

## Sample Itinerary: Vietnam

Hanoi \* Pu Luong \* Halong Bay \* Ho Chi Minh City \* Cu Chi Tunnels \* Mekong Delta

11 nights/ 12 days

### Highlights of the trip:

- *Enjoy a cyclo ride of Hanoi's Old Quarter to learn about traditional Vietnamese architecture*
- *Experience the uniquely northern Vietnamese water puppet performance.*
- *Explore Pu Luong Nature Reserve by bicycles*
- *Spend a night cruising Halong Bay aboard a cruise boat*
- *Explore the engrossing underground network of Cu Chi Tunnels*
- *Visit the Mekong Delta - Vietnam's 'rice basket', cruise the watery through sleepy villages and green fields, visit one of the liveliest floating markets in the region*

### Summary of itinerary:

**Day 1: Welcome to Hanoi (Private Dinner at Tam Cuisine)**

**Day 2: Hanoi – Full Day City Tour with 1-hour Cyclo Ride & Water Puppet Show (B, L)**

**Day 3: Hanoi – Transfer to Mai Chau – Cycling to Pu Luong Nature Reserve (B, L, D)**

**Day 4: Biking from Kho Muong village to Pho Doan town to Canh Nang Town (B, L, D)**

**Day 5: Pu Luong Nature Reserve – Afternoon Return to Hanoi (B, L)**

**Day 6: Hanoi - Halong Bay Cruising (Join with other travelers on the cruise) (B, L, D)**

**Day 7: Halong Bay Cruising – Late Afternoon Flight to Ho Chi Minh City (B, L)**

**Day 8: Ho Chi Minh City Tour – Full Day (B)**

**Day 9: Farm to Table Cooking Class – Visit Cu Chi Tunnels (B, L)**

**Day 10: Explore the Mekong Delta – Cai Thia – Vinh Long – Transfer to Can Tho (B, L)**

**Day 11: Boat Trip to Visit Cai Rang Floating Market - Ho Chi Minh City (B)**

**Day 12: Ho Chi Minh City Departure (B)**

### Detailed itinerary:

**Day 1: Welcome to Hanoi (Private Dinner at a Local House)**

When you arrive at Noi Bai International airport in Hanoi, you'll be welcome by one of our representative and transferred to your hotel in the downtown.

You will be pick-up between 17h30 and 18h00 for your transfer to a local house in the outskirts of Hanoi where you will meet the house owner and the chef. The experience is unique and exclusive as the whole space is just for two of you to celebrate your love. On arrival the owners will welcome you with a cup of tea. You may join in and assist the chef to cook a traditional dinner or just observe the process. You shall enjoy a traditional Vietnamese dinner as the host introduces each dish. After dessert you may wish to enjoy a cup of Vietnamese green tea. You will be transferred back to your hotel after a unique experience of local life in Hanoi.

Overnight in Hanoi

**Day 2: Hanoi – Full Day City Tour with 1-hour Cyclo Ride & Water Puppet Show (B, L)**

This city tour of Hanoi takes in essential sites which will commence from your hotel lobby at 08.30 am. In the morning, you'll visit the Ho Chi Minh Complex including the Mausoleum, his former stilt-house residence, the Presidential Palace and the Ho Chi Minh Museum; The Temple of Literature - Vietnam's first university dating back to 1070.

After lunch at a local Vietnamese restaurant, you'll continue visiting the Museum of Ethnology, widely acknowledged as the best in the country, containing an extensive display of life-size structures dedicated to Vietnam's 54 ethnic minority peoples; Ngoc Son Temple and Hoan Kiem Lake - the Ngoc Son Temple is set on a tiny island on Hoan Kiem Lake, its history dating back to the 13th century; a cyclo ride for 1 hour touring through the narrow, chaotic streets of the Old Quarter - a

must for any visitor to Hanoi! The day finishes with a traditional performance of the famous Vietnamese water puppets.  
Overnight in Hanoi



### **Day 3: Hanoi – Transfer to Mai Chau – Cycling to Pu Luong Nature Reserve (B, L, D)**

After breakfast, you will be picked up and transferred to Pu Luong via Mai Chau. You will have lunch at a local restaurant in Mai Chau.

