

Overseas Adventure Travel®

THE LEADER IN SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide®



Inside Vietnam

2027

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill your travel dreams.

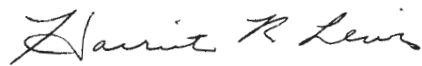
When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your **A Day in the Life** experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a **Home-Hosted Visit**, discuss the **Controversial Topics** impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by **Grand Circle Foundation**. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences without an additional cost, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

Throughout the entirety of your adventure, you will be supported by a dedicated, local Trip Experience Leader. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to customize your air itinerary for increased comfort and a seamless travel experience. You can also add an optional pre- or post-trip extension to your itinerary, arrive a few days early to get acclimated and explore independently, journey with peace of mind by adding our Travel Protection Plan, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

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ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1-2	Fly to Hanoi, Vietnam
3-6	Hanoi
7	Halong Bay
8-9	Fly to Hué
10-12	Hoi An
13-14	Fly to Dalat
15-16	Nha Trang
17-19	Fly to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)
20	Return to U.S.

WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

Pacing: 7 locations in 18 days with one 1-night stay aboard a traditional boat on Halong Bay

Physical Requirements: Travel over some bumpy unpaved roads, walk along city streets and ancient ruins, and visit monuments, often with uneven paths and walkways with no handrails

Flight Time: Travel time will be 25-30 hours and will most likely have two connections

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/svd

VIETNAM: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: Discover what daily life is like in Dalat when a local family invites you into their home for a traditional **Home-Hosted Dinner**, and meet with a nun in Hué for an insightful conversation about why she chose this path in life. Plus, spend **A Day in the Life** of Tho Ha Village, where you'll meet with the village chief and other residents to learn about rice paper production.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Throughout your adventure, you'll meet with locals to discuss **Controversial Topics** such as land reform. Plus, visit Phuoc Phuc Women's Shelter, supported in part by **Grand Circle Foundation**, to learn how this organization helps young mothers and their children.

CUSTOMIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Hill Tribes of Vietnam: Journey into Ancient Cultures

PRE-TRIP: 6 nights from **\$1,195**

Cambodia: Angkor Wat & the Legacy of the Ancient Khmer Empire

POST-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,495**

ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Hanoi** before your Vietnam Hill Tribes pre-trip extension or before your main adventure from **\$100** per room, per night

Inside Vietnam

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

6 nights in *Hill Tribes of Vietnam: Journey into Ancient Cultures*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive in Hanoi, Vietnam

Day 3 Explore Hanoi

Day 4 Overland to the Mai Chau Valley • Pom-Coong Village homestay

Day 5 Mai Chau Valley trek • Overland to Hanoi

Day 6 Overland to Sapa • Visit cinnamon farm • Explore Ta Phin

Day 7 Trek to Lao Chai and Ta Van villages

Day 8 Sapa • Sin Chai village • Transfer to Hanoi • Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Activity Note: Due to different air carriers and varied flight schedules, some travelers will fly from their home city to the domestic gateway city later today. Not all travelers will depart for a gateway city on Day 1. If you are already located in a gateway city, you will likely depart directly from that city on Day 2.

Morning/Afternoon: Depart today for Hanoi, Vietnam.

Day 2 Arrive in Hanoi, Vietnam

- Destination: Hanoi
- Accommodations: May De Ville Corner Hotel or similar

Evening: Arrive in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital and second-largest city. Transfer to your hotel, where you'll be joined by travelers who took our optional *Hill Tribes of Vietnam: Journey*

into Ancient Cultures extension and those who arrived early in Hanoi before the main adventure.

Day 3 Explore Hanoi • Cyclo-rickshaw ride

- Destination: Hanoi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: May De Ville Corner Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning, we'll get our first taste of local life here during an orientation walk along the streets of Hanoi, a pulsing city of about seven million people. From 1883 to 1945, Hanoi was the heart of French Indochina, and the French influence is still clearly visible today. The Old Quarter is a dense collection of markets, cafés, and restaurants—many of which embrace an *al fresco* spirit. Tables and

people spill out onto the bustling, narrow streets, filling the area with the sounds of chatter, dining, and drinking.

Lunch: On your own. You are free to dine at the hotel restaurant, or you can ask your Trip Experience Leader for local dining recommendations.

Afternoon: You'll have time to relax or to set off and explore the Old Quarter on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations for galleries, cafés, and more.

Later, we'll meet with our Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Briefing at the hotel, during which we will review our itinerary in more detail (including any changes that may need to occur).

