



## Jewels of Vietnam Dossier

### Exclusive Collection Tour | 13 Days | Physical Level 1

Saigon – Hoi An – Hue – Hanoi – Halong Bay

Offering a more luxurious look at the wonders of Vietnam including Saigon, Hoi An, Hanoi and Halong Bay, a series of exclusive experiences will give you insights into the rich history and natural beauty of this compelling country.

- Enjoy a deluxe Mekong cruise
- Explore Chinatown by Cyclo
- Marvel at the A O show
- Be charmed by Hoi An
- Learn of grand dynasties past in Hue
- Meet a water puppeteer in Hanoi
- Practice Tai Chi on Halong Bay



### Jewels of Vietnam inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- 5\* accommodation throughout
- Meals as stated in the itinerary
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.

### Exclusive Collection Tours:

These tours have been meticulously designed with the more discerning traveller in mind. These deluxe journeys through Asia feature distinctive and exclusive experiences which bring the region to life. Our Exclusive Collection tours include:

- Spa treatment
- Afternoon Tea Experience
- 2 soft drinks during lunch; soft drinks/local wine/beer during dinner
- Unique experiences
- Small group sizes
- Complimentary chauffeur transfers available for clients who live within 60 kilometres of the airport
- Porter service to and from your hotel rooms
- A mid-tour laundry service

### Physical Level 1:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

'Jewels of Vietnam' is rated as a physical level 1 tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it's more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You'll be getting on and off coaches and boats, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- On several days there will be sightseeing on foot for extended periods of time often on an incline or on uneven surfaces.
- You will be required to get on and off varying sizes of boats often without assistance.

Of course, our National Escort and Local Guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

### Country Profile: Vietnam

Vietnam is a country of breathtaking natural beauty with an incredible modern-day history that quickly becomes addictive. It has experienced war and a bloody revolution in the past 100 years, but the nation now reunified, Vietnam is peaceful and prosperous. Vietnam has something to offer everyone, so whether you are a culture vulture, thrill seeker or just looking to relax and take in the beaches, Vietnam will not disappoint.

### Joining Your Tour

The tour is 13 days in duration including international flights. Please note that depending on flight schedules passengers may arrive/depart on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only', the price includes visa fees and your arrival/ departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations. Join the tour on day one in Saigon and end the tour on Day 12 in Hanoi. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

### Itinerary Changes

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

- The Notre Dame Cathedral is currently undertaking restorations which will continue until 2023. During this time customers are unable to enter the Cathedral; however, they can view it from the outside.

## Itinerary – Jewels of Vietnam

### Day 1: Saigon

Meals included: Nil

Arrive at the airport by chauffeured transfer and fly to Saigon. On arrival, you will be met and taken to your hotel by your National Escort or Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time travel to your hotel for check in.

*Please note: 2 soft drinks during lunch; soft drinks/local wine/beer during dinner will be provided throughout the tour.*



### Destination Information

**Saigon** - The exuberant city of Saigon is driving Vietnam forward into the modern world but is also a treasure trove of fascinating heritage. During the 1960s and early 1970s, Saigon was the Pearl of the Orient, which flourished under the American occupation. In more recent times, it was the seat of the South Vietnam government until the events that led to the country's reunification. Today, the old mixes seamlessly with the new and you can wander through timeless alleys to incense-infused temples before catching up with the present in designer malls beneath sleek skyscrapers.

### Day 2: Saigon

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today explore Saigon city with its heady mix of local culture and colonial influences. Start at the Central Post Office and the Opera house then continue on to Reunification Palace and the chilling War Remnants Museum. Visit Ben Thanh Market the city's bustling commercial heart before taking off on your cyclo tour of fascinating Chinatown arriving at Cha Tam Church and Chua Ong Pagoda, a stunning example of Chinese-inspired architecture. Later head down a traditional herbal medicine street where your tour guide will share with you how locals use their herbal remedies. Continue to head onward to Bitexco



Building - a glittering example of modern architecture in the city to enjoy sunset views and a cocktail. Tonight, transfer to the Nha Rong port and step aboard the Bonsai Legacy to wine and dine against the backdrop of Saigon's city lights. This beautiful vessel is a re-creation of a classic river vessel once found all over Indochina and is tastefully updated with modern amenities.

### Destination Information

**Central Post Office** - Located next to the Notre-Dame Cathedral. The Central Post Office building was constructed in the late 19th century. It counts Gothic, Renaissance and French influences and was designed by Auguste Henri Vildieu and Alfred Foulhoux but is often erroneously credited as being the work of Gustave Eiffel.

**Reunification Palace** - Built on the site of the former Norodom Palace, is a landmark in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. It was designed by architect Ngô Viết Thụ and was the home and workplace of the President of South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. It was the site of the end of the Vietnam War during the Fall of Saigon on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1975, when a North Vietnamese Army tank crashed through its gates.

**War Remnants Museum** - Comprised of numerous buildings displaying military equipment, photographs and artefacts relating to the Vietnam War from 1961-1975. This museum illustrates a harrowing period in this nation's history.

