



Reflections of Vietnam

Discovery Tour | 17 Days | Active

Hanoi - Sapa - Halong Bay - Hoi An - Saigon - Mekong Delta

Vietnam offers unsurpassed cultural experiences and natural sights; cycle through lush countryside, taste beautifully spiced foods and get to know the locals on the Mekong Delta on this exciting journey from north to south.

- Explore bustling and vibrant Hanoi
- Hike through the rice terraces of Sapa
- Relax with a cruise on picturesque Halong Bay
- Discover the ancient streets of Hoi An
- Cycle through the farmlands of the Mekong Delta



Reflections of Vietnam tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- Meals as stated on your itinerary
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) and Local Guides
- Visa fees for UK and EU passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with ABTA, ATOL and IATA

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.

Discovery Tours:

Designed for those who wish to be further immersed in the authentic charm of Asia; our Discovery Tours include more cultural and active experiences. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience. Our Discovery tours include:

- Cycling and walking through classic sites
- Unique cultural experiences and encounters
- Off the beaten track destinations
- More evenings at leisure for independent exploration

Active Tours:

'Reflections of Vietnam' is an Active tour. This is one of the most demanding trips Wendy Wu Tours offers. As a whole, this itinerary requires a high level of fitness.

- There will be both short and long periods of walking whilst sightseeing
- Whilst in Sapa you will be hiking between 4 to 6 hours each day, occasionally on steep and uneven ground
- Throughout the tour there will be bicycle tours which may involve cycling over an even ground
- You will be required to get on and off varying sizes of boats throughout the tour, often without assistance

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you require any more information about the pace of our Discovery Tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

Itinerary – Reflections of Vietnam

Days 1-2: Hanoi

Meals included: Dinner

Fly to Hanoi where you will be met at the airport in the arrival hall by your Local Guide and/or National Escort. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer 45 minutes to your hotel and check into your room or store any luggage if your room is not ready yet. There is no sightseeing today.



Destination Information

Hanoi - With a population of approximately four million, Hanoi is a charming and richly historic city of lakes, shaded boulevards and leafy open parks. The centre is an architectural museum piece housing groups of ochre coloured buildings holding the air of provincial French towns of the 1930s, a “Paris of the Orient” as people have called it.

Day 3: Hanoi

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Discover the sights of Hanoi today. First stop will be Ba Dinh square and the Ho Chi Minh complex, followed by the Museum of Ethnology. After lunch visit a water puppet artist, you will have a chance to talk with the artist, have a look steps of making the puppets, and enjoy a private water puppet show. Tonight your guide will take you on a culinary adventure in the Old Quarter for a chance to browse the local street foods before transferring to a restaurant for your dinner. Sightseeing in central Hanoi involves approximately 4 hours on foot.



The Ethnology Museum is closed on Mondays and on Vietnamese New Year, if your visit falls on these days you will go to the Vietnamese Women’s Museum as an alternative. Ho Chi Minh’s Mausoleum is closed for entry on Mondays and Fridays every week and from September to December each year. During these times we are unable to enter the Mausoleum; however, we can view it from the outside.

Destination Information

Ho Chi Minh complex - Dedicated to the father of modern Vietnam and where Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum stands in Ba Dinh Square. Ho Chi Minh first declared independence from French rule in 1945.

Water Puppet Show – Is a traditional form of entertainment, founded by farmers working alongside the Red River in Hanoi. Topics covered usually involve traditional folklore but sometimes modern themes are incorporated.

Day 4: Hanoi – Lao Cai

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning rise early for a visit Hanoi's biggest flower market, Quang Ba, before taking a stroll around Hanoi's iconic Hoan Kiem Lake watching hundreds of locals doing their morning aerobics. Return to the hotel for breakfast. Later visit the Temple of Literature before enjoying some free time in Hanoi's Old Quarter.



