



Vietnam

Planning a trip to Vietnam? Then you should talk to us... We offer independent expert advice and the ability to deliver top quality itineraries with the best tour operators that are exceptional value for money. Arranging your travel through The Specialist Travel Consultancy also reduces the time you have to spend researching and planning your trip. And our service is completely free! Contact us to discuss your travel requirements on **0845 838 7667** or for more information on the service we offer please visit our website: www.thestc.co.uk

We arrange tailor made trips:

- School expeditions
- Walking & trekking
- Vietnam War History Tours
- Link school visits
- Adventure Travel
- Geography Tours

Facts & Highlights

Full Name: The Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Area: 329,247 sq km (127,123 sq miles)

Population: 84 million

Capital City: Hanoi

People: Vietnamese (over 85%), 54 ethnic minorities including Dao, Hmong, Nung, and Tay.

Languages: Vietnamese (majority) plus ethnic languages, English and Russian.

Religions: Buddhist (main), Taoist, Confucianism, Christian

Currency: Dong

Government: Socialist Republic

Electricity: 220/110v, 50Hz, 2 pin flat plugs

Time: GMT + 7 hours



Colonial Cities: Soak up the history in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh (Saigon).

Tribal Encounters: Trek to remote hill tribe communities in the Sapa region and summit Vietnam's highest mountain, Mt. Fansipan.

Take to two wheels: Hop on a bike and travel like the locals - the perfect way to explore this beautiful country.

Halong Bay: Explore the extraordinary beauty of Halong Bay's limestone landscape on board a traditional junk boat or sea kayak.

Floating Food: Experience the hustle in the floating markets of the Mekong.

Food: Taste world class food cooked to order in front of your eyes.

The Reunification Express: All aboard a piece of history on the train that linked the north and south.

Vietnam is beautiful.

Its landscapes, ranging from jagged mountains and brilliant green rice fields, to the limestone pinnacles of Halong Bay and idyllic palm fringed beaches are a sheer joy to behold. However, what makes Vietnam really special and what turns a beautiful country into a stunning travel experience are the Vietnamese people. Their warm and welcoming nature, as well as their mouth-watering cuisine puts the seal on one of Asia's best destinations.

For schools planning either adventurous expeditions or cultural tours, Vietnam is a great destination. There is so much on offer in terms of history, geography, adventure and cultural interaction it can be difficult to decide what to include in an itinerary - especially if time is limited. Through our specialist south east Asia tour operators, we can tailor-make an itinerary to suit your requirements, from two week cultural tours, to longer adventurous expeditions involving project work.

For adventure seekers, there is excellent trekking, especially in the north, where Mt. Fansipan, Vietnam's highest mountain at 3,143m is situated amongst an ethnically diverse region of hill tribes. It's a technically easy, but physically demanding four day trek through dense mountain forest. Even if you choose not to attempt Fansipan, the region is a trekking Mecca and the experience of trekking through remote and traditional tribal villages is one that is not easily forgotten.

Colonial Hanoi with its bustling street markets and the spectacular UNESCO World Heritage site at Halong Bay are

"must see" sights in the north, while the traditional towns of Hue and Hoi An with their markets, temples, pagodas and Chinese charm are a great stop on the journey to the south.

In the far south Ho Chi Minh (formerly Saigon) and the surrounding regions offers many opportunities. Explore the history of the Vietnam War with visits to the War Remnants Museum and the famous Cu Chi tunnels, take a boat trip among the narrow waterways and markets of the Mekong Delta, and then kick back with a few days on the sun soaked beaches of Phan Tiet.

Vietnam is perfect for exploring by bike - 35 million Vietnamese can't be wrong! From a vantage point of two wheels, you will be able to fully appreciate the beautiful landscapes and meet more of the country's delightful people than would be possible if travelling by bus.

Vietnam can easily be linked with visits to Cambodia, Laos or Thailand. The world's biggest temple complex at Angkor Wat and a visit to the Killing fields museum, is a good example of a 4 or 5 day possible extension in Cambodia. Contact us to discuss your requirements.



Suggested Itineraries

2 weeks: Cultural tour by bike

Days 1/3 Depart UK, arrive Hanoi. Visit the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and other city highlights on a cycle tour.

4/5 Cuc Phuong National Park, home to the endangered primate rescue center. Visit ancient capital of Hoa Lu.

6 Transfer to Hue.

7/8 Transfer to Hoi An. Cycle the 80km Hai Van Pass for magical coastal views.

9 Cycle into the Central Highlands, home to many little visited hilltribes.

10 Cycle through the Coffee plantations and forested hills of Buon Ma Thuot.

11/12 Downhill to the coastal resort of Nha Trang. Boat trip among islands.

