



# Vietnam Express Southbound

## Overview & Itinerary

<b>Start</b>	Hanoi, Vietnam
<b>Finish</b>	Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
<b>Destination</b>	Vietnam
<b>Style</b>	Original
<b>Theme</b>	Explorer
<b>Code</b>	TVSF
<b>Trip rating</b>	4.89
<b>Validity</b>	01 Jan 2019 to 31 Dec 2019

## Is this trip right for you?

- We cover a lot of distance on this trip, including an overnight train from Hanoi to Hue (approx 12 hours). Compartments are on a mixed gender basis and you may be sharing with locals or travellers from other groups. For more about what this experience is like, see our blog post here: <https://www.intrepidtravel.com/adventures/what-to-expect-on-an-overnight...>
- The sightseeing tour by motorbike in Hue is great fun with bikes driven safely by professionals (and helmets provided), but alternative transport can be arranged for those who would prefer not to travel by motorbike.
- Depending on where you come from, the weather in Vietnam might be hotter and more humid than what you are used to. We recommend checking online for what the typical temperatures will be when you're looking to travel to learn what to expect - this website might be useful: <https://www.intrepidtravel.com/vietnam/weather-in-vietnam>
- Some travellers find the pace of this trip quite fast as we are covering a lot of destinations in a short amount of time. If you would like a more relaxed pace with more time to explore, you might like to consider a longer trip, or additional days in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.
- This itinerary also runs in reverse direction, from Ho Chi Minh City to Hanoi - see trip code TVSQ on our website.

## Physical rating

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## Joining point

Hong Ngoc Cochinchine Hotel  
97 Nguyen Truong To Street  
Hanoi  
VIETNAM  
Phone: +84 437164143  
Fax: +84 38285054

## Joining point description

Located within walking distance to Hanoi's Old Quarter, the newly renovated Hong Ngoc 5 features 35 well appointed rooms, a restaurant serving buffet breakfast, bar and café, and lift. Room facilities include IDD phone, air conditioner, cable TV, mini bar, bathroom with bathtub, and natural daylight.  
[www.hongngochohotel.com/Overview204.html](http://www.hongngochohotel.com/Overview204.html)

## Joining point instructions

Intrepid can assist with pre-booking an arrival transfer from the airport - enquire with your agent. Please advise your flight arrival details at least 14 days prior to your departure.

If you have pre-booked an arrival transfer you will be met as you exit the Terminal Hall by a transfer representative holding an Intrepid sign. If you cannot find your transfer representative, or if your flight is delayed, please call our hotline on +84 903 117 770. Please note that neither the driver nor any representative should ask you for additional payment.

Metered taxi ranks are available outside the airport entrance. Exit the Customs Hall and walk through the airport exit gates A4 and A5 on level 1. You will find Noi Bai Airport Taxis (+84 4 3886 8888) readily available. Noi Bai Airport Taxi drivers wear a yellow uniform shirt. Taxi fare to your hotel in town will cost approx. VND350,000.00 in total. Please note these taxis won't use a meter, but generally charge a fixed fare. Please avoid taxi touts who tell you that they have a metered taxi parked outside the airport.

## Alternate Joining points

### Alternate Joining Point 1

For trips departing on the following dates, use this joining point.  
12 Mar 2019 (TVSF190312), 03 Apr 2019 (TVSF190403)  
La Sante Hotel & Spa  
42 Chau Long Street  
Ba Dinh

Hanoi  
VIETNAM  
Phone: +84 2435132222

## Instructions

Intrepid can assist with pre-booking an arrival transfer from the airport - enquire with your agent. Please advise your flight arrival details at least 14 days prior to your departure.

If you have pre-booked an arrival transfer you will be met as you exit the Terminal Hall by a transfer representative holding an Intrepid sign. If you cannot find your transfer representative, or if your flight is delayed, please call our hotline on +84 903 117 770. Please note that neither the driver nor any representative should ask you for additional payment.

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## Alternate Joining Point 2

For trips departing on the following dates, use this joining point.

19 Mar 2019 (TVSF190319)  
Thang Long Espana Hotel  
63 Nguyen Truong To Str., Ba Dinh Dist.  
Hanoi  
VIETNAM  
Phone: +84 2437163233  
Fax: +84 2437163232

## Problems and emergency contact information

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local representative straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader/local partner may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction - if this is the case, please ask the leader to speak to their direct manager.

You may also choose to provide details in your online feedback, which we ask you to complete within 30 days of the end of your trip. But we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

For general contact details please use the following page: <http://www.intrepidtravel.com/ourtrips/contact/>

For general enquiries or questions about your booking, please contact your agent or adventure specialist, or visit us at [www.intrepidtravel.com/contact-us](http://www.intrepidtravel.com/contact-us)

In case of a genuine crisis or emergency, you can reach our local operator on the number below.

Intrepid's Vietnam Office: +84 903 117 770

## Itinerary

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### Day 1: Hanoi

Welcome to Vietnam. Your adventure begins with a welcome meeting at 6 pm. Please look for a note in the hotel lobby or ask reception where it will take place. We'll be collecting insurance details and next of kin information at this meeting, so please ensure you bring these details to provide to your leader.

If you arrive early into the capital of Hanoi, there's plenty to see and do. Consider booking the Hanoi Highlights Urban Adventure with an expert local guide to introduce you to the city. Start by visiting the Temple of Literature, drop into a traditional tea house, and learn the stories of the Hoa Lo Prison museum. This tour concludes at Hoan Kiem Lake, surrounded by modern office buildings and ancient Buddhist temples. Or take it at your own pace and wander the Old Quarter and admire the city's French-colonial architecture, relax in a park, or enjoy some street food.

### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

### Optional Activities

- Hanoi - Women's Museum - VND30000
- Hanoi - Museum of Ethnology - VND40000
- Hanoi - Hanoi Highlights Urban Adventure - USD40
- Hanoi - Citadels, Karsts & Cycle Urban Adventure - USD88
- Hanoi - Ho Chi Minh Complex: Ho Chi Minh, Stilt House and Museum - VND80000

### Meals Included

There are no meals included on this day.

### Special Information

You may wish to arrive a day early so you're able to attend the group meeting and have time to explore Hanoi. We'll be happy to book additional accommodation for you (subject to availability). If you're expecting to be late, please inform the hotel reception or your booking agent in advance.

To book an Urban Adventure before you meet your tour leader, go to <https://www.urbanadventures.com/>

### Day 2: Halong Bay

Travel by private minibus to the spectacular World Heritage site of Halong Bay in the Gulf of Tonkin (approximately four hours). The bay is dotted with sandy coves, grottos and 1,600 limestone islands, which have been formed over millennia by wind and water erosion. Board a private boat and cruise the bay, exploring island caves and perhaps even enjoying a swim from Ti Top Island Beach during the warmer months. To end the day, spend a peaceful night aboard the boat beneath the night sky.

Your wooden junk-style boat has twin share cabins with air-conditioning and private facilities. There's also a dining room and bar to enjoy lunch, dinner and breakfast.

#### Accommodation

- Overnight boat (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Halong Bay - Overnight boat cruise

#### Optional Activities

- Halong Bay - Kayaking - VND250000

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

#### Special Information

It is recommended to pack a smaller overnight bag to take to Halong Bay for ease of boarding and disembarking. You can store your main luggage in Hanoi for tonight.

Kayaking and swimming is restricted to designated zones within the bay.

There are restrictions on the number of boats that are permitted to stay in the bay overnight, sometimes resulting in a shortage. To ensure all Intrepid travellers can enjoy the experience of a night on the water, occasionally you will stay on a larger boat (with approximately 12 cabins) and share your boat with another group. Or your group may be split across different vessels, in which case an Intrepid group leader will be present on each boat, and the route taken and inclusions on board will remain the same.

### Day 3: Hanoi - Overnight Train

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Return by boat to Ha Long, and at approximately midday travel by bus back to Hanoi. Arrive late this afternoon, and use free time to shop, explore the sights or just relax. Later tonight board an overnight train to Hue.

#### Accommodation

- Overnight sleeper train (1 night)

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast

#### Special Information

There are shared day use hotel rooms available this afternoon in Hanoi if you would like to freshen up before the overnight train. There is one room provided between up to 6 members of the group. Single supplements do not apply to day rooms.

Sleeper trains typically have four-berth compartments (occasionally six berths depending on the season), which have bench seats that convert into sleeping bunks. A sheet, pillow and blanket are provided (although some travellers prefer to bring their own sleeping sheet). Most trains have a dining carriage serving simple food, but you may like to stock up on some food supplies before departure.

### Day 4: Hue

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Arrive into Hue at approximately 11 am and transfer to the hotel.

Once the imperial capital of Vietnam, Hue holds the treasures of the country's royal past. You'll have free time in the morning to rest or explore. The bustling Dong Ba Market is a great place to sample some of the foods that once graced the Nguyen emperors' tables, such as banh khoai (royal rice cake). Reunite with the group to visit the war-damaged ruins of the Hue Imperial Citadel complex, which once contained temples, state houses and the emperor's palace.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Hue - Imperial Citadel

#### Meals Included

There are no meals included on this day.

### Day 5: Hue

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Today, tour the sights of Hue on the back of a motorbike driven by a local guide. Enjoy a stop at Thanh Toan to see the 18th century covered bridge and villagers shopping at their local market. Visit the 17th-century active Buddhist monastery of Thien Mu Pagoda. During the visit you'll see the car of a former monk who drove to Saigon in 1963 to set himself alight to protest the poor treatment of Buddhists by the South Vietnamese regime. Enjoy a short boat cruise down the Perfume River before eating lunch inside a nunnery. Finally, visit the lakeside royal tomb of Emperor Tu Duc before heading back to Hue.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Hue - Perfume River cruise & Thien Mu Pagoda
- Hue - Royal tomb
- Hue - Motorbike trip including lunch

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast

- Lunch

### Special Information

This motorbike activity has been assessed for safety and is closely monitored. To participate please ensure your travel insurance covers riding pillion on a motorbike up to 125cc. If you prefer not to participate, please let your leader know and they will arrange car transportation (cost included).

Boats for the Perfume River trip may not be available if you're travelling during festival periods. During these times you'll travel by land to reach the activities instead.

## Day 6: Hoi An

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This morning travel by bus through coastal rice paddies and the spectacular Hai Van Pass. After a brief visit to Lang Co Beach, arrive into Hoi An. Recently declared a World Heritage site, Hoi An was a major international trading port during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Today, parts of the beautifully preserved town retain the feel of centuries past. It's also a shopping mecca, famous for its plethora of tailors. On arrival your leader will take you on a sightseeing walk through the Old Town and visit a handful of the city's major attractions. You'll also be given a sightseeing pass so you can further explore select attractions at your leisure.

### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

### Included Activities

- Hoi An - Old Town walking tour

### Optional Activities

- Hoi An - Hoi An Boat & Bike Urban Adventure - USD51

### Meals Included

- Breakfast

## Day 7: Hoi An

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Today is a free day to explore Hoi An. Browse the town's cobbled streets and art galleries, or hire a bike and cycle through rice paddies out to Cua Dai Beach. Shop for paintings, ceramics and colourful cloth lanterns in the town's markets and preserved Chinese shop houses. Perhaps visit one of the hundreds of tailors in the city to get something special made. Hoi An is also known for its delicious regional food, so be sure to enjoy a meal at a riverside restaurant or perhaps partake in a cooking class.

### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

### Optional Activities

- Hoi An - My Son Cham day trip - USD35
- Hoi An - Food Adventure Urban Adventure - USD28
- Hoi An - Hoi An Walking & Cooking Class Urban Adventure - USD49

### Meals Included

- Breakfast

## Day 8: Ho Chi Minh City

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Today take a short early morning flight to Ho Chi Minh City. Formerly known as Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City has a fascinating history and is arguably Vietnam's capital of commerce and culture. After landing, take a sightseeing bus tour around the city. Pass the Reunification Palace, Notre Dame Cathedral and the Opera House, stopping in at the War Remnants Museum to discover some of the sobering stories of the Vietnam/American War.

### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

### Included Activities

- Ho Chi Minh City - War Remnants Museum
- Ho Chi Minh City - City tour

### Optional Activities

- Ho Chi Minh City - Reunification Palace - VND40000
- HCMC - A O show - VND1050000
- HCMC - Saigon Street Food by Night Urban Adventure - USD35

### Meals Included

- Breakfast

## Day 9: Mekong Delta/Ho Chi Minh City

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This morning head out on a day trip to explore the Mekong Delta. Board a boat to Ben Tre to visit the coconut gardens, stopping at a local home to sample tropical fruits & coconut jams. Afterwards, paddle in sampans (small rowing boats) past water coconut trees along the Mekong. Take a tuk-tuk tour around the villages, learning about local rural life and how they make their living making coconuts products like brooms and coconut fibre mats. Eat lunch at a restaurant in the heart of the delta, sampling regional specialties such as the famous elephant ear fish. Then it's back to the private boat to cruise the delta's major waterways to Ben Tre boat pier. After the cruise return via bus to Ho Chi Minh City.

Enjoy a final group dinner at KOTO restaurant, an organisation dedicated to developing the hospitality careers of disadvantaged youth.

### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

### Included Activities

- HCMC - Mekong Delta day trip including coconut gardens visit and village tuk tuk tour
- HCMC - KOTO dinner

### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

## Day 10: Ho Chi Minh City

Your trip ends after breakfast today. There are no activities included and you're free to depart your accommodation at any time. For those who are staying on and want to explore Ho Chi Minh City further, check out our Urban Adventure day trips.

### Optional Activities

- Ho Chi Minh City - Cu Chi Tunnel Experience Urban Adventure - USD43

### Meals Included

- Breakfast

## Finishing point

Park View Saigon Hotel (formerly Asian Ruby Park View)

100 Le Lai Street

District 1

Ho Chi Minh City

VIETNAM

Phone: +84 2838223999

## Finishing point instructions

Intrepid can assist with pre-booking a departure transfer from the airport - enquire with your agent. Please advise your flight arrival details at least 14 days prior to the start of your trip.

If you have pre-booked a departure transfer your leader will advise your pick up time the day before your trip ends.

Taxi fare from your hotel to the airport will cost approx. VND120,000.00. Please ask your leader or hotel staff for assistance in arranging a taxi.

## Alternate Finishing points

### Alternate Finishing Point 1

For trips departing on the following dates, use this finish point.

03 Mar 2019 (TVSF190303), 05 Mar 2019 (TVSF190305), 07 Mar 2019 (TVSF190307), 10 Mar 2019 (TVSF190310), 11 Mar 2019 (TVSF190311), 17 Mar 2019 (TVSF190317), 19 Mar 2019 (TVSF190319), 24 Mar 2019 (TVSF190324), 26 Mar 2019 (TVSF190326), 31 Mar 2019 (TVSF190331), 01 Apr 2019 (TVSF190401), 02 Apr 2019 (TVSF190402), 03 Apr 2019 (TVSF190403), 07 Apr 2019 (TVSF190407), 08 Apr 2019 (TVSF190408), 09 Apr 2019 (TVSF190409), 14 Apr 2019 (TVSF190414), 16 Apr 2019 (TVSF190416), 21 Apr 2019 (TVSF190421), 30 Apr 2019 (TVSF190430), 05 May 2019 (TVSF190505), 12 May 2019 (TVSF190512), 19 May 2019 (TVSF190519), 02 Jun 2019 (TVSF190602), 09 Jun 2019 (TVSF190609), 16 Jun 2019 (TVSF190616), 23 Jun 2019 (TVSF190623), 30 Jun 2019 (TVSF190630), 02 Jul 2019 (TVSF190702), 07 Jul 2019 (TVSF190707), 09 Jul 2019 (TVSF190709), 14 Jul 2019 (TVSF190714), 16 Jul 2019 (TVSF190716), 21 Jul 2019 (TVSF190721), 28 Jul 2019 (TVSF190728), 30 Jul 2019 (TVSF190730), 04 Aug 2019 (TVSF190804), 18 Aug 2019 (TVSF190818), 25 Aug 2019 (TVSF190825), 01 Sep 2019 (TVSF190901), 08 Sep 2019 (TVSF190908), 15 Sep 2019 (TVSF190915), 22 Sep 2019 (TVSF190922), 24 Sep 2019 (TVSF190924), 29 Sep 2019 (TVSF190929), 01 Oct 2019 (TVSF191001), 06 Oct 2019 (TVSF191006), 08 Oct 2019 (TVSF191008), 15 Oct 2019 (TVSF191015), 20 Oct 2019 (TVSF191020), 22 Oct 2019 (TVSF191022), 27 Oct 2019 (TVSF191027), 28 Oct 2019 (TVSF191028), 29 Oct 2019 (TVSF191029), 03 Nov 2019 (TVSF191103), 04 Nov 2019 (TVSF191104), 04 Nov 2019 (TVSF191104), 05 Nov 2019 (TVSF191105), 10 Nov 2019 (TVSF191110), 11 Nov 2019 (TVSF191111), 12 Nov 2019 (TVSF191112), 17 Nov 2019 (TVSF191117), 19 Nov 2019 (TVSF191119), 24 Nov 2019 (TVSF191124), 26 Nov 2019 (TVSF191126), 01 Dec 2019 (TVSF191201), 03 Dec 2019 (TVSF191203), 08 Dec 2019 (TVSF191208), 10 Dec 2019 (TVSF191210), 15 Dec 2019 (TVSF191215), 17 Dec 2019 (TVSF191217), 29 Dec 2019 (TVSF191229), 29 Dec 2019 (TVSF191229), 31 Dec 2019 (TVSF191231), 31 Dec 2019 (TVSF1912312)