Next, we'll gather at the hotel, board cyclo-rickshaws, and ride through the Old Quarter to a local restaurant.

Dinner: At a local restaurant. Tonight's Welcome Dinner will feature local cuisine.

Evening: We return to the hotel and the rest of the evening is on your own. Settle in with a drink at the bar, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations for entertainment or exploration.

Day 4 Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum & One Pillar Pagoda • Water puppet demonstration at local puppet master's home

- Destination: Hanoi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: May De Ville Corner Hotel or similar

Activity Note: The Ho Chi Minh mausoleum is closed every Monday and Friday (outside grounds and garden area will be open on these

days). The mausoleum is also normally closed from September 4 through October 5 for preservation and maintenance of the building.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart for Ba Dinh Square, a pivotal site in 20th-century Vietnamese history. It was here in September 1945 that Ho Chi Minh read Vietnam's Declaration of Independence, and it's here today that the national leader's body rests within a massive granite mausoleum. We'll take in the sight of guards and flowers, and we'll also behold the One Pillar Pagoda, widely considered one of Vietnam's most iconic Buddhist temples. Built of wood atop a single, four-foot-wide stone pillar and designed to resemble a lotus flower, the temple's origins date back to the year 1049.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After returning to the hotel, you'll have time to rest in your room, or gather with fellow travelers in the hotel to reflect on the morning's discoveries. Perhaps you'll start exploring the Old Quarter on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations for galleries, cafés, and more.

Later, we'll head to the home of a local water puppet master. After watching traditional water puppets in action during a private show, we'll enjoy a hands-on demonstration on how to manipulate the puppets to make them move—an O.A.T.-exclusive experience. Then, we'll learn how these intricate puppets are made. In Vietnam, the art form of water puppetry continues to thrive at least 1,000 years after it originated with peasants in the Red River Delta of the north. Puppets are suspended over water and directed by puppet masters who must sit, semi-submerged, for hours at a time. The French used to call these puppets "the souls of the Vietnamese rice

fields”—made of lacquered, water-resistant fig wood, they depict villagers, farm animals, dragons, and more.

Dinner: On your own, with the freedom to seek out local cuisine or familiar American standards. In either case, your Trip Experience Leader will be ready with recommendations.

Evening: You’re free to turn in early for the night, or make the most of your time in Hanoi with extra exploration.

Day 5 Hanoi • *A Day in the Life of Tho Ha Village*

- Destination: Hanoi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: May De Ville Corner Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We’ll begin our *A Day in the Life* discoveries of Tho Ha Village, where we’ll see what daily life is like in rural Vietnam. We’ll set off on a journey north, stopping along the way at a local market for ingredients we’ll enjoy at lunchtime.

We’ll then head to a nearby ferry station, where we’ll board a ferry and ride across the Nhu Nguyet River to reach our destination: Tho Ha. This quaint village showcases traditional architecture, winding streets, terracotta buildings, and an ancient community hall. Boasting a population of about 3,000 people, the main industry here is rice production, a business we’ll learn about in greater detail this morning.

Upon arrival, we’ll take a walk through the village, navigating small alleys and witnessing scenes of daily life as we explore. We’ll also make brief stops at an eastern medicine store

to learn about traditional healing, as well as a local restaurant to learn how to make *banh da*, a sesame rice cracker.

Then, we’ll be welcomed into the home of a village chief. A Vietnam War veteran, the chief fought with the Viet Cong along the Ho Chi Minh trail. After the war, he came back to Tho Ha, where he met his wife and started a family. Currently, he serves as the village chief, as well as the leader of a traditional music club.

After introductions, we’ll be joined by the chief’s wife, who will guide us in making rice paper, an industry which supports most of the village. We’ll combine white rice flour, tapioca flour, salt, and water to conjure this staple ingredient commonly found in dishes like spring rolls, which we’ll also be making with our hosts.

Next, we’ll take a break in the kitchen and sit down to get to know our hosts and discuss various topics. We may be curious to learn how things have changed since the dissolution of the Indochinese Federation in 1954, or perhaps we’ll ask the chief about his experience fighting in the war. Take this opportunity to glean further insight into the daily lives of our hosts, and if you’d like, you can also use this time to share a little bit about yourself and what brought you to Vietnam.

Lunch: We’ll share a meal with the chief, his wife, and fellow villagers in his home that includes the fruits of our labor, as well as other traditional dishes.

