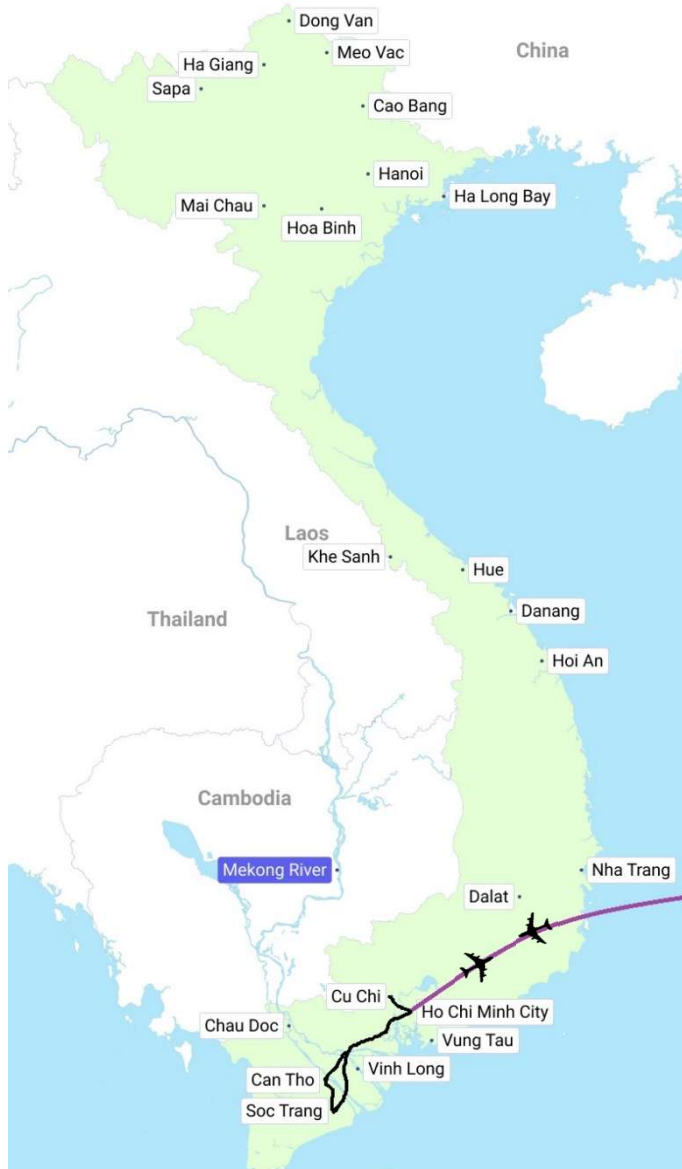


# The Deep South – Community Service (8 days)

Vietnam



**Please note: This itinerary can be modified to best suit your school's aims, objectives and budget.**

The southern regions of Vietnam are packed with fascinating highlights and places of interest that will surely impress educators and students alike. Steeped in tradition and heavily influenced by natural geography, the people of the south have a dynamic nature, while the signs of inequality are still evident.

This trip is specifically designed for students seeking several cultural immersion opportunities to learn of the people and social and economic patterns of this unique region

Highlights of this 8-day service-learning trip include an excursion to the Cu Chi Tunnels and 'Great Race' style urban exploration activity of Ho Chi Minh City. It will also incorporate a physical community-service project working alongside residents helping to construct a brick house (or repair a local school).

This trip is highly enjoyable and fosters students' Asian literacy and awareness of Vietnam as a developing nation.

## Day 1

### Arrive Ho Chi Minh City



Our tour leader escorts us to our hotel upon arrival in Vietnam. Following this, we hit the streets for an orientation walk of District One. Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon, is the industrial powerhouse of Vietnam and a city full of motor scooters on the move. With a population of 9 million, one can imagine the frantic street scenes where the footpaths act as car parks, bike repair shops and marketplaces all in one. We visit the beautiful French colonial-era post office and Notre Dame Cathedral in the afternoon. We head to an outdoor barbeque restaurant that is very popular with the locals tonight. (meals: dinner)

## Day 2

### Ho Chi Minh City



Our city exploration continues with a visit to the confronting War Remnants Museum to learn about the Vietnam War from a local perspective. The Vietnam War is commonly referred to in Vietnam as the American War, distinguishing it from several other wars fought last century in Vietnam.

