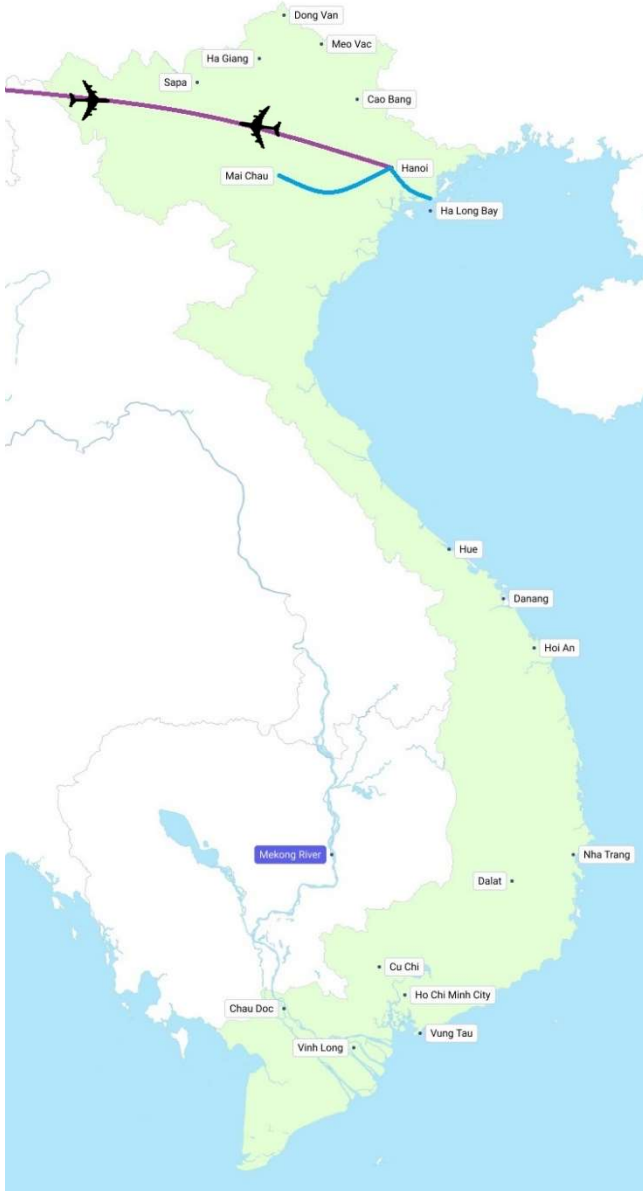


# Adventurous Journey & Service Project (11 days)

## Vietnam



Vietnam is a land of captivating contrasts, offering stunning natural beauty, rich cultural traditions, a picturesque coastline, and vibrant hill-tribe villages. This tour is designed for adults seeking meaningful engagement with the local people and a deeper understanding of this dynamic Asian nation.

The itinerary includes a 3-day community service program, where participants will help construct a traditional wooden stilt house, working closely with rural hill-tribe villagers. The experience also features a hike through hill-tribe regions and an exciting motorbike ride as pillion passengers through Hanoi's less-travelled areas.

Additional activities include a hands-on cooking class, urban rickshaw rides, and insights into Vietnam's complex history from a local perspective. The journey promises to immerse travellers in Vietnam's lively street culture and the contrasting lifestyles of its urban and tribal communities.

This tour is designed to leave a positive impact, promoting responsible travel.

## Day 1

### Arrive Hanoi



Upon arriving in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital, we are welcomed at the airport by our tour leader and transferred to our hotel. During the journey, the tour leader provides an overview of our itinerary and offers valuable information for travelling in Vietnam, including a brief introduction to the Vietnamese language and a short history lesson. Once at the hotel, we gather for a group meeting to review the itinerary in detail. In the evening, we embark on a short walking tour of the vibrant Hoan Kiem District, concluding with our first experience of authentic Vietnamese cuisine. (meals: dinner)

## Day 2

### Hanoi



This morning, we set out to explore some of Hanoi's most intriguing landmarks, starting with a visit to the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum. This imposing Soviet-style structure houses the remains of President Ho Chi Minh, the leader of North Vietnam during the conflict with the United States and a revered nationalist figure who passed away in 1969. His legacy continues to hold great significance for many Vietnamese today. Next, we delve into Hanoi's bustling Old Quarter, a maze of narrow streets teeming with vendors offering everything from exotic fruits and local delicacies to knock-off designer goods and electronics. Our tour then

takes us to the Temple of Literature, Vietnam's first Confucian university, established in the 9th century. Later, we stroll through the former French Colonial Quarter, visiting iconic landmarks such as St Joseph's Cathedral and the beautifully restored Opera House.

