



Celebrations International Travel, Inc.



A Culinary Tour of Vietnam

Day 1: Arrival in Hanoi

On arrival, you will be met and transferred to the hotel. The balance of the day at leisure until evening.

Vietnam's capital is described by almost all who go there as "an old-fashioned city". Old-fashioned in style, it is a city of lakes, parks, trees, villas, mansions and an area called the Old French Quarter where crumbling houses are crammed into narrow alleyways that are still named after the goods that were traded there - Silk Street, Gold Street, even Fried Fish Street! Old-fashioned in atmosphere, Hanoi has sidewalk cafes, pavement barbers, less traffic than Saigon, less frenetic rushing about, less noise, simply less people. Wide tree-lined bicycle-filled boulevards, elegant colonial French mansions, the grandeur and solemnity of Ho Chi Minh's monumental Mausoleum, the incongruous rustic simplicity of the house in which 'Uncle Ho' lived out his final years, the barely concealed misery of the Hoa Lo Prison, the 'Hanoi Hilton' where so many prisoners of war were incarcerated, the religious pride that constructed the beautiful temple of Literature compound - it's all here in Hanoi, a microcosm of the Vietnamese culture.



In the evening, the Water Puppet Show allows you to experience an ancient art form derived from rural Vietnam over 900 years ago. This charming performance relates to the daily life of the people, farm life and festivals including "Rearing Ducks and Chasing Foxes" and "Returning from School After Graduation".

Afterwards, dinner is served at the Wild Lotus Restaurant. Guests will enjoy delicious Vietnamese cuisine in one of Hanoi's most beautiful restaurants where the partially open-air setup allows diners to relax as they are surrounded by warm wooden décor in a classic art deco building.

Accommodation in Hanoi: (2 nights)

- **First Class: Melia Hotel (Deluxe Room)**
- **Moderate Class: Galaxy Hotel (Superior Room)**

Day 2: Hanoi

B, L, D

Morning: Vietnamese Cooking Class at Wild Rice Restaurant

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the Wild Rice Restaurant for a cooking class.

Class Schedule:

- 09:30 Depart for the market on foot with a local guide and Wild Rice's staff.
- 10:30 Return to Wild Rice to begin preparing lunch. Guests will be involved in the preparation of all dishes.
- 11:30 Coffee Break. The chefs are now executing the final preparation, giving the guests time to reflect on the morning's activities and quiz the restaurant manager about life at a Vietnamese restaurant.



- 12:00 Lunch is served! Specialty menu items (subject to change) include:

Crab and Baby Corn Soup
Fresh Spring Rolls
Pan-fried Young Tofu
Grilled Chicken with Chili & Lemongrass
Stir-Fried Beef with Onion & Green Pepper
Tofu & Mushroom in a Clay Pot
Pan-Fried Eggplant with Pepper Fish Sauce



Afternoon: City Highlights Tour of Hanoi

This afternoon, you will have a city tour of the highlights of Hanoi--a unique Asian city with tree-lined boulevards, French colonial architecture, peaceful lakes and Oriental temples. It is time for your "Cyclo Adventure". The best way to experience the charm of Hanoi is by cyclo--Vietnam's most traditional form of transport. Enjoy weaving through the narrow streets and tree-lined avenues in comfortable style passing ochre-colored colonial style buildings and many lakes. Your personal cyclo will take you past Hoan Kiem Lake in the center of the town through the old part of the city, often referred to as 36 Streets, and back along some of Hanoi's tree lined boulevards. You will also visit the Temple of Literature built in 1070 and dedicated to Confucius. It is a serene retreat from the busy streets outside, and it later became Vietnam's first university.

Afterwards, return to the hotel for dinner and leisure time this evening.

Day 3: Hanoi--Halong Bay

This morning you will depart Hanoi by road and travel through the rich farmlands of the Red River Delta to the Halong Bay area, located to the north of Hanoi (approx. 3 – 3.5 hours). Halong Bay is often considered as Vietnam's eighth wonder of the world – and on arrival it is easy to see why. Three thousand spectacular chalk and limestone outcroppings, cliffs, arches, and coves form a dragon's tail across the bay. Traditional sailing junks and local fishing boats glide by selling their latest catch.