In the afternoon you will start with a warmup ride for 15km to Co Luong on paved road. You start the off-road bike from Co Luong to Don village. You cycle past rice fields and bananas plantations as you pass through small minority villages inhabited by the Muong and the Thai minorities. There are two hard climbs today the first starts after 1 km with a 3 km ascent but the second, and most challenging comes at the end of this stunning day, with a 5 km strength-sapping climb. You finish the day with a stunning descend on a winding trail into Don village where you will check in and spend the night.

Summary: road transfer: 4 hours, cycling 3-4 hours (45-60km)

Overnight in Pu Luong

The Pu Luong nature reserve, about 170km from Hanoi or 20km from Mai Chau, is an important example of Limestone Karst, ecosystems renowned for their complexity, richness and beauty. Biking in Pu Luong is one of the best ways to discover the natural beauty of the region and exotic culture of minority groups. On this biking tour that includes both off-road, single track mountain biking and homestay experience.



### **Day 4: Biking from Kho Muong village to Pho Doan town to Canh Nang Town (B, L, D)**

After breakfast, you will bike on the village path uphill to the dirt road. This part of the road is in bad condition but offers beautiful views over Thai villages and terraced rice fields on the valley. You cycle downhill on the single track to Pho Doan. After lunch, provided in a local restaurant in town, you will continue pedalling along a mix of dirt tracks and tarmac trails through Thai village and across rice paddies. The biking follows a river gradually upstream, though the ride appears flat. You will be picked up by your support vehicle at Canh Nang town and transferred back to and be transferred back to the Pu Luong Retreat. The remainder of the day is your own!

Summary: road transfer: 1 hour, cycling 2-3 hours (20-40km)  
Overnight in Pu Luong.

**Day 5: Pu Luong Nature Reserve – Afternoon Return to Hanoi (B, L)**

After breakfast, take a short ride from the retreat to Bang village where you will start hiking down into the beautiful valley leading to Kho Muong. Along the way you will have a chance to enjoy beautiful terrace rice fields. After enjoying the view from above we will visit the isolated village is surrounded by a huge mountain range, you can come to visit a local family. This is a great chance to learn more about lifestyle and culture of the local. After lunch, drive back to Hanoi by road, arriving in the late afternoon.

Summary: road transfer:4.5 hour, cycling 2 hours (10km)  
Overnight in Hanoi

**Day 6: Hanoi - Halong Bay (Join with other travellers on the cruise) (B, L, D)**

After breakfast, you'll leave for Halong Bay with a refreshment break en route. Meet the crew upon boarding the traditional wooden junk, then relax and enjoy lunch while the boat heads towards the secluded islands. Visit ancient limestone caves and go sea kayaking and swimming if the weather permits. Return to the junk refreshed and invigorated and relax on deck with a drink to watch the sunset. Enjoy a freshly prepared seafood dinner under the stars.  
Overnight on a traditional junk in Halong Bay

**Day 7: Halong Bay Cruising – Late Afternoon Flight to Ho Chi Minh City (B, L)**

Enjoy an early morning swim (if weather permits) followed by breakfast. The tour then visits one of the famous caves in the middle of the bay before cruising back to the main harbour for the 4-hour drive straight to Noi Bai airport in Hanoi for a late afternoon flight to Ho Chi Minh City.  
Overnight in Ho Chi Minh City

**Day 8: Ho Chi Minh City Tour – Full Day (B)**

After breakfast, you'll enjoy a guided city tour starting with the War Remnants Museum - a real eye-opener to a part of Vietnam's proud history, followed by the Reunification Palace, the former Presidential Palace for the president of the South of Vietnam, the Notre Dame Cathedral and Old Post office to get good shots for our memory of the big, modern city of Vietnam. After lunch at a local restaurant, you will continue by heading to Chinatown with walking tour through back streets of China town near Cho Lon to view the local daily life. Stop off for a visit of Thien Hau temple, which was built in the early 19th Century dedicated to Thien Hau, the goddess of seafarers. We delve deeper into Chinatown visiting the amazing Cholon and Binh Tay Market (or Ben Thanh market) for an insight into where locals shop. Then you'll be back to hotel at around 17:00.  
Overnight in Ho Chi Minh City.