In the evening, we participate in a hands-on cooking class led by a skilled local chef, who introduces us to the ingredients and techniques behind some of northern Vietnam's most beloved dishes. As we'll be preparing our own dinner, it's important to pay close attention! (meals: breakfast, dinner)

## Day 3

### Hanoi – Mai Chau



We embark on an exhilarating motorbike adventure as pillion passengers. Our skilled drivers navigate us through the city's vibrant streets, showcasing key landmarks and hidden gems. Our journey begins with a ride across the historic Long Bien Bridge, a 100-year-old French Colonial structure built using the cantilever method. From there, we cruise around Truc Bach Lake, West Lake, and the scenic Thanh Nien Street, renowned as one of Vietnam's most picturesque spots. Next, we venture into the narrow laneways of Ngoc Ha commune, a densely populated area that was once rice fields. Our destination is B52

Lake, the resting place of an American B52 bomber shot down during a bombing raid in December 1972, one of the final events of the Vietnam War.

After lunch, we set off on a four-hour drive northwest to Mai Chau province, near Vietnam's border with Laos. This remote region is home to several ethnic minority groups, including the White Thai, who continue to live traditionally in stilted longhouses and observe unique religious and cultural practices, such as singing and dancing to celebrate the rice harvest.

Upon arrival, our host family welcomes us with local rice wine and a delicious traditional dinner, offering a glimpse into a way of life that has remained unchanged for generations. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

## Day 4

### Mai Chau (Trekking)



We embark on a full-day trek through valleys and undulating hillsides, passing terraced rice paddies and intricate irrigation systems. Along the way, we encounter welcoming locals and gain insight into how the region's minority groups live in harmony with their natural surroundings, as explained by our guide.

Our trek arrives at a new Thai village, where we stay in a traditional stilted longhouse. The host family prepares a hearty evening meal, and we have the opportunity to learn about the local customs and folklore.

The evening features traditional dancing, including a lively bamboo dance where participants jump between clapping bamboo poles while performing rhythmic arm movements. Please note: *While the village experience is a highlight of the trip, facilities are basic. Each guest is provided with a thin mattress, pillow, and mosquito net in the longhouse. Toilets are simple, and showers offer lukewarm water. Sturdy walking shoes are essential for the trek. Main luggage can be stored at our Hanoi hotel or sent ahead to the primary homestay, so only a small day pack is needed during the trek. All meals will be freshly prepared by a local cook. (meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)*

## Days 5, 6, 7

### Mai Chau (Community service house building program)



Today marks the start of our three-day community project, where we actively participate in building a traditional stilt house for a local community. Working alongside skilled tradespeople, we are guided by the chief builder and his team, who oversee and support the construction process. Tasks are divided among smaller groups, ensuring everyone contributes to various stages of the build.

The project involves raising the main support beams using ropes, assembling the outer frame, and constructing the roof. The flooring consists of bamboo slats carefully laid and secured, while the roof is

crafted from either straw thatching or tiles, depending on local resources. Wherever possible, natural materials are used, reflecting traditional building methods. A brief ceremony is held during the construction to mark the beginning of a new home.

The recipient family works alongside us, providing an opportunity to build meaningful connections with them and their children. During our stay, it is common for us to assist in preparing and cooking meals, further enriching the cultural exchange. *(meals: 3 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners)*

## Day 8

### Mai Chau - Hanoi



We put the final touches on the stilt house we've helped construct, culminating in a brief handover ceremony with the recipient family. By mid-morning, we bid farewell to our host family and the building team, who have become dear friends over the past few days, and begin our journey back to Hanoi.