Hoang Ngan Hotel

29-31 Bui Thi Xuan Street, District 1

Ho Chi Minh City

Ho Chi Minh City

VIETNAM

Phone: +84 2839251880

Fax: +84 2839251881

### Alternate Finishing Point 2

For trips departing on the following dates, use this finish point.

28 Feb 2019 (TVSF190228), 04 Mar 2019 (TVSF190304), 14 Mar 2019 (TVSF190314), 18 Mar 2019 (TVSF190318), 21 Mar 2019 (TVSF190321), 25 Mar 2019 (TVSF190325), 28 Mar 2019 (TVSF190328), 11 Apr 2019 (TVSF190411), 15 Apr 2019 (TVSF190415), 18 Apr 2019 (TVSF190418), 22 Apr 2019 (TVSF190422), 25 Apr 2019 (TVSF190425), 29 Apr 2019 (TVSF190429), 02 May 2019 (TVSF190502), 06 May 2019 (TVSF190506), 09 May 2019 (TVSF190509), 13 May 2019 (TVSF190513), 16 May 2019 (TVSF190516), 20 May 2019 (TVSF190520), 23 May 2019 (TVSF190523), 27 May 2019 (TVSF190527), 30 May 2019 (TVSF190530), 03 Jun 2019 (TVSF190603), 06 Jun 2019 (TVSF190606), 10 Jun 2019 (TVSF190610), 13 Jun 2019 (TVSF190613), 17 Jun 2019 (TVSF190617), 20 Jun 2019 (TVSF190620), 24 Jun 2019 (TVSF190624), 27 Jun 2019 (TVSF190627), 01 Jul 2019 (TVSF190701), 04 Jul 2019 (TVSF190704), 08 Jul 2019 (TVSF190708), 11 Jul 2019 (TVSF190711), 15 Jul 2019 (TVSF190715), 18 Jul 2019 (TVSF190718), 22 Jul 2019 (TVSF190722), 25 Jul 2019 (TVSF190725), 29 Jul 2019 (TVSF190729), 01 Aug 2019 (TVSF190801), 05 Aug 2019 (TVSF190805), 08 Aug 2019 (TVSF190808), 12 Aug 2019 (TVSF190812), 15 Aug 2019 (TVSF190815), 19 Aug 2019 (TVSF190819), 22 Aug 2019 (TVSF190822), 26 Aug 2019 (TVSF190826), 29 Aug 2019 (TVSF190829), 02 Sep 2019 (TVSF190902), 05 Sep 2019 (TVSF190905), 09 Sep 2019 (TVSF190909), 12 Sep 2019 (TVSF190912), 16 Sep 2019 (TVSF190916), 19 Sep 2019 (TVSF190919), 23 Sep 2019 (TVSF190923), 26 Sep 2019 (TVSF190926), 30 Sep 2019 (TVSF190930), 03 Oct 2019 (TVSF191003), 07 Oct 2019 (TVSF191007), 10 Oct 2019 (TVSF191010), 14 Oct 2019 (TVSF191014), 17 Oct 2019 (TVSF191017), 21 Oct 2019 (TVSF191021), 24 Oct 2019 (TVSF191024), 31 Oct 2019 (TVSF191031), 07 Nov 2019 (TVSF191107), 14 Nov 2019 (TVSF191114), 21 Nov 2019 (TVSF191121), 28 Nov 2019 (TVSF191128), 02 Dec 2019 (TVSF191202), 05 Dec 2019 (TVSF191205), 09 Dec 2019 (TVSF191209), 12 Dec 2019 (TVSF191212), 16 Dec 2019 (TVSF191216), 19 Dec 2019 (TVSF191219), 23 Dec 2019 (TVSF191223), 26 Dec 2019 (TVSF191226), 26 Dec 2019 (TVSF191226), 30 Dec 2019 (TVSF191230), 30 Dec 2019 (TVSF1912302)

Hoang Phu Gia Hotel Saigon  
19 C -19 F Bui Thi Xuan, Ben Thanh  
District 1  
Ho Chi Minh City  
VIETNAM  
Phone: +84 839252555  
Fax: +84 839259343

## Itinerary disclaimer

### ITINERARY CHANGES:

Our itineraries are updated regularly throughout the year based on customer feedback and to reflect the current situation in each destination. The information included in this Essential Trip Information may therefore differ from when you first booked your trip. It is important that you print and review a final copy prior to travel so that you have the latest updates. Due to weather, local conditions, transport schedules, public holidays or other factors, further changes may be necessary to your itinerary once in country. The order and timing of included activities in each location may also vary seasonally to ensure our travellers have the best experience. Your tour leader will keep you up to date with any changes once on tour.

