



VIETNAM - CYCLING HOLIDAYS

VIETNAM – FROM HANOI TO HO CHI MINH CITY (SAIGON)

16-days / 15-nights guided inn-to-inn road touring – ancient sites, modern cities, beaches & highlands

Departs: November - February

Cost from: **US\$3995** per person twin share Single room supplement from: US\$795

Bike hire: **US\$400** per bike if required - all prices are shown in US Dollars – please contact us for the Australian dollar rate

Groups: Minimum of 6 to maximum of 18 cyclists per tour

Rating: Moderate - most roads paved but rough surfaces - mountain bike and road tyres ideal.

The trip can also be split into two sections: **Ancient Vietnam** (10 Days: from US\$2795 per person + US\$270 bike hire), which is Hanoi to Nha Trang, and **Beaches and Highlands** (9 Days: from US\$2395 per person + US\$245 bike hire) from Nha Trang to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City).

We also offer a Hanoi and Halong Bay 3-day / 2-night pre tour (from US\$505 per person, no biking) that includes an overnight on a junk in the World Heritage Park, and a Mekong Delta 4-day / 3-night extension (from US\$1070 per person + US\$90 Bike hire) which starts and ends in Ho Chi Minh City.



Our Vietnam cycling route was created to include quiet roads and an extra day in the Highlands. Journey from Imperial City of Hue to historic Hoi An, the golden beaches of Nha Trang, the former French spa resort Dalat, to the cosmopolitan city of Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City). We offer you the chance to see this captivating country alongside the friendly locals, as you pedal past rice fields, visit local ethnic villages and explore imperial cities.

We stay at mostly 3 and 4 star hotels and lodges that have been carefully chosen for their character and location. We run many custom tours for groups small or large, using the standard of accommodation of your choice. Groups larger than six cyclists qualify for a discount.

Distances between overnight lodgings in Vietnam are often too far to cycle, so we drive part way and cycle the best and most scenic sections, avoiding the busy highways. The trip is fully supported with drivers and English-speaking guides, who cycle with you, and includes three meals a day on most days.



Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for Reservations

Suggested itinerary:

Pre-tour – Hanoi and Halong Bay

We recommend you add a few extra days in Hanoi and the World Heritage Park of Halong Bay before the tour. Hanoi, particularly the Old Quarter, deserves at least a full day even if you are not taking the pre-tour Halong Bay extension. We can arrange for you to be met at Hanoi Airport and transferred to your hotel.

Day 1: Arrival in Hanoi

You will be met at Hanoi Airport (please notify us of your arrival details and look for the driver with a sign). Today is designed to allow you settle in and relax after your journey. The Old Quarter, with its narrow streets where tradespeople can be seen working on the pavement, is well worth exploring. The Water Puppet show is also highly recommended – it is best to pre-book on arrival in Hanoi. (D)

Day 2: Arrive Hue

Travel day

This morning we take the morning flight from Hanoi to Hue. Hue is built on the banks of the Perfume River and steeped in 3,000 years of history. After introductions we will fit you to your rental bike, or unpack your own and then explore the Citadel and Forbidden City by cycle. At dinner tonight we may be entertained with traditional music in the garden courtyard. (B, L, D - B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner)

Accommodation: 4-star grand old French Colonial style hotel by the Perfume River with garden courtyard, in-house restaurant, bar, swimming pool.

Day 3: Hue to Hoi An

Cycling section: 61km or 106km

We drive from Hue (you are welcome to cycle if you would like) to Lang Co Beach, a superb beach where you may like to have a swim before biking. After a few km of flat road, we tackle the Hai Van Pass, a very quiet road now that there is a tunnel (not open to cyclists). The view from the top and on the descent is outstanding and well worth the effort (the support vehicle will be there should you prefer to drive). After a fabulous descent we reach Danang. From here you may like to visit China Beach where American servicemen went for their R&R during the Vietnam /American War or view the exquisite workmanship at a marble factory. (B, L, D)

Accommodation: Resort with restaurant, bar, tennis court, swimming pool, laundry service. A beautiful garden setting on the banks of the Thu Bon River and just a short walk from the old town.