This evening transfer to the station to board your overnight train to Lao Cai station. You may have to carry your luggage over numerous train tracks to reach your platform and carriage because of the layout of Hanoi station. You will be sharing a 4 berth cabin with other passengers who may not be part of the Wendy Wu Tours group and may be of different genders; private use of the cabin is available but it is at an additional cost. Wear comfortable clothes on board to sleep in and take snacks as none are readily available. This journey usually takes 9 hours (over 340km) and can be quite bumpy.

You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for your trip to Sapa. Main luggage will be left in safe storage at the hotel in Hanoi and picked up your return.

Destination Information

Temple of Literature – One of the main centres of Confucianism in Vietnam, the Temple of Literature was originally a centre for education in Hanoi and is still used for graduation ceremonies in Vietnam.

Hanoi Old Quarter – Hanoi's Old Quarter is one of its most exciting and colourful sections. The Old Quarter is home to many stalls, selling Vietnamese curios, small eats and souvenirs.

Day 5: Lao Cai – Sapa

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Arrive in Lao Cai around 5:30 am and go to a local restaurant for breakfast before transferring to the verdant hill town of Sapa. You will start your 4 to 5 hour walk at Suoi Ho Village and make your way through beautiful rice terraces and quaint villages. Surfaces sometimes are uneven and can be steep in places. Stop at Ma Tra Village where you will learn about local culture from the local people. Back in Sapa hike up Ham Rong Mountain for spectacular views of the town.



Please ensure you have sturdy and comfortable walking shoes as the mountain trails can be slippery in wet weather

Destination Information

Sapa - Located 1,600m above sea level and close to the Chinese border. This mountainous area with its spectacular landscapes and temperate climate is sure to make a lasting impression on its visitors. The H'mong and Dao people, the largest and most colourful ethnic groups in the region, are a cultural highlight.

Ham Rong Mountain – Ham Rong rises up impressively over the town, the peak forming the 'Dragon's Jaw'; the mountain is scattered with beautiful orchid gardens and European style botanical gardens.

Day 6: Sapa

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

This morning start your 6 hour hike south of Sapa towards the busy village of Cat Cat, today's walk will be around 13km and requires a good level of fitness. The valleys that surround the village of Y Linh Ho are some of the most picturesque in the region, and this route allows you to explore one of Sapa's less-traversed areas. Make your way along a gentle incline, through emerald paddy fields above a deep river gorge, before arriving on the river bank. Take a rest, dip your toes in the cool mountain waters and if you are lucky see local children fishing with nets, before continuing deeper through the villages and terraces of the Black H'mong. Enjoy lunch with a view at a local village restaurant before continuing through the valley towards the village of Lao Chai. Take a well-earned rest and enjoy a soothing cup of tea before learning the art of Batik painting. Afterwards, head to Ta Van village where you will be picked up and transferred back to your hotel in Sapa.



Destination Information

Batik Painting - The beautiful textiles of the Black H'mong are famous around the world and Batik is a traditional part of H'mong culture. Under threat from modernization, Batik is now only practiced by a handful of villagers. By taking part will be supporting a sustainable tourism project that supports local women and ensures this amazing art form is handed down to the next generation.

Day 7: Sapa - Hanoi

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning is free for you to further explore the town or relax in your hotel. After lunch head to Hau Thao village where you will see the stunning view of Muong Hoa valley. In Hau Thao Commune, you will have a chance to discover the daily life of Black Hmong minority and their traditional customs. Continue trekking to Giang Ta Chai village inhabited by Zay and Red Zao minorities. You will be walking today for approximately 2 and half hours (5-6km), this requires a good level of fitness. Later transfer to Lao Cai for your overnight train journey back to Hanoi.

Destination Information

Black H'mong Tribe – Migrating from China in the 19th Century, the Black H'mong wear distinctive indigo dyed linen typically accompanied by aprons, leggings and cylindrical hats. They are now one of the largest ethnic groups in Vietnam, cultivating the lands of Sapa with rice and medicinal plants.