Afternoon: We’ll make the return drive to the hotel. Upon arrival, you’re free to settle in with a book or explore. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide you with recommendations. Perhaps you’ll seek out a café in the Old Quarter, or discover the Temple of Literature, built in 1070 and home to Vietnam’s first national university. You

may visit the Hoa Lo Prison, also referred to as the “Hanoi Hilton.” Or, you can visit the Vietnamese Women’s Museum to discover the many contributions women have made in Vietnam throughout the country’s history.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide some recommendations.

Evening: On your own with the freedom to turn in for the night or continue your independent exploration with tips from your Trip Experience Leader.

Day 6 Hanoi • Visit Bat Trang ceramic village • Controversial Topic: Land reform in Vietnam • Optional Hanoi local life & food adventure with UAZ or Motorbike

- Destination: Hanoi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: May De Ville Corner Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We’ll travel to Bat Trang, a small village located on the southeastern outskirts of Hanoi. Since the 14th century, Bat Trang has been known and celebrated for its signature ceramic pottery, crafted from rich white clay with precision and skill. Our small group size grants us access to a workshop, where generations of craftspeople have been perfecting their art for centuries. There, we will meet with an artist and their family. We’ll learn about the artist’s daily routine and the ceramics process, from forming the clay to painting the distinctive, intricate designs that have been coveted by customers for centuries. Then, we’ll have the chance to practice making ceramic pieces.

Next, we’ll walk to the historic, colonial-style home of a local family to discuss the **Controversial Topic** of land reform in Vietnam. From about 1954 to 1975, a highly divisive campaign was carried out by northern Vietnam’s communist forces, in which tens of thousands of people—including the family we meet today—were forcibly stripped of their land. The property seized was then divided and allocated amongst lower income populations in an effort to redistribute generational wealth. Today, we’ll hear a firsthand account of this reform, as well as come to understand its ramifications.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Hanoi.

Afternoon: You’ll have the remainder of the afternoon on your own.

Or, you might choose to join us on an optional tour of Hanoi’s local life and food adventure through the lesser-known sections of the city. We’ll explore aboard a unique form of transportation as we ride either a UAZ (a Russian military vehicle similar to a jeep) or a motorbike through the narrow lanes of Hanoi’s backstreets, viewing scenes of everyday life in city neighborhoods that tourists rarely visit.

This optional tour adventure connects you with local culture and cuisine. As you travel through the city using local vintage transportation, you’ll have the opportunity to sample authentic dishes that reflect Hanoi’s culinary traditions—including a special treat of Hanoi’s famous egg coffee. We’ll also drive past some of the city’s iconic landmarks, allowing you to appreciate their historical and cultural significance. We’ll stop at a local market to observe the vibrant displays and witness locals earning their livelihood and carrying out daily tasks. A highlight of the journey includes Hanoi’s “Train Street,” where shops and homes stand close to a narrow, active railway. We’ll pause here to enjoy a drink, taking in the

bustling energy as locals dine just steps away from passing trains. Finally, we'll end at a casual dining place to enjoy a local meal before returning to the hotel.

Dinner: Travelers on today's optional tour will have dinner at a casual local restaurant. Otherwise, dinner is on your own—your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

Evening: On your own. Travelers on the optional tour will arrive back at the hotel early this evening.

Day 7 Overland to Halong Bay • Embark on overnight cruise

- Destination: Halong Bay
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Traditional Vietnamese boat

Activity Note: Today, our transfer from Hanoi to Halong Bay will involve a 4-hour bus ride over roads that may be bumpy or uneven at times. We'll be spending the rest of the day—and the night—aboard a wooden sailboat, except for a visit into a cave, which features uneven surfaces.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll head east to Halong Bay, the "emerald bay of Vietnam" and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. With clear waters and mountains draped in velvety cloaks of vegetation, it's little wonder that the bay has served as inspiration for generations of Vietnamese poets.

Upon our arrival, we'll embark a traditional wooden sailboat. Thanks to our small group size, this boat will serve not only as our vessel for the afternoon, but also our accommodations for the night.

Lunch: Onboard the boat.

Afternoon: While relaxing on our boat's sun deck, we are free to marvel at daily life on Halong Bay—whose name translates to "the bay of the descending dragon." Resting peacefully across the Gulf of Tonkin near the Chinese border, the bay is dotted with more than 1,600 mountain islands, whose jagged profiles seem to rise out of nowhere. Against the backdrop of innumerable caves, beaches, soaring cliffs, and grottoes, the Vietnamese go about their daily lives: Harvesting and fishing, they reap the riches of the land and sea. Vietnamese fishermen nimbly navigate in lacquered and woven-wood *coracles*, lozenge-shaped and rudderless vessels that resemble oversized tubs. Flat-bottomed and oar-propelled fishing boats, or *sampans*, abound as well—many occupied by entire families.

