

Day 1 Arrive Hanoi

Upon arrival into Hanoi we will be met by our friendly guide and transferred to the hotel.

Day 2 Hanoi City Tour – Gallery Tour – Art Class

Today we venture out to explore Hanoi. First up we drive to the Ho Chi Minh complex where we will spend time at Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum, his former stilt-house, the Presidential Palace, the Ho Chi Minh Museum and One Pillar Pagoda. Following our tour we make our way to a Fine Art Museum as well as stop at Hang Bong Street which is famous for its propaganda art shops.

After lunch we visit an art gallery where we will have the opportunity to meet some of the artists who will discuss their techniques and mediums used. We then continue onto the Temple of Literature where we sit down to our own private art lesson. A local artist will guide us through as we produce our own piece of Vietnamese art to take home. Later this afternoon, we enjoy a 1 hour cyclo tour of the French inspired "old quarter" before making our way to dinner.

Tonight after dinner we sit down to enjoy a performance of the city's famous Water Puppets. The water puppet is a tradition which dates back to the 11th century. Though now performed in a pool of water, the water puppets were traditionally performed in the rice paddies when the rice fields would flood as a form of entertainment. The puppets however are still hand-made the traditional way out of wood and lacquered often with exquisite detailing.

Day 3 Hanoi - Halong Bay

Today we set off to the 'Jewel in the Crown of Vietnam'; Halong Bay. Arriving before lunch we will board our private boat and then set sail, cruising amongst thousands of extraordinary limestone karst formations. Halong Bay was voted one of 'The New 7 Wonders of Nature' in 2011, and once here you will know why it was included in this group. Later this afternoon we make our way back to the buses and return to Hanoi.

Day 4 Wood Carving Village – Silk Weaving Village - Pottery Village

This morning after breakfast we make our way to a traditional wood carving village to observe the skilled craftsman. A lot of the techniques and tools have been handed down from generation to generation. Students will have the opportunity to see the different stages as well as chat to some of the craftsmen.

We then make our way to a traditional silk weaving village which has specialized in silk production since the 18th century. Van Phuc Village is known for providing the best silk in Vietnam with its silk used for royalty during the Nguyen Dynasty Period. Silk from this village is now widely known and exported to many countries all over the world.

Following our lunch today, we visit a ceramic village where we will not only get a chance to see the artisans at work but also have the opportunity to sit down and create a piece of pottery to take home.

Day 5 Hanoi Food Exploration Tour – Danang

This morning we venture out on a food exploration tour and discover why Vietnam is so well known for its amazing cuisine. Enjoy visiting vendors and markets, some hidden away in back alleyways yet all producing the most delicious food. Explore this cuisine which uses an abundance of fresh herbs and vegetables and uses meat as a condiment rather than a main meal. Discover why Vietnamese food is regularly described as 'healthy yet delicious'.

Later this afternoon we make our way to the airport for our short flight to Danang. Upon arrival we visit the Cham Sculpture Museum. Housing over 300 exhibits dating back from the 5th – 15th century, the museum holds the world's largest and most extensive collection of sculptures from this civilization which occupied southern and central Vietnam up until the early 19th century.

Day 6 Cooking Class

This morning as we wake up in Hoi An we will commence our cooking class. The cooking lesson runs for about 2 hours with each dish first being demonstrated before we prepare the same dish ourselves. Included in the class is a brief introduction to Vietnamese food carving and plate decoration. The Vietnamese see vegetable carving as an art form itself, creating beautiful objects such as flowers and birds which are used as a garnish for dishes. After the lesson we will sit down and enjoy what we have just prepared for lunch.

This afternoon we enjoy a walking tour through the World Heritage listed town of Hoi An. Often featured in newspapers and travelling shows, this small quiet town is now a very popular spot to visit. Hoi An is known for its excellent food, interesting architecture and countless tailors.

