

Culture & The Arts (13 days)

Vietnam



Vietnamese culture is both rich and diverse, offering a living history lesson at every turn. Over centuries, the nation has refined its artistic traditions, producing exquisite works that blend natural materials with exceptional craftsmanship, imagination, and storytelling.

This art and culture tour is perfect for those seeking to be inspired by Vietnam's skilled artisans, including silk weavers, oil painters, embroiderers, carpenters, and tribal jewellery makers.

The itinerary covers many of Vietnam's most significant cultural and historical sites, including the charming town of Hoi An, with its silk trade heritage, and the bustling capital, Hanoi. A journey to the mountainous border region of Sapa offers insight into ethnological arts, while the Central Highlands around Dalat showcase French colonial architecture, world-class embroidery workshops, and unique local cuisine—all within a captivating cultural landscape.

This tour is designed to be both enlightening and immersive, providing travellers with a deeper appreciation of Vietnamese arts and culture, as well as a wealth of quintessentially Vietnamese experiences.

Day 1

Arrive Hanoi (Vietnam)



We are greeted upon arrival in Hanoi at Noi Bai International Airport then escorted to our hotel. Following a short meeting where we are briefed on our itinerary, we set out to explore the central Hoan Kiem lake district in cyclos (a rickshaw propelled by a cyclist) to experience the dynamic atmosphere of the city's historic Old Quarter and its eclectic mix of Chinese, French and Vietnamese architecture. In the evening we dine at one of Hanoi's fine restaurants and enjoy our first taste of Vietnamese cuisine. (meals: dinner)

Day 2

Hanoi



We continue our exploration of Hanoi's vibrant Old Quarter, a maze of narrow streets teeming with life. Here, we find an array of goods, from exotic fruits and local delicacies to knock-off designer clothing and electronics. Next, we visit the Temple of Literature, Vietnam's first Confucian university, founded in the 9th century. Renowned for its traditional architecture, the temple features ancient stone steles inscribed with the names of the earliest graduates.

Our journey then takes us to the former French Colonial Quarter, where we admire St Joseph's Cathedral and the beautifully restored Opera

House. While in the area, we visit a couple of exceptional art galleries to explore the works of contemporary Vietnamese artists. One of the gallery curators offers insights into Vietnam's evolving art scene.

We roll up our sleeves for a hands-on cooking class led by a talented local chef. Equipped with woks and unfamiliar ingredients, we learn to prepare three traditional Vietnamese dishes. The chef guides us through essential cooking techniques and explains the importance of balancing flavours in Vietnamese cuisine, enhancing our appreciation for its subtle complexities. After cooking, we enjoy the fruits of our labour for dinner.

To conclude the evening, we attend a performance by Hanoi's renowned Water Puppet Troupe. Set over a shimmering pond, the show brings Vietnamese folklore and legends to life through intricate puppetry, dazzling effects, and captivating storytelling. The skill and artistry of the puppeteers leave us in awe. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

Day 3

Hanoi



We begin our day with a visit to the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, a stark Soviet-style structure that serves as the final resting place of President Ho Chi Minh. As the leader of North Vietnam during the war with the United States, Ho Chi Minh became the nation's most revered nationalist figure. Although he passed away in 1969, his legacy remains deeply respected by many Vietnamese.

Late in the morning, we embark on an exciting motorbike adventure as pillion passengers. Our skilled drivers navigate the city's streets, taking us to key landmarks and attractions. Highlights include a ride over the

historic Long Bien Bridge, originally named Paul Doumer Bridge after a former French Governor-General, and built using the cantilever method. We also pass by Truc Bach Lake and West Lake, travelling along the picturesque Thanh Nien Street, frequently cited as Vietnam's most beautiful road. Along the way, our guides point out the city's diverse architectural styles. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

Day 4

Hanoi - Sapa (hill tribe village trek)



We embark on a 4-hour drive to the northern border town of Lao Cai, situated near the Chinese border and serving as the gateway to Vietnam's remote hill-tribe region. From Lao Cai, we ascend into the mountains to the picturesque town of Sapa, perched at an elevation of 1,650 metres. Sapa overlooks a dramatic valley, with towering mountains on all sides.

