

Vietnam Encounters

Country(ies): Vietnam

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: A/C minibus, junk boat, sleeper train, flight & riverboat

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 12

Days: 11 Days

Start location: Hanoi, Vietnam

End location: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Departs On: Saturday

Meals: Breakfasts - 9, Lunches - 3, Dinners - 3

Highlights: Ancient Hanoi tours, street food walk, Halong Bay overnight junk boat cruise, perfume river in Hue, colonial Hoi An, boat trip and overnight homestay on the Mekong Delta, Ho Chi Minh evening Vespa tour

Places Visited: Hanoi, Halong Bay, Hue, Hoi An, Ho Chi Minh City & Mekong Delta



Itinerary

Day 1: Welcome to Hanoi, arrival airport transfer

After arriving at the airport, the Vietnam tour starts with a tour guide meeting you and transferring you to your hotel in Hanoi. They'll give you some initial introductions to the country and Hanoi during the drive to the hotel, help you settle in and schedule a pick-up time for the next day.

You can decide this evening whether to join the visit to Hoan Kiem Lake to watch or join in with the local's early morning Tai Chi exercise.

OVERNIGHT: Hanoi hotel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Single room supplement (VESGVE) || Extra day in Hanoi - pre-tour

Day 2: Explore Hanoi city and a street food tour

If you've decided to join the visit to Hoan Kiem Lake to watch or join in with the local's early morning Tai Chi exercise, you'll leave the hotel with guide at around 6am this morning before returning for a tasty breakfast. The group all then joins a fun Vietnamese language lesson with the guide, learning some words and sayings which will come in handy during the tour.

On our tour today, we'll visit the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, the One Pillar Pagoda and the Presidential Palace before visiting an 11th-century relic. After that, we'll head to the Temple of Literature, which was built in homage to the Chinese scholar Confucius.

The afternoon starts with a visit to the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, before travelling to the Hanoi's Old Quarter for a culinary adventure, where we'll explore the narrow streets, learning about and sampling the huge variety of different street foods. To wash all the food down, we'll also have the chance to try some of the local brews - some traced back to Eastern Europe!

As night falls, the narrow sidewalks are packed with locals on stools, gathering around sizzling woks and bubbling pots. If you're in the mood for something sweet, we'll also have the chance to enjoy some dessert from Hanoi's best-known ice cream parlour.

OVERNIGHT: Hanoi hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 3: Halong Bay cruise

The day starts with a scenic drive to Ha Long Bay, known for its emerald waters and thousands of towering limestone islands topped by lush rainforests.

We'll embark on a classic Junk boat cruise through the unique limestone islands found in Ha Long Bay, along with its mysterious and beautiful caves scattered throughout, before savouring a delectable lunch on the deck.

After lunch, we'll explore the Sung Sot Cave - the most beautiful cave in Ha Long Bay. It's also known as the "Cave of Surprises" because the French Admiral who discovered it in 1901 was surprised by how big it was. We'll spend the rest of the day cruising to Titov island, where you can go swimming or relax on the beach before returning to the boat to enjoy sunset on the sundeck before we enjoy a tasty dinner and socialising with the rest of the guests.

We'll spend the night on the boat, taking in the natural sounds of your Vietnamese surroundings.

OVERNIGHT: Halong Bay junk boat

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 4: From Ha Long Bay to Hanoi

The day starts with some Tai Chi or a photo hunt before having breakfast on board the boat.

We'll then kayak around Luon Cave located on Bo Hon Island. The cave is arc-shaped and limited in height, which means the only way to visit it is via a small boat or kayak. Afterwards, we'll head back to the boat, have a chance to freshen up before the cruise takes us further along the bay, passing the Ba Hang fishing village, Dog Islet, and much more.

As we head back to the harbour, we'll have the opportunity to watch a fruit carving demonstration and participate in a cooking class before enjoying a traditional Vietnamese lunch.

We disembark reluctantly after lunch and return to Hanoi for some free time in the afternoon, with a day-use hotel room provided for you to freshen up in before we take the overnight Reunification Express sleeper train south to Hue.

OVERNIGHT: On board sleeper train

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 5: Welcome to Hue city

Wake up on board today to the sight of rice paddies with their attendant farmers and water buffalo, small villages and rural farmland rushing past us. On arrival in Hue we transfer to our hotel before enjoying a private tour of this historically and culturally rich city and its ancient temples.