Later this afternoon, we'll stop to explore a cavernous grotto, and then drop anchor at an island pierced with surreal caves. The bay's caves are popular among visitors and locals alike, as the stone formations seem to drip like candlewax from the ceiling or down the walls.

Following our discoveries, you may want to come and watch a cooking demonstration by our onboard chef.

Dinner: Onboard the boat.

Evening: On your own aboard our boat. You're free to rest up before tomorrow's discoveries, enjoy a book in the boat's common spaces, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for even more insights into the history of life on the bay.

Day 8 Halong Bay cruising • Fly to Hué

- Destination: Hué
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Cherish Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today will be a long travel day. Our transfer from Halong Bay to the airport in Hanoi will involve a bus ride of about 3.5 hours. The day also includes a flight of a little more than an hour.

Early Morning: For early risers interested in a healthy start to the day, join a session of *tai chi* on the sundeck, led by a certified instructor. *Tai chi* is a Chinese martial art practiced for self-defense, health benefits, and meditation.

Breakfast: Onboard the boat.

Morning: This morning, we can spend our last few hours here soaking up the scenery of Halong Bay while our boat cruises back to port. After disembarking the boat, we'll begin our transfer to Hanoi Airport.

Lunch: On your own. Our Trip Experience Leader will accompany us to a spot where you can grab snacks before we head to the airport, or you may wish to enjoy lunch at the airport after going through security.

Afternoon: Our flight south to Hué departs this afternoon. Upon landing, we'll transfer to our hotel.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: On your own, with the freedom to kick off your discoveries before tomorrow's city tour.

Day 9 Explore Hué • Meditation lunch with local nuns • Grand Circle Foundation visit: Minh Tu or Hope Orphanage

- Destination: Hué
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Cherish Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Travelers will either visit the Minh Tu Orphanage (described below) or the Hope Orphanage. Both of these orphanages are supported by Grand Circle Foundation.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll depart to explore Hué. The former imperial capital, Hué was built by the first king of the Nguyen Dynasty during a time recognized as the golden age of Vietnam. For centuries, the city has been a main cultural, religious, and educational center—and that reputation continues with the many students who live here today.

The older section of the city is a moated, walled citadel surrounded by eleven stone gates. Nguyen empires ruled from the citadel until 1945, although in a mostly symbolic form after the French established Indochina in the 19th century. As we tour the citadel—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—we'll find the Imperial Enclosure and see its inner Forbidden Purple City, a once-private area reserved for the emperor. During our explorations, we'll also learn about surprise attacks that were carried out here by the Viet Cong during the Tet Offensive. We then depart for a local Buddhist pagoda.

Lunch: At the Buddhist pagoda, featuring simple vegetarian fare enjoyed by the local monks and nuns. This meal will not only introduce us to the dishes that the nuns are accustomed to, but also the manner in which the nuns dine—quietly, as this is a meditation lunch.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll enjoy an insightful conversation with one of the nuns that lives here. She'll tell us about why she decided to become a nun, how she is able to financially support herself, and what her family thinks of her decision. Afterward, we have the opportunity to ask our host any questions we may have.

Then, we'll regroup to visit either the Minh Tu Orphanage (described below) or the Hope Orphanage, each supported in part by **Grand Circle Foundation**.

Grand Circle Foundation

Minh Tu Orphanage

Total donated: **\$376,374**

Partner since: **2002**

Minh Tu Orphanage is run by 23 staff members and serves as the home for 167 orphan children whose ages range from just a few months to 17 years old. Their mission is to assist children in securing an education, as well as to provide a safe, healthy living environment.

During our visit, we'll witness the safe space here at Minh Tu and learn about the kinds of educational resources available to the young residents. We'll also interact with some of the children and have the opportunity to see the improvements the Foundation has made to the orphanage, including renovating the dining hall and providing computers.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own. You're free to retire to your room, chat with your fellow travelers in the hotel's common spaces, or to ask your Trip Experience Leader where to find *me xung*, Huế's beloved sesame candy.