Breaking into smaller groups, with basic maps and instructions in hand, we participate in a 'Great Race' activity designed to immerse us in the urban environment and enhance our knowledge of this fascinating city. We complete written and photographic tasks, navigate the city's streets

and purchase items while identifying infrastructure networks. It will be challenging, fun and educational. Not only is it a fabulous learning experience, but it is also a great team-building activity. Led by our local guide, we delve into a slice of history by visiting the Reunification Palace from where the South Vietnamese government once ran its war effort against the communist North. We then climb down into the underground map and communication rooms, tour the stately meeting rooms, and finish on the roof where the escape helicopter would take off. From this vantage point, we see several of the original tanks that crashed through the gates of the Palace on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1975, ending the war. This evening we enjoy a sunset boat cruise on the Saigon River, lit with neon lights as commuters return home. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

## Day 3

### Mekong Delta - Soc Trang



A new adventure begins as we depart the city for our journey into the waterways of the Mekong Delta. The Mekong Delta derives its shape from the mighty Mekong River, some 4,900 km in length. The river begins in the Tibetan Plateau of China and winds through five countries, dumping its fertile silt across the Delta before reaching the sea. The fertile soil is the lifeblood of the fishing and farming industries and is home to twenty per cent of Vietnam's population.

Our 4-hour journey into the Delta seems like we are stepping back in time to the ways of old, where we still see traditional farming techniques in use

and rural lifestyles unchanged for generations. In this region, the locals go about their daily business wearing pyjama-like clothes (ao ba-ba) and conical hats. Commuting to school or the local market is often done by boat along the numerous river tributaries crisscrossing the Delta.

In the afternoon, we make our way to the site of our local family homestay in Soc Trang, a remote rural community in the deep south of the Delta. Our host family introduces family members and their friends as we begin to understand the local lifestyle and carve new friendships. This afternoon we learn the process of growing rice and the sustainable practice of recycling rice husks to produce other goods, fuels, and natural fertilisers. Tonight, our hosts prepare a delicious Delta meal using local ingredients, including tamarind, okra, and elephant ear fish. We also devour another delightful local favourite: caramelised pork.

We discuss the house building/school project collaborating with local tradesmen, village labourers and support staff tonight. Our discussion covers the purpose and benefits of community service work, the various steps and how to measure the project's outcomes.

NB: Our homestay is a comfortable home overlooking the Mekong River with separate sleeping areas for male and female students. Each room has comfortable beds, mosquito nets, ceiling fans and western-style toilets. (meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

## Days 4, 5 & 6

### Mekong Delta (School renovation or house building project)



We wake early to participate in the house-building program or school renovation project these mornings. This project involves practical building and labouring tasks as we construct a brick house made from locally produced materials or repair and upgrade existing facilities and equipment in a rural school. Once divided into smaller groups, various tasks are undertaken, including assembling frames, hammering, sawing, bricklaying, painting, and transporting materials. Local tradespeople and tour leaders supervise and assist throughout the project as the groups are rotated. Each afternoon we walk around the village to meet local

families and immerse ourselves in the *Delta* way of life. We are expected to assist with the preparation and cooking of meals. (meals: 3 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners)

## Day 7

### Soc Trang – Can Tho - Ho Chi Minh City



We farewell our host family and head to Can Tho, the location of the largest floating market in the country, Cai Rang Market. Here, farmers and traders across the Delta come to trade their fruit, vegetables, and fish. Cruising the bustling waterways, we approach several sellers' boats to taste exotic fruits and see the living conditions of many families living near-permanently on their transport boats. Finally, time is spent at the Ong Temple, where we learn about Buddhism in Vietnam and see worshipers of all ages pay respects to their ancestors.

Departing Can Tho, we travel back to Ho Chi Minh City, passing through the suburbs that form Chinatown, laden with traditional medicine shops and bustling wholesale markets. Local Chinese silversmiths show us how they make bracelets and rings and tell us the history of the ethnic Chinese community in Vietnam. Tonight, we enjoy our final dinner in Vietnam at a popular local restaurant. (meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

## Day 8

### Cu Chi Tunnels - Depart Vietnam



One of the most astounding vestiges of the American War in Vietnam is the Cu Chi Tunnels, located 50km northwest of Ho Chi Minh City. Initially built by resistance fighters against the French colonial rulers in the 1940s, the tunnels were extended and deepened to house communist guerillas that fought against the Americans in the 1960s. The lower levels of the tunnels were bombproof, while the upper levels housed ingenious boobytraps and hidden doorways that opened underneath termite nests to thwart the Americans. We can climb into the tunnels and experience the harsh conditions the guerilla fighters endured as we explore the

tunnel networks. In addition, watching a propaganda video gives us further insights into the determination of the guerilla soldiers.