We'll spend the day exploring the Citadel - a UNESCO World Heritage site, before relaxing on a sunset cruise on the Perfume River as the evening ends with the sounds of traditional music. We'll spend the night in Hue City.

OVERNIGHT: Hue hotel

MEALS: Lunch

EXTRAS: None

Day 6: Hue to Hoi An, ancient town

We'll head south along a beautiful stretch of coastline and over the scenic Hai Van Pass, to the picturesque riverside community of Hoi An.

We'll be treated to a walking tour of this charming traditional town now listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. From the 16th to 18th centuries, Hoi An was a thriving international commercial port for Chinese, Dutch, French, Japanese, Portuguese and Arab merchants.

We'll then head upstream to visit the traditional pottery village of Thanh Ha. Here, we'll have a chance to make

pottery products like vases, jars, bowls and pots, perhaps engraving your name on one to take home.

We'll head back on the boat and travel to the village of Kim Bong to marvel at its carpentry and its shipbuilding area where wooden fishing vessels are built using traditional techniques. We'll also make a stop at a carpentry workshop where the carpenters create hand-crafted furniture, sculptures and souvenirs.

The cruise continues down the Bon River, where we watch the local fishermen doing what they do best, and possibly even join in.

OVERNIGHT: Hoi An hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 7: Free and easy day in Hoi An, optional tours

Hoi An is a lovely town, that many people return to time after time. This day is left free for you to explore individually, or take one of a variety of local options. These include a boat trip to visit some nearby islands and do some snorkelling; an exploration of the My Son Holy Land; a market visit, bike ride and cooking class in Tra Que village; or a fun tour with the local fishermen, learning how to cast nets, catch crabs, and race basket boats!

Hoi An is also famous for its tailors shops, and you've time today to get measured up and customise a brand new suit or dress that will be professionally made for you in record time, ready for you to pick up before you leave tomorrow.

OVERNIGHT: Hoi An hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Exploring Cham Island || Visit My Son heritage site || Cooking class at Tra Que village || Fish & Chips tour

Day 8: Fly to Ho Chi Minh City, evening Vespa tour

We leave Hoi An today and transfer to Danang airport to fly to Ho Chi Minh City. On arrival you have a little time after checking in to look around and refresh before we head out for a special evening tour exploring the city, its food and music from a unique perspective, the back of a vintage Vespa scooter!

We start in Cafe Zoom for a cocktail and a few appetizers. We'll then head to a popular eating spot for a meal, before heading out on the back of a vintage Vespa scooter to experience the Saigon nightlife the way the locals do.

Your experienced drivers will make their way through Chinatown and the busy streets and alleys of District 4 to meet the locals and enjoy some street seafood and drinks. We'll pass through District 3 and District 1, taking in the sights of Banh Xeo, the speciality of Saigon and its southern food.

The Vespa tour continues to a hidden Vietnamese-style coffee shop to have a taste of live Vietnamese music as a local, before heading to another live music venue. Drinks and food are included and we finish around 10pm.

OVERNIGHT: Ho Chi Minh City hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 9: Ho Chi Minh City, Mekong Delta

Today we'll drive through the Mekong Delta to the town of Cai Be, famous for its floating markets.

After touring the markets, we'll board a private boat and cruise along the maze of waterways and canals to Vinh

Long. Here, we'll feast at the home of a Bonsai gardener for a sumptuous Delta lunch, including the popular 'Elephant ear fish', before continuing to explore the tributaries and canals of the Delta.

Towards the end of the day, we'll stop at the home of a local family, relax, before trying to catch fish by hand to prepare for dinner. Dinnertime will be with the locals, chatting with them and learning about the life of a farmer in the Delta before settling in for the night.

OVERNIGHT: Mekong delta homestay

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 10: Mekong Delta, Ho Chi Minh City

Wake up to the sounds of life on the Delta and have an early breakfast before cycling to a local market to buy some food for lunch, using the local language, which we learnt the previous night.

We'll have a chance to help the locals to cook some Vietnamese dishes for lunch, before saying 'Tạm Biệt' - Goodbye! to the house owner and their children. Then it's back to Saigon to relax and we'll overnight in Ho Chi Minh City. A couple of optional tours are available this evening.

OVERNIGHT: Ho Chi Minh City hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Saigon craft beer Vespa tour

Day 11: Free time, included departure airport transfer

The last day leaves you with free time to relax before we include a departure transfer to the airport for you to catch your flight back home. Additional options are also available today if you have a late afternoon or evening flight, or if you'd like to add some extra nights.