Day 4: Hoi An

Rest Day

Today is a day at leisure to explore this delightful town (dating back to 200BC) with its street side cafes, artists and markets. Explore the historic architecture of Japanese and French origin, take in the morning concert of traditional music or take a gentle ride (@10km return) to fabulous Hoi An beach. Let your guide know if you would like a longer ride.

There is much to see and do. There are wonderful pastry shops in the old town and excellent tailors who will make any garment to measure in a few hours. There is a wonderful cooking school in Hoi An, let your guide know if you would like to book a cooking class. (B - Lunch and dinner are not included today; there are several attractive riverside restaurants).

Day 5: Hoi An to Sa Huynh: 234km

Cycling section: 82km, back road sections: 32km

We leave Hoi An on a delightful little road into the countryside where we will sample a slice of rural Vietnamese life. We cycle roughly 50km hugging the coastline before a half hour vehicle transfer to Tam Ky for lunch. After lunch we drive to Chau O Town where we start our ride on country roads, passing a fishing village and a lively local market. The route includes 12km of unsealed road; it is quite rideable but the support vehicle will never be far away. The ride finishes at My Lai where you may wish to visit the memorial site. We then drive to Sa Huynh for our overnight stay. (B, L, D)

Accommodation: Resort-hotel with swimming pool and spa, set on the white sand beach, surrounded by pine forests, against the backdrop of the Truong Son mountain range.

Day 6: Sa Huynh to Quy Nhon: 133km

Cycling section: 88km

We drive to Tam Quan to commence cycling on an attractive minor road through several little villages and a range of scenery - mostly flat with two steep climbs. We drive the final 30km to our seaside resort (B, L, D)

Accommodation: Resort with spa, restaurant, fitness centre, tennis courts, centrally located, with a charming marina location.

Day 7: Quy Nhon to Tuy Hoa: 129km

Cycling section: 70km

We ride on a delightful quiet road through cassava and sugarcane plantations. We have a picnic lunch at Me Trang café before riding an additional 10km to where we re-join our vehicle and drive to Tuy Hoa city. (B, L, D)

Accommodation: Comfortable rooms, swimming pool with bar, located at the picturesque northern entrance of Tuy Hoa, nestled into the side of a lush forested hill along a white-sand beach.



Day 8: Tuy Hoa to Nha Trang: 150km

Cycling section 52km

Today's highlight is the ride to the top of Ca Pass: spectacular views of both jungle and bay. Afterwards we lunch and rest in the vehicle as we are transferred to Nha Trang. Our final short ride is through Nha Trang to our hotel, sharing the road with many local cyclists – schoolchildren often doubling up on their bikes. (B, L, D)

Accommodation: Our 4-star hotel for two nights overlooks a magnificent beach and ocean dotted with islands and is opposite many restaurants. Comfortable rooms, swimming pool, spa, restaurant and bar, Wifi.

Day 9: Nha Trang

Rest Day

Today there is the option of a boat trip to the islands. You will visit a fishing village and be rowed ashore in Vietnamese round boats. There will be time to swim and snorkel, so bring your 'togs'. We may take time to stop at the Oceanographic Institute and Tri Nguyen Aquarium; lunch will be at a lovely bamboo restaurant on an offshore island, returning to Nha Trang mid-afternoon. There may be time to visit an ancient Cham Tower, a relic from the ethnic people who once ruled this part of Vietnam. (B,L) Dinner is at own arrangements.

Day 10: Nha Trang to Buon Ma Thout 225km

Cycling section: 82km

Today we cycle through the mountainous Central Highlands, featuring the long houses of the Edeh and M'Nong people (the two main ethnic groups in the Central Highlands). Our morning ride takes us on quiet roads through a village with local market and around a national park. After lunch there is a climb to the Phuong Hoang Pass before a final drive to Buon Ma Thout, the coffee capital of Vietnam. (B, L, D)

Accommodation: A new, 3-star hotel in the city, with spa, swimming pool and tennis courts.

