

CYCLING EUROPE

VIETNAM BY BIKE
GUIDED TOUR: HANOI TO HO CHI MINH CITY
16 Days / 15 Nights



Vietnam is a country with spectacular scenery and mysterious monuments of times gone by. It is a country full of contrasts, with bustling, vibrant cities and rural districts

where time seems to have stood still. Experience two weeks of Oriental flair and discover by bike and boat this fascinating country at the other side

Admire the lush green rice fields and meet the friendly water buffaloes, visit colorful temples and pagodas and let the emerald-green waters of the South China Sea and the incredible cave formations enchant you. Explore in Central Vietnam the impressive monuments of the Vietnamese emperors as well as the historical town of Hoi An - a World Heritage site - and in South Vietnam the expansive water labyrinth of the Mekong Deltas.

DIFFICULTY: The cycle routes require a level of fitness acquired by regular cycling. The bike routes are generally from 45-70 km per day, and lead through hilly or mountainous areas and will be crossed without time constraints. The roads are mainly asphalted, with some but good unsealed roads.

ITINERARY

Day 1 Arrive in Ho Chi Minh City

Your trip starts today with your arrival in Saigon. No activities are planned until your evening group meeting, so you may arrive at any time.

Please check the welcome board or reception desk, located on the ground floor of the hotel, for information on your upcoming tour. This will advise you of your tour leader's name, telephone number and the time and location

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of your group's Welcome Meeting. Normally, the meeting will be at 6pm. Until your meeting we encourage you to get out and discover the delights that Vietnam has to offer. Make sure that you take a hotel business card so that you will be able to find your way back to the hotel. Please note that your tour leader will collect your travel insurance details at the meeting, so please bring them with you. The meeting is generally followed by an optional group meal out at one of Saigon's many fantastic eating spots.

Day 2 - Saigon (cycling approximately 40km)

There is much of interest in the countryside not far from Saigon. We head out of town today to visit the Cu Chi Tunnels. Cu Chi is actually the name of the district, which covers an extensive underground network (approximately 200 kilometres) of tunnels dug initially by the Viet Minh and later expanded by the Viet Cong. The tunnels contained hospitals, plus



accommodation and schools, and were used extensively for refuge and storage and also

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utilised as a military base for the Viet Cong close to Saigon. The 1968 Tet Offensive was launched from Cu Chi with surprising effect. A section of the tunnels has been widened to allow tourists to get a feel for what the life underground must have been like.

Breakfast

Day 3 - Mui Ne (cycling approximately 60km)

We drive on the highway out of Saigon, before turning off on the road to Vung Tau. We hit the back roads and head through the rubber and dragon fruit plantations. We also pass by some small fishing villages as we make our way closer to the coast. We finish the ride in Mui Ne, a beautiful and tranquil white sand beach where we can enjoy a swim after the day's riding and witness our first sunset by the South China Sea.

Breakfast | Lunch

Day 4 - Dalat (cycling approximately 50km)

Today we head away from the coast and begin our ascent into the Central Highlands. Along the way we pass by an abundance of coffee and tea plantations as well as flower gardens and pine forests, as we reach higher altitude. Dalat is one of Vietnam's most charming towns. The influence of the French is prevalent as Dalat was founded as a hill station to enable the colonials to escape the heat and chaos of Saigon. The city is set around a lake

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and surrounded by forests, waterfalls and rolling countryside.

Breakfast | Lunch

Day 5 - Nha Trang (cycling approximately 80km)

Our bike riding today is mainly downhill as we travel through the new Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park. Here we descend through some rare pine forests as well as some small villages, which are home to some of the ethnic minority people who inhabit the highlands of Vietnam. We board our vehicle and drive past the naval base of Cam Ranh Bay to the beach resort town of Nha Trang. On arrival we have time to enjoy a swim or to relax on the beach, which is just across the road from the hotel. In the evening we can visit one of the many nearby restaurants and sample some of the delicious seafood available.

Breakfast | Lunch



Day 6 - Nha Trang

A highlight of a visit to Nha Trang is a day trip out on a boat exploring the islands of the South China Sea. We spend a day on the water enjoying swimming, snorkelling, lazing on a beach and feasting on a seafood lunch.

Breakfast | Lunch

Day 7 – Quy Nhon (cycling approximately 80km)

Depart Nha Trang and cycle up the coast past white gold sands and small fishing villages to Quy Don, a town well known for its seafood.

Breakfast | Lunch

Day 8-9 – Hoi An (cycling approximately 60km)

We depart from Quy Nhon on a cycle ride that takes us to the sobering war site of My Lai, scene of the infamous massacre, is an eerie experience. We continue then our drive up National Highway One before arriving in Hoi An. Hoi An has retained much of its old ambience, and this together with its historic architecture and narrow streets has made it one of Vietnam's most pleasant towns. We enjoy two full days here and there is plenty to see in this town, which was once a bustling port in centuries gone by before the river silted

up. Today much of it is a tranquil and delightful backwater town with an air of liveliness. It is also an excellent place to cycle around. You can explore the busy market, stroll around the vibrant waterfront, and visit the famous Japanese Covered Bridge and the many Chinese assembly halls, which reflect the town's multi-cultural past.

Breakfast | Lunch

Day 10 - Hoi An (cycling approximately 35 km)



We enjoy a ride in the countryside by visiting the nearby Marble Mountain (good walking shoes recommended and be prepared for the most aggressive vendors in Vietnam!) and relaxing on China Beach. In your free time, you can also take a boat to visit the Cham ruins of My Son. There are many street-side cafes and restaurants in Hoi An; they are ideal places to finish off the day by sampling the culinary delights of this town. Hoi An is renowned for its tailors and you have a free day in town to go shopping.