B, L, D



An overnight Halong Bay cruise offers luxurious elegance amid the splendor of Vietnam's premier cruising attraction. After boarding the boat at approximately 12:00, begin cruising on the bay while lunch is served. Whilst cruising on the emerald green waters of the bay you have a chance to enjoy the magnificent scenery and to visit a selection of islands and caves. If weather permits, you may enjoy swimming, snorkeling, or to relaxing onboard while enjoying the views or socializing with your fellow passengers. A luxurious dinner is served onboard.

Accommodation: Overnight Halong Bay Boat (sharing a boat with other travelers for 1 night)

- **First Class: Bhaya Cruise (Deluxe Cabin)**
- **Moderate Class: Bai Tho (ROH Cabin)**

Day 4: Halong Bay—Hanoi—Hue

B, L, D

Early this morning there may be the chance to practice Tai Chi on the sundeck whilst the sun rises over the bay. Breakfast is served as the boat continues cruising through Halong Bay, allowing guests a last chance to enjoy the spectacular views of this unique seascape. At approximately 10.30 am you will return to the mainland and after check-out and disembarkation, you will be met by your local guide and transfer by road back to Hanoi Airport for your flight to Hue.

One of the country's foremost cultural, religious, and educational centers, Hue began its existence as the citadel of Phu Xuan in 1687, just northeast of the present-day city, and assumed the role of capital city of southern Vietnam in the mid-1700s. More than a century later, French forces encircled the city, and the Vietnamese were powerless in their battle to keep their homeland. A colony was born. Hué suffered some of the bloodiest battles of the 1968 Tet Offensive, and it was the only city to be held by the Communists for more than a few days. By the 1970s, much of the old city was decaying, but the local government recognized its value, and in 1993 UNESCO declared it a World Heritage site. Restoration and preservation work continues today.

On arrival, we will transfer to the hotel to check in.

Accommodation in Hue (2 nights)

- **First Class: Morin Hotel (Deluxe room)**
- **Moderate Class: Century Riverside Hotel (Deluxe room)**

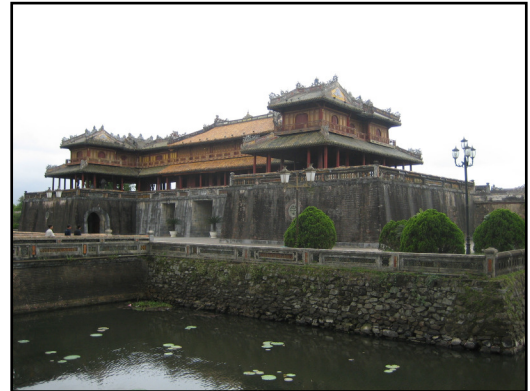


Day 5: Hue

B, L, D

This morning, visit the Imperial Citadel & Dong Ba Market.

The citadel is perhaps the most well-known site in Hué. Begun in 1805 by Emperor Gia Long, it is actually a complex comprised of the Imperial City, several museums, lakes, and lovely gardens, all laid out in a series of concentric circles. We also visit the Forbidden Purple City, originally built in the early 1800s for the personal use of the emperor and staffed by eunuchs who posed no threat to the royal concubines. This section was nearly destroyed in the Tet Offensive, and today the ruins house the Royal Library and the grounds flourish with mimosa plants and vegetable plots.



After visiting the Citadel we continue to visit nearby a local market which famous with tourists--Dong Ba Market in Old Hue is near the place where the Dong Ba Canal joins the Perfume River. This market is strongly recommended to anyone with an interest in Vietnamese food or culture. The maintenance of ancient characteristics makes an unforgettable impression on visitors. Dong Ba Market is near the eastern corner of the Citadel. Nearby, a commercial district stretches along the Dong Ba Canal.

This afternoon, take a relaxing boat trip along the Perfume River to visit the famous Thien Mu Pagoda then continue by boat to the less visited and perhaps most majestic of all of Hue's tombs--the tomb of Minh Mang. Built between 1841 and 1843, Minh Mang's this tomb is well known for its harmonious blend of architecture and natural landscape.



Built in 1601 between a river and a pine forest, the Thien Mu Pagoda ("Heavenly Lady Pagoda") in Hue is one of the oldest and prettiest religious buildings in the country. Among the many interesting artifacts housed at the complex is the car that took the monk Thich Quang Duc to his self-immolation in Saigon in 1963.