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Cambodia Extension || Extra day in Ho Chi Minh - post-tour || Half-day city tour || Cu Chi Tunnels tour

Included

- All accommodation as stated in the itinerary
- All transport and transfers
- 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- Services of a local tour guide during sightseeing and activities
- Admission fees, with instruction where necessary
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary
- Internal Flight from Da Nang to Ho Chi Minh

Excluded

- International flights (available on request)
- Visas fees (Currently waived for GB and some other nationals. We can arrange a Visa Approval letter to enable other nationalities to obtain their visa on arrival - see your Tour Notes for details)
- Travel insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks, tips and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for tour guides and drivers

- Any other items not mentioned above

Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting.

However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

Single room supplement (VESGVE)

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$265.00

This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

Note: The price shown is a low season price. Slightly higher prices may apply during high and peak seasons - the exact price for your dates will be shown on the online booking form and is always available on request.

Extra day in Hanoi - pre-tour

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$30.00

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Extra day in Ho Chi Minh - post-tour

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$35.00

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport departure transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Exploring Cham Island

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$40.00

A local Vietnam tour guide will collect you at your hotel before transferring you to the Cua Dai Harbour. You'll take a speedboat to Cham Island. Here, you'll have the chance to visit Au Thuyen, where local boats are hidden in storms. You'll also walk along a rice field before visiting the ancient temple of Hai Tang Pagoda and fishing village.

You'll then head to Bac Island for some snorkelling. Here you can swim and explore the marine-life in its colourful coral reefs and a tasty seafood lunch follows (included in the tour price).

The tour starts at your hotel at 08.00am and takes around 6 hours. The tour is arranged as a sharing tour, joining other people, but is available privately for a supplement if you prefer (please contact us for prices).

Visit My Son heritage site

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$140.00

You also have the option of exploring the lush green countryside of the My Son Holy Land, to take a closer look at how the locals live and it will provide you with plenty of photographic opportunities.

Once you arrive, you will be briefly introduced the history, culture and the Indian-Hinduism influence on the Champa Kingdom before visiting the remains of a carefully-crafted red brick temples with monuments and epitaphs which are often described as Vietnam's Angkor Wat.

The tour starts at your hotel at 08.30am and takes around 4 hour, including the return 100km drive to and from My Son. This is a private tour, just for any travellers in our group. Prices shown are based on min 2 people, with a supplement due if only 1 person does the tour.

To provide better experience and flexibility throughout this optional tour it is operated by jeep, not minibus or coach.

Cooking class at Tra Que village

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$40.00

A tour guide will meet you at your hotel before cycling to Hoi An's colourful central market. Here, you'll have the opportunity to interact with the local sellers and learn about the ingredients to be used in the cooking lesson later.

You'll then hop back on your bike and head towards the Tra Que vegetable village. You'll be welcomed with a drink before being introduced to the vegetable gardens where the local farmers work using traditional methods of yesteryear - no electricity needed.

After familiarising yourself with the locals, you'll go to the restaurant to meet the chef - who will give you a cooking master class on the traditional ways of preparing and cooking Vietnamese food, before enjoying the fruits of your

labour for lunch (included in the tour price).

The tour starts at your hotel at 08.00am or 2.00pm and takes around 4 hours. The tour is arranged as a sharing tour, joining other people, but is available privately for a supplement if you prefer (please contact us for prices).

Fish & Chips tour

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$55.00

You'll cycle to the Tra Que Village to explore the vegetable fields and see how the local farmers go about their daily activities before heading towards the Hoi An Beach dock, where you'll take a boat to the Cua Dai sand dune, where the local fishermen will display their net casting skills and you'll even have a chance to learn how to do it.

You'll then travel to the Cam Thanh Water coconut village, where the local fishermen will teach you how to catch crabs. You'll then be divided into groups for basket boat racing - the winner gets a wonderful gift!

You'll have a delectable lunch (included in the tour price) at a local family house before learning how to make funny tools with a water coconut leaf, before visiting a craftsman's house in the village.

The tour starts at your hotel at 08.00am and takes around 6 1/2 hours. The tour is arranged as a sharing tour, joining other people, but is available privately for a supplement if you prefer (please contact us for prices).

Saigon craft beer Vespa tour

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$130.00

The Saigon craft beer tour takes you to four of the best craft breweries in town, as you ride around the busy city streets in between venues on the back of our vintage Vespas. These new breweries in Saigon are taking flavours to the next level, exploring worldwide brews with local Vietnamese essences.

