



INDOCHINA PIONEER

Experience, Learn, Enjoy

VIETNAM OVERVIEW

Saigon • Mekong Delta • Hanoi • Halong Bay

(Please note that this is a sample itinerary and can be amended to suit)

Vietnam, an S-shaped country (or as the Vietnamese proudly say, "a dragon shape country") is located to the west of the South China Sea (or Bien Dong – The East Sea – as the Vietnamese name it). With all her hidden charm in culture, history and people, Vietnam has gained her fame in recent years throughout the world as a safe and attractive destination. The beauty of this place is that not only does Vietnam offer travelers a valuable insight into her rich culture, her various lifestyles, or being one of the world's leading rice baskets, but she also offers a fantastically adventurous and educational holiday.



Briefed Itinerary

- Day 1 Saigon arrival
- Day 2 Saigon City tour – Cu Chi tunnels
- Day 3 Saigon – Mekong Delta
- Day 4 Saigon – Fly to Hanoi
- Day 5 Hanoi City tour
- Day 6 Hanoi - Halong Bay
- Day 7 Halong – Hanoi
- Day 8 Departure day

Quick Facts

Tour grade: Easy (customizable)

Trip code: VL02 (private tour)

Trip duration: 8 days/ 7 nites

- ● ● ● ● Comfort 5
- ● ● ● ● Active 1

Highlights:

Trip Map





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- Savour the dynamic city of Saigon, Explore the fascinating Cu Chi tunnels and the vibrant Cai Be floating market.
- Visit the historic sites of Hanoi, Walking tour of the Old and see the puppet show
- Sail across tranquil Halong Bay, Enjoy seafood banquets and spend an overnight boat cruise.

Land Only Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Saigon (D)

Upon arrival, you will be welcomed by our guide and transferred to your hotel in (previously known as Saigon). The remainder of the day is free for you to explore and orient yourself in this busy city before our welcome dinner in a Vietnamese restaurant in downtown Saigon.

Day 2: Saigon City Tour – Cu Chi Tunnels (B, L)

We start our day with a cyclo tour to see the major attractions of the city. The cyclo drivers will take us to the War Remnants Museum and The Reunification Palace, and will pass by the former American Embassy (now the American Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City). We will also visit the Notre Dame Cathedral, the City General Post Office as well as Dong Khoi Street where the City Opera House is located. Our morning will be followed by a quick and delicious lunch at the a Vietnamese restaurant.

After lunch we will take a bus trip to Cu Chi Tunnels, a Viet Cong Stronghold during the American War between 1965 and 1975. First constructed in 1948, during the French Resistance War, the tunnels were expanded by the Viet Cong, with the help of the local people, into a complex underground network stretching over 250 km. A visit to this place will offer us an insight into the war when Vietnamese determination and loyalty to their country overcame the hardships of the times and eventually brought the war to an end.

Day 3: Saigon – Mekong Delta/ Cai Be Princess (B, L)

This deluxe sampan cruise starts along the Mekong canals to Dong Hoa Hiep Island located between Vinh Long and Cai Be. During this cruise you will discover beautiful landscapes along the river and observe the typical Mekong delta rural life. These evergreen islands among the Mekong River still remain unknown to many people.

Lunch awaits at Le Longanier restaurant at La Residence de Phu An resort, a superb Indochine style resort. After a short walk along a narrow canal, the excursion will end at around 3.30pm where the vehicle will await you for your transfer back to Saigon.

Day 4: Saigon – Flight to Hanoi (B, L, D)

This morning we depart from Tan Son Nhat airport for a short flight to Hanoi. We check in to our hotel once we arrive in Hanoi, with the remainder of the day free to explore the dynamic city. This evening we will attend the unique traditional Water Puppet Show, followed by dinner in the city.

Day 5: Hanoi City Tour (B, L)

We begin the morning with a visit to the Ho Chi Minh Complex, which includes the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, his house on stilts and his Museum. One of Vietnam's oldest pagodas with its unique architecture, One Pillar Pagoda, is also at the same site. Another hour will be spent to see the Temple of Literature, which is known as the very first university of Vietnam (established in 1076!). We enjoy lunch in a Vietnamese restaurant to sample some of the finest Hanoi cuisine.

In the afternoon we will visit the Vietnam Ethnology Museum where we can learn about the cultures, beliefs, distributions and the development of Vietnam's 54 ethnic groups. Our bus will then take us to Hoan Kiem (Sword Restored) Lake to see Ngoc Son Temple and then followed with a Hanoi Walking tour. Dinner will be back at our hotel. Overnight in our hotel.



