

ITINERARY

DAY 1: ARRIVE IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM

Welcome to Vietnam! Hotel rooms are available for mid-afternoon check-in.

DAY 2: HO CHI MINH CITY

B, L, WD

Sightseeing starts with a WALKING TOUR of the city's famous and historic landmarks. The route will take you through the heart of the city along Dong Khoi Street (formerly Rue Catinat) past the Rex Hotel, Ho Chi Minh Square, the Municipal Theatre, Central Post Office, and Notre Dame Cathedral. Next, visit the WAR REMNANTS MUSEUM, followed by BEN THANH MARKET, the largest and oldest in the city. After some free time, join your traveling companions at a special welcome dinner hosted by your Tour Director.

DAY 3: HO CHI MINH CITY. CU CHI EXCURSION

B

This morning, leave the city and drive through vast expanses of rice paddies to visit the CU CHI TUNNELS, an extraordinary network of tunnels more than 120 miles long that was used by the Viet Cong as a hideout and secret village during the war. Return to Ho Chi Minh City and enjoy the remainder of the day at your leisure. The city is booming, and pulses with contagious energy day and night. Sample local food from a street vendor, get a foot massage, or spend more time on Dong Khoi Street. Tonight, be sure to stop at one of several rooftop bars for a drink and great views of the city. Your Tour Director will be on hand to assist with recommendations.

DAY 4: HO CHI MINH CITY–DANANG–HOI AN

B, D

After a short flight to Danang, visit CHINA BEACH, landing point for U.S. soldiers during the Vietnam War. Continue on to Hoi An, Vietnam's active trading center and a town that has been largely preserved. Architecture here reflects the influence of Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, French, and British traders.

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DAY 5: HOI AN

B

Today starts with a CRUISE on the Thu Bon River. Along the way, meet with a local fisherman who will teach you about their fishing methods and give you a FISHING LESSON, where you will learn how to throw and retrieve a traditional round fishing net called a ro. Afterward, you will have a chance to throw the net yourself and see what you catch! Later, continue with a WALKING TOUR of Hoi An, visiting an old MERCHANT HOUSE, the HOI AN MUSEUM, a CHINESE ASSEMBLY HALL, and the Japanese Covered Bridge. Then, take free time to enjoy this quaint town further.

DAY 6: HOI AN–DANANG–HUE

B, L

Stop in Danang to visit the CHAM MUSEUM, then continue north over spectacular Hai Van Pass (weather permitting), considered to be one of the most scenic in all of Vietnam, before arriving in Hue. One of Vietnam's former capitals, Hue is a beautiful, welcoming city that remains a cultural and religious center. Upon arrival, visit the IMPERIAL CITADEL and the THIEN MU PAGODA, the unofficial symbol of the city.

DAY 7: HUE–HANOI

B

This morning's sightseeing provides a unique window into Vietnam and its complex past. Visit the TOMBS of the NGUYEN EMPERORS: the KHAI DINH MAUSOLEUM and the ROYAL TOMB of TU DUC. Later, fly to Hanoi, the nation's capital and one of Southeast Asia's most engaging cities.

DAY 8: HANOI

B, L, D

Today, take time to look at the life of Ho Chi Minh, the father of modern Vietnam. First, visit the MAUSOLEUM and the humble cottage from which "Uncle Ho" ruled Vietnam until his death in 1969. Next on the agenda are visits to the ONE PILLAR PAGODA and HO CHI MINH MUSEUM. You will also visit the ancient TEMPLE OF LITERATURE, more than 900 years old and Hanoi's first university, followed by the infamous HANOI HILTON. After lunch in a local restaurant, take a "CYCLO" ride around the city, followed by a WALKING TOUR through the fascinating Old Quarter, 36 ancient streets where peddlers trade as they have for centuries. An early dinner this evening is followed by a fascinating performance of Hanoi's renowned [LF] WATER PUPPETS, a traditional art form dating back to the 11th century.

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DAY 9: HANOI–HA LONG BAY

B, L

Travel from Hanoi through the fertile countryside to Hon Gai, gateway to Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Located in the Gulf of Tonkin, the bay is dotted with more than 3,000 limestone islands carved into fanciful shapes by the action of the water. Tunnels, caves, and weirdly shaped outcroppings with imaginative names can be found on many of the small islets that are sprinkled across the bay. Aboard a CRUISE that takes you to explore the caves, and admire the beauty and scale of the many secluded bays.

DAY 10: HA LONG BAY–HANOI–SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA

B, L

This morning, drive to Hanoi and board your flight to Siem Reap, which will act as your base during your visit to Angkor, considered by many to be the most spectacular architectural ruins on Earth!

DAY 11: SIEM REAP

B, L

Constructed between the 9th and 13th centuries, the TEMPLES OF ANGKOR were built around the Khmer interpretations of Indian religious and political beliefs that ultimately evolved from Hinduism to Buddhism. The complex architectural grandeur of the temples is arguably unmatched among the world's ancient ruins. Start your exploration at the best preserved and most famous of all the temples, ANGKOR WAT, honoring the Hindu god Vishnu. Featuring five trademark towers and stunning bas-reliefs, it has become a symbol of Cambodia. Next stop is ANGKOR THOM to see the BAYON TEMPLE. One of the few Buddhist temples in Angkor, it features some 200 striking faces carved in 54 towers and impressive bas-reliefs. The rest of the day is at leisure.

DAY 12: SIEM REAP

B, D

This morning, visit BANTEAY SREI, a unique temple dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva that was built on a small scale from red sandstone, which can be carved like wood. Unlike the other temples, TA PROHM has been left relatively untouched and surrounded by jungle, with tree roots growing over and through the ruin walls. You'll be able to experience the temple with the same wonder as the early explorers who discovered it. This afternoon, enjoy a bit of time at your leisure. This evening, enjoy a traditional APSARA DANCE PERFORMANCE, where the ancient Khmer culture is brought to life by talented dancers, singers, and musicians.

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DAY 13: SIEM REAP–BANGKOK, THAILAND **B**

Today, fly to exciting Bangkok. The remainder of the day is at your leisure.

DAY 14: BANGKOK **B, L**

Today's PRIVATE GUIDED TOUR starts with a BOAT RIDE through the klongs, Bangkok's canals, to see family homes, temples, and the way of life that gives this city the nickname "Venice of the East." Stop at Wat Arun, the TEMPLE OF THE DAWN, whose 260-foot-tall spire has become identified with Bangkok. Continue on to the GRAND PALACE, comprised of the Funeral Palace, the Reception Palace, the Throne Hall, the Coronation Hall, the Royal Guest House, and the TEMPLE OF THE EMERALD BUDDHA. Also, visit the TEMPLE OF THE RECLINING BUDDHA, the oldest and largest Buddhist temple in Bangkok. It houses more than 1,000 Buddha images, including the 49-foot-high and 151-foot-long massive Reclining Buddha.

DAY 15: BANGKOK **B**

Enjoy a full day at leisure to explore on your own. Your Local Host can help with suggestions to help maximize your time. Perhaps consider a visit to Jim Thompson's House, a dinner cruise on the Chao Phraya River, or an excursion to the colorful floating market at Damnoen Saduak.

DAY 16: BANGKOK **B**

Your tour ends with breakfast this morning.

MEAL:

B = Breakfast

L = Lunch

D = Dinner

WD = Welcome Dinner

FD = Farewell Dinner