



BAMBOO SOJOURN

17-Day Slow Vietnam Journey

Hanoi - Ninh Binh - Ha Long Bay - Hue - Hoi An - Ho Chi Minh City - Ben Tre

A measured private journey through Vietnam, designed around longer stays, later mornings, fewer programmed hours and natural pauses.

How the rhythm is protected

Most sightseeing days begin between 8:30 and 9:30. Earlier starts are used only when flights, cruises or local operating conditions require them.

Each day follows one principal narrative. Post-flight schedules remain light, selected afternoons are deliberately open, and Hoi An includes one full free day.

Cycling, stairs and longer walks have supported alternatives. Private transfers, guiding, luggage movement and hotel coordination are planned as one continuous operation.

Selected central four- and five-star hotels, a quality overnight cruise and carefully chosen restaurants support the journey without making the itinerary feel over-programmed.

Day 1 - Arrival in Hanoi

Arrive at Noi Bai International Airport, where a local representative welcomes the group and assists with the private transfer into central Hanoi. Guests arriving on different flights are met individually, while the guide joins the principal arrival or meets the group at the hotel.

After check-in, the remainder of the day is deliberately left open for rest and recovery after the international journey. Depending on arrival times, guests may take a short independent walk near the hotel or simply settle into the property.

A welcome dinner is arranged when the flight pattern allows the group to gather comfortably. The evening remains relaxed, with no formal sightseeing scheduled.

Overnight: Hanoi | Meals: Dinner

Day 2 - Hanoi heritage and water puppetry

Begin at the Temple of Literature, founded in the 11th century and closely associated with Vietnam's Confucian educational tradition. The visit introduces the historic importance of scholarship, examinations and social advancement in Vietnamese society.

Continue to Ba Dinh, the political heart of modern Vietnam, for the Ho Chi Minh historical complex. Subject to opening conditions, the programme may include the mausoleum area, Presidential Palace grounds, Ho Chi Minh's stilt house and the One Pillar Pagoda. The visit considers both the historical setting and the place Ho Chi Minh continues to occupy in national memory and public life.

After lunch, return to the hotel. The entire afternoon is free for rest, a spa appointment, a nearby cafe or independent time in the city.

In the evening, attend a traditional water puppet performance. Dinner follows at a carefully selected restaurant.

Overnight: Hanoi | Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 3 - The Old Quarter at an unhurried pace

Begin later in the morning with a guided walk through Hanoi's Old Quarter. Rather than attempting to cover every street, the route concentrates on selected former trade streets, merchant houses, communal spaces and the continuing commercial life of the district.

The walk considers how family businesses, food vendors, religious spaces and tourism now share a dense historic neighbourhood. Pause for Vietnamese coffee or hot tea before continuing to lunch.

The afternoon is free. Guests who would like an additional cultural visit may add the Vietnam National Museum of History, subject to opening hours, but it remains optional rather than part of the core programme.

Overnight: Hanoi | Meals: Breakfast and lunch

Day 4 - Hanoi to Ninh Binh

Leave Hanoi after the morning rush and travel south through the Red River Delta to Ninh Binh.

Visit Hoa Lu, the capital of Vietnam during the Dinh and Early Le dynasties in the 10th century. Set beneath limestone formations, the site provides useful historical context before the journey moves into the agricultural landscape of the region.

After lunch, continue to the countryside hotel or resort and check in. The afternoon remains open for the gardens, the pool, a gentle walk near the property or simply time to enjoy the rural setting.

No cycling or additional sightseeing is scheduled today.

Overnight: Ninh Binh | Meals: Breakfast and lunch

Day 5 - Rural Ninh Binh and Trang An

After breakfast, explore the countryside by bicycle, with a supported vehicle alternative available for guests who prefer not to ride. Follow quiet lanes through villages, rice fields and limestone valleys, allowing time to observe the working landscape rather than moving through a chain of staged stops.

A local encounter may be included according to the group profile and operating conditions. The focus is on everyday rural life, agriculture and the ways communities have adapted around tourism and changing livelihoods.

After lunch and a pause, continue to Trang An. A small rowing boat carries guests through rivers, caves and enclosed limestone valleys closely connected to the surrounding agricultural landscape.

Return to the hotel in the late afternoon. The evening is free.

