



EXPLORE VIETNAM

Nov. 6 – Nov. 18, 2022

National Geographic Journey



Cost

\$2349 per person double occupancy
\$350 non-refundable deposit holds your spot
\$739 My Own Room single supplement
Final payment due **July 15, 2022**

Details

International air is not included
All internal transfers are included
Upgraded service level
Activity level 2

Immerse yourself in Vietnam's mesmerizing culture and momentous history on a journey from the emerald mountains of the north to the sun-drenched beaches of the south. Discover a plethora of UNESCO World Heritage sites, including the imperial city of Hue and mystical Ha Long Bay. Glimpse rural life on a hike through idyllic Mai Chau Valley; enjoy a cycle ride through the heart of bustling Hanoi; and descend into the famed Cu Chi tunnels, where Viet Cong guerillas lived during the Vietnam War.

But one of the most unique experiences, that I'm so excited about, will be being tutored in noodle cooking by former street youth. Oodles of Noodles, in Hoi An, is an initiative that empowers under-privileged kids through skills and employment training. Our young guides are being trained in the culinary arts and will take us shopping in a noodle market in Hoi An, educate us on the varieties of noodles, then teach us how to cook our lunch.



NOV 6: HANOI

Arrive at any time. Arrival transfer is included.
Arrival Airport Transfer

Noi Bai International Airport, Hanoi

Travel from the airport to your hotel and get ready for an unforgettable journey. The adventure begins tonight; feel free to explore before your welcome meeting.

Accommodation: Golden Silk Boutique Hotel (or similar)
Meals included: None

NOV 7: HANOI/MAI CHAU VALLEY

Travel to the verdant Mai Chau Valley, a patchwork of rice paddies, emerald hills, and charming traditional villages. Opt to take a kayak out on the scenic Hoa Binh reservoir, the largest reservoir in Vietnam, or pedal through the countryside on a bike, enjoying the lush scenery and getting a glimpse of local life.

Optional Activities:

Cycling Mai Chu: Cycle through the lush countryside and small towns to get a great view of local life and the surrounding paddy fields.

Kayaking: Take a kayak out on the beautiful Hoa Binh reservoir (Vietnam's largest man-made reservoir) and take in the views of the surrounding hills and villages.

Accommodation: Mai Chau Hideaway Lake Resort (or similar)
Meals included: Breakfast

NOV 8: MAI CHAU VALLEY

Spend the day exploring the picturesque valley. Set out on a walk through the peaceful countryside, learning about the local tribes and customs, and visit a rural market for a fruit tasting. Choose to enjoy an authentic country lunch at a village home.

Village Walking Tour: Enjoy an easy walk-through rice paddies, terraces, and scenic green hills. Visit Na Phon village and a local traditional brickworks, continuing to Lac Village (White Tai ethnic group) or Mai Chau market for some exotic fruit tasting. Enjoy stunning natural landscapes while learning about the local ethnic tribes of the Mai Chau valley.

Optional Activities:

Mai Chau Village home meal: Enjoy a truly authentic dinner at a local home and get to know the ethnic White Tai culture firsthand.

Accommodation: Mai Chau Hideaway Lake Resort (or similar)
Meals included: Breakfast



NOV 9: MAI CHAU VALLEY/HANOI

Return to Hanoi and discover the bustling Vietnamese capital on a guided tour. Visit the mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh, one of Vietnam's most influential political leaders, and learn more about his life at the Presidential Palace, a French colonial-style building that was designed to be his official residence. Gain insights into the Vietnam War at



NOV 11: HANOI/HA LONG BAY

the Hoa Lo Prison, known by American POWs as the Hanoi Hilton; then jump on a cyclo, a three-wheel bicycle taxi, for a fun-filled ride through Hanoi's colorful Old Quarter.

Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and Museum Visit: Take a guided tour of the mausoleum where Ho Chi Minh's embalmed body is housed in a glass case. Continue to the Presidential Palace and visit the museum to learn about Ho Chi Minh's life and political history. Opt to visit the palace gardens.