13/14 Head back into the mountains to the former French hill station of Dalat.

15/16 Ho Chi Minh City: Experience the bustle of Saigon before flying home.

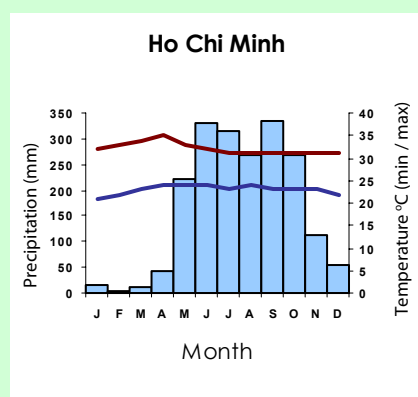
Geography & Climate

Vietnam holds great geographical variety within its borders including a continuous mountain range along its western border, tropical forests, dramatic limestone landscapes and vast and intricate river Delta.

Vietnam's climate varies greatly due to its diversity of geographical zones and wide latitudinal range. You can visit year round, but due to its tropical climate, rainfall should be expected at any time of year. It is difficult to give a definitive "best time" of year to travel as what might be a good month in the north, is likely to have poor weather in the south.

February to April and also November are generally considered to be the optimum times to visit. If you plan to just visit the north of the country, then our winter months are best, but the temperature can be cold, especially in the mountains. The south tends to be hot during our summer, with heavy rains in early autumn.

In summary, don't let the weather dictate when you go - just make sure you go! You'll have a great time whatever the weather!



2 weeks: Trekking northern hill tribes

Days 1/2: Overnight flight to Hanoi

3: Hanoi sightseeing; overnight train to Lao Cai

4: Climb Sapa Hill to Cat Cat & visit Hmong people

5-7: Trek between tribal villages & homestay in local villages; return to Sapa

8: In Hanoi

9/10: Halong Bay boat trip; return to Hanoi

11/12: Overnight flight to London

1 month: Adventurous expedition

1/2: Overnight flight to Hanoi

3: Hanoi sightseeing; train to Lao Cai

4: Climb Sapa Hill to Cat Cat & visit Hmong people

5/9: Trek to the summit of Mt. Fansipan; return to Sapa

8: In Hanoi

9/11: Explore Halong Bay by boat and sea kayak.

12/15: All aboard the Reunification Express, visit Hue and Hoi An.

16: Head into Central Highlands, trek to remote village.

17/21: Community project in tribal village helping community build pathways, buildings or water supplies.

22/25: Head to Nha Trang for relaxation amongst beaches and islands

26: Drive to Ho Chi Minh.

27: City tour of Ho Chi Minh & Cu Chi tunnels

28: Tour of Mekong Delta.

29: Final day in Ho Chi Minh, flight home.

30: Arrive UK

National Holidays

1 Jan: New Years Day

Jan/Feb: Vietnamese New Year (dates vary with lunar calendar)

3 Feb: Founding of the Communist Party

8 March: International Women's Day

26 March: Youth Day

30 April: Liberation of Saigon

1 May: International Labour Day

1 May: Ho Chi Minh's Birthday

1 June: Children's Day

27 July: Memorial Day for War Martyrs

19 Aug: Revolution of 1945

2 Sept: National Day

20 Nov: Teachers' Day

22 Dec: Army Day



Festivals

"Tet" - The country wide festival in late January or early February marks Vietnam's new lunar year and the re-emergence of spring. It is the most important festival in the country. Celebrations often go on for a week or longer and involve fireworks and firecrackers to ward off evil spirits, the wearing of traditional dress and huge gatherings at Buddhist temples.

Project Work

There are many possibilities for project work in Vietnam but most are community related. Our tour operators pride themselves on choosing projects that are both responsible and sustainable. Typical examples would be working with hill tribe villages to establish trails, drainage or new buildings.

Price Guide

Prices vary enormously depending on the length and style of trip required, as well as the number of participants involved and date of departure. Two week itineraries start from around £1600 including flights. Extended expeditions can be around £3,000 per person, dependent on the itinerary and project work costs.

Regulations & Red Tape

British passport holders do require a visa for visits to Vietnam. A one month visa currently costs £38 for British passport holders. A full passport, valid for at least 1 month after the expiration of your visa is also required.

Useful Addresses

Embassy, Socialist Republic of Vietnam

12 Victoria Road, London W8 5RD

Tel: 0207 937 1912.

Web: www.vietnamembassy.org.uk

Open: Mon-Fri 0930-1230 (for visas)

Vietnamese National Administration of Tourism

Web: www.vietnamtourism.com

More Information

To discuss the travel possibilities that Vietnam offers in greater detail and receive free independent advice on potential tour operators, please contact:

The Specialist Travel Consultancy

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