All the beers have been carefully selected by each Master Brewer especially for this Vespa Adventure, so you can get a taste of the broad range of flavours of the impressively growing craft beer scene in this vibrant city.

The brewers will join you and take delight in sharing their knowledge, story and the actual brewing process with unique ingredients & flavours, so you can fully appreciate the taste of their creations.

Our scope goes from independent brewers still producing small batches of beer at home, to the most famous brands of craft beer and cider in town. Apart from multiple tastings of the best beers, each place also offers a variety of delicious and elaborate food pairings include the best pizza in the city, gourmet tapas and some Vietnamese inspired bites.

The tour starts at your hotel at 5.30pm and finishes around 10pm. The tour is arranged as a sharing tour, joining other people, but is available privately for a supplement if you prefer (please contact us for prices).

Half-day city tour

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$40.00

Go on a city tour of Ho Chi Minh and explore its highlights which include the Reunification Hall, the War Crimes Exhibition or the History Museum, a lacquer or rattan ware factory, Notre Dame Cathedral, War Remnants Museum, Centre Post Office, Chinatown and Thien Hau Pagoda (built by the Cantos congregation in the early 19th). You'll

stop at Binh Tay or Ben Thanh Market for some shopping.

The tour starts at your hotel at 08.00am and takes around 4 hours. This is a private tour, just for any travellers in our group. Prices shown are based on min 2 people. Solo travellers can opt to pay a supplement for a private tour, or to join a sharing tour with other travellers.

Cu Chi Tunnels tour

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$35.00

You'll have the chance to visit the Cu Chi Tunnels, which highlight the dedication of Viet Cong soldiers during the Vietnam War. It took about 25 years to build these extensive underground tunnels, which stretch for approximately 250 kilometres.

Using the tunnels, Viet Cong soldiers could move around war areas undetected by American soldiers. It is believed that Cu Chi Tunnels are built on the land known as 'Land of Steel' which is located at the end of Ho Chi Minh Trail.

This activity includes:

- Watching a documentary film about one of the most sophisticated man-made tunnels together with its extraordinary wartime legends
- Walking in the jungle and visiting the traps, the secret entrances, the bunkers, and underground hideouts
- Option to do some shooting at the rifle range of Cu Chi Tunnels. (Exclusive of bullets)
- Seeing the rice-paper (spring roll skin) and rice-wine production line
- Crawling into the tunnels and getting a feel for their size and the soldiers' experience
- Taking a rest, drinking green tea and having tapioca - the main food served during the war time.

You'll then head back to Ho Chi Minh, either back to your hotel or to the airport.

The tour starts at your hotel at 08.00am and takes around 5-6 hours. The tour is priced as a sharing tour, joining other people, but is available privately for a supplement if you prefer (please contact us for prices).

Tour Notes

1. Accommodation

We use good quality hotels rated at the local 3 and 4-star level on this tour, together with a more basic homestay in the Mekong Delta and a comfortable stay onboard a deluxe Junk boat in Halong Bay. Hotel rooms all have air-conditioning and en-suite bathrooms. Facilities at the homestay are simple but with all beds & bedding provided, and shared bathrooms.

All couples will be given a private double room. If you are a single traveller who would like to share, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up. If we don't have anyone to pair you up with when you book, then a single room supplement will be due, but we will remove this or provide a refund if/when we can pair you up later. Check with us for guaranteed no single supplement offers on some tours and departures.

2. Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time we want you to finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour. With this in mind we use public transport where we think it offers a good local experience, this may include overnight sleeper trains, local buses and local ferries. We also use private transportation including jeeps, rickshaws or pickup trucks, and mini buses for sightseeing tours where required.

Sleeper trains:

The sleeper trains in Vietnam are of a good standard and are popular with tourists. Each carriage has its own steward who ensures the train is kept clean and tidy. You will stay in a 4-berth cabin with 3 other passengers. Supplements can be paid to book a private cabin. Bedding is provided onboard the train. The berths are on two tiers and we cannot pre-book lower tier berths. A ladder is provided but you therefore need a reasonable degree of mobility to climb up to the top tier berths.

When travelling in a group, we cannot guarantee that everyone in the group will be seated together in the same cabins. However, the train stewards are generally very helpful at arranging seat swaps, and the local travellers on the train are friendly and interesting to talk to during your journey too.