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

A selection of optional activities that have been popular with past travellers are listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This isn't an exhaustive list and should be used as a guide only for some of what might be available. Prices are approximate, are for entrance only, and don't include transport to and from the sites or local guides unless indicated. All activities are subject to availability. It may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination, so some pre-planning for what you are most interested in is advised. When it's recommended that travellers pre-book these activities, look for a note in the Special Information section of the day-to-day itinerary. For most, they can either be organised independently on the day, or let your leader know you are interested and they can assist.

Where activities are considered medium or high risk, we work with operators whose safety and credentials we have sighted and assessed. Although it is possible that you may find the same activity cheaper with another operator on the ground, we cannot vouch for the safety or quality of that operator. Medium and high risk activities not listed above have not been assessed by us and as such our staff and leaders are unable to assist you with organising these activities. Activities that contravene our Responsible Travel policies are also not listed. Please remember that the decision to partake in any activity not listed is at your own discretion and risk.

## Feedback

After your travels, we want to hear from you! We rely on your feedback. We read it carefully. Feedback helps us understand what we are doing well and what we could be doing better. It allows us to make improvements for future travellers.

<http://www.intrepidtravel.com/feedback/>

## Essential Trip Information

### Important notes

1. Please provide your full name exactly as per passport at the time of booking (including any middle names listed on your passport) for train and flight tickets. Ticketing fees may apply for amendments to details within 45 days of departure, and in some cases you will be required to cover the cost of issuing a new ticket.
2. A single supplement is available on this trip, subject to availability. Please contact your sales agent if you would like to book this. Please note the single supplement excludes day 2 (overnight boat) and day 3 (overnight train) where you will be in shared accommodation. Day use rooms are also excluded.
3. This trip includes a domestic flight. Checked luggage allowance is a maximum 20kg, with up to 7kg carry on luggage. Any excess luggage charges will need to be paid directly to the airline at check-in.

### Passport and visas

As a general rule most countries expect that your passport has a minimum of 6 months validity remaining. Please ensure the name on your passport matches the name on your booking and airline tickets. Your passport details are required to complete your booking. Your consultant will contact you when this is required. Take a copy of the main passport pages and other important documents with you, and leave another copy at home with family or friends.

Visas are the responsibility of the individual traveller. Entry requirements can change at any time, so it's important that you check for the latest information. Please visit the relevant consular website of the country or countries you're visiting for detailed and up-to-date visa information specific to your nationality. Your consultant will also be happy to point you in the right direction with acquiring visas. Visas can take several weeks to process, so familiarise yourself with any requirements as soon as you have booked your trip to allow for processing time.

#### VIETNAM VISA:

Most nationalities are required to obtain tourist visa in advance to travel to Vietnam. When obtaining your visa you should allow 3 weeks for processing with your nearest embassy or consulate, the cost is approximately US\$60 to US\$100. Please check with your embassy or consulate for further requirements.

Some nationalities are exempt from visas for a stay of a maximum of 15 days, including British, German, French, Spanish and Italian citizens travelling to Vietnam (for all purposes). This exemption period is currently effective until 30 June 2021, and is based upon meeting all conditions prescribed by Vietnamese laws. If you are planning on staying in Vietnam for longer than 15 days you will need to obtain a visa extension in advance (please contact your relevant Consulate or Embassy). Please also check requirements if you plan to re-enter Vietnam.

An eVisa is available for some nationalities including passport holders from Australia (from 2018), France, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States of America, valid for a single entry of a maximum of 30 days stay in Vietnam. For information on obtaining an eVisa visit the immigration website:

<https://evisa.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn/>

Evisas take up to 3 days to be processed. You will need a clear electronic copy of your passport data page and passport photo, and to make a non-refundable payment as outlined on the immigration website.

Keep the customs and immigration form you receive on arrival, as you need it to complete exit formalities on departure.

If your visa application asks for a point of contact, please write: Intrepid Vietnam 5th floor HiPT Building, 152 Thuy Khue Street, Thuy Khue, Tay Ho, Hanoi, Ph +84 4 3715 0996.

Most nationalities do not require a letter of invitation for Vietnam but if you do need one, please contact your sales agent for more information.

### Medical and health information

All travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully on this trip. When selecting your trip please make sure you have read through the itinerary carefully and assess your ability to cope with our style of travel. Please note that if, in the opinion of our group leader or local guide, any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, Intrepid Travel reserves the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information or for any necessary vaccinations before departure. We recommend that you carry a first aid kit as well as any personal medical requirements as they may not easily be obtained at the locations on this trip. Please ensure that you are adequately prepared.

**DENGUE FEVER:**

Rare instances of dengue fever have been reported in this region. This virus is transmitted by mosquitoes. There is no vaccination against it, but there are preventative measures that you can take such as wearing long clothing and always using repellent. Please note that this mosquito is most active during daylight hours however care should be taken at all times.

**ZIKA VIRUS:**

There have been reports of transmission of the mosquito-borne Zika virus in this region and we advise all travellers to protect themselves from mosquito bites. Given possible transmission of the disease to unborn babies, and taking a very cautious approach, we recommend all women who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant to consult with their doctors before booking their trip.

**Food and dietary requirements**

While travelling with us you'll experience the vast array of wonderful food available in the world. Your group leader will be able to suggest restaurants to try during your trip. To give you the maximum flexibility in deciding where, what and with whom to eat, generally not all meals are included in the trip price. This also gives you more budgeting flexibility. As a rule our groups tend to eat together to enable you to taste a larger variety of dishes and enjoy each other's company. There's no obligation to do this though.

