



VIETNAM: A FAMILY ADVENTURE

The warmth and friendliness of the Vietnamese, the contrasts of ancient and modern, the excellent lodgings and myriad cultural attractions make Vietnam an ideal place to travel with family of all ages.

Tailor-Made Journeys, Families & Multi-Generational Travel, Suggested Itineraries



Asia, Vietnam



15 days Call for a quote pp



Private

Journey Overview

The warmth and friendliness of the Vietnamese, the contrasts of ancient and modern, the excellent lodgings and myriad cultural attractions make Vietnam an ideal place to travel with family of all ages. This two week journey gives exciting opportunities to explore local markets, try new foods, discover the country's history and heritage, sail on a traditional junk, participate in local cultural activities, launch into outdoor adventures and have ample time to relax. Hotels have been hand-picked to suit discerning families with plenty to keep both adult and child entertained.

Journey Highlights

- Wander the bustling alleyways of Hanoi's iconic 36 Streets where old and new collide.
- Embrace Lan Ha Bay, Ha Long Bay's less-travelled sister, and experience its spectacular isolated beaches and majestic karst rock formations.
- Trek through the lush mountain scenery of Mai Chau through verdant rice fields and friendly villages.
- Catch a glimpse of an historic 15th century trading port with original period architecture in Hoi An's UNESCO World Heritage-listed Old Town.
- Witness the architectural beauty and rich history of the Imperial City of Hue, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Visit the dynamic streets of Ho Chi Minh City experiencing how the locals live in Vietnam's most vibrant modern metropolis.
- Uncover the majestic Mekong Delta and experience the natural beauty of its sprawling flood plains and picturesque river landscape.



Itinerary

Day 1: Hanoi

Welcome to Hanoi with A&K's fast track arrival services. Transfer to your hotel and soak up the city vibe before your adventure begins. The cultural heart and capital of Vietnam, Hanoi is a city of surprising beauty where rows of narrow houses stand alongside elegant French-colonial mansions and ornate traditional temples. The life of the city is centred around the meandering streets of the Old Quarter and Hoan Kiem Lake where small boutiques, coffee shops and lively street vendors create a vibrant and bustling atmosphere.

Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi

Day 2: Design Your Day Hanoi

Tailor your own way today and see Hanoi at your own pace. Take a deep dive into the city's colourful history. Learn about the life and times of former President Ho Chi Minh, who played a key role in the nation's journey towards independence. Visit the mausoleum where his body is embalmed and see his humble stilted house, which was built in the style of an ethnic village home. Continue to the One Pillar Pagoda, a unique 11th century structure dedicated to King Ly Thai To's son. Visit the Temple of Literature, where Vietnam's royal family and elite society were educated for almost 700 years. Ride a cyclo (bicycle rickshaw) through the network of narrow, 15th century streets, each named after the business that was once conducted there, such as Silk Street, Rice Street, Paper Street and Jeweller's Street. End the day at Dong Xuan market where you may like to peruse the stalls for textiles, embroidery and ceramics before exploring its tasty food offerings.

Or, choose a half day cycling expedition in the Red River Delta. You are transferred to the village of Bac Bien where you meet your guide Mr Dan at his home. After a short introduction and briefing, hop aboard your bike and start your cycling adventure. Cycle towards the Duong River and take a ferry across to the other side. Then pedal your way along country lanes, past village houses, pagodas, temples and a local market. Admire the emerald green rice fields and vegetable gardens along the way and meet some villagers in a local house. When you're ready for a break, pause for, light refreshments in the shade of an old tree. Later, cycle back to the ferry crossing. Visit a local temple to experience a unique Vietnamese folk ceremony called "Len Dong". Then relax and chat with a local family over a bowl of bun cha (grilled pork with vermicelli) and nem (spring rolls).

Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi / Meals: B

Day 3: Hanoi - Hai Phong - Lan Ha Bay

A major port city in north-eastern Vietnam, Hai Phong acts as a gateway to the dramatic beauty of Ha Long Bay and nearby Cat Ba Island. With leafy boulevards lined with French colonial buildings, the town centre offers an interesting mix of cultural influences with a neoclassical Opera House and cathedral dating back to the 19th century as well as a pagoda and an elaborate Buddhist temple.

Swap the hustle and bustle of Hanoi for the peace and tranquillity of Lan Ha Bay, the extension of Ha Long Bay. Board your beautifully crafted sailing vessel and enjoy lunch as you drift over emerald waters past towering rocky outcrops, some more than 100 metres high. Venture south to explore the interesting limestone formations at Dark and Bright Caves by bamboo boat or kayak. Then continue to Tra Bau where you can enjoy swimming in the pristine ocean waters. Back on board, enjoy a cooking demonstration before taking your place on the terrace deck to watch the sun sink behind the bay's myriad islands.

Orchid Premium Cruise - Boat Charter / Meals: BLD**Day 4: Hai Phong - Hanoi - Mai Chau**

Wake to a gentle breeze and the water lapping against the boat in the early morning. To kick start the day, head to the sundeck for an optional tai chi session before breakfast. Then head out to experience more of the bay and explore Frog Lake by kayak. Enjoy the wild beauty of the area and admire the tranquil scenery and dream-like landscape filled with tree-topped islands.

After a leisurely brunch and tea ceremony, the cruise comes to an end with your disembarkation. The rest of the day is spent in your private vehicle as you are driven west to Mai Chau, pausing for breaks along the way. This evening upon arrival, settle into your accommodations, and then gather for dinner and a traditional dance performance.

Mai Chau Eco Lodge / Meals: BLD

Day 5: Mai Chau

After a leisurely breakfast, you may opt for a cycling tour in the surrounding valleys passing scenic villages, lush rice paddies and seldom-seen countryside. En route, pause to meet a local hill tribe community and learn about their enduring cultural traditions before visiting a home filled with precious Vietnamese tribal antiques including hunting equipment, musical instruments and jewellery. Return to your hotel for lunch and enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure.

Mai Chau Eco Lodge / Meals: BLD

Day 6: Mai Chau - Hanoi - Hue

This morning, transfer to Hanoi. After lunch at a local restaurant, transfer to the airport for your flight to the old imperial city of Hue. On arrival you are met and transferred to your boutique hotel fronting the Perfume River. The remainder of your evening is at leisure.

Azerai La Residence /Meals: BL

Day 7: Design Your Day Hue

Choose to discover Hue your way.

Uncover centuries of history and culture with a scenic boat ride along the Perfume River to Thien Mu Pagoda, one of the city's oldest religious monuments. Then take a short drive to the tomb of Tu Duc, the "Poet Emperor." A lover of romance and eastern philosophies, the Emperor designed his own tomb within an enchanting garden of pine trees and frangipanis overlooking a lake. Stop by an incense-making village to see how thin sticks of bamboo are dyed and dried in a mixture of sandalwood, cinnamon or pine-scented powder to create ceremonial items used at temples and shrines all over Vietnam. Then head to Dong Ba Market for a chance to peruse the local goods, including clothing, kitchenware, handicrafts and souvenirs.

Alternatively, experience the 300-year-old tradition of making kites in Hue. During the time of the Nguyen emperors, kites were often used during cultural festivals as a way of depicting traditional folk stories. You will meet a fourth-generation kite-maker and member of Hue's Kite Flying Club who is one of only two recognized masters of this ancient art. Learn from the artisan how to assemble the bamboo frame and decorate the kite in your own colourful way. Then put your handiwork to the test and fly your new kite at the Imperial Citadel.