Overnight: Ninh Binh | Meals: Breakfast and lunch

Day 6 - Early departure for Ha Long Bay

Depart early from Ninh Binh because the road journey to the cruise harbour normally requires approximately four to five hours, depending on traffic and the vessel's boarding point. This is one of the few intentionally early starts on the journey and is necessary to protect the cruise schedule.

Board the overnight vessel in time for lunch as the cruise begins its passage through Ha Long Bay or a quieter neighbouring section of the wider bay system.

The afternoon includes one light activity selected by the cruise operator, which may be kayaking, a small-boat excursion, a cave visit or time on deck. The programme is not overloaded after the long road transfer.

Return to the vessel for sunset, dinner and an evening among the limestone islands.

Overnight: Ha Long Bay cruise | Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 7 - Ha Long Bay to Hue

Begin with the quiet morning atmosphere of the bay. Guests may join an optional early activity before breakfast, or remain on board and enjoy the scenery at their own pace.

The vessel continues through the limestone landscape before returning to port in the late morning. Brunch is served before disembarkation.

Transfer to the appropriate regional airport for the flight to Central Vietnam. Depending on the operating schedule, the arrival airport may be Hue or Da Nang, followed by a private road transfer to the hotel in Hue.

No formal sightseeing is scheduled after arrival. Guests may have a light dinner and rest.

Overnight: Hue | Meals: Breakfast or brunch

Day 8 - Kim Long garden houses and local life

Begin later and spend the day in Kim Long, a historic residential area along the Perfume River once associated with mandarins, royal relatives and influential families of the Nguyen period.

Travel primarily by bicycle along flat roads and quiet lanes, with a supported vehicle alternative for guests who prefer not to cycle. Visit garden houses where architecture, ancestral spaces, fruit trees, herbs and household traditions remain closely connected.

Meet local residents and learn how family history, food, landscape and traditional ideas of wellbeing are integrated into daily life. The experience may include tea, seasonal snacks or small household demonstrations according to the host and season.

Share a home-style Hue lunch and allow time to remain with the hosts rather than leaving immediately after the meal. Return to the hotel in mid-afternoon, leaving the remainder of the day free.

Overnight: Hue | Meals: Breakfast and lunch

Day 9 - Imperial Hue and a vegetarian evening

Visit Hue's Imperial City in the morning, the former political and ceremonial centre of the Nguyen dynasty.

Walk through the royal complex while learning about court life, state ritual, architecture and the decline of imperial rule during the colonial and wartime periods. The visit complements the previous day in Kim Long: one explores the residential world connected to the court, while the other examines the formal centre from which the dynasty governed.

After lunch, return to the hotel for a long rest. No additional afternoon visit is scheduled.

In the evening, travel through Hue by cyclo, passing illuminated streets and quieter neighbourhoods before a carefully selected vegetarian dinner. The meal introduces the depth of Hue's Buddhist and household vegetarian traditions without turning the evening into another formal food programme.

Overnight: Hue | Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 10 - Hue to Hoi An

Enjoy a slow morning before leaving Hue for Hoi An. Travel south through the coastal landscape, with views toward Lang Co and the Hai Van area.

A selected lunch stop is included along the route. Short photographic or comfort stops may be made, but the transfer is not overloaded with extra attractions.

Arrive in Hoi An during the afternoon and check in. Allow time to rest before a short orientation walk through the old town in the cooler early evening.

Dinner is at leisure, giving guests the option to remain in town or return to the hotel.

Overnight: Hoi An | Meals: Breakfast and lunch

Day 11 - Hoi An craft, gardens and cooking

Begin in or near the historic centre with a lantern-making workshop. Under the guidance of a local craft instructor, guests learn about the structure and assembly of the fabric lanterns now closely associated with Hoi An, completing a small piece to take away.

Continue to a local market or the gardens of Tra Que, depending on the final operating plan. Walk through cultivated plots and learn how fresh herbs and vegetables are used in Central Vietnamese cooking. The visit remains grounded and avoids staged 'farmer for a day' activities.

Join a hands-on cooking session using regional ingredients, followed by lunch featuring the dishes prepared during the class.

Return to the hotel in the early afternoon. The rest of the day is free for swimming, shopping, a spa treatment or independent time in the old town.

Overnight: Hoi An | Meals: Breakfast and lunch

Day 12 - A full day to inhabit Hoi An

There is no scheduled departure today. The day is intentionally left open so guests can experience Hoi An according to their own interests and energy.