After lunch, we set out on a leisurely walk to a nearby village, offering a glimpse into the daily lives of the region's hill-tribe groups, including the Black Hmong, Red Dao, and Giay. Along the way, we learn about traditional practices such as indigo cloth dyeing and hear stories of their

unique rituals and customs.

Returning to Sapa, we explore the bustling central market and browse handicraft stalls showcasing locally made goods. In the evening, we visit a local art gallery featuring stunning photographs, paintings, and wall hangings that capture the spirit of the region. Dinner is at a local restaurant, where we sample Sapa's culinary specialities, accompanied by traditional rice wine—if we're feeling adventurous! (meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 5

Sapa



This morning, we immerse ourselves in the customs and traditions of the Dao and Hmong tribes, exploring their intricate embroidery patterns, traditional medicines, and beautifully crafted silver jewellery. During visits to hill-tribe families, we have the unique opportunity to engage with local artisans. A Dao seamstress might demonstrate how she creates her elaborate designs, while a jewellery maker showcases their tools and techniques for crafting stunning silver necklaces.

The Black Hmong, named for their predominantly dark attire, are the largest ethnic group in the region. Hemp plants line the valleys, as some

of their clothing is made from locally grown hemp. The entire process of hemp cloth production, from planting seeds to detailed embroidery, is traditionally a woman's role.

One of the most fascinating Hmong techniques is their batik dyeing process. Using a tool dipped in beeswax, women create repetitive zigzags, crosses, and geometric shapes on long strips of fabric, which are then dyed in a cold indigo vat. Once the wax is boiled off, the patterned fabric is transformed into pleated skirts, baby carriers, and jackets.

Later, we visit a French colonial-era stone church and the Ham Rong Botanical Gardens, where we enjoy views of the valley below and the towering peaks of Hoang Lien National Park above. From here, we catch a glimpse of Fansipan Mountain, Vietnam's highest peak at 3,143 metres. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

Day 6

Sapa – Hanoi – Hoi An



We leave the mountains of the North and begin our road journey back to Hanoi, heading directly to the airport. From there, we take a short one-hour flight to Central Vietnam and make our way to Hoi An, a former trading hub along the historic silk route and a contemporary of Malacca in Malaysia and Macao in China.

Hoi An is a true gem of our journey, renowned for its enchanting atmosphere. Once a prosperous seaport celebrated for its spirit of innovation and cultural diversity, Hoi An is now considered one of Vietnam's most charming destinations. The town boasts stunning

architecture, delectable cuisine, and warm, welcoming locals.

In the early evening, we embark on a brief orientation walk through the Old Town, soaking in its rich history and vibrant streets. Afterwards, we are free to explore this captivating town independently, discovering its unique character at our own pace. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

Days 7, 8 & 9

Hoi An



Over the next three days, we delve into Hoi An's rich history and architectural heritage, exploring its former prominence as a major trading port during the 15th and 16th centuries. By visiting UNESCO-listed sites and local museums, we gain a deeper understanding of this unique town and its vibrant cultural tapestry.

There's also time to unwind on a secluded beach and enjoy a peaceful boat cruise along the Thu Bon River, where we observe local fisherfolk at work. Other highlights include a visit to a silk factory and an exploration of traditional industries such as boat building and the Thanh Ha brick kiln village. Guided by a skilled lantern maker, we try our hand at crafting

traditional lanterns, showcasing the town's strong Chinese influences.

On the evening of day 8, we join a cooking class led by an exceptionally talented chef, learning to prepare local specialties such as Cao Lau, White Rose dumplings, and turmeric-flavoured tuna steaks wrapped in banana leaves. Additionally, there's time to visit one of Hoi An's many tailor shops to have custom clothing made.