Day 11: Buon Ma Thout to Dalat 157km **Cycling section: to Lien Son: 60km uphill but good cycling**

We cycle on a very attractive road through a wonderful variety of scenery. Through hills and broad valleys we head for Lien Son, the summer palace of the late Emperor, with its sweeping views of Ho Lak and the surrounding countryside. We also stop at an ethnic village with long houses and may have the opportunity to ride on working elephants. (B, L, D)

Accommodation: 3-star hotel in the French colonial style with modern facilities, close to lake and town centre. No air conditioning, but Dalat enjoys milder temperatures than on the coast. We spend two nights here.

Day 12: Dalat,

Rest Day

Dalat, at 1475 metres above sea level, is a temperate region dotted with lakes and waterfalls and surrounded by evergreen forests, once a French hill station known as 'Little Paris'. The surrounding hills provide South Vietnam with cooler-climate flowers, fruit and vegetables, like strawberries, carrots and apples. In the morning we visit a silk embroidery village, the 'Crazy House', known for its weird architecture, and the Art Deco summer palace built for former emperor Bao Dai in 1933. The afternoon is free for you to explore Dalat by foot or bicycle. You may wish to cycle around Xuan Huong Lake, or take the cable car to the Zen Pagoda. A half-day tour to an ethnic village is an optional extra – please ask your guide to arrange this. (B)

Day 13: Dalat to Mui Ne: 164 km

Cycling section: 80km

We descend the Prenn Pass, and then take a minor road with superb views through isolated country to a K'Ho ethnic minority village where we have lunch. From here we continue to descend gently to the coast and our overnight stay at a beautiful resort on the golden sands of Mui Ne (near Phan Tiet). (B, L, D)

Accommodation: Attractive 4 star beachside resort with a combination of French colonial and Vietnamese country house styles, with restaurants, spa and swimming pools.



Day 14: Mui Ne to Loc An:

Cycling section: 121km

Quiet roads take us to the coastal desert reserve at Phuoc Buu. Lunch will be at La Gi. In the afternoon there will be more coastal riding as we cycle beside large sand dunes and plantations of the bizarre looking Dragon fruit. (B, L, D)

Accommodation: A comfortable hotel with spa and swimming pool, set within beautiful grounds, right on Ho Tram Beach.

Day 15: Loc An Beach to Saigon:

Cycling section: 64km

We cycle by rubber, cashew nut and black pepper plantations. On reaching a roadside temple we load up to avoid the busy highway into Ho Chi Minh City. Celebrate your ride with a group farewell dinner at a local restaurant. (B, L, D)

Accommodation: A comfortable, centrally located, French style hotel close to good shopping, a local market and a selection of restaurants. It offers satellite TV, Swimming pool, fitness centre, laundry.

Day 16: Ho Chi Minh City

The tour finishes after breakfast. We will gladly take you to the airport should you depart this morning. We hope you have enjoyed your holiday and wish you a safe journey home.

Note: Cycling distances given are entirely optional; a support van will be available at all times

As an optional pre-tour extension we recommend you add a few extra days in Hanoi and visit the World Heritage Park of Halong Bay You may also like to join our **Mekong Delta** post-tour extension: ask our reservations team for more details on either of these options.

If you have explored the south, we offer a **Far North Vietnam** guided cycling tour, which takes in the highlands and Sapa, with its colourful and wide variation of ethnic cultures and landscapes. Ask for details and itinerary (13 day tour starts from Hanoi on 8th March 2017, cost from US\$2995 + bike hire US\$355).

Inn-to-inn cycling holidays - guided or self-guided - are available from **Outdoor Travel** in many destinations around the world including Vietnam, China, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and in most countries across Europe including France, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, England and Ireland.

