

Vietnam

Halong to Ho Chi Minh Expedition



Join us on this very special expedition amongst the hidden backwaters and breath-taking beauty of rural Vietnam. With remote trails, traditional tribes, the stunning beauty of Halong Bay and the culture of Ho Chi Minh and the Mekong Delta, this expedition traverses the length and breadth of Vietnam. Students will gain an unparalleled 'insiders' perspective of the country through our exceptional local contacts and expert guides. In conjunction with our pre-trip training, this Vietnam programme offers an excellent introduction to adventure, expeditioning and expanded global horizons.



Recommended itinerary:

Culture shock rating: 

Physical rating: 

Days 1-2 Depart UK and fly overnight to Hanoi: Enjoy a welcome dinner and recover from our flight.

Day 3 Cooking class and tour of Hanoi: After breakfast our guide will take us to meet our chef and go shopping at the local market to buy all the ingredients we will need for our Vietnamese cooking class. Remember to pay attention because the end result will be our lunch! In the afternoon, we walk around the old quarter and soak up the sights and sounds of old Hanoi. We visit Hoan Kiem Lake to catch a glimpse of the endangered soft backed turtle and discover the legend of the "Lake Of The Returned Sword".

Day 4 Pu Luong and first trek This morning we leave Hanoi and drive to Mai Chau. We arrive at Poom Coong village for lunch and our first taste of the idyllic Vietnamese landscapes that will be present throughout our adventure. Driving a little further to the start of our first trek, we continue on foot through the beautiful hills, terraces and villages of the Pu Luong nature reserve. Tonight is spent at our first 'homestay'.

Days 5-7 The Hidden trails of Pu Luong: After breakfast with our Homestay hosts, we will spend the day trekking through more gems of Pu Luong. We stop for lunch amongst the lush, verdant hills before continuing our trek, reaching Hieu village and our next Homestay in the afternoon. The afternoon is free for us to rest and take a stroll around the village and visit the beautiful waterfall nearby. Over the next few days we continue our trek, passing the small villages of Hieu, Nua and Son. Each day we will pass cool streams perfect for a refreshing dip, luminous green paddy fields and friendly locals. At night, we stay in welcoming village homestays

Days 8-11 Project Work In Son Village: On reaching Son Village, we will spend the next three days engaged in a project to help the local community. Currently this would be building a pipe for the water supply to come directly into their village. Participants would be expected to help towards fundraising for this prior to their departure. Working alongside the locals gives us a great opportunity to support local communities, whilst gaining an insiders view of life in these small villages.

Day 12: Hike to Ton village and return to Hanoi: Today we will say goodbye to Son village and, walking a gentle route through rice paddies and lush jungle, we arrive at Ton village. Our driver will be waiting for us there to transfer us to Muong Khen town for lunch. We transfer back to Hanoi in the late afternoon before heading out to the bustling streets of this amazing city for dinner.

Day 13-15: Halong Bay Adventure: We drive to the picturesque Halong Harbour for the start of a three day cruise and have lunch on board whilst cruising to the bay. This stunningly beautiful UNESCO World Heritage site is our home for the next few days, and we will go kayaking and swimming, visit floating markets and see incredible sunsets. On day 15, we return to the harbour and then to Hanoi, having dinner before heading to the train station for our night train south to Danang. Our accommodation tonight is the famous Reunification Express and a four-berth soft sleeper cabin.

Day 16 Danang to Hoi An: Stepping off the train in Danang we visit Cham Sculpture Museum, home of the world's largest collection of Cham artefacts. We also visit the beautiful Marble mountains on our way to the ancient port town of Hoi An. We spend the afternoon strolling around the town exploring the delights of the Japanese covered bridge and the beautifully preserved Tan Ky House. We meet for dinner at a local restaurant in the ancient town.

Day 17 Hoi An to Huong Tra Que village: After breakfast we'll head down to the pier and take a boat along the Thu Bon River. We can visit the Bay Mau coconut forest, an area of both ecological and historical interest. The boat then continues down the river to Tra Que Vegetable Village where we spend the afternoon experiencing life as a Vietnamese farmer. When we arrive, we will be welcomed with a local tea, before turning our hand to learning some local farming methods, preparing our lunch using ingredients that have been grown locally. After lunch, we cycle through the lush countryside back to Hoi An for the evening.

Days 18 -20 Beach Days: After two weeks of intensive travel, we have two days rest and relaxation on the golden sands of Hoi An beach, before transferring back to Danang airport and flying to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City).

Days 21-23 Explore the Mekong Delta: Today we leave Saigon and head to My Tho village for our first boat trip along the bustling waterways of the Mekong Delta. We stop at one of the many islands to visit a traditional Mekong Delta house and kitchen for some seasonal fruit along with some local tea and fresh honey. We also visit a local rice wine distillery and try our hand at paddling a traditional 'sampan' along the smaller waterways. Next we take to our bikes and also using a number of the small local ferries, wind our way on to Cai Be, where we sail along the river to visit the colourful Cai Rang, the biggest floating market in the Mekong Delta, before cycling onto Can Tho. The route can be tailored to the group's cycling ability and interests, including possible visits to brick kilns where terracotta and pottery are made, or a ride along the immense rice fields, or a cycle through numerous rural riverside villages. After lunch at a local street-side stall, we are taken by bus to Can Tho city, and, time allowing, we can go on a walking tour of the city. Finally, it's back on the bikes again for our last two-wheeled glimpse of the magical Mekong before we head back to Saigon by bus.

Day 24 Saigon to Cu Chi tunnels: After a relaxing morning and lunch at the hotel, we head out in the afternoon to the Cu Chi tunnels, one of the Viet Cong's main bases in the Vietnam war. See what life was like for the guerrilla warriors who lived and fought underground during the war. Those not scared of small spaces can crawl through 50 m of the some 200 km of tunnel systems below ground. There will also be the chance to visit a rice paper workshop before returning to Saigon for a final farewell dinner.

Day 25 Fly back to the UK: Depending on flight time, there may be some time to have a final look around Saigon before transferring to the airport for our flight back home.

Please note: It is important to realise that the itinerary needs to be flexible. While every effort will be made to follow the above schedule, in the event of political problems, airline schedule changes, we will do our best to make your trip as enjoyable and hassle-free as possible, but it is important to EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED and be prepared to accept some slight changes. Relax and have faith in your guides – he or she will want you to see their country in a good light.



For more information and a detailed quote, please contact us:
telephone: 01392 660056
email: schools@thestc.co.uk
website: www.thestc.co.uk

