



VIETNAM EXPERIENCE

2024 - Private Tour | 11 Days | Physical Level 1
Saigon - Mekong Delta - Hoi An - Hue - Hanoi - Halong Bay

Want to experience Vietnam's top sights? With this tour, you can explore all the highlights in just under two weeks, with visits to charming Hoi An, historical Hue, spectacular Halong Bay and much more.

- Uncover Saigon's fascinating history
- Discover the Cu Chi Tunnels
- Explore the Mekong Delta
- Soak up the charms of Hoi An
- Marvel at Hue's Imperial Citadel
- Take a two-day cruise on Halong Bay

TOUR MAP



PRIVATE TOUR INCLUSIONS :

- All accommodation
- Meals as stated (B – Breakfast / L – Lunch / D – Dinner)
- Sightseeing and entrance fees as per itinerary
- Transportation and transfers as per itinerary
- English speaking Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR:

International flights, visas, drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, meals not included early check in or late check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

PRIVATE TOURS:

These tours are designed for those who want some independence and flexibility. They offer the choice to explore local cuisine, leisure time for optional activities or excursions, and travel when it suits you.

Our Private Tours offer excellent value holidays alongside the assurance that most of your arrangements are taken care of. You will also be accompanied by a dedicated and professional guide whose knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

PHYSICAL LEVEL 1:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

'Vietnam Experience' is rated as a **physical level 1** tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required, and you should expect to be on your feet for much of the day. You'll be getting on and off coaches, trains or boats and walking around the sights, often including steps, plus occasional longer walks.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time, often on uneven surfaces.
- You will be required to get on and off small boats without assistance.

Of course, our local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

If you require any more information about the pace of our tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Days 1 Arrive Saigon

Meals: N/A

On arrival our representative will meet you in the Arrivals Hall at Ho Chi Minh City Airport ahead of the 45-minute transfer to the hotel.

This evening is at leisure to begin your explorations of Saigon.



Destination Information

Saigon – Formally renamed Ho Chi Minh City, but still locally known by its older name of Saigon, this exuberant city is driving Vietnam forward into the modern world while preserving a wealth of fascinating heritage and French colonial architecture. It was a major base of the American military during the Vietnam War and was the seat of the South Vietnam government until the city was captured by North Vietnamese forces in April 1975.

Day 2: Cu Chi & Saigon

Meals: B, L

This morning, visit the fascinating Cu Chi Tunnels to learn the history of the Viet Cong and their guerilla tactics during the Vietnam War. Sightseeing here involves two hours on foot on wide but uneven paths through the forest, seeing examples of reconstructed bamboo traps, Viet Cong kitchens, and tunnel entrances.



Should you choose, you will also have the opportunity to spend a few minutes underground, on a short, crouched walk through an example section of the tunnel network, which has been slightly enlarged for visitors' safety.

Stop for lunch at an organic farm en route back to Saigon. Explore the city's heady mix of local culture and colonial influences. See the Notre-Dame Cathedral and visit the Central Post Office, the Reunification Palace, and the poignant War Remnants Museum. The latter is an emotional visit; you will be given time to explore independently.

Destination Information

Cu Chi Tunnels - The tunnels of Cu Chi are an immense network of connecting underground passages and rooms and are part of a much larger network of tunnels that underlie much of the country. The Cu Chi tunnels were the location of several military campaigns during the Vietnam War and were the Viet Cong's base of operations for the Tet Offensive in 1968.

The tunnels were used by Viet Cong soldiers as hiding spots during combat, as well as serving as communication and supply routes, hospitals, food and weapon caches and living quarters for fighters.

Notre-Dame Cathedral – The 60-metre bell towers of Saigon’s Notre-Dame Cathedral overlook downtown Saigon. It was consecrated in 1880 by the Roman Catholic Church to provide religious services for French colonialists. All the building materials were imported from France, including the red bricks, which came from Toulouse and have retained their vivid colour.