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Day 6: Hanoi - Halong Bay (B, L, D)

Halong Bay is our destination today. Our bus trip there will take us on a 3.5 hour journey on a scenic road with plenty to see along the way. We may even have some photo opportunities on the way. Once we board our boat in Halong Bay, we can enjoy a delicious seafood lunch while soaking up the magnificence of the UNESCO Heritage area. This afternoon we will visit Sung Sot Cave (Amazing Cave) – one of the largest caves in Halong Bay, before climbing Titop Mountain for some panoramic views of the stunning sunset over Halong Bay. We will have our dinner back on our boat and settle in for a relaxing sleep onboard our junk boat.

Day 7: Halong Bay – Hanoi (B, D)

We wake up with the sunrise, enjoy a buffet brunch on board then head back to the shore for our drive back to Hanoi. Tonight we will enjoy a fare – well dinner in a local Vietnamese restaurant.

Day 8: Departure Day

Free time until departure from Hanoi for flight home.

Hotels to be used

Hotel Name	Location	Star Rating	Website
Caravelle Hotel	Saigon	5 Star	www.caravellehotel.com
Paradise Cruise	Halong	Luxury	www.paradisecruises.org
InterContinental Westlake	Hanoi	5 Star	www.intercontinentalhanoi.com

Price

Policy Applied	Valid from now until 30 Sep 2010 Price per person in USD in party of						
Group Size	1	2	3 - 5	6 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 15	Sgl Sup
Price list	2,393	1,448	1,354	1,233	1,209	1,185	608

Note: Price may be subject to currency fluctuation until deposit it made. Please note that these services have not yet been booked and this proposal is subject to availability.

Tour includes:

- National Escort for group of ten or above. Regional tour guide(s) applied for group under 10.
- All transfers and transportation
- Accommodation based on twin shared room at selected hotels with daily breakfast
Check-in time at all hotels is 14:00 and check-out time at all hotels is 12.00
Early check-in and late check-out is subject to availability with surcharge.
- Meals as mentioned in the itinerary (B= Breakfast, L= Lunch, D= Dinner)
- Domestic flight: Saigon –Hanoi (economy class)
- All guided sightseeing fees and entrance fees as per itinerary

Tour excludes:

- Travel Insurance (Compulsory)
- Other flight tickets
- Visas and airport departure tax



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- Meals, drinks and other those mentioned in the itinerary
- Laundry, telephone calls and expenditure of a personal nature
- Tips and gratuities

Practical Information

Country Facts:

- Official Name: The Socialist Republic of Vietnam
- Population: 84 million
- Language: Vietnamese
- Religion: Predominantly Buddhist, with Confucianism, Taoism and other minorities.
- Currency: Vietnam Dong (VND)
- Time Zone: GMT plus 7 hours
- Electricity: 220V, 50 Hz AC (some 110V, 50HZ AC) 2 pin plugs
- Weights and Measurements: Metric
- International Dialing Code: +84

Travel Insurance (compulsory)

Indochina Pioneer Vietnam does everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. However, traveling always involves some risk, so we require that you purchase travel insurance to protect you and your possessions against trip cancellation, medical problems, baggage loss or damage.

Direct Customer Service: info@indochinapioneer.com

Website: www.indochinapioneer.com

Passports

You must have a valid passport which expires no later than 6 months after the date you leave Vietnam

Visas

You must have either a letter of approval for a visa or a valid visa on arrival in Vietnam. You can get a Vietnam tourist visa from any Vietnam Embassy or consulate office world wide. Your travel agency can also obtain a visa on your behalf.

Your Health: Preventing Illness

We recommend you consult your doctor for vaccinations, preventions and medications needed for traveling in tropical country like Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Your First Aid Kit

It's a good idea to bring a first aid kit stored in a watertight container. You may never need the following items, but it's good to be prepared.

Your Pre - departure Check List

- Travel documents (passport, visas, travel insurance certificate, air tickets, tour voucher)
- Money (traveler's cheques, cash, credit card, debit card and money pouch)
- Day pack for your personal needs during the day
- First aid kit
- Medication, including a doctor's letter if you are carrying a large amount of medication
- Prescription glasses and contact lens solution if required
- Alarm clock
- Flashlight
- Travel plug/international adapter



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- Insect repellent
- Refillable water bottle and water purification method
- Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
- Bathing suit
- Lightweight travel towel
- Ear plugs/eye mask
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Local language phrase book
- Camera, film and/or memory cards with spare batteries
- Raincoat/umbrella
- Waterproof jacket
- Tampons (difficult to buy in Vietnam)
- Clothes suitable for visiting temples (long pants or long skirts, long sleeved tops)
- Warm clothes for winter months. (Nov to Feb)

Please note: As domestic airlines impose a maximum baggage weight of approximately 20kg, try to travel light. Also, train cabins and boat cabins in Halong Bay have limited space so pack light and use soft luggage if possible.