Once back in Ho Chi Minh City, there is a final opportunity to pick up any last-minute gifts at a local market. With their vibrancy, the city's markets are the prime location for us to refine our bargaining skills for one last time. Our tour leader takes care of all flight re-confirmations, assist with check-in, and waves us farewell. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

## Summary

### Grading

**Moderate;** To get the most out of this trip, you need to be in good health. However, anyone with a good level of fitness will be able to take part. Some outdoor activities include physical exertion, and there may be long periods of exposure to the elements. You will be expected to walk every day and carry your luggage for short distances. The itinerary may include bike riding, climbing steps and trekking. If your itinerary includes community service work of any description, you will be expected to work diligently during this component. Conditions here may be basic with simple accommodation and bathroom facilities. Suitable packing lists will be provided to match the content of the itinerary.

### Accommodation

School tours: Student accommodation is on a twin/triple share basis. Teacher accommodation is on a single room basis. Hotels usually hold a 3-star equivalent rating. Separate sleeping areas and bathrooms are provided for boys, girls, and staff members at homestays.

### Transport

Depending on the tour, modes of transport may include modern air-conditioned private coach, boat, train, plane.

### Your Tour Leader

A tour leader accompanies all group tours. Your tour leader is the person who most influences the success of your trip. They have been meticulously trained and are very experienced in running tours. Every tour leader is locally employed, therefore they are the best person to showcase their country and culture. Their expertise and knowledge creates an insightful and authentic experience of the region. They are with you throughout your trip from breakfast time until the group returns to the hotel in the evening. They are contactable 24/7.

For more information on the role of the tour leader, local guides and accompanying teachers, please refer to our website.

### Group Size

School tours: Minimum group size is 16 students with a minimum of 2 staff members.

There are no maximum participant numbers on any tour.

### Service-Learning Programs

The local community instigates all our service-learning programs in response to their genuine needs and goals. Every program is conducted *only* after careful consultation with local community leaders and authorities.

We assess each program during the consultation process to ensure that it's sustainable, ethical, and empowers local people. Each project is designed to have lasting economic benefits that build wealth within the

community – we're not in the business of tokenistic hand-outs.

- **Physical construction projects.** These projects include building, repairing or improving housing, schools, libraries, washroom facilities or other infrastructure and fittings. We also work with communities that require water reservoirs, irrigation systems and animal pens. As you can imagine, these projects require lots of physical exertion, sweat and some exposure to the elements. Undertaking a construction project involves hiring expert local tradespeople, assistant builders and transport providers. More substantial construction projects require purchasing locally produced materials, hiring cooks and booking local homestay accommodation, all of which inject money into the host community. Fundraising is usually required for these projects.
- **Community engagement programs.** Through our strong relationships with local schools and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), students can help deliver social service and education initiatives within a community. Your students will work in government-run classrooms or vocational training programs to help teach English (by following a lesson plan prepared in advance), help implement health programs, or work alongside local students as they learn small business skills.

For more details about our service-learning programs, please refer to our website.

## Land Trip Cost and Details

Cost per traveller from A\$ 1,450

Based on a minimum of:  
16 students & 2 accompanying teachers/staff members.  
*\*Smaller or larger group sizes priced on application*

### Inclusions

- All accommodation, transport, activities, entrance costs and other programs as described in the itinerary
- Professional Adventure Travel tour leader throughout the trip & additional specialist guides
- Extensive destination-specific risk management and assessment
- Meals (and drinking water) as listed in the itinerary
- 24-hour **IN COUNTRY** support
- Pre-departure support, briefings and planning meetings
- Tips for tour leaders, local guides & drivers

### Exclusions

- International flights to/from Vietnam
- Travel Visa costs (if required)
- Cost of Community projects/Service-learning programs \$3300
- Spending money
- Travel Insurance



## Contact details

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