Day 7 Hoi An – Eco Tour

We have an early start this morning as we head off to our Farming & Fishing Life Eco Tour. Starting at Tra Que Village, we will get a personal insight into the local farming communities. We set about joining the farmers in preparing their land for sowing, helping to fertilize the garden using seaweed from the local river and watering it in using huge tin cans strapped to our backs. Following this, we will begin our leisurely cycling tour through the countryside witnessing local Vietnamese rural life first hand.

Late morning we board our Hoi An Eco-tour boat for a river cruise. Here we meet and witness local fishermen working their craft, before enjoying a hands-on experience of traditional net fishing. We then transfer to a Vietnamese bamboo basket boat for a quick race and ride down a coconut palm lined waterway. Whilst onboard our boat our host will explain the history of the bamboo basket boat as well as its construction techniques and materials, which are all locally found and readily available.

Lunch today, is on board our boat which is prepared using vegetables picked earlier at Tra Que Village.

After lunch we make our way into Hoi An and partake in a lantern making class. Hoi An is famous for its silk lanterns and a trip to the night markets or simply into town on any given night will have students and teachers mesmerized and enchanted by the amazing colours and designs of the silk lanterns which is used to light up the streets.

Day 8 Hoi An – Hue – City tour

This morning after breakfast we will depart early for our trip to Hue. Hue is home to the Hue College of Arts and is often frequented by those enthusiastic about art and history. Upon arrival we visit the Ming Mang Tomb, the Ancient Citadel and also the Thien Mu Pagoda, which built in 1601 is one of the oldest and prettiest religious buildings in the country. Here we can view and appreciate the intricacies of the building and its carvings which were all hand carved centuries ago.

Later this afternoon we make our way to a local art gallery. Galleries here often display works of upcoming artists or graduates from the local university. Students will be able to see the difference between galleries exhibiting works from artists whose techniques have been passed down through the family and works of those who have been taught more modern techniques at the university.

Tonight we enjoy the aesthetically presented cuisine of Hue, which is often regarded as the best in the country, creating a meal for the eyes as well as the stomach.



Day 9 Hue – Saigon

Today we transfer to the airport for a short flight to Saigon. Upon arrival we will set off for the Cu Chi tunnel system; a complex maze once home to Communist guerrillas in their wars against the Japanese, French, Americans (and Australians). Before entering the tunnels, we will watch a short introductory video and then explore Cu Chi. Also on display are various mantraps, the remains of an American tank as well as numerous bomb craters created by 500lb bombs dropped by B52 bombers.

Later this afternoon we head back to Saigon to freshen up for dinner.

Day 10 Saigon City Tour – Art Gallery Tour

This morning we begin our sightseeing around Vietnam's largest and busiest city. We will start with the imposing Notre Dame Cathedral which was built between 1886-1890 and the French style Central Post Office which was designed and constructed by Gustave Eiffel who is better known for his work on the Eiffel Tower. We will then visit the former Presidential Palace and War Remnants Museum. We then spend some time shopping in Saigon, the Ben Thanh Market will be one of the stops in our quest to snap up some bargains.

Later this afternoon we explore the Ho Chi Minh City Fine Arts Museum. Here we will see a varied collection of works by Vietnamese artists, both historical and contemporary. Following our tour we take a short stroll to Dong Khoi St to browse the many art galleries, many of which are small single roomed shops crammed with artworks from floor to ceiling often with the artist inside working on another piece to add to their collection.

Dinner tonight will be at K.O.T.O restaurant. K.O.T.O, founded by Vietnamese Australian Jimmy Pham, is a non-profit organisation which is run by local children who Jimmy recruited from the streets.

Day 11 Australia – Depart for home

After breakfast this morning we make our way to Thien Phuoc orphanage which houses approximately 65 children all of whom have a disability. Some of the children are orphans while others could not be cared for by family members due to lack of finance and facilities at home. The children are cared for by a group of nuns who have dedicated their lives to these children. We will volunteer and help with such things as meal times (this can take up to 3 hours) and simply visit and interact with the children.

Later this afternoon, we make our way to the airport for our journey home.

Day 12 Arrive Home

We arrive home today.

