approached flexibly and some regions can be unpredictable. Some Imaginative Traveller journeys go through off the beaten track areas, which often have poor infrastructure and less stringent safety standards than we are used to at home.

## **Our Groups**

Our groups are made up of people from around the world and are usually an interesting mix of nationalities and ages. On average there is a pretty even split, males to females and between solo travellers, couples and small groups of friends. We believe that adventure travel should be open to as many people as possible and so although some trips have a minimum age limit, as long as you are fit, healthy and passionate about travel, we are happy to take you. One of the highlights of group travel is the camaraderie and friendships that are formed along the way, and as well as the variety of people that you will meet.

The maximum group size depends on the operator and the style of transport, but will usually be a maximum of 15-16 or up to 21-22 on our overland journeys.

## **Accommodation**

Imaginative Traveller trips are designed for shared accommodation, whether staying in hotels, hostels, homestays or campsites, and therefore do not involve a single supplement. Single travellers will share with people of the same sex for the duration of the trip and those that book together will usually be able to share accommodation.

The type, variety and standard of accommodation will vary greatly depending on what options are available in the region you are travelling; hotels can vary from very basic rooms without electricity or running water to high standard hotels with good facilities! Generally in hotels most rooms will be twin-share. Hostels, gers and yurts are nearly always multi-share.

Many trips will feature a stay in a local homestay or community tourism initiative, allowing us to experience a slice of local life in the areas we travel through. On our overland trips, we will sometimes camp in campsites ranging from rather basic or even wild camps to those with excellent facilities, including swimming pools, restaurants and bars.

## **Dietary Requirements**

If you have any dietary requirements please tell us at the time of booking and also remind your leader at your welcome meeting. Our crew will try to cater for any particular dietary requirement or food intolerance whenever possible.

## **Health**

You need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in our trips. When selecting your trip

please make sure you have read through the itinerary carefully and assessed your ability to cope with the style of travel on that trip. We are always happy to give extra advice if you have additional concerns. Please note that if, in the opinion of our leader, you are unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to yourself and/or the rest of the group, Imaginative Traveller or our partner operators reserve the right to exclude you from all or part of the trip.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information prior to travel, particularly if you have a pre-existing medical condition. We also advise you to declare any pre-existing medical conditions to your travel insurers upon purchase.

## **Altitude**

Imaginative Traveller offers some trips that travel to above 2,800m altitude above sea level - it is imperative at high altitudes to drink lots of water to stay hydrated, be careful not to get burned by the sun, and try not to exert yourself too much. Some pre-existing medical conditions are known to severely worsen at high altitude and be difficult to adequately treat on the ground, leading to more serious consequences. It is imperative that you discuss your pre-existing medical condition/s with your doctor. We understand certain medications are reported to aid acclimatising to high altitude; please discuss these options with your doctor.

## **Yellow Fever**

A valid international certificate of vaccination against Yellow Fever is required in many countries. You may need to present this on arrival at the airport or border crossing. Some countries will refuse entry if you are unable to present your certificate - please see each country's note above for details. It's also quite common for your home country to request a Yellow Fever certificate on your arrival back home.

It is your responsibility to check with your doctor well in advance of leaving home about the Yellow Fever requirements for the countries you'll be visiting.

## **Malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases**

Some areas we travel to have the risk of contracting malaria. If this applies to your trip, please get expert advice before travelling about types of malaria pills and take them as instructed. Recommended types do change from time to time and from area to area. Consult your GP / travel clinic for the most up-to-date requirements and to find the right option for you. If advised by your doctor to take a course of anti-malarial tablets, please complete the course as instructed as malaria can often manifest itself upon your return home if the course is not followed.

Other mosquito-borne diseases such as Dengue Fever, Chikungunya and Zika are continuing to spread and becoming a bigger problem around the world. Bite prevention is vital to avoid contracting any of these diseases as there are no vaccines or specific treatments available. Health professionals have issued warnings for pregnant women travelling to areas affected by the Zika virus.

The mosquito usually bites between the hours of dusk and dawn and so covering up by wearing long-legged and long-sleeved clothing, preferably light coloured and buttoned at the wrists, can help. Do not sleep without closing windows, use a mosquito net where possible and use mosquito repellent applied directly to your skin or soaked into your clothing.

## **Vaccinations**

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection vary according to different regions and recent bulletins issued by health authorities. It is essential to get the latest advice on the region(s) you are planning to travel in so please check with either your doctor or travel clinic in good time before you travel.