**INCLUDED BREAKFASTS:**

At hotels you'll often have a buffet with choices of Vietnamese and Western food. At homestays you will have simpler breakfasts of local foods, eggs, bread, jam, tea and coffee.

**DIETARY REQUIREMENTS:**

Check out this guide to eating in Vietnam for vegan, vegetarian, gluten & peanut free travellers: <https://www.intrepidtravel.com/adventures/vegan-vegetarian-gluten-free-v...>

**FOOD ALLERGIES:**

Travelling in South East Asia with a food allergy? We have some advice for you here: <https://www.intrepidtravel.com/adventures/travelling-food-allergies-sout...>

**Accommodation**

Hotel (7 nights), Overnight boat (1 night), Overnight sleeper train (1 night)

**OCCASIONAL ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION**

The style of accommodation indicated in the day-to-day itinerary is a guideline. On rare occasions, alternative arrangements may need to be made due to the lack of availability of rooms in our usual accommodation. A similar standard of accommodation will be used in these instances.

**TWIN SHARE / MULTI SHARE BASIS**

Accommodation on this trip is on a twin/multishare basis. Please note there may be times where facilities will be shared rather than ensuite and rare occasions when you share a room with passengers travelling on our different trips than your own.

**CHECK-IN TIME**

Throughout the trip we request that our hotels prepare rooms in time for our arrival, especially if we're arriving prior to normal check-in time. However this isn't always possible which means we won't be able to check-in immediately on arrival at some hotels. Instead, we can store our luggage and explore our new destination.

**PRE/POST TRIP ACCOMMODATION**

If you've purchased pre-trip or post-trip accommodation (if available), you may be required to change rooms from your trip accommodation for these extra nights.

**HALONG BAY BOAT:**

Your boat has twin-share cabins that have air-conditioning and private facilities. The boats have 8-12 passenger cabins. There's also a dining room and bar on board. The boat is not likely to be a traditional sailing junk, as many older or imported vessels do not comply with waterway traffic safety laws.

**DAY ROOMS & EARLY CHECK IN**

Please note in some destinations we will provide use of day rooms. These rooms are provided for shared group use before or after overnight train journeys. We have some days where we arrive at our destination before check in time and a day room is not included. If you have booked a Single Supplement for your trip, it will not apply to these day rooms. Your leader may be able to assist you in booking a room for your sole use (depending on availability) until our regular trip rooms become available for an additional charge. Please talk to your leader at the Group Meeting if this is a service you would like to request.

**WINDOWLESS ROOMS:**

Some hotels in Vietnam have windowless rooms, or windows that don't necessarily have a view. This is often due to high population density in large cities, however local building standards also don't require rooms to have windows. We do request rooms with windows, however please be aware that they may not always be available or allocated to our groups.

**Transport**

Boat, Motorbike, Overnight sleeper train, Plane, Private Vehicle, Taxi, sampan, tuk-tuk

**VIETNAM FLIGHTS:**

Please provide your exact name (including middle name) as per passport 45 days prior to the departure date for flight tickets to be issued. Internal flights will be on the following safety audited airlines: Jetstar Pacific, Vietjet or Vietnam Airlines.

During peak travel times your group may be required to travel on different flights at different times of the day, and you may be unaccompanied on the internal flight. In this case you will be assisted by additional tour escorts on departure and arrival.

**CYCLOS & TAXIS**

On this trip we may use a local style of transport called a cyclo. These small, motorised three wheeled vehicles are a common form of transport across Vietnam and do not have seatbelts. Regular metered taxis are also common in Vietnam and readily available in most destinations.

**OVERNIGHT SLEEPER TRAINS IN VIETNAM:**

Compartments will be 4 berth to 6 berth depending on seasonal variations and the group configuration. We aim to secure 4 berth compartments where possible. 6 berth compartments have bench seats that convert into sleeping bunks. A sheet, pillow and blanket are provided, although some travellers prefer to bring their own sleeping sheet. Passengers of different genders may be required to share a compartment and there will be occasions where you'll be sharing with local travellers or travellers who are not part of your group. On occasion the group may be split between several carriages, however your leader will coordinate and give further information on the trip.

**Money matters****SPENDING MONEY:**

When it comes to spending money on the trip, every traveller is a little different. You know your spending habits better than we do, so please budget a sensible amount for things like meals not included, drinks, shopping, optional activities and laundry. It's always better to bring a little more than you think you'll need. Also make sure you've read your trip details thoroughly so you know what's included in the trip price and what isn't. This should make budgeting a little easier. You'll find this info in the Inclusions section of your Essential Trip Information (that's this document).

**MEALS NOT INCLUDED**

We recommend USD200 for meals not included.

**VIETNAM:**

You can use your credit/debit card in ATMs, which are common throughout Vietnam. These machines dispense cash in VND (Vietnamese dong). Credit/debit cards aren't accepted for small payments in Vietnam so please ensure you have VND cash to cover daily expenses. Clean banknotes in small denominations are most useful. There is no



need to bring lots of cash with you unless you prefer not to use ATMs. You can obtain VND cash prior to arriving in Vietnam, through normal outlets such as banks and currency exchange offices.

#### CONTINGENCY FUNDS:

We try to plan for every eventuality, but there are still some things beyond our control. Please make sure you have access to an extra US\$500 for emergencies (e.g. severe weather, natural disasters, civil unrest) or other events that result in unavoidable changes to the itinerary (e.g. transport strikes or cancellations, airport closures). Sometimes these things necessitate last minute changes to enable our trips to continue to run, and as a result there may be some extra costs involved.

#### TIPPING

If you're happy with the services provided a tip - though not compulsory - is appropriate. While it may not be customary to you, it's of great significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels, inspires excellent service, and is an entrenched feature of the tourism industry across many Intrepid destinations. Carrying small notes of local currency will make tipping easier. It is best to avoid tipping with coins, very small denomination notes, or dirty and ripped notes, as this can be regarded as an insult.