Or, discover a 200-year old martial arts tradition that is unique to Hue. Developed by mandarins of the Nguyen dynasty, the *vo kinh van an* technique was used to protect the imperial city in the old world. This specialised martial art was prohibited for ordinary citizens and was almost lost after the fall of the dynasty. Now, the old practice has been revived and you are invited to join a local troupe for a rare demonstration and a chance to interact with the martial artists and learn more about their training routine after the show.

Azerai La Residence /Meals: B

Day 8: Hue - Hoi An

After breakfast, transfer south to Hoi An via the stunningly scenic Hai Van Pass. Also known as the “Cloudy Pass,” this winding mountain road overlooks lush countryside, sandy beaches and the blue waters of the South China Sea. Pause in Lap An lagoon and admire the beautiful natural landscape before continuing to Danang to the Museum of Cham Sculpture to view some of its stone treasures, including what is believed to be the finest collection of Cham sculpture in the world. The exhibitions include sandstone carvings, alters, lingas, garudas, ganeshas and images of Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu.

Take a stroll through the winding streets of old Hoi An, where rows of vibrant yellow shophouses are adorned with multi-coloured lanterns. Admire the Old House of Tan Ky, an 18th century merchant's house that has been lovingly preserved through five generations and features Chinese and Japanese influences. See where the Chinese migrant community once gathered for meetings and social events at the Fukien Assembly Hall and walk across the 400-year-old covered bridge built in Japanese style. Then get in touch with your creative side and make your own traditional Hoi An lantern at a studio led by skilled artisans. After the workshop, take a boat ride along the peaceful Thu Bon River lined with trees and swaying palms, admiring traditional row boats and fishermen along the way.

Intercontinental Danang Sun Peninsula / Meals: BL

Days 9-10: Design Your Day Hoi An

Over the next two days choose how you explore Hoi An from a range of options.

Embark on a epicurean adventure, learning how to make, and of course taste, the local specialties. Visit the local market to learn about the uses of different types of noodles, discover the tricks to selecting the best herbs and spices and recognise when fish is at its freshest. Then explore a mouth-watering collection of stalls at The Market where local chefs cook street food specialties in the open kitchens. Savour freshly baked Vietnamese-style baguettes straight out of the oven and sip traditional Vietnamese tea served with home-made Hoi An cupcakes and local treats which are usually served during Tet, Vietnam's New Year festival. Learn how rice and water can be used to create noodles, dumplings and rice paper and discover how Hoi An's cao lau noodles are made by hand and steamed over an open fire. Get hands-on with a two-and-a-half-hour cooking session, learning how to prepare a variety of local dishes before sitting down to enjoy your self-made feast.

Or visit a non-government organisation that is working to preserve the communities and ecosystems in and around Da Nang and surrounding

provinces before heading off into the wild jungles of the Son Tra Peninsula in search of the rare ``Queen of Primates`` with their representative. This area of the Son Tra Peninsula is home to a species of endangered primates, the red-shanked douc langur, which is considered the "Queen of Primates" due to its colour. There are about 300 red-shanked douc langur living in the Son Tra Peninsula and you may catch a glimpse of one as you explore the jungle with your trekking guide. Venture deep into the forest, learning more about the wildlife here and how the local communities are promoting conservation efforts in order to protect the many creatures that live in these forests. Your visit here today contributes to these local efforts and helps provide a more sustainable future for this beautiful ecosystem. During the walk, your trekking guide takes you to the most likely spots to see the red-shanked douc langur. However sightings are rare and weather dependent.

Alternatively, experience a culinary morning and chef's table lunch with Chef Duc Tran, the gastronomic master behind the well-loved Mango Mango and Mai Fish restaurants in Hoi An. After fleeing Vietnam during the war years at age 15, and spending time in a refugee camp in Malaysia, Chef Duc found himself in Texas where he developed a passion for food. He continued to cook his way around the world, from Mexico to Europe and New Zealand before arriving back in his hometown of Hoi An where he opened his first restaurant in 2003. Today, before meeting the chef, walk with your guide through the local market to experience the lively atmosphere and learn about some Vietnamese ingredients. Then head to Chef Duc's countryside home and cooking studio for a private cooking demonstration followed by a Vietnamese lunch, freshly prepared by the chef himself.

