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# A Culinary Tour through Vietnam – 11 Days

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*Hanoi, Ha Long, Hue, Da Nang, Hoi An, Saigon*

**DAY 1:** Depart from the USA.

## **Day 2: ARRIVAL – HANOI**

Meet on arrival at Hanoi/Noi Bai International airport. Transfer to hotel for check-in. Free leisure time. Welcome dinner at historic **Indochine** Restaurant in the **Old Quarter** for an introduction to Vietnamese food. Staff wears traditional attire, and musicians perform classical Vietnamese songs. **Sofitel Plaza Hotel** (D)

## **DAY 3: HANOI - COOKING CLASS - CITY TOUR**

Start your half-day cooking class at **Seasons** restaurant this morning. Arrive at Seasons for coffee and orientation for the morning's activities. You will have hands-on involvement in preparing all of the day's meals. Depart for Hang Da market accompanied by a Seasons chef followed by return to restaurant to begin with the lunch preparation. Items on the menu include: fresh Hue-style spring rolls, shrimp paste on sugar cane, fish baked in a clay pot and banana flower salad. Afterwards, chefs will put the finishing touches on the day's meals during question and answer session. Enjoy lunch. Afternoon city tour in Hanoi: **Fine Arts Museum**, the **Temple of Literature**, **Sword Lake**, and a one-hour panoramic trishaw excursion through the 36 ancient streets of Hanoi's bustling **Old Quarter** with its 36 corporation streets.

Evening: enjoy the famous **Water Puppets Show** followed by dinner at a local restaurant. **Sofitel Plaza Hotel** (B/L/D)

## **DAY 4: HANOI – HA LONG**

Drive 100 miles east to **Ha Long**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site of stunning natural beauty. Upon arrival, begin your fantastic cruise on the luxury traditional boat. **Ha Long Bay** comprises over 3,000 small jagged limestone islands (called "karsts") that rise out of the South China Sea. These dramatic rock formations are the backdrop of your two-day boat cruise, during which you will dine on fresh seafood. You'll stop to visit several above ground caves filled with spectacular stalactite formations. Overnight on boat. **Bhaya Cruise** (B/L/D)

## **DAY 5: HALONG - HANOI - HUE**

Marvel at the spectacular sunrise on the bay. Morning cruise takes you to the **Surprise Cave** area with floating village nearby. Transfer by tender to the Surprise Cave for a guided visit. After lunch on board, disembark mid-morning at Bai Chay/Ha Long pier. Transfer to Hanoi for an afternoon flight to **Hue**, the former capital of Vietnam. On arrival in Hue, transfer to the hotel. Dinner tonight will be at the chic Morin Hotel garden. **Saigon Morin Hotel** (B/L/D)

#### DAY 6: HUE - COOKING CLASS - CITY VISIT

Morning pick-up at the hotel. Shop for ingredients at the Dong Ba market. Return to **Hue Vietnamese Cooking Class**. Prepare, cook, and enjoy eating the dishes you have spent the day mastering. In the afternoon, take a boat cruise along the **Perfume River** to visit **Thien Mu Pagoda**, one of the oldest ancient architectural structures for religious worship in Hue. Continue by car to the nearby **Imperial Citadel** from where the Nguyen Dynasty ruled between 1802 and 1945. Although the Citadel suffered severe damage during the Vietnam War, you can still see where the kings and queens lived; where they discussed literature and listened to concerts; and where they were educated and buried. **Pilgrimage Village** (B/L/D)

#### DAY 7: HUE - DANANG - HOI AN

After breakfast at hotel, visit **Tu Duc Mausoleum** with its traditional Vietnamese architecture. Leave Hue mid-morning to **Hoi An**. En route to **Da Nang**, you will travel through some of Vietnam's most spectacular scenery as you cross the **Hai Van Pass** (Ocean Cloud Pass) and enjoy pristine coastline views. After lunch at local restaurant, visit the **Cham Museum**. This stunning open-air collection of sandstone carvings, sculptures and altars comes from the **Kingdom of Champa**, which flourished from the 2nd to 15th centuries. Next stop is the **Marble Mountain**, a cluster of five limestone peaks rising dramatically from a flat plain. Historically, the Marble Mountain was a sacred place of pilgrimage for Hindus and Buddhists, who built altars in the caves. Proceed to **Hoi An** for check-in.

Dinner at local restaurant with a variety of local specialties from simple Cao Lau noodles to seafood preparations. **Life Resort** (B/L/D)

#### DAY 8: HOI AN - COOKING CLASS - CITY VISIT

Breakfast at hotel. Transfer to **Hai Café in Hoi An** to meet your cooking instructor. Visit Hoi An's colorful market and transfer by boat to the **Red Bridge Cooking School**. Tour the herb garden and proceed with the class. Enjoy lunch. Transfer to town by boat after lunch. In the afternoon you will have a walking tour in Hoi An. This charming medieval city was once a busy port that attracted Dutch, Portuguese, and Japanese trading vessels in centuries past. Learn the rich history of this unique town on a guided stroll through streetscapes of elegant pagodas, colonnaded French buildings and the Japanese Bridge, gracefully curving over a tributary of the Thu Bon River and Phuc Kien Pagoda. **Life Resort** (B/L/D)

#### DAY 9: HOIAN - DANANG - SAIGON

Transfer to Da Nang Airport for the morning flight to **Ho Chi Minh City**, the economic, industrial and cultural center of Vietnam. Visit **Chinatown** and **Thien Hau Pagoda** in the Chinese section in **Cholon**. Lunch at a *pho* restaurant (Boudain's favorite). Then continue with the city tour: **Ben Thanh Market**, **Notre Dame Cathedral** and the **Central Post Office** to take some pictures. Dinner tonight will be at one of Saigon's best-known restaurants, **Mandarine**. The cuisine of the South uses many fresh herbs and spices and has been influenced by Cambodia, Thailand and India. Summer is the perfect time to be in the South where there is a wide selection of tropical fruits and vegetables that are not available in the cooler North. **Equatorial Hotel** (B/L/D)

#### DAY 10: HO CHI MINH – COOKING CLASS

After breakfast, transfer to the **Vietnam Cookery Centre** where you will learn about the evolution of Vietnamese cuisine and the culinary arts in Vietnam: the roots of the different types of cuisine from Vietnam's three main regions; the set up of an original Vietnamese kitchen; and the traditions, etiquette and historical influences on Vietnamese food. Lunch at the Vietnam Cookery Centre.

This afternoon is free to explore the city on your own. You might want to souvenir shop, visit art galleries or simply have a cool drink at a café while soaking in the sound, sight and scent of the city once called the "Pearl of the Orient. A **Farewell Dinner** tonight offers you a chance to say goodbye to the other guests and exchange stories about your amazing culinary journey to Vietnam. **Equatorial Hotel** (B/L/D)

#### DAY 11: DEPARTURE

Transfer to Tan Son Nhut Int. Airport for your departing flight to the US. Bon voyage and thank you for travelling with Insider's Vietnam. (B)