Hoa Lo Prison (Hanoi Hilton) Guided Tour: Tour the museum of Hoa Lo Prison, referred to as Hanoi Hilton by American prisoners, to learn more about the Vietnam War.

Hanoi Cyclo Tour: Take a seat on a cyclo for a tour of Hanoi's lively Old Quarter. Let the driver navigate through the bustling streets and start taking some photos or just use the tour to help get familiar with the area.

Optional Activities:

Thăng Long Water Puppet Theatre Performance, 6USD/person: Watch a traditional Vietnamese water puppet show with beautiful live music and intricate puppets dancing in a water stage.

Hanoi Foodie Culture Tour: Indulge your inner foodie with a street food tour through bustling Hanoi. Follow your guide through the back streets and markets of the city's old quarter, sampling local fare along the way. Mingle with city natives and experienced street food artists alike, as you taste a variety of Hanoi faves like "nem ran" and "banh goi." Stop at a StreetSide bar to savor a draught beer like Hanoians do. Cap off the tour at the Hanoi Food Culture restaurant and try the city's signature specialty coffee.

Accommodation: Golden Silk Boutique Hotel (or similar)
Meals included: Breakfast



Begin the day with breakfast at Hoa Sua, a non-profit training restaurant for underprivileged Hanoi youth. Afterward, transfer to Ha Long Bay, where thousands of sculpted limestone islands rise from serene, turquoise waters. Settle into your cabin on a traditional-style wooden junk boat, where we'll spend the night, and embark on a cruise of Bai Tu Long Bay, a more secluded section of this UNESCO World Heritage site. Glide around the bay's stunning karst formations and explore the fascinating Me Cung cave with our local guide.

This traditional wooden sailing boat offers a unique way of navigating the lime karsts of Ha Long Bay with all the comforts of a motorized, floating hotel. The boat crew will prepare an included seafood lunch and dinner. All cabins are twin share and have an en-suite bathroom. The boat features an enclosed dining and sitting area, and of course plenty of outside deck space to enjoy your beautiful surroundings.

On the rare occasion, Halong Bay is closed to tourist vessels by the government, due to extreme weather conditions. Should this occur, an alternate activity will be provided.

Breakfast at Hoa Sua: Savor a meal of Western (mainly French) and Vietnamese cuisine at this restaurant, while supporting a training program that prepares local disadvantaged youth for careers in the culinary arts. After 19 years of operation, the Hoa Sua School has trained more than 7,000 young people, giving them the skills to overcome poverty, many of them going on to have very successful careers. Meet with one of the organizers

Ha Long Bay Overnight Junk boat Cruise: Cruise through stunning and secluded Bai Tu Long Bay, a less visited section of Ha Long Bay. Relax on board our comfortable traditional wooden junk boat. Enjoy your time afloat eating fresh seafood, admiring the magnificent karst formations, and exploring Me Cung Cave. Spend a peaceful night anchored in the bay under the stars.

Optional Activities:

Kayaking, 10USD/person: Transfer from boat to kayak in this guided water tour, giving you the chance to get even closer to the stunning natural surroundings.

Accommodation: Halong Boat (or similar)
Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

NOV 10: HA LONG BAY/HUE

Enjoy an early lunch on board before returning to land and heading back to Hanoi to catch a short flight to Hue. A former imperial capital of Vietnam, this World Heritage-



listed city boasts many architectural treasures; it was also the site of one of the Vietnam War's most dramatic battles.

Accommodation: Moonlight Hotel Hue (or similar)
Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

NOV 12: HUE

Set out on a guided tour of Hue's imposing walled citadel, discovering lavish palaces, gardens, and courtyards. Visit the Forbidden Purple City, which served as the private quarters of the imperial family; then venture into the countryside to the magnificent tombs of Vietnam's emperors, located along the banks of the Perfume River. Visit a Buddhist nunnery and enjoy a leisurely lunch, following the traditions of vegetarian cuisine. Later, opt to explore Hue on the back of a motorbike—the way the locals get around.