3. Transfers

Our South East Asia tours all include a 24-hour arrival and departure airport-hotel transfer service, and all other transfers throughout the tour. If you are already in the country then we will provide you with your first hotel details, contact numbers for our local representatives, and details of your first meeting time.

4. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don't include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour.

Our Vietnam tours start and finish in either Hanoi airport (HAN) or Ho Chi Minh airport (SGN).

If you are booking a tour that combines Vietnam and Cambodia we may not include the connecting flight between the two countries in the tour price (see the inclusions/exclusions or extension option sections for details). This flight can often be built into your main international flight ticket, or we may be able to book this flight for you separately if you prefer - please contact us and we will advise you on available airlines, times and prices.

5. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

We are committed to making sure our small-group tours in South East Asia have low maximum numbers as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. Having a smaller group also allows us to be a bit more creative with the places you stay and activities you do, which may simply not be possible with larger numbers. The group size for this tour is therefore a minimum of 2 and maximum of 12.

At Encounters Travel we aim to only use local guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

On this tour we may use separate guides in Hanoi, Hue-Hoi An and Ho Chi Minh. The Halong Bay cruise and some optional tours are a sharing basis and you may join other travellers for these parts of the tour.

6. Entrance Fees

The tour price includes entrance fees to all the tourist sites mentioned in the itinerary. You will need to cover the cost of entrance to any other extra sites that you may wish to visit.

7. Tipping

Tipping is not part of culture in South East Asia in the same way that it is standard practice in other parts of the world. However it has become more customary but not compulsory in the tourist and service industry. Tipping is always optional, and any amounts paid should reflect excellent service. You may therefore wish to tip your guide and driver at the end of the tour. You should not feel obliged to tip any particular amount, and should consider your personal budget. We are often asked to provide a guide however, and can suggest that approx. USD 5-10 per person per day would be appropriate for your guide(s).

8. Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are:

[Thailand](#): Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transited through an infected area.

[Vietnam](#): Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an infected area.

[Cambodia](#)

: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

[Laos](#): Additional vaccinations: Diptheria, Poliomyelitis, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an infected area.

The above information can change at short notice. For up to date health information & vaccination requirements we recommend that you contact your medical practitioner or a travel clinic.

Malaria: Vaccinations are not available against Malaria, which is a disease transmitted by mosquitoes that can be very serious and sometimes fatal. You should avoid mosquito bites by covering up bare skin with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers and applying insect repellents to exposed skin. When necessary, sleep under a mosquito net. Mosquitoes are most active during and after sunset. You should consult with your GP/medical practitioner/travel clinic about the most appropriate malaria prophylactic medication to take for the regions you are visiting.

Yellow Fever: This disease is spread by infected mosquitoes that bite during the day. A Yellow Fever Certificate of vaccination may be required as a condition of entry depending on which country you are arriving from, or that you have travelled or transitted through recently (including connecting flights with stopovers of over 12 hours). You can view a [World Health Organisation map](#) of areas where the virus is present in monkeys and therefore a potential risk to humans. Please ensure you have this certificate with you and to hand if necessary.

Please inform us of any pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or asthma and any prescription medicine you may be taking. We also need to know about any food allergies or physical disabilities that you may have.

9. Passports and Visas - Vietnam

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities.

British citizens (plus Japan, South Korea, Denmark, Russian, Sweden, Norway, Finland, , France, Germany, Italy, Spain) are currently subject to a visa exemption scheme, so no visa is required for stays in Vietnam of up to 15 days. Other nationalities and those staying longer in Vietnam will need to obtain a visa in advance. As this isn't always convenient we offer the option of obtaining a visa on arrival approval letter which means that you can then purchase you visa on arrival in Vietnam. However if you try to board the flight without this letter or a visa you'll be refused board. Visa approval letter fees are normally USD 10 p/p for single entry, or USD 15 p/p for multiple entry visas. The visa stamp fee on arrival at the immigration desk is then USD 25 p/p for single entry, or USD 50 p/p for multiple entry. These fees are given as a guide and may vary over time and subject to nationality. Please contact us if you have any queries.

10. Time

The time in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos is GMT plus 7 hours. Daylight saving adjustments are not observed.

11. Voltage

Sockets are two round or flat pronged and 220 volts (Type A, B, C). Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. Standard European adapters will work fine, though sometimes they may feel a little loose in the sockets. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are normally available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already. If you have US appliances (110 volts) you will need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

12. Money - Vietnam

The Vietnamese currency is the 'Dong' (VND). Most people prefer to be paid in Dong rather than US dollars. It can sometimes be difficult to change large notes at smaller villages so try to keep a stash of smaller notes with you.