Day 10 Overland to Hoi An • Thien Mu Pagoda boat cruise

- Destination: Hoi An
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hoi An Central Boutique Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today's transfer to Hoi An includes a total of about three hours traveling by bus along roads that may be bumpy and uneven at times—including a winding mountain pass.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Drive to a nearby pier where we'll board a boat for a cruise to Thien Mu Pagoda. We'll discover this temple's history that dates back to the 17th century and the symbolism of its seven stories before saying goodbye to Huế and heading for the coastal village of Hoi An.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll walk to nearby My Khe Beach, which is better known to Americans as China Beach. This is the setting for the eponymous TV show about a U.S. army base in Vietnam, and now a peaceful 18 miles of white sand and waves. Then, we'll finish our drive to Hoi An.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You're free to explore Hoi An as you'd like, and your Trip Experience Leader will be ready with recommendations to help you make the most of your time here.

Day 11 Explore Hoi An • Countryside Cruise & Street Food Experience optional tour

- Destination: Hoi An
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hoi An Central Boutique Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Drive to Hoi An's Old Town where we'll embark on a walking tour. A well-known feature in this port town is its Japanese covered bridge, complete with its own temple and statuary. We'll amble through Hoi An's historic streets and observe the city's mossy houses, including the Phuc Kien Congressional House. Most of Hoi An's historic houses have been maintained in their traditional design, with brick exteriors and wooden interiors. And after many centuries of maritime trade, the town boasts a multicultural air: Traders from Persia, Arabia, China, Japan, and India, as well as the first Christian missionaries to reach Vietnam, have all left their marks.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: You can enjoy the afternoon on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations on what to do and where to go during this free time.

Or, if you'd prefer, you can choose to join an optional tour that gives us the chance to view the area by land and water. We'll drive to the village of Cam Thanh—where we'll witness rural life, meet local families, and visit their farms—before continuing on to a nearby boat station for a cruise along the Thu Bon River. Apart from the stunning views, this optional tour also provides the opportunity to sample traditional street food as we explore a central market frequented by locals, followed by dinner.

Dinner: For those who did not join the optional tour, tonight's dinner is on your own. Perhaps you'll dine with fellow travelers in the hotel, or venture out for a meal at a local restaurant. Dinner will be at a local restaurant for those on the optional tour.

Evening: On your own, with freedom to discover more of the city as you'd like. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations.

Day 12 Hoi An • Explore Champa Ruins at My Son Sanctuary

- Destination: Hoi An
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hoi An Central Boutique Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to My Son Sanctuary. This is Vietnam's most significant ruin from the ancient Champa Kingdom, which prospered from the second to 15th centuries.

Nestled in an isolated valley overlooked by Hon Quap (Cat's Tooth Mountain), My Son was established as a religious center in the fourth century. We'll learn about the history of the complex and its surroundings during a guided tour, which gives us time to walk among the red-brick ruins and admire the delicate masonry.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Hoi An.

Afternoon: The rest of the day is on your own. You're free to take in the views along the riverbanks, or you may visit a local café. Later, you also have the option to gather with some of your fellow travelers for a round table conversation on the complex history and controversial topics our group has encountered during our time in Vietnam.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening: Tonight you are free to explore at your own pace, browse the local shops, or gather at the hotel with fellow travelers.

Day 13 Fly to Nha Trang

- Destination: Nha Trang
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Yasaka Saigon Nha Trang Hotel & Spa or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We have time this morning to pack our bags or relax. After, we begin our travel day to Nha Trang, which includes a short flight.

Lunch: Our Trip Experience Leader will accompany us to a bakery before we leave for the airport. Here, you can grab a classic Vietnamese lunch like *bánh mì*, a sandwich that combines French and Vietnamese influence.

Afternoon: Upon arrival in Nha Trang, we'll transfer to our hotel. Enjoy free time to explore on your own. Perhaps you'll stroll along Nha Trang beach or rest after the flight.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: The rest of the evening is on your own. Consider asking your Trip Experience Leader for the best locales for whatever your preferences are.

Day 14 Nha Trang • Grand Circle Foundation visit: Phuoc Phuc Women's Shelter • Village visit • Community lunch

- Destination: Nha Trang
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Yasaka Saigon Nha Trang Hotel & Spa or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll depart for Phuoc Phuc Women's Shelter—supported in part by Grand Circle Foundation—to meet with the husband and wife co-founders, who will introduce us to their organization.

Grand Circle Foundation

Phuoc Phuc Women's Shelter

Total donated: **\$5,194**

Partner since: **2020** Upon arrival, we'll be greeted by the co-founders, devoted Christians, parents, and philanthropists—in fact, the organization is primarily funded by income generated from their own clothing shop and farm. Since 2004, they've worked tirelessly to reduce the number of abortions in Vietnam, as well as support young girls through pregnancy and beyond. Nearly five hundred women have lived at the shelter since, and currently it is home to eleven mothers and forty children.