Imperial Citadel Tour: Tour this one-time capital city and UNESCO World Heritage site. See the walled fortress and former palace, which has many palaces, gateways, courtyards, and gardens to explore. The Forbidden Purple City (modeled on China's Forbidden City) inside the citadel was once home to the imperial family and was significantly damaged during the Vietnam War.

Emperor's Tomb Guided Tour: Tour the tombs of Vietnam's great emperors. Just outside of Hue, along the Perfume River are several impressive tombs dating back to the 1800s. Ranging in size and states of ruin, the ornate architecture and history make the sites a great place to learn more about the history of Hue.

Lunch at a Buddhist Nunnery: Visit a nunnery and enjoy a leisurely lunch following the traditions of Buddhist cuisine, which features fresh, local produce and fermented or preserved ingredients. Today, we'll sample a set menu of six to seven dishes, such as pumpkin soup with mushroom, tofu and green beans; crispy noodles with rice crackers; fresh spring rolls with soy sauce; steamed rice with eggplant and green beans; fried rolls with potato curry; and bread with potatoes, carrots and onion. *(Please note: the menu is seasonal and may vary from what is mentioned above.)*

Optional Activities:

Hue Motorbike Tour: Grab a helmet, hop on a motorbike driven by your experienced local guide, and get ready for a crash course in authentic Viet culture. Spend the next four hours exploring the stalls of a local market, making a Vietnamese conical hat, sipping on fresh green tea with a local family, learning to plough and make rice, and seeing the most iconic local sights. Don't forget to bring your camera!

Accommodation: Moonlight Hotel Hue (or similar)
Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

NOV 13: HUE/HOI AN

Drive to Hoi An this morning, a remarkably well-preserved river port and UNESCO World Heritage site. Stroll the narrow, winding streets of the atmospheric old town, lined with quaint merchants' homes and decorated with colorful silk lanterns. Then try your hand at crafting a lantern of your own—a symbol of luck, wealth, and happiness—and leave with a beautiful souvenir. This afternoon, opt to visit a local tailor and be fitted for a custom-made shirt.

The journey to Hoi An, via the Hai Van Pass, is an incredibly scenic and mountainous stretch of highway with spectacular views of Lang Co Beach.

Hoi An Walking Tour: Stroll through the narrow winding streets of Hoi An's old town to see the Chinese assembly halls, ancestral homes, the Japanese covered bridge, and well-preserved pagodas. Opt to stop for lunch and sample delicious local delicacies and fusion food at one of the restaurants for which Hoi An is becoming famous.

Traditional Lantern Making Experience: In Hoi An, it's said that hanging a lantern in front of your home will bring luck, happiness, and wealth to your family. Learn how to make traditional lanterns, handicrafts that are found hanging all over the Old Town of Hoi An. First appearing in the 16th century when the Chinese came to Vietnam, lanterns are used for decoration and in traditional celebrations like the monthly Hoi An Lantern Festival, which marks the full moon.

Accommodation: Thanh Binh Riverside Hotel (or similar)
Meals included: Breakfast

NOV 14: HOI AN

Delve into a local market this morning with guides from Oodles of Noodles, a program that trains local youth in the culinary arts. Taste dozens of varieties of noodles and pick out fresh ingredients at the market; then take your groceries to the Oodles of Noodles training kitchen, where you'll learn to prepare mouthwatering noodle dishes and enjoy your creations for lunch.

Oodles of Noodles Local Market Excursion: Take a walking tour of a Hoi An local market led by youths who have come to Oodles of Noodles to be trained in the culinary arts. This excursion will empower the kitchen youth to lead insider noodle tours in Hoi An. There are currently over 26 types of noodles in this city alone, and we will go to the market with two students and their trainer, learn about



the ingredients at the market, and do a tasting of the different noodles, while supporting local small women enterprises. We then pick the ingredients and return with our youth guides to the training kitchen, where you will learn to cook and prepare noodles. This program helps these youth practice their English, increasing their skill set and opportunities available to them in the tourism industry. After we enjoy our noodles for lunch, watch a video to learn more about the organization.

Free Time: Spend free time this afternoon visiting a tailor, wandering through the temples and tombs at a UNESCO World Heritage site, or take a bike ride to a nearby beach.