We also recommend you check out any specific health advice for the country you are travelling to either via your GP or the following websites: [www.nathnac.org](http://www.nathnac.org) or [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)

In the UK, we have been working with Nomad Travel for many years and their website has comprehensive,



up-to-date vaccination and health information. You will receive a 10% discount off all vaccinations given at Nomad Travel clinics.

## **Activities**

Included activities are listed in the day-to-day itinerary, all other activities are optional and at your own expense. If you choose not to participate in the included activities on this itinerary, the cost will not necessarily be refunded; this is something you will need to check with your leader.

A selection of optional activities is listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This list is designed to be a helpful guide as to what is commonly available in each location, and is neither an exhaustive list, a guarantee that the activity is available, or an endorsement or recommendation. Please note that certain activities may not be available on your particular visit if they are overbooked, underbooked, out of season, or for any other reason - the list of activities is made according to our latest information and in the best faith, but please be aware that things may change between our last visit and your arrival. Please also note that it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination, and it is recommended to give yourself extra time in your joining or ending city if you would like to participate in some optional activities there.

If you do any optional activities, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Dragoman. You may be required to sign/complete a waiver form or optional activity form for some optional activities.

## **Insurance**

It is a condition of booking that you have comprehensive travel insurance. Without evidence of valid travel insurance you will not be allowed to start the trip. This can be arranged by Imaginative Traveller through our website or by contacting our team of travel consultants.

If you prefer to arrange your insurance independently, it should have a minimum medical (including repatriation) cover of £2,000,000. We recommend that any policy also has a minimum level of cover for Personal Liability of £2,000,000 and for Cancellation and Curtailment of £5,000. Cover for loss of baggage, personal effects, money and other inclusions are down to personal choice although please bear in mind that personal effects are more likely to go missing whilst travelling and you should ensure that your policy is adequate to cover the value of your personal effects e.g. cameras, tablets, phones etc. Please note that Imaginative Traveller and our partner operators are not responsible for your personal effects and are not insured for their loss.

If you prefer to arrange your insurance independently, it should cover you for any activities that you may wish to participate in, such as white-water rafting, trekking, horse-riding, etc. and the 24-hour Emergency Assistance Company must be experienced in handling situations in developing countries if applicable (e.g. they have the ability to arrange repatriation from remote areas such as the Sahara or trekking in the Andes). If you are travelling to high altitude (such as embarking on a trek to the summit of Kilimanjaro), please make sure that this is also covered.

Please double check if you have annual travel and/or credit card policies to ensure they have the cover you require, as many of these policies are not suitable with adventure travel to remote areas. Many credit card medical insurance policies are not valid for travelling outside your country of residence or outside the EU.

Please also check the age limits on any policy you wish to take out and make sure that you thoroughly inform the insurance company of any pre-existing conditions.

## **Passports**

Check that your passport will still be valid for 6 months after the end of the trip - this is important as some countries WILL refuse entry to anyone whose passport is due to expire. A temporary or emergency passport is not valid on our trips. You will need to provide us with your passport details prior to departing for your trip. If you change your passport please remember to inform us.

## **Pre and Post Trip Accommodation and Transfers**

At Imaginative Traveller we believe you should make the most of the places you visit, so if you would like to see more of the joining or finishing point cities, why not book additional accommodation to extend your stay? We can take away the hassle of time zones and language barriers by making the booking for you. This accommodation is only available at the joining or finishing city of your trip, immediately before or after the trip you are travelling on. Please note our rates do not reflect last minute walk-in rates or internet specials.

We can also book arrival airport transfers for you as long as we have your flight arrival details. These are normally payable in cash upon arrival; however we do have pre paid transfers in a few destinations.

Please contact our reservations team for details of the accommodation and transfers that we can offer, as not all hotels offer this service.

## **Responsible Tourism**

Imaginative Traveller is committed to ensuring that we have a positive impact on local communities and that we implement policies to minimise any negative impact on the local environment. We recognise that we are guests of local communities and strive to make them benefit directly from our visit. You can find full details of Imaginative Traveller's responsible tourism policy on our website.

## **Issues on the trip**

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on

[customer-relations@imtrav.net](mailto:customer-relations@imtrav.net)

You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip, but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

## **Feedback**

After your travels, we want to hear from you! We rely on your feedback. We read it carefully. Feedback helps us to understand what we are doing well and what we could be doing better, and it allows us to make improvements for future travellers.