#### Optional Tipping Kitty:

On Day 1 your tour leader will discuss with you the idea of running a group tipping kitty, whereby everybody contributes an equal amount and then your tour leader pays the tips for drivers, local guides, and hotel staff (excludes restaurant tips). The leader will keep a running record of all monies spent which can be checked at any time, and any money remaining at the end of the tour returned to group members. This is often the easiest way to avoid the hassles of needing small change and knowing when and what is an appropriate amount to tip. Participation in this kitty at your own discretion, and you are welcome to manage your own tipping separately if you prefer. Please note the tipping kitty excludes tips for your tour leader

Optional tipping kitty for this trip: USD 20 per person (can be paid in VND).

#### Your Tour Leader:

You may also consider tipping your tour leader for outstanding service throughout your trip. The amount is entirely a personal preference, however as a guideline US\$2-US\$4 per person, per day can be used. Of course you are free to tip more or less as you see fit, depending on your perception of service quality and the length of your trip. Remember, a tip is not compulsory and should only be given when you receive excellent service.

#### Commissions:

Unfortunately, commissions in exchange for recommending particular shops or restaurants are an ingrained part of the tourism industry. Rather than turning a blind eye though, we've tried to legitimise the practise with a centralised fund. Moneys are collected from recommended and fully vetted suppliers and funnelled back into our business. This keeps the trip cost low (for us and for you) and makes sure you only get the best experiences.

If you're unhappy with any places your leader recommends, or feel the quality of the trip is being compromised in any way, please let us know in your feedback.

## Packing

What you need to bring will vary according to the trip style you have chosen, the countries you are visiting and when you are travelling. Generally speaking you should pack as lightly as possible. On the vast majority of our trips you are expected to carry your own luggage, although you won't be required to walk long distances with it (max 30 minutes).

Many travellers carry their luggage in a backpack, although an overnight bag with a shoulder strap would suffice if you travel lightly. Smaller bags or backpacks with wheels are also convenient although we recommend your bag has carry straps. You'll also need a day pack/bag to carry water and a camera etc for day trips.

Below we have listed the essentials for this trip:

<https://www.intrepidtravel.com/packing-list>

#### INTERNAL FLIGHT LUGGAGE ALLOWANCE:

Checked luggage allowance is a maximum 20kg, with up to 7kg carry on luggage. Any excess luggage charges can be paid directly to the airline at check-in.

#### LOCAL DRESS:

When packing be aware that dress standards are conservative throughout Asia, especially outside major cities. To respect this and for your own comfort, we strongly recommend modest clothing. This means clothing that covers your shoulders and knees. Loose, lightweight, long clothing is both respectful and cool in the predominantly hot Asian climate. In many rural areas in Asia women will need to wear modest clothing even to swim. Singlets, tank tops and topless sun bathing are all unacceptable. When visiting religious sites men often need to wear long trousers and women a long skirt or sarong.

#### WATER BOTTLE:

This trip includes one or more sections in a private vehicle with a water dispenser. We encourage all our travellers to bring a refillable water bottle on your trip to help reduce the use of disposable plastic bottles.

## Climate and seasonal information

#### TET (6-9 February 2019):

Tet is Vietnam's New Year festival which takes place in late January/early February based on the lunar calendar and is the most important celebration of the year. While this can be a fascinating time to be in Vietnam, you do need to be prepared for some businesses to be closed, tourist sites to be very busy and for transport to be packed as many Vietnamese are travelling around the country. Although we do our best to run trips during Tet as per the scheduled itinerary, it is likely that there will be some changes to transport, accommodation or order of destinations visited. Due to the high demand on tickets at this time, flights and overnight trains may on occasion need to be replaced with day buses. We will aim to communicate any known changes prior to your departure.

#### WET SEASON:

Flooding is common across Vietnam during rainy season (June-December) and could also lead to landslides. Typhoons are also common during this period. During these months there may be disruptions to transport and some activities or destinations may need to be changed as a result at short notice.

#### CLIMATE & CLOTHING:

For the majority of the year, the temperature in Vietnam is normally warm and humid, particularly from Hoi An southward. North of here, it can be cool between late November and March. If travelling at this time it is advisable to bring some warmer clothing, particular if in the Central Highlights or Sapa.

## Group Leader

All Intrepid group trips are accompanied by one of our group leaders. The aim of the group leader is to take the hassle out of your travels and to help you have the best trip possible. Intrepid endeavours to provide the services of an experienced leader however, due to the seasonality of travel, rare situations may arise where your leader is new to a particular region or training other group leaders.

Your leader will provide information on the places you are travelling through, offer suggestions for things to do and see, recommend great local eating venues and introduce you to our local friends. While not being guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad general knowledge of the places visited on the trip, including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects. At Intrepid we aim to support local guides who have specialised knowledge of the regions we visit. If you were interested in delving deeper into the local culture at a specific site or location then your leader can recommend a local guide service in most of the main destinations of your trip.

## Safety



Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information before departure and ensure that your travel insurance covers you for all areas your itinerary covers. Please refer to our website's safety page for links to major travel advisories and updates on safety issues affecting our trip.

We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling, for the safe-keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewellery at home - you won't need it while travelling. Many of our hotels have safety deposit boxes, which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.