Upon arriving in Hanoi, we have time to relax and freshen up at the hotel before heading out to visit Hoa Lo Prison. Originally built by the French in 1896 to detain political revolutionaries, it later gained notoriety as the

"Hanoi Hilton," where American airmen, including Senator John McCain, were held during the Vietnam War. Other notable inmates include Truong Chinh, a former General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, and Peter Peterson, a US pilot who later became the first US Ambassador to Vietnam after the normalisation of relations.

As we return to the city, we are surrounded by Hanoi's vibrant streets, where swarms of motor scooters weave through a backdrop of charming French colonial architecture. The remainder of the afternoon and evening is free for independent exploration—whether it's wandering through the lively streets or relaxing at a café, soaking in the energy of daily life in Hanoi. *(meals: breakfast, lunch)*

## Day 9

### Hanoi - Ha Long Bay



This morning, we set off on a scenic drive to Ha Long Bay, with stops at local handicraft villages or workshops along the way. Arriving before lunch, we board our private boat to cruise this enchanting bay, home to 1,969 limestone islands. Each island, crowned with lush jungle vegetation, rises dramatically from the sea, surrounded by clear waters dotted with floating pearl farms and fishing villages.

The tranquil waters provide an ideal setting for a refreshing swim at one of the bay's beaches, followed by a visit to a huge cave. Our guide shares stories of the myths surrounding the bay and explains the

geological processes that shaped its remarkable karst landscape.

As the day winds down, we dock at the main port and head to our seaside hotel just as the sun sets. In the evening, we explore the vibrant open-air night market, known for its handicrafts and Ha Long Bay souvenirs. Seafood enthusiasts will find plenty of specialty restaurants offering a wide array of fresh, local dishes.

*Note: The boat cruise navigates calm waters, as Ha Long Bay is naturally sheltered from the open sea. (meals: breakfast, lunch)*

## Day 10

### Ha Long Bay - Hanoi



We bid farewell to Ha Long Bay and journey back to Hanoi, where we have another opportunity to delve into this captivating capital. By mid-afternoon, our guide leads us on a tour of the Lakes District, stopping at a selection of art galleries showcasing exquisite oil paintings and depictions of Vietnam's landscapes and culture. Alternatively, we can visit one of the unique propaganda art galleries, which feature vintage Soviet-era socialist and communist posters, often commemorating significant events in Vietnam's tumultuous political history.

We also take time to visit one of Hanoi's ancient temples, offering insights into Vietnamese Buddhism and an opportunity to admire its intricate architecture. Here, we observe locals lighting incense and offering prayers in a serene atmosphere.

This evening, we enjoy dinner at a renowned restaurant that has been serving a single iconic dish for over a century. The day concludes with a mesmerising performance by Hanoi's famous Water Puppet Theatre, where traditional myths and legends are brought to life on a shimmering water stage. *(meals: breakfast, dinner)*

## Day 11

### Depart Hanoi

This morning is free for independent exploration, providing a final opportunity to soak up the atmosphere of Hanoi. Around lunchtime, we reconvene to share a farewell meal, reflecting on the incredible experiences and memories made during our time in Vietnam. Following lunch, our tour leader accompanies us to the airport, bidding us a fond farewell as we embark on our homeward journey. *(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

Private tours/family tours: Accommodation is based on a double/twin share arrangement. If you are travelling alone, you will be paired up with someone of the same gender. If you choose not to share or are the odd numbered person on tour, a single supplement is payable. For children under 12 years of age, it may be possible for one child to share with parents (depending on hotel regulations and availability of extra beds/rollaway beds)

### 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

Private tours/family tours: Minimum group size is 12. 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.

- **Environmental projects.** Our environmental projects are wide-ranging. They include activities such as: constructing greenhouses with suitable plants, planting cash crop gardens, such as mango and dragon fruit trees; constructing small dams; restoring native vegetation and habitat; setting up solar panels, installing fish farms, and maintaining conservation huts and hiking trails.

By taking part in these projects, travellers will develop their environmental awareness. They'll learn about environmental impacts and discover ways to measure the lasting success of an environmental project. As with physical construction projects, fundraising is usually required for these projects.

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

## Land Trip Cost and Details

Cost per traveller from A\$ 1,650

Based on a minimum of 12 travellers

*\*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 \$3,800
- Spending money
- Travel Insurance

## Contact details

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