Guests may return independently to the old town, spend time at the beach or pool, visit a tailor, arrange a spa treatment, sit in a cafe or simply follow the rhythm of the neighbourhood around the hotel.

The guide and operations team can provide practical suggestions and transport support where required, but there is no compulsory programme. An optional hosted dinner may be arranged for groups that prefer to gather in the evening.

Overnight: Hoi An | Meals: Breakfast

Day 13 - Hoi An to Ho Chi Minh City

Keep the morning light before checking out and transferring to Da Nang International Airport for the flight to Ho Chi Minh City.

Upon arrival, meet the local team and transfer privately to the hotel in central Saigon. Luggage and room arrangements are coordinated in advance so the group can settle in without an additional programme immediately after the flight.

If the flight schedule permits, take a short late-afternoon orientation walk through the central district, introducing the city's colonial commercial core, public spaces and contemporary street life.

The evening remains relaxed, with dinner arranged or left independent according to the final flight timing.

Overnight: Ho Chi Minh City | Meals: Breakfast and dinner

Day 14 - Market to Market

Begin the morning with Market to Market, a signature walking experience through central Saigon. Rather than following a conventional landmark checklist, the route examines how the city trades, eats and adapts.

Walk through older market streets, narrow trading lanes, food counters and neighbourhood spaces before continuing toward Ben Thanh Market. Selected tastings and street-level observations help explain the communities and economic layers that have shaped central Saigon.

The experience considers both formal and informal commerce, the relationship between traditional markets and modern development, and the influence of Vietnamese, Chinese, Indian and European communities.

The walk concludes around lunchtime. After lunch, the remainder of the day is free for independent sightseeing, shopping, a rooftop drink or rest at the hotel.

Overnight: Ho Chi Minh City | Meals: Breakfast and lunch

Day 15 - Two perspectives on wartime Saigon

Today is organised around one coherent wartime route, selected according to the group's interests. The two programmes are alternatives rather than a single overloaded day.

The Cu Chi programme leaves the city in the morning to examine the tunnel landscape, underground engineering, rural communities and the practical realities of wartime survival. Guests are not required to crawl through confined sections, and the shooting range is avoided. Return to the city after lunch, leaving the afternoon and evening free.

Alternatively, remain in Saigon for an urban route linking Phở Bình, a preserved weapons bunker and the War Remnants Museum. Together, these sites reveal how wartime networks operated beneath ordinary city life and how the conflict is remembered in Vietnam today.

Whichever route is selected, the programme finishes with enough time to rest and absorb the material rather than adding unrelated sightseeing.

Overnight: Ho Chi Minh City | Meals: Breakfast and lunch

Day 16 - Ben Tre and the Mekong Delta

Leave Ho Chi Minh City in the morning and travel south to Ben Tre, entering a landscape of small roads, waterways, coconut gardens and rural settlements.

Begin at a working local market or riverside community before travelling by motorised boat along the larger waterways. Observe homes, agricultural activity, small docks and the movement of goods through the delta.

Continue into the coconut-growing countryside by a small local vehicle, walking or light cycling according to the group profile. Visit family enterprises or household producers to understand how coconut, fruit cultivation, local transport and small-scale trade support rural livelihoods. Obligatory shopping stops are avoided.

A hand-rowed sampan may be included for a quieter passage through palm-lined canals. Lunch is served in a small local or home-style setting using regional and seasonal ingredients.

Return to Ho Chi Minh City in the late afternoon. The evening is free for a farewell dinner.

Overnight: Ho Chi Minh City | Meals: Breakfast and lunch

Day 17 - Departure

Breakfast is served at the hotel. Rooms remain available until the standard check-out time unless a late check-out has been arranged.

Guests with later flights may keep the morning free for cafes, shopping or independent exploration near the hotel.

At the appropriate time, transfer privately to Tan Son Nhat International Airport for the onward flight.

Meals: Breakfast

Operating notes

Hotels

Carefully selected central four- and five-star hotels, with resort-style properties in Ninh Binh and Hoi An where they strengthen the pace of the journey.

Guiding

Regional specialists or one national guide throughout, depending on group profile, language and preferred continuity.

Private operation

Private vehicles, private guiding and coordinated transfers. Guests arriving on different flights can be met individually.

Mobility

Cycling in Ninh Binh, Kim Long and Ben Tre is short and recreational, with supported vehicle alternatives planned in advance.

Wartime day

Cu Chi and the urban wartime route are alternatives. They are not combined into one overloaded day.