Day 8: Hanoi – Halong Bay

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Arrive early in Hanoi and freshen up before driving 4 hours to Halong, where you will take an overnight cruise to the far-most corners of the bay on a traditional Vietnamese boat. There is usually a crowd of boats at the docks; however, the cruise itself will be scenic and relaxing. Boarding your boat could involve navigating your way over and through other boats, moored between it and the dock, sometimes without handrails, ladders or assistance from staff.



The boats usually hold about 40 passengers; have an enclosed dining area and an open area on the upper deck. Enjoy lunch onboard as you cruise out into the bay, stopping to anchor for an afternoon of activities (which are subject to change due to cruise selection and weather conditions). Sightseeing includes visiting underground caves on the islands, which require climbing up and down steps inside and outside of the caves. End the day on deck with a drink in hand to watch the sunset over the bay followed by a freshly prepared dinner, before retiring to your cabin for the night.

You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for your trip to Halong Bay. Main luggage will be left in safe storage at the hotel in Hanoi and picked up your return.

Please note: Weather conditions such as mist, fog, wind, rain and storms may delay the departure time of your cruise, or in some cases your cruise may be cancelled. Notifications of any delays or cancellations may not be known until your group's arrival in Halong Bay. If your cruise is cancelled after your arrival in Halong Bay, you will have lunch in Halong City and return to Hanoi. If notification of the cruise cancellation is given prior to your departure for Halong Bay an alternative day trip will be arranged to Hoa Lu and Tam Coc or 'Halong Bay on Land', an area located approximately 2 hours from Hanoi. Our guides will make every effort to inform the group at the earliest possible moment should there be any itinerary changes.

Destination Information

Halong Bay - Compared to the landscape of the limestone islets of Guilin in China and Krabi in southern Thailand, Halong Bay shares a common border with China in the north and harbours some of the most stunning scenery in Vietnam. Unique rock sculptures jut out dramatically from the clear emerald waters of the Gulf of Tonkin and numerous grottoes have created an enchanting, timeless world, looking out onto the horizon with the sails of the junks and sampans completing the picture.

Day 9: Halong Bay - Hanoi

Meals included: Brunch, Dinner

Start your day on deck with a relaxing Tai Chi session whilst you admire an amazing sunrise over the karst scenery. Spend the morning sailing through Halong Bay. After brunch disembark your cruise and return to Hanoi for an afternoon at leisure.



Day 10: Hanoi – Hoi An

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to Danang and transfer 45 minutes to the Ancient town of Hoi An. Spend the afternoon to walk the ancient streets of Hoi An, lined with Chinese traders' homes and wooden houses reincarnated as restaurants, cafés, and outlets for local artists, craftsmen and tailors. Explore the beautiful 16th century Japanese Bridge.



Destination Information

Hoi An - Perhaps more than any other place in Vietnam, Hoi An retains the feel of centuries past. Once known as Faifo, Hoi An was an influential port along the Silk Road. For over 500 years merchants from China, Japan, France and Portugal settled in the prosperous town resulting in a distinctive blend of culture, cuisine, religion and architecture.

Japanese Covered Bridge - First constructed in the 1590s to link the Japanese and Chinese quarters of the town. This iconic pink hued bridge has been restored to its former splendour.

Day 11: Hoi An

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Jump on your bike today and wheel through the scenic rice paddies outside of Hoi An. Pay a visit to local farmers where you can try your hand at traditional farming techniques. Enjoy a calming boat ride to a fishing village where you can try and make fishing nets and paddle bamboo basket boats.



Day 12: Hoi An

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Take a boat from Hoi An to Cham Island. Arriving at Lang Village, you'll stroll around the village and learn about the island's history. After visiting the Marine Protected Area and other sites continue to Chong Village and enjoy the winding roads and amazing sea views. You'll then have time to swim before a lunch of fresh seafood.

If the weather conditions prevent you from taking the boat trip to Cham Island and alternative tour to My Son will be provided.