Intercontinental Danang Sun Peninsula / Meals: B

Day 11: Hoi An/Danang - Ho Chi Minh City

Transfer to Da Nang Airport in time for your onward flight to the bustling economic centre of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City, commonly known by its former name Saigon. Full of contrasts, the city is known for its cosmopolitan vibe and energetic pace which is unlike any other city in Vietnam. Old French boulevards and colonial architecture stand beside traditional temples and modern skyscrapers, revealing a city of captivating diversity and charismatic charm.

Upon arrival in Ho Chi Minh City transfer to your hotel.

This afternoon discover the essence of Ho Chi Minh City from past to present. Start with a visit to the Reunification Palace where the official handover of power took place during the Fall of Saigon in 1975. Then choose between the History Museum or the War Remnants Museum. Built in 1929, the History Museum houses a collection of artefacts illustrating the evolution of Vietnamese culture since ancient times, while the War Remnants Museum contains an at-times grisly display of wartime photographs and relics including an American tank, an original 20th century French guillotine and a UH-1 "Huey" helicopter. Afterwards venture into Cao Dai Temple, to learn about a unique religion of Southern Vietnam, the result of a colourful range of several religious philosophies.

This evening, discover quintessential Saigon by Vintage Vespa. Part night excursion, part street food adventure, this evening offers an authentic taste of Ho Chi Minh City's buzzing nightlife. Ride pillion on the back of a vintage Vespa and set off into the chaotic city streets. Stop at one of the city's historical bridges to toast the enchanting riverside view with a signature drink. Then zip through side streets and alleyways to a popular local spot for street seafood. Take a seat on a low stool by the roadside, like the locals do, and taste the fresh and beautifully-seasoned crab claws and clams. Head to a downtown area to try a Ho Chi Minh City specialty called banh xeo, a kind of Vietnamese pancake with savoury fillings. Then round out the evening with cocktails at an intimate venue where you can mingle with locals and listen to live Vietnamese music.

Park Hyatt Saigon / Meals: B

Day 12: Ho Chi Minh City

Tailor your morning to suit. Choose from the following:

Encounter a tale of drama, intrigue and fascination, exploring the city on foot with a local art and cultural expert. Gain new perspectives on the old city, uncovering untold stories from its establishment in the late 17th century to the arrival of the French and the turbulence of the Vietnam War. The walk commences at the Saigon Zoo and Botanical Garden and takes you past heritage buildings and historical sites intimately connected with the city's dramatic past. Take a fresh look at iconic landmarks such as the Central Post Office, the former French Lieutenant Governor's residence and the former U.S. Embassy. Stop to take in the vibe at some of the city's most fashionable cafés and enjoy a meal at a family-style eatery that dishes up the authentic flavours of a Vietnamese home kitchen.

Or, experience wellness in one of the city's beautiful green spaces. Enjoy a stroll around the park before joining a tai chi session with an experienced local master. Bask in the serene morning atmosphere and observe the locals go about their daily routine, exercising, practicing various types of martial arts or playing foot badminton. Continue to a renowned local restaurant for a healthy vegetarian meal served in a beautiful, zen-like setting.

Alternatively, take to the water with a private speedboat cruise along the Saigon River, passing mangroves and palm trees for about an hour to reach one of the region's most well-known wartime landmarks - the Cu Chi tunnels. The intriguing network of underground tunnels provided shelter and an effective source of infiltration for the Viet Cong during the later years of the Vietnam War. Catch a glimpse of life during the war as you experience crawling in tight, narrow passageways and through a series of caverns which consist of storage rooms, make-shift hospitals and sleeping quarters. Return to your speedboat for the journey back to Ho Chi Minh City with lunch at a riverside restaurant en route.