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Breakfast

Day 11 - Hue (cycling approximately 50-60km)

This morning we embark on a journey north in our vehicle, before cycling over the Hai Van Pass. This is one of Vietnam's most spectacular road trips. Along the way we stop at Lang Co, one of Vietnam's nicest beaches. Our destination is Hue, the last imperial capital of Vietnam (1802-1945) and also one of its cultural centres. In the evening we can sample the local delicacy known as 'banh khoai'.

Breakfast

Day 12-13 - Hue - overnight train to Hanoi (cycling around Hue approximately 10-20km)

We board our boat for a leisurely cruise down the Perfume River to the Citadel and the ruins of the imperial Forbidden Purple City, the impressive Thien Mu Pagoda and then further on to the most impressive of the royal tombs, the mausoleum of the Emperor Tu Duc. We then take to our bicycles and cycle through the countryside on the way back to Hue. This is where we say goodbye to our bicycles as tonight we board an overnight sleeper-class train for our journey to Hanoi. The train is very basic; we travel in 'soft sleeper' class, which is a compartment for up to four

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people - a communal environment. The beds on board come with a pillow and sheets, although some people may wish to bring their own sleeping sheet (purely optional and not a necessity). Also, breakfast tomorrow is not the best food you will find in Vietnam, so it is recommended that you purchase some snacks before boarding in Hue. This journey is in keeping with the adventurous nature of our trips and allows you to experience a taste of the 'real Vietnam'.

Breakfast Lunch



Day 14-15 – Halong Bay - Hanoi

CLIMATE

Vietnam's climate can vary markedly from region to region due to its length stretching 1650 km from north to south. Generally two distinct seasons prevail in Vietnam. From November to April, the temperatures are usually fairly cool, especially in the north of the country. In the mountain areas temperatures can be as low as 0oC (32 degrees Fahrenheit) and there can be a constant light drizzle. Hotter temperatures and heavy monsoon rains characterize the months from May to October although you can experience rain at any time.

The hottest months of the year are June, July and August. Southern Vietnam's weather patterns are more constant with a rainy season from May to October and a relative dry season from November to February. The temperatures in the south can rise as high as 35oC (95 degrees Fahrenheit) from March to May.

Today we drive to Halong Bay. It is a three-hour drive to Halong Bay, truly one of Vietnam's most impressive scenic sights. Views of sailing junks navigating past over 3000 limestone islands and rocky outcrops jutting out of the bay are nothing short of spectacular. We spend the night on a traditional junk among the thousands of column-like limestone islands. All boats used by us have twin-share cabins with en suite facilities and air-conditioning. Single occupancy is not available due to the small number of cabins. There may also be the chance to do some kayaking (optional and extra cost involved) on Halong Bay.

2 breakfasts, 1 Lunch, 1 Dinner

Day 16 - Hanoi

The tour ends after breakfast today. A transfer to the airport is not included; however, your tour leader will be on hand to advise you as to the options available.

Breakfast

HOTELS:

In Hanoi, on Cat Bay Island, in Hue and Hoi An (Central Vietnam) and in Saigon you spend the night in very good 3 - 4 star hotels.

MEALS: Catering as specified in the itinerary

HOW TO BOOK:

To book this trip, you will need to complete a booking form which is found in A Walker's World brochure or can be downloaded from our website www.cycling-europe.com. On completion, fax or post the form to A Walker's World along with your non-refundable deposit of \$450 per person.

FLIGHTS:

Please note that you have to book your flight to Hanoi and the return flight from Ho Chi Minh City. If at all possible, the outward flight should land before noon on the arrival day. The return flight should not be before 8 pm on the last day.

GROUP SIZE: Minimum 6 / maximum 15 participants

COST 2015

Based on private small groups and dependent on the number of participants.

INCLUDED IN THE COST:

- 16 day trip / 15 nights comfortable double/twin rooms in good hotels (min. 3 star)
- Catering as specified in the itinerary
- 12 days guided bicycle tours, walks and sightseeing along the way
- All city tours and entrance charges to Hoi An and Hanoi's One Pillar Pagoda, Ho Chi Minh's House and Temple Of Literature.
- English speaking guides
- Rental bikes – mountain bikes with spare parts
- Full day boat cruise on the South China Sea with seafood lunch
- Visits to the war sites of Chu Chi and My Lai
- Perfume cruise in Hue
- Overnight train Hue to Hanoi with accommodation in 'soft sleeper' class – a compartment for up to 4 people (pillow and sheets provided)
- Arrival transfer

NOT INCLUDED IN COST:

- International airfares
- Drinks on board and in hotels
- Meals not in itinerary
- Bike helmet – you will need to take your own
- Tips
- Airport transfers): price on request
- Visa fees
- Departure taxes

Visa requirements:

In order to enter Vietnam, foreigners need a passport valid for at least 6 months and a valid visa to be obtained from the Vietnamese embassy in Wellington.

Inoculations:

We recommend that you see your family doctor, or a doctor for tropical diseases at least two months before the trip in order to get the necessary advice. There is no absolute requirement for inoculations for Vietnam. The institutes for tropical diseases, however, recommend a vaccination against hepatitis A and under certain circumstances also against typhoid. Since some of these inoculations have to be repeated, you should plan these in plenty of time. A sufficient tetanus protection as well as an inoculation against polio and diphtheria (single vaccination, so-called three-way combination) should also be guaranteed.

Book through:

“A Walker’s World”

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