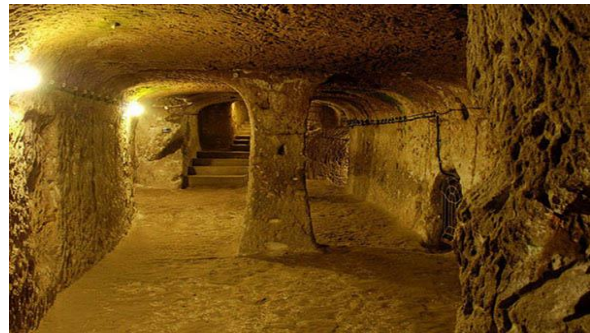
**Day 9: Farm to Table Cooking Class – Visit Cu Chi Tunnels (B, L)**

Learn the secrets of local cuisine with our English-speaking Vietnamese Chef!  
You will be picked up at 08h30 for your visit to the Agricultural Village which is about 40km from the city centre. Upon arrival, you will visit a vast farm and an organic garden with many kinds of herbs, spices and vegetables. Your guide will show you around and explain the use of them. You will also visit the Mushroom House to learn how to grow mushrooms. Later, experience what it is like to be a Vietnamese farmer – select herbs and vegetables from the garden under guidance of your chef. Sit down and discover Vietnamese kitchenware to cook and enjoy a tasty 3 courses meal under guidance of your talented professional chef. You will then sample your own dishes after cooking. During the class you can just concentrate on the pleasure of discovering and cooking, you will be

provided all detailed recipes at the end. Menu for vegetarians or customers with specific food allergies can be adapted so please let us know in advance so we can accommodate for you. Kids from 7 years old are welcome.

After lunch you will drive to visit the Cu Chi tunnels. The tunnels are 75 kms northwest of Ho Chi Minh City, an area that played an important role during Vietnam's wars for independence and unification. The more than 200 km of tunnels built here by the Communist guerrillas are the often the highlight of South Vietnam touring. You can explore the bedrooms, meeting rooms, air-raided shelters, smokeless kitchens, and experience life underground in this extraordinary tunnel complex. Return by road to Ho Chi Minh City, arriving in the late afternoon.

Overnight in Ho Chi Minh City.



#### **Day 10: Explore the Mekong Delta – Cai Thia – Vinh Long – Transfer to Can Tho (B, L)**

This morning head south to Vinh Long in the Mekong Delta. Arrival at Cai Thia about 10h00, walk along the canal to visit Cai Thia church, My Luong temple, and some brick kilns. Get on a sampan and cruise the peaceful waterway to visit a local house where they produce the typical rice paper. Next, pick up your bicycle to cycle through the villages on the winding countryside roads of Hoa Loc village - known for varieties of mango under cultivation in the Mekong Delta thanks to its aroma and sweetness. There will be lots of opportunities to interact with locals as you cycle through the villages. You will also call in a local family for a cup of green tea and taste some local specialties. After cycling, return to your boat and enjoy tasty lunch while cruising towards An Binh Island. Once you reach the Luc Cu Canal, a rowing boat will take you deeper into the countryside of the Delta through the networks of small canals with traditional houses on both sides and lots of daily life activities. Visit another local family where you will taste some fresh tropical fruits and enjoy the traditional music performance by the locals. Continue cruising and stop at a workshop where the locals make coconut candy, pop-rice, and popcorn or rice vodka. Cross the mighty Mekong after visiting some floating houses and fish farms and disembark at Vinh Long at around 16h00 where your private vehicle awaits and transfer you to Can Tho in the heart of the Mekong Delta for overnight stay.

Overnight in Can Tho.



#### **Day 11: Boat Trip to Visit Cai Rang Floating Market – Return to Ho Chi Minh City (B)**

Today a half hour boat cruise will take you to visit the vibrant Cai Rang floating market to experience a special type of market in which all purchasing activities take place on boats and ships. Then continue to small canal to visit a fruit garden where your guide will show you around before having a plate of delicious fruits. Return to Can Tho and observing the rural life and the lush vegetation along the riverbanks. Drive back to Ho Chi Minh City with lunch en-route, arriving in the late afternoon.

Note: Cai Rang market is one of the three biggest markets (Cai Be, Phung Hiep, Cai Rang) in the Mekong Delta. You can visit the market at any time of the day, but it is most crowded and busy from sunrise to 06h00

Overnight in Ho Chi Minh City.

#### **Day 12: Ho Chi Minh City Departure**

Breakfast, hotel check out and free until you are transferred to the airport for your international flight.

**Service ends**

Price on request: [res2@bltrips.co.za](mailto:res2@bltrips.co.za)