Bike and Boating cruises are available in Vietnam and in many regions of Europe including the **Dalmatian Coast** of Croatia, the Aegean Island and **Santorini** in Greece, the Southern **Lycian Coast** of Turkey, the **Amalfi Coast or Venice** in Italy, and along the canals and rivers of France, Belgium, Germany and Holland.

For reservations or further information call OUTDOOR TRAVEL Pty Ltd

- Toll free on 1800 331 582 or (03) 57551743 or Fax (03) 57501020
- Email: info@outdoortravel.com.au
- Web: <http://www.outdoortravel.com.au>
- Mail: Outdoor Travel Pty Ltd, PO Box 286, Bright, VIC 3741, Australia

Comments on this tour from Outdoor Travel's Reservations Manager: Susi Texler



“Vietnam is an amazing, chaotic, vibrant and friendly place, not to mention hot and sticky...” That was the first thing I wrote in my trip diary. As I was to discover, a cycling trip in Vietnam has more facets than a diamond and I was to discover many of them over the next 2-weeks or so.

The scenery was glorious, food was fantastic, and drinks were usually cold and the accommodation delightful, from 4-star beachside resorts to quality, centrally located hotels. The cycling was varied and as challenging as required (Hooray! for the air-conditioned Mercedes mini-coach...), the bikes good quality and excellently maintained, the group really fun and the guides quite fabulous, if occasionally misinterpreted. A smile always got one by, when words failed. The guide's service level was exceptional and they are always on hand with a cool towelette, cold bottled water, peanut brittle, bananas and other snacks.

The group comprised of 15 Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders and Americans. The common factors were a desire to cycle, a convivial temperament and a desire to celebrate at the end of each day. Those with a 'Tour de France' cycling mentality were well balanced by the photo-taking, recreational members of the party. There was a definite need to be fit enough to cycle – I had prepared with weekend rides of 45km over undulating terrain and perhaps should have done a few longer distances, if only to enjoy the scenery more. The total daily distances varied from 68km to over 100km, usually done in two or three sections. However, there was always the support vehicle sweeping past, so while the desire to complete each leg was strong, one only had to make a simple 'hand on helmet' gesture, and quickly, there was a cool drink in hand and you were on an informative and entertaining coach ride to the next stop.

Half the fun of cycling in Vietnam was swerving around the plethora of cows, dogs, water buffalo, motorbikes (by the thousand - they have largely replaced pushbikes), carts, chickens and wandering children - all with big smiles and waving 'Hello's. Each little village (and there were many!) was a chaotic mix of market stalls, shacks, concrete pastel houses, school kids on bikes, old ladies in conical straw hats and outrageously overloaded scooters carrying everything from a family of four to steel pipes to pigs in baskets!

The landscapes changed regularly, from flat rice paddy country, to sweeping, roller coaster, coastal dunes and seascapes, to jungle and plantation covered hills and mountains. The roads were usually good, asphalt or concrete. Although due to our desire to discover the secrets of rural Vietnam, there were sections of quiet, back country roads that required skilful negotiating of potholes or were unsealed. Cycling these was optional, of course, but most of us were excited by the challenge.

November is cycling season in Vietnam, but of course the only thing we can't control is the weather.... As luck would have it, we were met by the most unexpected floods of the season, which meant it rained often and there was a fair bit of mud. This made for some good cycling temperatures and we soon got used to speedy donning of rain jackets and carried on, regardless. It also made for some fascinating experiences, including having our bikes and selves loaded onto wooden canoes to be poled across flooded causeways.

The weather returned to sunshine for our extension to Halong Bay. This was a huge highlight of the tour and I would urge anyone doing this tour to take it – it was an exceptional reward. Our junk was as funky and oriental as could be hoped for, complete with dragons on every corner and loads of dark timber and bamboo thatch. As well as comfy beds and doonas, ensuite cabins, pressed table linen, fine crystal glassware, good wine and multi-course meals to die for. Halong Bay is the most extraordinary place I have ever been to and the vista from the deck was absolutely awe-inspiring.

*Would I cycle in Vietnam again? Absolutely! Call me if you have any questions on (03) 57501044.....**Susi***

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