Central Post Office – This colonial-era landmark, constructed in the late 19th century, stands beside the Notre-Dame Cathedral. Its Gothic and neoclassical design is strongly reminiscent of 20th century European train stations.

Reunification Palace - Built on the site of the former Norodom Palace, is a landmark in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. It was the home and workplace of the President of South Vietnam and was the site of the end of the Vietnam War during the Fall of Saigon on 30th April 1975, when a North Vietnamese Army tank crashed through its gates.

War Remnants Museum - Comprised of numerous buildings displaying military equipment, photographs and artefacts relating to the Vietnam War from 1961-1975.

Day 3: Mekong Delta

Meals: B, L

Drive 2 and a half hours down to the picturesque province of Ben Tre, situated along the mighty **Mekong Delta**. This area is known as the ‘Rice Basket of Vietnam’, because its rich and fertile lands produce huge amounts of rice, coconuts, vegetables and tropical fruit.



Spend the day cruising and exploring, travelling by motorised, wooden boats between the islands and changing to smaller, paddleboats in the canals. Sightseeing involves hopping on and off these boats, often on unsteady and slippery surfaces, sometimes without handrails or assistance. Return to Saigon.

Destination Information

Mekong Delta - Although primarily rural, the Mekong Delta is a densely populated area where life progresses around its fertile banks. The Mekong Delta is the 12th longest river in the world, and people live, trade, travel and go to school on the riverbanks.

Day 4: Saigon – Hoi An

Meals: B, L

Take a 1h 20min flight from Saigon to Danang and transfer 45 minutes through the countryside to the enchanting town of Hoi An. Head out on a walking tour of the Old Town, with visits including Chua Ong Chinese Pagoda, a 200-year-old merchant house, and the spectacular Japanese Covered Bridge.



With its charming yellow buildings and vivid silk lanterns, a stroll through this traditional town feels like stepping back in time.

Destination Information

Hoi An - Perhaps more than any other place in Vietnam, Hoi An retains the feel of centuries past. Once known as Faifo, Hoi An was an influential port along the Silk Road. For over 500 years merchants from China, Japan, France and Portugal settled in the prosperous town, resulting in a distinctive blend of culture, cuisine, religion and architecture.

Japanese Covered Bridge – This iconic pink-hued was constructed in the 1590s to link the Japanese and Chinese quarters of the merchant town.

Day 5: Tra Que Village

Meals: B, L

Head out into Hoi An's peaceful countryside to visit an organic farming community.

Here you can enjoy the lush green landscapes and stroll through the gardens to see the farmers at work. You'll even have an opportunity to try the techniques for yourself!

The afternoon is at leisure to head to the beach or explore the Old Town's charming shops and boutiques.

**Destination Information**

Tra Que Vegetable Village – Located just outside Hoi An, this co-operative project is a first-choice supplier for most local restaurants, growing delicious herbs and vegetables using traditional techniques. Their secret is in the fertiliser: natural seaweed from a local lagoon.

Day 6:**Hue**

Meals: B, L

Leave Hoi An for Hue, taking a scenic drive over the dramatically beautiful Hai Van Pass.

This afternoon, discover Hue's imperial history, beginning at the Imperial Citadel and Forbidden Purple City. Visit the Royal Tomb of Emperor Minh Mang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This funerary complex comprises dozens of monuments set in beautiful surroundings with gardens and pools. Continue to Thien Mu Pagoda, the symbol of the city, before taking a cruise on the perfume river.



Destination Information

Hue – The imperial capital from 1802 until 1945, after the last emperor abdicated, Hue is still regarded as a centre of Vietnamese culture. The city is dominated by the Imperial Citadel, modelled on the Forbidden City in China. There are many wonderful pagodas and temples of high significance, and it contains the Grand Tombs of the Nguyen Emperors.

Imperial Citadel - A walled fortress accompanied by cannons, artilleries and surrounded by a moat for protection. Inside the Citadel are numerous gates, courtyards and the Forbidden Purple City.