Money

The local currency is the VND (dong). Bank notes come in denominations of 100, 200, 500, 1000, 2,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000, 50,000, 100,000d and 500,000 dong. Coins come in denominations of 200, 500, 1000, 2000, and 5000 dong.

Updated exchange rate can be found at <http://www.xe.com>

Both Vietnam Dong and USD can easily be used for purchasing.

ATMs are popular around the country. Credit cards are widely accepted in large shopping place and hotels, restaurants. Some small cash needed for petty shopping.

Departure airport taxes

Your international and domestic tickets include departure tax.

The Climate

The Vietnamese climate is variable and differs widely from north to south and within regions. Flooding may cause minor alterations to trip itineraries.

Check <http://www.weather.com>

Safety

Vietnam is considered one of the safest destinations in Asia. Women and independent travelers can travel easily here. Petty theft and purse snatchings sometimes occur, especially in the larger centres. The usual precautions are recommended: keep your bags zipped and close to you at all times. Do not carry large amounts of money. Keep some money in your hotel safe. When you are away from your hotel, you should remember to carry bottled water, toilet paper, a copy of your passport/visa/travel insurance/some limited cash/credit card cancellation numbers, your first aid kit, medications and hotel card. And don't forget your camera.

Food and Beverage

Travellers to Vietnam love the food! Its style is unique, relying on quality and seasonally fresh ingredients rather than added spice. The traditional Vietnamese breakfast is Pho – a bowl of rice noodles flavored with sliced beef or chicken and fragrant broth, garnished with fresh coriander and bean sprouts. Excellent and well priced seafood is available throughout the country. Duck, chicken, beef, and lean pork are also featured on most menus, as well as fresh salads and vegetable dishes and delicious legacies from the French colonial period.



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The Buddhist influence also means lots of vegetables. Bottled mineral water, soft drinks, and Vietnamese tea and coffee are readily available. Beer, usually a light larger style, is the main alcoholic drink. The local rice wine (ruou gao) is popular with many Vietnamese.. Just remember, do not drink (or even brush your teeth) with tap water. Use bottled water instead. It is safe to have ice in your drinks, and there is no need to avoid fruits and vegetables. Strict vegetarians should make it clear that they do not eat meat and fish as either may be included in vegetable dishes.

Clothing

We recommend light, comfortable, and easy to launder clothing. It can be cool during Hanoi's winter and the rainy season in the central region, so a sweater or light jacket will come in handy. Thermal underwear is a must you are trekking in winter. You will need good walking shoes and sandals that can be easily removed for visiting temples and private homes. Your knees and shoulders should be covered when you are entering a temple.

Etiquette

Body language: You should know that most Asian people believe that the head is the most important part of the body. To touch a Cambodian or Laotian or some Vietnamese people on the head is a grievous insult. Conversely, the feet are the lowest and the dirtiest part of the body. To point your feet at someone is an insult. To point your feet at an image of Buddha is unforgivable. Women should never touch monks and avoid sitting next to them on public transport.

Business hours

Government agencies work Monday to Friday from 7:30 hrs to 16:30 hrs (excluding one-hour lunch) and are closed Saturday and Sunday. Banks are open Monday to Friday from 7:30 hrs or 8:00 to 11.30 hrs and from 13:00 hrs to 16:00 hrs and are closed Saturday and Sunday. Private shops are open from 8:00 or 8:30 hrs to 21:00 or 11:00 hrs

Tipping

If you are happy with services provided by your local guides and drivers, a tip, though not compulsory, is appropriate. While it may not be customary to you, it is of great significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels, it inspires excellent service, and is an entrenched feature of the tourism industry across destinations. Here are our suggestions;

- Meals (restaurants): the average amount is \$1
- Guides: We recommend \$2-\$5 per day for local guides (depending on group size),
- Drivers: You will have a range of drivers on your trip. Some will be with you for a short journey while others may be with you for few days. We would recommend a higher tip for those more involved with the group however a base of \$1 to \$2 per day would be appropriate (depending on group size).
- Bellboy: the average amount is \$1
- Chambermaid: the average amount is \$1 per day.

For larger groups and adventure trips you may want to increase this. But please remember that it's totally up to you, these are guidelines only.

For fully detailed travel tips in Indochina, please click [travel guide](#) on our website

For any further information or inquiries, please feel free to email us at sales@indochinapioneer.com