Tonight, enjoy a Royal Dinner at the An Dinh Cung Restaurant.

Day 6: Hue—Danang—Hoi An

B, L, D



After breakfast depart Hue for the drive to Hoi An, over the Lang Co Beach and Hai Van pass (a journey of approximately 3 hours).

Hoi An is an extraordinary jewel of a town. As you wander the completely traffic-free streets of this ancient seaport it is not hard to imagine the sailors and merchants of the 18th Century, when Hoi An was one of the busiest trading ports in Asia. Chinese, Japanese, and European architecture bears witness to a cosmopolitan past and allows today's visitors a glimpse of Vietnam that no longer exists elsewhere.

Enjoy lunch at Full Moon Restaurant, pleasantly located along the banks of the river.

This afternoon journey into the center of town and enjoy a guided walking tour of Hoi An. Wander the cobble streets with your local guide to visit former merchant homes, temples, art galleries and absorb the atmosphere of this unique town.

Tonight's dinner is at a beautiful restaurant decorated in traditional Hoi An style with dark woods and lush gardens located on the Thu Bon River, the Brother Cafe. Thereafter return to your resort for an evening of leisure.

Accommodation in Hoi An (2 nights)

- **First Class: Hoi An Riverside Resort (Superior Riverview room)**
- **Moderate Class: Hoi An Hotel (Deluxe room)**

Day 7: Hoi An

B, L, D



We start the day by gathering for a drink at a local restaurant, then visit Hoi An's colorful market to experience its amazing sights, sounds, and aromas. We will have the opportunity to interact with the local sellers and purchase some of the ingredients to be used in the cooking lesson later.



Then board a boat for a leisurely cruise along the Hoi An River to the local restaurant. The cruise gives you the chance to observe local river life.

On arrival, we explore the Red Bridge Cooking School's herb and vegetable garden, before learning about some of Hoi An's and Vietnam's well-known dishes. The cooking lesson runs for about 2 hours – each dish is first demonstrated by a local chef's, before we prepare the same dish ourselves. Included in the class is a brief introduction to Vietnamese food carving (plate decoration). After the lesson, enjoy your culinary creations for lunch.



The remainder of the afternoon is free at leisure to look around Hoi An until about 4:40 p.m., when we venture into the nearby countryside for a cycling tour that takes you into the very heart of rural Hoi An for insight into the everyday life of a local village community. The small settlement of Cam Thanh, nestled among seemingly endless rice fields, allows the visitor to experience first hand the very backbone of Vietnam's rural culture.

Enjoy a cycle (or walk) through the village, shaded from the sun by a canopy of bamboo thickets, passing by local homes, vegetable and fruit gardens, a village temple and a husking mill. Depending on the season, you may have the opportunity to see the local farming community threshing and harvesting.

Day 8: Hoi An—Danang—Saigon

B, L, D

After breakfast at the hotel, take a short flight on Vietnam Airlines brings you to the Ho Chi Minh City, better known as Saigon, where you will spend three nights in the heart of the city.

Saigon is surely one of the most evocative place names in Asia and definitely one of its most extraordinary cities. The most Western in atmosphere of Vietnam's cities, Ho Chi Minh City (to use its official name--although to residents and visitors alike it is universally and affectionately known as Saigon) has a population of 5 million, and a booming free-market economy. It is a city of amazing contrasts: elegant new international hotels, exclusive restaurants and trendy bars side-by-side with roadside noodle stalls, street children and vociferous cyclo drivers. Golf courses, bowling alleys and shopping malls vie for space with fruit and vegetable markets, pagodas and karaoke rooms. Bustling, booming, crowded, noisy--all words that barely scratch the surface of the addictive and often mesmerising chaos that is Saigon. And yet there are the elegant colonial French boulevards and buildings, the Cathedral, the riverfront, the quiet moments at a sidewalk cafe watching the world literally go by you at breakneck speed. Saigon. A city that is almost indescribable and completely unforgettable.



After checking in to the hotel and freshening up, head straight into Saigon with a hot bowl of Vietnam's traditional dish, pho—a delightful broth of beef or chicken with noodles that sends the taste buds into overdrive.