Forbidden Purple City - Constructed for the personal use of the Imperial family, along with their concubines and eunuchs. This royal structure is still being restored many years after the destruction caused by street fighting and bombing during the American war in Vietnam but retains its historic atmosphere.

Thien Mu Pagoda – This seven-storey octagonal tower is built on a hillock overlooking the Perfume River. Dating back to 1601, it is Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda, and considered the unofficial symbol of the city. Wander the grounds, where bonsai, ponds and the smell of incense set a peaceful backdrop.

Day 7:**Hanoi**

Meals: B, L

Today fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to the charming city of Hanoi.

Please note that as you have multiple days in Hanoi, your guide may change the order of touring based on local flights and schedules. No touring will be missed.



Destination Information

Hanoi – The history of this fascinating Vietnamese capital is visible at every turn; a blend of French neoclassical architecture, imperial temples, and post-war apartment complexes, interspersed with green parks and leafy boulevards. At its heart is the picturesque Hoan Kiem Lake, where locals come to meet, play sports, or enjoy a stroll and an ice cream.

Day 8: Hanoi

Meals: B, L

Discover the sights of Hanoi. Visit the Ho Chi Minh Quarter for an insight into the Vietnam War. Visit the Humble House on Stilts, where Ho Chi Minh lived in the grounds of the Presidential Palace and see his Mausoleum in Ba Dinh Square.



Visit the serene Temple of Literature, Hanoi's first university, before taking a cyclo tour of Hanoi's Old Quarter. Each cyclo (rickshaw) takes one passenger and is operated by a cycle driver behind the carriage. Wrap up your ride with an opportunity to taste some 'egg coffee' – a local speciality.

Destination Information

Ba Dinh Square – Ba Dinh Square was named after a Vietnamese uprising against colonial rule in the 1880s. It was here that President Ho Chi Minh read the Proclamation of Independence in 1945, when North Vietnam declared its independent status. It had previously been part of French Indochina, though it was under Japanese control for a number of months in 1945. Its dominant landmarks are Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum, where his body lies embalmed and on display, and the National Assembly Building.

Presidential Palace – This yellow, distinctly European building was built by the French as the Palace of the Governor-General of Indochina in the early 1900s. When Vietnam achieved independence, President Ho Chi Minh refused to live in the grand structure, instead building the **Humble House on Stilts** in its grounds. He used the Palace only to receive guests; it is still used for major political meetings.

Humble House on Stilts - The two-storey wooden home of Ho Chi Minh, who ruled Vietnam from here until his death in 1969. A carp pond sits on one side, with a fruit garden on the other.

One Pillar Pagoda: Rebuilt in 1955 after damage during the French evacuation, the pagoda is made of wood and sits on a single pillar. Designed to reflect the shape of a lotus flower emerging from the water, it has become a popular spot for locals to enjoy the tranquil surroundings.

Day 9: Halong Bay

Meals: B, L, D

Drive 2 and a half hours from Hanoi to Halong Bay, where you will take an overnight cruise to the far-most corners of this famously beautiful bay by boat.

Enjoy lunch onboard as you cruise out into the bay, stopping to anchor for an afternoon of activities such as kayaking, swimming, or relaxing on an island beach (determined by the local weather conditions). Sightseeing may include visiting underground caves on the islands, which require climbing up and down steps inside and outside of the caves.



End the day on deck with a drink in hand to watch the sunset, followed by a freshly prepared dinner, before retiring to your cabin for the night.

Please note: You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for your trip to Halong Bay. Main luggage will be left in safe storage at the hotel in Hanoi and picked up your return.

Please note: Weather conditions may delay the departure time of your cruise, or in some cases your cruise may be cancelled. Notifications of any delays or cancellations may not be known until your arrival in Halong Bay. If your cruise is cancelled after your arrival in Halong Bay, you will have lunch in Halong City and return to Hanoi.