Destination Information

Cham Island – a surprising piece of paradise just outside of Hoi An, Cham Island has beautiful sandy beaches and sapphire waters, great for swimming and snorkelling.

Day 13: Hoi An - Saigon

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Fly an hour and a half to Saigon Vietnam's colourful and vibrant southern city. Take a walking tour of Saigon, passing through its colonial and modern architecture., See the Notre Dame Cathedral and the French colonial Post Office before passing the Hotel Continental as seen in the book, the 'Quiet American'. End your day with a visit to the Caravelle Hotel's rooftop bar where you can enjoy some drinks (at your own expense) whilst you look out over this bustling city. You will be on your feet for 3-4 hours in Saigon touring some of the city's main sights.



Destination Information

Saigon - Saigon is one of the world's truly cosmopolitan cities with a history, culture and style obtained from colonial France, ancient China and the art deco era. Once the main port of Cambodia's Mekong territory, Saigon became the capital of France's Cochinchina and later the capital of the Republic of Vietnam. It remained the capital of South Vietnam until reunification at the end of the American War in Vietnam in 1975, when the capital was moved to Hanoi.

Notre Dame Cathedral - Influenced by French design and built between 1863 and 1880, the red brick exterior and 60-meter bell towers overlook downtown Saigon.

Central Post Office - Located next to the Notre-Dame Cathedral. The Central Post Office building was constructed in the late 19th century. It counts Gothic, Renaissance and French influences and was designed by Auguste Henri Vildieu and Alfred Foulhoux, but is often erroneously credited as being the work of Gustave Eiffel.

Day 14: Saigon – Mekong Delta

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Head south for 2 hours to Ben Tre, gateway to the Mekong Delta. Here you will take a rickshaw ride past quiet rural villages and verdant fields, usually two people can sit in each rickshaw (also known as Xe Loi). Board a boat to drift through small backwater canals before visiting local workshops where you can talk with locals before meeting a former Vietcong soldier. Arrive at your homestay this afternoon where you can enjoy some independent time to explore the area. Your bedroom will have a mosquito net, soft bed with blanket, pillows and bath towel. Your evening meal will be home-cooked at your homestay.



You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for your trip to the Mekong Delta. Main luggage will be left in safe storage at the hotel in Saigon and picked up your return.

Destination Information

Mekong Delta - Although primarily rural, the Mekong Delta is a densely populated area where life progresses around its fertile banks. The Mekong Delta is the 13th longest, and the 10th largest, by volume alone and people live, trade, travel and even go to school on the riverbanks.

Day 16: Can Tho - Saigon

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Start your day with a visit to the Cai Thia rural market before cycling through orchards, where you will pass local farmers and traditional houses. This afternoon enjoy a garden lunch, with fresh fruit and rice wine. Transfer 1 hour to Can Tho for an overnight stay.

Destination Information

Can Tho – Located on the south bank of the Hau River Can Tho is famous for its floating markets, Buddhist pagodas, fantastic food and fresh fruits.

Day 15: Mekong Delta – Can Tho

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Pay a morning visit to the famous Cai Rang floating market, taking in the scenery and locals going about their daily business along the canals. Take a relaxed cycle through quiet and isolated countryside before returning 3 hours drive to Saigon.

**Destination Information**

Cai Rang Floating market – is made up of hundreds of boats with vendors selling a myriad of items, including farm products, fruit and seasonal goods.

Day 17: Depart Saigon

Meals included: Breakfast

Transfer 1 hour to the airport to fly home; anytime before your flight is at leisure.

Reflections of Vietnam Travel Information

Visas

For UK citizens entry visas for Vietnam are required for stays longer than 15 days or for multiple entries into Vietnam within a 30 day period; therefore UK citizens will not need a visa to enter Vietnam for a single entry stay of up to 15 days. Currently this visa exemption rule applies until 30th June 2017. Should the visa requirements for UK citizens travelling to Vietnam change after 30th June 2017 you will be contacted by Wendy Wu Tours regarding your visa requirements. To allow for unforeseen circumstances if your tour includes a stay of 15 days or more in Vietnam the standard visa processing service is included in your tour cost.