Your leader will accompany you on all included activities, however during your trip you'll have some free time to pursue your own interests, relax and take it easy or explore at your leisure. While your leader will assist you with the available options in a given location, please note that any optional activities you undertake are not part of your Intrepid itinerary, and Intrepid makes no representations about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. Please use your own good judgement when selecting an activity in your free time. Please also note that your Leader has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it's deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

For more details on the type of conditions and safety standards you can expect on your trip, please refer to Intrepid's operational safety policy on our website. We recommend that you take a moment to read through this information before travelling, and would appreciate any feedback on how well it's being implemented in the field:

<http://www.intrepidtravel.com/contact-us/safety>

#### FIRE PRECAUTIONS:

Please be aware that local laws governing tourism facilities in this region differ from those in your home country and not all the accommodation which we use has a fire exit, fire extinguishers or smoke alarms.

#### SEAT BELTS:

Please be aware that local laws governing transportation safety may differ from those in your home country and not all the transport which we use is able to provide seat belts.

#### PETTY THEFT & PERSONAL SAFETY:

Petty theft, including bag-slashing, is not uncommon in tourist areas, at markets, on crowded trains and buses, and at supermarkets, particularly in the lead up to Vietnamese and Western holidays. Snatch-and-grab crimes by thieves on motorbikes are frequent and have sometimes resulted in injury to victims. Pay close attention to your personal belongings, particularly in crowded areas. Carry only what you need and leave other valuables in a secure location. Beware of motorcycles approaching from behind as you walk on the footpath and hold bags and backpacks in front of you.

#### SCAMS

There are a number of common credit and debit card, taxi and gambling scams in Vietnam that travellers should be aware of. See also this blog post on some other common tourist scams to avoid:

<https://www.intrepidtravel.com/adventures/common-scams-in-vietnam/>

## A couple of rules

Everyone has the right to feel safe when they travel. We don't tolerate any form of violence (verbal or physical) or sexual harassment, either between customers or involving our leaders, partners or local people. Sexual relationships between a tour leader and a customer are strictly forbidden.

Use or possession of illegal drugs will not be tolerated on our trips. If you choose to consume alcohol while travelling, we encourage responsible drinking, and expect that you'll abide by the local laws regarding alcohol consumption.

The sex tourism industry is known to exploit vulnerable people and have negative consequences on communities, including undermining the development of sustainable tourism. For this reason, patronising sex workers will not be tolerated on our trips.

By travelling with us you are agreeing to adhere to these rules. Your group leader has the right to remove any member of the group for breaking any of these rules, with no right of refund.

If you feel that someone is behaving inappropriately while travelling with us, please inform your tour leader or local guide immediately. Alternatively, contact us on the emergency contact number detailed in the Problems and Emergency Contact section of this Essential Trip Information.

## Travelling on a group trip

As you travel on a group trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of travelling in a group. Your fellow travellers will probably come from all corners of the world and likely a range of age groups too. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part. Due to privacy reasons we are unable to provide you with contact details and any personal information about your fellow travellers booked on your trip prior to departure.

#### SINGLE TRAVELLERS:

Our group trips are designed for shared accommodation and don't involve a compulsory single supplement. Single travellers share with people of the same gender in accommodation ranging from twin to multishare. Some of our itineraries have accommodation booked on a mixed gender share basis and where applicable this will be specified in our Trip Notes. On a selection of our trips, you have the option to pay a single supplement to ensure that you have your own accommodation (where available). Please note that this only applies to accommodation during the tour - pre-trip and post-trip accommodation will be booked on a single room basis.

## Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all our trips. We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects.

When travelling on a trip, you won't be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number has been seen by your leader.

If you have credit card insurance your group leader will require details of the participating insurer/underwriter, the level of coverage, policy number and emergency contact number rather than the bank's name and credit card details. Please contact your bank for these details prior to arriving in-country.

<http://www.intrepidtravel.com/insurance.php>

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Please note that for this particular trip, your travel insurance cover must also include riding pillion on a motorbike. The motorbikes used are 125cc or less.

## Responsible Travel

We believe strongly in low impact or rather positive impact tourism. Broadly speaking this means that we try to minimise the negative aspects of tourism on the local cultures and environments that we visit and highlight the positive aspects. Please visit our website for further details and suggestions on how you can be a responsible traveller.

<http://www.intrepidtravel.com/ourtrips/rt/responsibletraveller>

## The Intrepid Foundation

Help us change thousands of lives by creating meaningful work and supporting skills training in communities around the world.

The Intrepid Foundation is the not-for-profit for Intrepid Group. We work with local organisations around the world to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable individuals and communities through sustainable travel experiences. With our travellers' help, we've contributed more than AU \$6 million to over 100 community organisations since 2002.

Did you know that tourism is one of the biggest contributors to the global economy, making up 1 out of every 10 jobs? That's why we support local projects that create meaningful jobs and give people the skills they need to work in the destinations we take you to. And it's why we exist – to make it easy for travellers to give back to the communities and places they've been in an effective and meaningful way.

All donations to The Intrepid Foundation are matched by Intrepid Group dollar for dollar (up to AU\$10,000 per donor and AU\$500,000 in total each financial year, excluding emergency appeals). And because Intrepid Group covers all administration costs, every cent goes directly to the projects. Donating is simple and secure. Please ask your leader for information about the projects we support through The Intrepid Foundation or visit our website:

<http://www.theintrepidfoundation.org/>

Organisations and projects currently supported by The Intrepid Foundation in Vietnam include:

\* Blue Dragon Children's Foundation rescues kids in crisis throughout Vietnam.

<https://www.theintrepidfoundation.org/blue-dragon-childrens-foundation>

\* KOTO is a restaurant and vocational training program that is changing the lives of rural and underprivileged youth in Vietnam.

<https://www.theintrepidfoundation.org/koto>

For more information, or to make a donation please visit: <https://www.theintrepidfoundation.org/page/projects>