If notification of the cruise cancellation is given prior to your departure for Halong Bay, an alternative day trip will be arranged to Hoa Lu and Tam Coc or 'Halong Bay on Land', an area located approximately 2 hours from Hanoi.

Day 10: Halong Bay – Hanoi

Meals: B, L

After a night anchored out on the bay, rise early to enjoy a Tai Chi lesson on deck as the sun rises. Cruise back to port, stopping en route to visit one of the bay's impressive caves.

Return to Hanoi, where in the evening, you will visit the home of a water puppet artist. Here you will have a chance to talk with the artist, watch the process of making the puppets and enjoy a private water puppet show.



Please note, your tour guide will inform you of the exact timings of the puppet show. Depending on the time of your water puppet visit and show, you may have some time at leisure this afternoon.

Day 11: Departure

Meals: B

Transfer to the airport for your onward flight. Late checkout is bookable in advance for those who have chosen a later flight option.

If you wish to extend your stay in Southeast Asia, please talk to our team about our various private extension packages before your departure. We have options for hiking in Sapa, beach breaks in Mui Ne, Phuket or Hua Hin, city stays in Bangkok or Singapore, and more.

SOUTHEAST ASIA TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

Vietnam visa for New Zealand passport holders is required to enter Vietnam for a stay of up to 30 days. Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into New Zealand.

Please note: The Vietnam Visa cost is not included in our Private Tours pricing. Please contact our reservations team if you would like the Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department to assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. Full details will be advised by Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate, Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa.

INSURANCE:

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24-hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your guide should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

EATING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

Southeast Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in most local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region has its own distinct characteristics. Vietnam, for example, is perhaps best known for its fresh and aromatic dishes – influences heavily on flavours from fresh herbs such as mint, basil and dill.

Meals as outlined in the itinerary (excluding drinks) are included in your tour. When dining in Southeast Asia, although some restaurants have adopted a western approach to dining, expect some restaurants to follow the traditional communal style of eating. Typically, this will mean each diner has their own small bowl and may serve themselves from a variety of shared dishes. At some local restaurants, appetizers and main courses might be served when they are ready instead of following a particular order.

Determining when it's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. In Vietnam, dishes are normally

placed in the centre and people serve food for themselves with their own chopsticks and bowl. In Thailand and some other countries in Southeast Asia, fork and spoon are used for most dishes and chopsticks are typically provided to eat noodles.

Usually, chopsticks or other utensils are provided to scoop the food into your bowl to prevent your own chopsticks from touching the food that remains on the table. Dining in Southeast Asia is fairly casual with not too many rules. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Please refer to your travel guide for more information on Southeast Asian cuisine, including information for travellers with restricted diets.

DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

Although Southeast Asia is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in New Zealand. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in New Zealand; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday, so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides.

ACCOMMODATION:

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities.

Hotels on our tours are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and Southeast Asia. All chosen hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your Local Guide.

TRANSPORT:

Vehicles with air conditioning are used on our tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers. Roads in Southeast Asia have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

TIPPING POLICY:

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and Southeast Asia is no exception. For Private Tours, tipping is at your own discretion, and we recommend the following amounts paid in the equivalent local currency.

- Tour Guide: US\$3 - \$5 per person, per day
- Drivers: US\$1 - \$2 per person, per day
- Hotel Maid & Porterage: US\$0.5 – \$1 per use
- Restaurants (with no added service charge to the bill): \$0.5 - \$1 per meal
- Ha Long Boat: \$3 - \$5 per person per night

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

Wendy Wu does not give specific health advice, but we do recommend you see your doctor at least six weeks prior to travel for advice and to allow time for any necessary vaccinations. Please remember to take your itinerary with you. Safe travel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.safetravel.govt.nz

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.safetravel.govt.nz as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.

Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements.

You can also access the New Zealand Government's travel advisory service for up-to-date information about your destination on the same website.

AFTER YOUR BOOKING:

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice including a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

It is our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

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