Park Hyatt Saigon / Meals: B

Day 13: Ho Chi Minh City - Ben Tre

Today, experience village life along the picturesque Mekong Delta, just two hours' drive from Ho Chi Minh City. Pass through the idyllic Vietnamese countryside to Ben Tre, a village built along a series of crisscrossing rivers and canals. Explore the pastoral lifestyle using various modes of transport, including a traditional *xe loi* (motorised rickshaw), weaving in and out of village streets and through lush green rice fields. Take a scenic boat ride through shaded canals before stopping at a brick factory to see how bricks have been made here by hand for centuries.

The day continues with more unique local encounters by bike, on foot and by traditional sampan boat. Spend time in the company of village residents such as rice paper and coconut liquor manufacturers, traditional fishermen, former Viet Cong soldiers and fruit farmers. Learn from their years of practice and immerse yourself in the slow pace of life in this remote countryside region before savour a five-course lunch of local specialties at a riverside restaurant.

Continue by bike to My Long where Sau Tuong, a former Viet Cong soldier who spent two years fighting the Khmer Rouge, now lives with his wife and makes rice paper. Sample their home-made crispy products while hearing more about their inspiring story. Later, transfer to your accommodation in Can Tho.

Azerai Can Tho / Meals: B**Day 14: Can Tho - Ho Chi Minh**

Rise early to enjoy breakfast. Then head out to experience the hustle and bustle of Cai Rang floating market. See traditional life and the trading culture as you weave in and around the vendors selling local fruits and fresh produce direct from their small wooden boats. Feel free to practice your bargaining skills and choose some fruits or snacks for yourself before returning to your hotel for breakfast.

Afterwards, return by car to Ho Chi Minh City with the remainder of your day at leisure.

Azerai Can Tho / Meals: B**Day 15: Depart Ho Chi Minh**

Today is free at leisure until your transfer to the airport for your onward flight.

Meals: B

Map



Accommodation

Sofitel Legend Metropole, Hanoi



The beautiful French-colonial style Sofitel Metropole is located in the heart of Hanoi just a short walk from the vibrant Old Quarter. Sofitel Metropole wonderfully combines old and new with its colonial style rooms in the original hotel and the contemporary rooms in the modern Opera wing. A spa and outdoor pool makes this the perfect retreat in the centre of Hanoi.

After a day visiting museums, bartering in the shops and visiting Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, relax in a rattan armchair at the poolside bar, Bamboo, while sipping a signature cocktail. Enjoy an exquisite Vietnamese dinner at Spices Garden Restaurant in the courtyard or sample the best French cuisine in town at Le Beaulieu.

Why we like it

- One of the grand old colonial hotels of Southeast Asia
- Excellent central location walking distance from the Old Quarter
- Blend of old world colonial charm and contemporary modern living
- Three amazing restaurants to choose from – French, Vietnamese and International

Park Hyatt Saigon



Park Hyatt Saigon enjoys a prime location on the city's most famous square, within walking distance of the most popular cultural attractions including the Opera House. The hotel's recently renovated 245 rooms and suites are decorated in elegant neutral tones channelling the old-world charms of colonial Saigon, with polished wooden floors, louvred windows, ceiling fans and silk cushions. Hi-tech additions include Bose Bluetooth speakers, sensor lighting, mini iPads and a Nespresso coffee machine. Plush king-sized beds come with crisp white linen and white marble bathrooms boast bathtubs and rain showers.

There is an excellent choice of restaurants and bars offering a range of cuisine from Italian and Vietnamese to traditional English afternoon teas and classic martinis. The Xuan Spa is a tranquil urban retreat offering private therapy rooms, a fitness centre and outdoor pool.

Why we like it

- One of the city's premier addresses
- Sophisticated and elegant colonial inspired grande dame
- Walking distance from the important sights, restaurants and cafés
- Award winning Xuan Spa

Abercrombie & Kent

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