You can also change all major currencies with any private moneychangers, at the local markets, shops or hotels, or at a bank. Banks usually open from 8.00am to 3.00pm, except Saturday afternoons and Sundays. Although all major currencies are usually accepted, the US\$ is by far the most widely accepted and preferred currency, with large notes (\$50 and \$100 bills) getting a better exchange rate. Travellers' cheques in major currencies are accepted at all banks, though a commission will be charged.

At banks throughout Vietnam you can draw cash, in both dong and dollars on all major credit cards. Approx. 3% commission will be charged for this service. Many souvenir shops, restaurants and hotels will accept payment with credit cards. There is, however, a 3-4% surcharge.

There are ATMs in Major cities like Ho Chi Minh, Hanoi and Hué, which accept major credit cards. We recommend that you consider bringing both credit cards, some cash in a hard currency (e.g. GB Pounds, Euros, US Dollars), and some travellers' cheques.

13. What to take

Luggage: Suitcases, rucksacks or fabric holdalls are all fine to bring with you to Vietnam, though if your itinerary has many stops and different travel included within it, we recommend packing light and not bring any large cases. You should also bring a small daypack/bag to take out during the day. Your main luggage will normally be left in the hotel during your sightseeing trips - you will not need to carry it far, and there are nearly always hotel porters to assist.

Luggage limits: There is no luggage limit for this tour. However, most airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 25kg for your hold luggage and between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage. Please check with your airline before travelling to the airport.

Climate and Clothing: There are three reasonably well-defined seasons in Vietnam, but unlike in Europe, where seasons are temperature based, Vietnam is tropical and generally speaking warm all year round. Take light clothes with something warmer for the winter nights. Some light raingear would be useful in the wet season.

Other items: We recommend you also bring:

- Cool footwear (sandals are ideal). If you are interested in exploring the reefs, a pair of reef shoes is recommended to avoid injuries. If you are trekking, then bring comfortable and sturdy walking shoes or light walking boots.
- Swimming costumes - rash-guards/t-shirts are recommended for snorkelling to avoid sunburn.
- Sunscreens, after sun lotions and personal hygiene products - Please adhere to 100ml restrictions for anything you wish to carry on hand-luggage on flights.
- Prescription medications (if required) - please bring supporting documents.
- Power adapter for phones, laptops etc
- Sunglasses and hats
- Basic first aid kit and toiletries
- Money belt
- Small torch
- Dive certification card and log book if you intend to participate in SCUBA diving.
- Sleeping bag if your tour includes any hill-tribe or village trekking

14. Dates & Prices

We run regular small-group departures on this tour throughout the year starting on Saturdays. All departures are guaranteed to run with a minimum of 2 people. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website and on a separate dates & prices sheet available on request. Extra nights can be added to the start and/or finish of the tour if you would like to extend your time.

The tour can also be run privately on any other dates for any number of people. An additional supplement will be due for private departures, the amount depending on your dates and the number of people in your party.

15. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

16. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event). [More information...](#)

You may arrange your own insurance, or you can take advantage of a comprehensive policy that we can arrange for you through Endsleigh Insurance which has been designed to be suitable for our tours. The policy is available to travellers of all nationalities and you do not need to live in the UK to take out the policy. For full details of cover provided, prices and to apply for one of our policies, please complete [travel insurance application form](#).

Note: Any country that borders the Mediterranean is considered as 'Europe' for the purposes of travel insurance (including Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Morocco). If you are doing a tour that visits one country in 'Europe' and one that is 'Worldwide' (for example, an Egypt and Jordan tour), then you need a 'Worldwide' policy. When completing the form you should enter your travel dates including any extra days involved in overnight flights or connecting travel between your home and the tour. Our policies are not able to cover any extra time or activities other than your tour and options booked with us and your travel to & from home.

Note - to comply with insurance sales regulations, our travel insurance policies are only available to customers booking directly with us. If you have booked through a travel agent you will need to arrange your own insurance.

If you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally, or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

IMPORTANT: *We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of*

the tour.

17. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and an ABTA Member (Y4447) and you can be confident when booking with us that your money is safe and protected.

Financial failure insurance is also provided through Affirma to protect all customers for the land portion of your tour.

Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

18. Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

19. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

www.facebook.com/encounterstravel

www.twitter.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

20. Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's ['Travel Aware' campaign](#) which provides further useful and invaluable information.



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Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