As we get acquainted with the organization, we'll have a chance to briefly tour the property, which consists of two homes: one for mothers with newborns and the other for families with older, more active children. We may meet some of these residents and learn about their daily lives as we explore. We'll also have a chance to see the bathroom and bedroom renovations made possible by donations from Grand Circle Foundation and our travelers.

Then, we'll depart for a nearby local market. During our time here, we'll have the opportunity to see locals going about their daily routines. We'll also enjoy a walk around the village, stopping along the way to say hello to local families.

Next, we'll continue to the home of a local, where we'll roll up our sleeves and begin preparing a traditional lunch.

Lunch: We'll sit down with the family for lunch and a conversation about life in the village.

Afternoon: We'll resume our walking exploration of the village and pass by local families making bamboo chopsticks. We may have the opportunity to stop and interact with several of them in order to learn more about their family-run business.

Upon returning to Nha Trang, the rest of the afternoon is yours, with the freedom to explore as you'd like. You may choose to visit the 19th-century Long Son Pagoda, which features one of the country's largest outdoor Buddha statues. Or, perhaps you'll visit the Dr. Yersin Museum to learn more about this revered bacteriologist.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on some of the best places for local fare, like *bun bo nam bo*, a dry noodle dish that combines a symphony of flavors and textures.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries.

Day 15 Overland to Dalat • Home-Hosted Dinner

- Destination: Dalat
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Sammy Dalat Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today's transfer to Dalat includes about four hours of bus travel, along roads that may be bumpy and uneven at times.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Journey to Dalat, nicknamed the "City of Eternal Spring." Along the way, we'll admire the region's rice paddies, vegetable patches, and gently sloping hills that grow into mountains. Nestled in the mountains, Dalat is prized by the Vietnamese for its mild climate—Bao Dai, Vietnam's last emperor, even had his summer residence here.

Lunch: At a local restaurant. Here, we'll have the opportunity to meet members of a local hill tribe—the Montagnards—and hear some of their traditional music while we dine. The hill tribes in this area have inhabited these lands for centuries, roughly 150 years before the French settled here. Now, they live in areas outside the village, but are happy to commute into the city to share insight into their culture with us.

Afternoon: Following our meal, we'll depart for our hotel and check in. After settling in, you're welcome to join our Trip Experience Leader for a short orientation walk around the neighborhood. The rest of the afternoon is free for you to spend as you'd like, whether you wish to explore the hotel or begin your own discoveries in Dalat. You might be interested in taking a leisurely stroll around Xuan Huong Central Lake, or perhaps you'll ride a cable car up to Truc Lam Zen Monastery.

Our group will reconvene this evening to learn about Dalat's local culture during a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with those who know it best: its residents. Your multi-generational host family might hail from a variety of different backgrounds, from teachers, to government officers, to retirees, and their home may be colonial-style or perhaps more modern.

Dinner: We'll enjoy dinner with our hosts. Here we'll see how residents go about their daily lives—where they live, what they cook, how they eat, and how they feel about their homeland. While we dine, we'll discuss Dalat's complex history, once a Montagnard territory and now a popular vacation spot.

Evening: The rest of the evening is on your own. You're free to gather with your fellow travelers to discuss our dinner in greater detail, or to ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on where to find the best *kem bo* (avocado ice cream).

Day 16 Dalat • Optional Dalat Agricultural tour • University student discussion

- Destination: Dalat
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Sammy Dalat Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: The morning is free to explore the city as you'd like. Perhaps you'll behold the "Crazy House," a guesthouse with a whimsical and abstract design. You may prefer more natural wonders, in which case you can stroll through the elaborate Dalat Flower Gardens. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations that suit your interests.

Or, you're welcome to join an optional tour focusing on Dalat's agricultural production and village life. We'll first visit a market garden, where we'll learn about the flowers grown in this region, before continuing on to a local coffee plantation. Here we'll get an introduction to weasel coffee—a close cousin to civet coffee, it's expensive, highly coveted, and somewhat controversial among Western coffee connoisseurs. We'll have a chance to sample this coffee before a local family invites us into their home to enjoy more weasel coffee. Next, we'll drive to the isolated, traditional village of Buon Chuoi (Banana Village). We'll arrive at the village and have some time to explore. We'll meet members of this hill tribe and learn about their subsistence farming practices, and they'll give us glimpses into their home lives. Then, we'll sit down with the chief to discuss the impacts government policies are having on local hill tribes.