From Pho 24 noodle shop, your tour will commence with the discovery of contrasts in bustling Ho Chi Minh. Amongst the grand old buildings, you will see colorful markets selling everything from chilies to French bread and, of course, an endless stream of bicycles, cyclos, and motorbikes. Photo stops are included at Notre Dame Cathedral, a Neo-classical structure dating back to the 19th century, and the beautiful Post Office building.

Visit the former Presidential Palace, now Reunification Hall, made famous when a North Vietnamese tank crashed through the front gates on April 30, 1975, signaling the end of the Vietnam War. It has changed little since that time and is now retained as a museum. Your tour will include the reception and dining rooms of the President's quarters, and the basement--still full of ancient American-made telecommunications equipment, with strategic military maps lining its walls.



Continue to Ben Thanh Market. Saigon's largest indoor market sells a variety of goods: souvenirs, clothing, flowers, and an abundance of fresh food and vegetables. The vibrant atmosphere of the market is enchanting, and after walking through the food stalls you can be sure that your sense of smell will be invigorated!

Afterwards, you will visit the Jade Emperor Pagoda then continue to wander Dong Khoi Street, Saigon's "chicest" avenue.

Dinner is at Vietnam House Restaurant, one of Saigon's most well-known restaurants.

Accommodation in Saigon (3 nights)

- **First Class: Duxton Hotel (Deluxe Room)**
- **Moderate Class: Kim Do Hotel (ROH Room)**

Day 9: Saigon

B, L, D

Today's cooking class offers you a good chance to discover Vietnamese culinary arts. Under the guidance of Grand Chefs, you will learn to make some traditional Vietnamese dishes. Also, you may choose to visit the market with the chefs to find fresh ingredients. Upon completion of the class, you will receive a certificate, a handbook with all recipes, and a souvenir gift from the school.

This afternoon, journey out of the city center to the Cu Chi regions, where you will visit the vast underground network of tunnels built first as a defence against the French, and later expanded during the American War. It was from here that the North Vietnamese waged their guerrilla warfare, and you will marvel at their ingenuity and resilience. See secret trapdoors, underground kitchens, living areas and meeting rooms. The more adventurous may explore the deeper second, and even third level tunnels. For those preferring to remain above ground, there is ample opportunity to view excavated areas from above. Your guide will advise you of the length and level of difficulty of each tunnel before entering. Some are easily accessed by stairs. We recommend good walking shoes and sun protection for this tour and advise that you may get a little dirty!



Return to Saigon for dinner at Maxim's Nam An Restaurant. Though it may not look it at first glance, Vietnam is a nation rich in culinary traditions. Enjoy a fantastic dinner at one of the most renowned Vietnamese restaurants in Saigon, with excellent local dishes served to the accompaniment of traditional musical entertainment.

Day 10: Full-Day Tour of the Mekong Delta

B, L, D

Until the 16th Century the Mekong Delta was an area of marshland and forest. Gradually marshland was reclaimed and a canal network built so that, nowadays, the people make a reasonable living from rice, fish, soybeans, maize, peanuts, tobacco, melons etc. The My Tho area is famous for its coconut palms and fruit orchards (mangoes, longans, bananas and citrus fruits).

The drive out of Ho Chi Minh City takes you through miles of flat rice fields, along a highway always busy with bicycles and people heading to or from market. The highlight of your day is a fascinating boat trip on the Mekong River, where you'll see all manner of boats, from dug out canoes to barges and houseboats to passenger ferries. Many of the wooden boats have an unusual "eye" painted on their bows.



Your boat ride will take you to one of the islands in the Mekong Delta to see a traditional farmer's home and fruit orchards, where you will have the opportunity to sample exotic tropical fruits. Enjoy the beautiful scenery and peace and quiet of these

waterways whilst floating in your sampan along the Mekong's tributaries. A truly unforgettable experience!

A seafood lunch will be served at a local restaurant overlooking a tributary of the Mekong. The exotic specialty here is freshly caught Elephant Ear Fish wrapped in rice paper.

The farewell dinner will be onboard a Bonsai Cruise along the Saigon River. This is a unique experience not to be missed.

Day 11: Departure

B

The morning is at leisure until you transfer to the airport for your onward international flight.

Tour Offered Exclusively By:



Celebrations International Travel, Inc.

Call: (480) 272-6020

Email: info@celebrationsinternationaltravel.com

For more information on Culinary Tours, visit www.celebrationsinternationaltravel.com