Day 9 is set aside as a free day for you to explore at your own pace or revisit a favourite site. You might choose to relax by the hotel pool, indulge in a traditional massage, or simply wander the charming streets of Hoi An. (meals: 3 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 2 dinners)

Days 10 & 11

Dalat



We board a short flight to Vietnam's south-central highlands. Upon arriving in the temperate city of Dalat, situated at an elevation of 1,500 metres, we set out to explore this charming French-inspired town. Our first stop is the bustling local market, brimming with highland produce such as fresh coffee beans, raspberries, and dried fruits. Once a colonial hill station, Dalat offers a European ambiance in the heart of Asia, complete with its own lake and a miniature Eiffel Tower.

A visit to Trai Mat, a colonial-era train station, is a must. Here, we admire the vintage steam locomotive before embarking on a short, scenic train ride

through rolling hills and market gardens, ending at a quaint village. In this village, we explore the eccentric Linh Phuoc Pagoda, a Buddhist temple uniquely constructed from bottles, bowls, and intricate ceramic mosaics, adorned with vibrant dragon motifs.

For those interested in fine craftsmanship, we visit the exquisite XQ Embroidery Workshop. The owner takes us on a fascinating tour, where we observe the meticulous art of silk embroidery and browse the Museum of Embroidered Arts.

We are guided through Bao Dai's Summer Palace, the royal summer residence of Vietnam's last king. Here, we learn about the life and role of King Bao Dai and the eventual fall of the monarchy. The palace, an architectural gem from the 1930s, is preserved with its original Art Deco furnishings, offering a glimpse into the opulence of a bygone era. (meals: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, 2 dinners)

Day 12

Dalat – Ho Chi Minh City



A one-hour morning flight takes us to the dynamic Ho Chi Minh City, the industrial capital of the south and a place of contrasts. We set out to explore the Notre Dame Cathedral and the War Remnants Museum, learning about the American War in Vietnam from a local perspective. This confronting museum is one that all travellers to Vietnam should see to gain an understanding of the country's turbulent past.

The national dress in Vietnam is the Ao Dai, a long tight-fitting tunic that emerged as a collaboration of French, Chinese and Vietnamese designs over 100 years ago. Today this iconic dress is still worn by schoolteachers,

office officials and fashion models. Wandering the halls of the Ao Dai Museum gives us a fascinating insight into the history and design of the dress in addition to the role of women in society.

In the evening, we enjoy dinner at one of the city's outdoor spacious barbeque restaurants before having drinks at a rooftop bar. It was here that journalists once sat as they reported on the turbulent war years of the last century. (meals: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, 2 dinners)

Day 13

Depart Ho Chi Minh City



Once the morning rush subsides, we embark on a charming cyclo ride or hop on the back of a motor scooter as pillion passengers, heading to the vibrant Chinese district of Cho Lon. Here, we explore sprawling wholesale markets, traditional medicine shops, and the bustling street life unique to this part of Vietnam.

We also have the chance to meet skilled jewellery makers who specialise in crafting silver bracelets and rings. They share fascinating insights into the history and cultural significance of silver in Vietnam.

Our journey continues to a lacquerware workshop, where we observe the intricate, multi-step process of creating beautifully lacquered bowls, serving trays, and wall art. Alternatively, for those seeking something different, we can take a side trip to a striking Cao Dai temple. This unique structure reflects a religion that blends elements of Catholicism, Taoism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, showcasing an extraordinary fusion of architectural styles.

The afternoon offers free time for shopping or leisurely exploring the city's streets. Finally, we transfer to the airport, where our tour leader bids us a fond farewell as we prepare for our journey home. (meals: 1 breakfast)

Summary

Grading

Easy; To get the most out of this trip, you need to be in good health. However, anyone with reasonable fitness will be able to take part. There are no real physical difficulties, but you will be expected to walk every day and carry your luggage for short distances. The itinerary may include bike riding and climbing steps. If your itinerary includes community service work of any description, you will be expected to work diligently during this component. 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.

Land Trip Cost and Details

Cost per traveller from A\$ 2,350

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 Edventure 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)
- Spending money
- Travel insurance

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