Lunch: If you haven't joined today's optional tour, lunch is on your own. You're free to seek out a restaurant, or perhaps try one of Dalat's popular street foods, *bánh tráng kẹp* (grilled egg, pork, and shrimp on rice paper). Your

Trip Experience Leader can tell you where to find this "Vietnamese pizza." Travelers on our optional tour will enjoy lunch at a local restaurant in Dalat.

Afternoon: Those who joined our optional tour will continue their drive back to the hotel. Then, we'll gather as a group at the hotel for a short ride to Dalat University, where we'll have the chance to meet with some of its students. Admittance into one of Vietnam's colleges and universities requires successfully passing a prestigious entrance examination, and the pressure on students is high: On average, only one in five Vietnamese high school students passes the test. Our candid conversation will give us the chance to learn about Vietnam's next generation in their own words.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own. You're free to return to the hotel or venture out for a last bit of exploration here in Dalat. Perhaps you'll go to Dalat Market to explore its vibrant night market scene, where street food stands beckon with a tantalizing assortment of scents, accompanied by the sound of sizzling pots and pans.

Day 17 Fly to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

- Destination: Ho Chi Minh City
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Central Palace Hotel or similar

Activity Note: We'll rise around 5am today so we have plenty of time to grab breakfast and finish packing before we transfer to the airport.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll head to the airport, and depart for our flight to the southernmost point of our adventure: Ho Chi Minh City. Upon landing, we'll dive into our explorations with an included city tour.

Formerly known as Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City is now a modern seaport and Vietnam's largest city. During our tour, we'll see the city's long and complex history on full display: Centuries' old Buddhist temples and buildings built by French colonists. Continuing on, we'll see the Catholic Cathedral of Notre Dame, completed in 1880 and said to stand on the site of an old pagoda. We'll then witness the majestic Post Office—also built in the late 19th century, it features a pair of enormous murals with maps of Vietnam as it was years ago. We will also drive by the former U.S. Embassy, an iconic Vietnam War site.

Lunch: At a local noodle soup restaurant. Rich and flavorful, *pho* (noodle soup) is Vietnam's national dish, having originated in the north and spread across the nation. It's considered a homey comfort food here, and locals note that different regions add their own nuances to the dish.

Afternoon: We'll drive to the hotel and check in. You'll have some time to explore on your own this afternoon—perhaps you'll venture out to the nearby Ben Thanh market. You may also visit the War Remnant Museum. The North Vietnamese captured this city on April 30, 1975, and as you explore the artillery and armor collection, you'll gain more northern insights into the "American War."

Later, we'll regroup for an orientation walk around the neighborhood.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the evening as you wish. You may choose to enjoy a beverage at the hotel's bar, retire to your room, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on exploring Ho Chi Minh City independently.

Day 18 Mekong Delta experience • Sampan ride • Visit a coconut candy workshop

- Destination: Ho Chi Minh City
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Central Palace Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll embark on a journey out of Ho Chi Minh City to discover Vietnam's famous Mekong Delta. Throughout the day, our Trip Experience Leader will facilitate interactions with many of the local people who earn their livelihood from the maze of rivers and islands of this fertile region often referred to as "Vietnam's rice bowl."

We'll begin by driving to a boat station, where we'll embark a motorized boat and cruise to the picturesque province of Ben Tre. Upon arrival, we'll disembark and walk to visit a local farmer. There, we'll meet some of his family members and have an opportunity to taste some of their produce, such as grapefruits.

Then, we'll board a *sampan*, a traditional flat-bottomed wooden boat, which we'll take on a canal cruise. After, we'll disembark and board another form of local transportation: a *Xe Lambro*. These three-wheeled vehicles are similar to auto rickshaws you find in India. They have no windows and seat between 4–6 people. Our destination is a local coconut candy workshop. There, a local villager will show us how to make *keo dua*, a type of coconut candy—a favorite treat in Vietnam. We'll have the opportunity to learn about the production process: first grating the fresh coconut flesh, then extracting the milk and cream. The next step is the addition of malt syrup and sugar, followed by heating the mixture to a high temperature in large woks. The coconut candy eventually caramelizes, and then it's cooled and

ready for consumption. Take the opportunity to ask the local villager any questions you have about this process.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll board our motorized boat, and cruise back to the pier before driving back to Ho Chi Minh City. The rest of the afternoon is yours, with the freedom to enjoy the hotel's common areas, relax in your room, or venture out into the city. Perhaps you'll visit Reunification Palace, where the Vietnam War formally ended.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening: On your own. You're free to stay on the hotel grounds tonight, or you may choose to see a performance at the nearby Opera House, or even stroll along the expansive and popular Nguyen Hue Boulevard.