Accommodation: Thanh Binh Riverside Hotel (or similar)
Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

NOV 15: HOI AN

The day is yours to explore enchanting Hoi An and its environs. Choose to take a day trip to World Heritage-listed My Son, a cluster of moss-covered Hindu temples dating between the 4th and 13th centuries. Alternatively, head to the nearby Cua Dai beach, or relax at your hotel by the pool.

Optional Activities:

Ma Sơn Excursion, 30USD/person: Travel approximately one hour from Hoi An to arrive at My Son. Tour these Hindu temples built between the fourth and 14th centuries; the site is widely accepted as one of the most important Hindu temple complexes in Southeast Asia. Learn about the architectural style and history of a site that's often compared to Angkor Wat in Cambodia and Bagan in Burma.

Cua Dai Beach: Play in the surf at Cua Dai beach about 4km (2.5 mi) away from the Old Town. Make your own picnic of local food and rest under one of the palm trees lining the shore.

Thu Bon River Boat Trip, 12USD/person: The Thu Bon River plays an important part in Hoi An's history and culture. Take a trip down the Thu Bon by riverboat for an alternative tour of the city.

Accommodation: Thanh Binh Riverside Hotel (or similar)
Meals included: Breakfast

NOV 16: HOI AN/HO CHI MINH CITY

Fly to Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon. Immerse yourself in this vibrant metropolis—Vietnam's economic hub—on a variety of optional activities. Discover the city on a cyclo tour, taking in iconic sites like the Notre Dame Cathedral and the ornate Central Post

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Office and City Hall. Visit the War Remnants Museum, a powerful reminder of the atrocities committed during the Vietnam War; or take a tour of the Reunification Palace, the site which marked the end of the war.

Free Time: Free time to enjoy the city.

Optional Activities:

Ho Chi Minh City Cyclo Tour, 10USD/person: Take a city tour on a cyclo (cycle rickshaw) – a great way to absorb the sights, sounds, and smells of Ho Chi Minh City while keeping your hands free for that camera action.

War Remnants Museum Visit, 2USD/person: Visit the War Remnants Museum, a gut-wrenching but worthwhile experience that includes three levels of exhibits and military hardware. Learn about the devastation that occurred in Saigon during the Vietnam War, a period that greatly contrasts the joy and liveliness of the Vietnamese people today.

Reunification Palace Visit, 2USD/person: Wander the historic halls of the Reunification Palace (Independence Palace), a landmark in Ho Chi Minh City. This former home of the South Vietnamese president during the Vietnam War became the location of the end of the war when a North Vietnamese tank pushed through the palace gates on April 30, 1975.

Dam Sen Water Park Visit, 4USD/person: Get away from the hustle and bustle of Ho Chi Minh City at this nearby water park. A lush setting and refreshing water make Dam Sen the perfect place for the whole family to cool off and have some fun—splash around or take a ride down one of the slides.

Accommodation: Hotel Continental Saigon (or similar)
Meals included: Breakfast

NOV 17: HO CHI MINH CITY

Venture to the legendary Cu Chi tunnels, a network of underground passageways that provided a base for Viet Cong soldiers during the Vietnam War. Visit subterranean hospitals and ammunition stores and learn about the vital role that the tunnels played in the eventual victory of the North.

Cu Chi Tunnels Guided Tour: Take a guided tour of the Cu Chi Tunnels, a complex network of tunnels that the Viet Cong lived in to protect themselves from opposing forces during the Vietnam War. Try crawling through some of the tunnels (if you're not claustrophobic). These tunnels stored ammunition, had underground hospitals, and served as a hidden base for attacking allied forces.



Accommodation: Hotel Continental Saigon (or similar)
Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

NOV 18: HO CHI MINH CITY

Depart at any time.
Meals included: Breakfast

This trip is non-refundable; we strongly recommend travel cancellation insurance. **Travel emergency medical, evacuation and repatriation insurance in the amount of no less than \$200,000 USD per person is required to participate. We recommend consulting your travel insurance company prior to making your deposit so you are aware of when you have to purchase insurance to cover cancellation etc.**