If you do require a visa Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining one. We will supply you with all paperwork and submit the visa application on your behalf. Visas for Vietnam are issued with specific start and expiry dates which are based on the dates stated on the visa application form. Travel must be completed within those dates. Please be advised that your passport must have at least 6-months validity left on it when you arrive back into UK. Visa application forms and all relevant documentation are due in our office 60 days prior to departure; if received after this, urgent visa processing fees will apply. Please note we do not accept passports and visa applications within 30 days prior to departure. Passports will be returned with your Final Documentation 2-3 weeks prior to your group tour's scheduled departure.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your national escort should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Evenings at Leisure

Due to the more intrepid nature of our Discovery clients, and to give you more flexibility and choice when travelling on selected Discovery tours; we have carefully balanced special highlight meals with evenings at leisure so that you can explore the many culinary delights that South East Asia has to offer. Alternatively, you can use this time to enjoy the facilities of your hotel. Your National Escort will be happy to provide you with advice about good places to eat, and assist in the booking of transportation to get you there (at your own expense).

Eating in South East Asia

Southeast Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in most local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region actually has its own distinct characteristics. Vietnam,



for example, is perhaps best known for its fresh and aromatic dishes – relying heavily on flavours from fresh herbs such as mint, basil and dill.

Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead. When dining in Southeast Asia, although some restaurants have adopted a western approach to dining, expect some restaurants to follow the traditional communal style of eating. Typically, this will mean each diner has their own small bowl and may serve themselves from a variety of shared dishes. At some local restaurants, appetizers and main courses might be served when they are ready instead of following a particular order.

Determining when it's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. In Vietnam, dishes are normally placed in the centre and people serve food for themselves with their own chopsticks and bowl. In Thailand and some other countries in Southeast Asia, fork and spoon are used for most dishes and chopsticks are typically provided to eat noodles. Usually chopsticks or other utensils are provided to scoop the food into your bowl to prevent your own chopsticks from touching the food that remains on the table. Dining in Southeast Asia is fairly casual with not too many rules. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Please refer to your travel guide for more information on Southeast Asian cuisine, including information for travellers with restricted diets.

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and South East



Asia. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

Solo travellers: If you are a solo traveller and willing to share a room, you will not have to pay a single supplement for any hotel rooms. However, if we cannot find another solo traveller for you to share with, you will be required to pay a supplement for just the cruise section of this tour - this payment will be taken when settling your final balance of the holiday.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Roads in South East Asia have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers

an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

Planes: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

Trains: This tour includes 2 overnight train journeys from Hanoi to Sapa and return. You will be sharing a 4 berth cabin with other passengers who may not be part of the Wendy Wu Tours group and may be of different genders; private use of the cabin is available but it is at an additional cost. This journey usually takes 9 hours and can be quite bumpy.

Development in South East Asia

Although South East Asia is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in the UK. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in the UK; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides.

Vietnamese public holidays

If you are travelling within the below Vietnamese Public Holidays please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Tourist attractions will be open, but may be crowded. Tet Holiday is between 27th – 31st January 2017 and 17th – 20th January 2018, International Labour Day is on 1st May every year, Reunification Day is on 30th April every year and National Independence Day is on 2nd September every year.

Optional activities

A list of optional activities and approximate costs will be provided with your final documents. These can be arranged by your guide and are paid for locally.

Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by both a national escort and local guides. There will usually be no more than 18 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only.

Tipping Policy

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and South East Asia is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right



amounts of cash available at the right time. In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed to local guides and drivers throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the national escort.

If you are travelling in a smaller group with local guides only, then tipping is paid in each destination. To be fair to the guides we ask for slightly higher amounts per traveller with small groups.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

Climate

Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

Itinerary changes

It is our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

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