Day 19 Explore the Cu Chi Tunnels • Discussion about postwar life for Viet Cong veterans

- Destination: Ho Chi Minh City
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Central Palace Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart for the village of Cu Chi—the namesake for a vast network of tunnels that stretch for more than 160 miles. During the Vietnam War, these tunnels allowed the Viet Cong to control a large area near the former Saigon. But they were so much more than a means of transport: Soldiers and local civilians alike took to the tunnels as aerial bombing raged overhead, and there they lived, with homes, kitchens, medical facilities, and more.

Upon arrival, we'll begin our guided tour of the tunnels. As we explore the rough-hewn passageways and see the community spaces, we'll gain invaluable insight into the war. Plus, thanks to our small group size, we'll benefit from a unique glimpse of the site, as we explore an area of the tunnels most American tourists don't typically visit.

Lunch: We'll share a meal with a local family in their home, providing an opportunity to discuss our experience this morning.

Afternoon: After we eat, we'll delve deeper into what life is like for former Viet Cong fighters during a conversation that will examine the Vietnam War—or “American War,” as it's referred to in Vietnam—and whether or not veterans are satisfied with the outcome.

Later, we'll return to Ho Chi Minh City. You're free to explore on your own, or continue exploring.

Dinner: We'll enjoy a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own—with freedom for you to enjoy your final night in Ho Chi Minh City as you'd like.

Day 20 Return to the U.S. or begin post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: A boxed breakfast will be provided.

Early Morning: Depart for the airport to catch your return flight to the U.S. or to begin your post-trip extension to *Cambodia: Angkor Wat & the Legacy of the Ancient Khmer Empire*.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Cambodia: Angkor Wat & the Legacy of the Ancient Khmer Empire*

Day 1 Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam • Fly to Siem Reap, Cambodia • Visit Killing Fields

Day 2 Angkor National Museum • Optional Banteay Srei tour

Day 3 Explore Angkor and Angkor Wat • Home-Hosted Lunch

Day 4 Cruise Tonle Sap Lake • Floating village visit • Angkor Wat sunset

Day 5 Fly to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Day 6 Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. They will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.

Hanoi Local Life & Food Adventure

(Day 6 \$75 per person)

Join us on an excursion through the backstreets of Hanoi to discover local life and cuisine in the lesser-known parts of the city. We'll explore aboard a unique form of transportation as we ride a vintage UAZ (a Russian military vehicle similar to a jeep) or a motorbike through the narrow lanes of Hanoi's backstreets, viewing scenes of life in city neighborhoods that tourists rarely visit.

We'll visit Hanoi's "Train Street", where shops and homes closely flank a narrow (and active) train track. We'll pause for refreshment, enjoying a drink as we observe the frantic rhythm of this neighborhood, where shoppers and diners sit a stone's throw away from passing locomotives.

Throughout our optional tour, we'll try samples of the city's famous street food specialties, such as delectable noodle dishes, fresh local beer, and unique concoctions like cà phê trứng—Vietnamese dessert coffee topped with a foam of egg yolk and condensed milk.

After making our way through various sections of the city, we'll conclude our discoveries at a local restaurant and sit down to a casual meal before returning to your hotel.

Countryside Cruise & Street Food Experience

(Day 11 \$75 per person)

We'll travel by electric car to Cam Thanh village, visit local family farms, and witness Hoi An's historic cityscape from a different vantage point during a cruise along the lovely Thu Bon River. We'll also sample a slice of daily life at the central market, where we'll experience various street food delicacies. Later, we'll round out our discoveries with dinner at a nearby restaurant, the glowing lights of Hoi An reflected on the nearby river.

Dalat Agricultural Tour

(Day 16 \$75 per person)

Dalat is an area of rich agricultural production in the central highlands. First, we'll visit a market garden, where we'll learn about the flowers grown in this region, before continuing on to a local coffee plantation. Here we'll get an

introduction to weasel coffee—a close cousin to civet coffee, it's expensive, highly coveted, and somewhat controversial among Western coffee connoisseurs. We'll have the opportunity to taste this traditional coffee. Then, we'll venture to the isolated traditional village of Buon Chuoi (Banana Village). The village chief will greet us and we'll have some time to explore. We'll meet members of this hill tribe and learn about their subsistence farming practices, and they'll give us glimpses into their home lives. Then, we'll sit down with the chief to discuss the impacts government policies are having on local hill tribes. We'll cap off our discoveries and head back to Dalat for an included lunch.