### Day 3: Saigon

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Depart from your hotel and drive to the township of Cai Be along the Mekong Delta to board the Cai Be Princess, a traditional riverboat made from native bamboo, wood and rattan. During Vietnam's French colonial period, boats like this were an essential means of transport in a swampy areas and poor roads. On the river, boat traffic is endless and the activity never ceases, observe the local life from the comfort of your sampan as it plays out on the riverbanks, making stops along the way to provide glimpses of local industries: including coconut candy and puffed rice (the local equivalent



of popcorn). Your cruise ends at Le Longanier Restaurant where lunch is served in an exquisite colonial-style villa set in tropical gardens by the river, giving you a sense of life during Indochinese times. After lunch, take a short walk along a small canal, towards the Ba Bon Bridge where you will be picked up and transferred back to your hotel in Saigon. Tonight, enjoy the A O Show, the show is a spectacular showcase of Vietnamese culture and performance art, and combines in beautiful precision elements of both old and new.

*Please note: The schedule may be changed based on the times of the AO shows. However, the AO show may not be available on certain dates because of schedule changes. In this case alternative options will be offered instead in other cities visited.*

### Destination Information

**Mekong Delta** - Although primarily rural, the Mekong Delta is a densely populated area where life progresses around its fertile banks. The Mekong Delta is the 13th longest, and the 10<sup>th</sup> largest, by volume alone and people live, trade, travel and even go to school on the riverbanks. The rice which is cultivated in the many farming lands is said to be enough to supply the entire country with a little extra.

**A O Show** - Featuring Vietnam's most talented performance artists, traditional musicians and circus-like choreography, A O Show explores the lives of the Vietnamese people through its ensemble creations.

### Day 4: Saigon – Hoi An

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Confront the reality of guerrilla warfare at the Cu Chi Tunnels. The cramped tunnels were central to a few of the war's strategic operations, including the famous 1968 Tet Offensive, and they did not escape damage. American B52 bombers dropped hundreds of missiles leaving huge tell-tale craters behind. The Cu Chi experience can be emotional for some visitors, but it offers a fascinating window into the hardship and traumas of war. Next, it's a short drive through the countryside to visit a cricket farm before transferring to the airport. Fly 1 hour and 15 minutes to Danang and transfer to the charming town of Hoi An.



#### Destination Information

**Cu Chi** - the tunnels of Cu Chi are an immense network of connecting underground tunnels located in the Cu Chi district of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam, and are part of a much larger network of tunnels that underlie much of the country. The Cu Chi tunnels were the location of several military campaigns during the Vietnam War, and were the Viet Cong's base of operations for the Tet Offensive in 1968.

**Hoi An** - Perhaps more than any other place in Vietnam, Hoi An retains the feel of centuries past. Once known as Faifo, Hoi An was an influential port along the Silk Road. For over 500 years merchants from China, Japan, France and Portugal settled in the prosperous town resulting in a distinctive blend of culture, cuisine, religion and architecture.

### Day 5: Hoi An

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

This morning starts with a cooking class including a market tour, learning about Vietnamese food culture, nutrition, herbal remedies and cooking techniques. Later enjoy a walking tour through the streets of Hoi An, arriving first at Chua Ong Pagoda. Next pass by the 200-year old Tan Ky House and take a short break at the Japanese Covered Bridge - one of Hoi An's most iconic structures. Visit the Reaching Out Tea House, an establishment that aids locals with disabilities, for a rejuvenating cup of tea before having a tasty lunch at a restaurant specializing in traditional Hoi An delicacies.



#### Destination Information

**Japanese Covered Bridge** - First constructed in the 1590s to link the Japanese and Chinese quarters of the town. This iconic pink hued bridge has been restored to its former splendour.

## Day 6: Hoi An - Hue

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Leave Hoi An this morning heading north to Hue. Driving over the scenic Hai Van Pass, passing the fishing village of Lang Co, to enjoy panoramic views of the central coastline. Hue was the imperial capital of Vietnam from 1802-1945, when the last emperor abdicated the throne, yet is still regarded as the seat of Vietnam's culture and religion today. This afternoon, take a boat trip along the Perfume River and visit Thien Mu Pagoda.



### Destination Information

**Hue** - Having been the imperial capital from 1802 until 1945 after the last emperor abdicated; Hue is still regarded as the centre of Vietnam's culture and religion. The city is dominated by the Imperial Citadel that is modelled on the Forbidden City in China. There are many wonderful pagodas and temples of high significance and it contains the Grand Tombs of the Nguyen Emperors.

**Thien Mu Pagoda** - This 7-storey octagonal tower built on a hillock, overlooking the Perfume River is Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda. Wander the grounds where bonsai, ponds and the smell of incense set a peaceful backdrop.

## Day 7: Hue

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel before exploring Hue's Imperial Citadel. Created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Imperial City was modelled on the Forbidden City in Beijing and holds many palaces and temples inside its giant walls. Many of the buildings have been damaged by war over the years and are now being restored to their former glory. Transfer to Minh Mang Tomb to explore the opulent and exotic resting place laid out in formal Chinese style. Next, make your way to Thanh Tien Village, well-known for over 300 years of crafting paper flowers. Meet one of the local villagers and learn how to make your own ornate paper flower. Finally, visit Tha Om Garden House and its owner, Mr Vinh. Explore the traditional 19<sup>th</sup> century Hue residence and listen to Mr Vinh's stories of his royal heritage before returning to your hotel.



### Destination Information

**Imperial Citadel** - A walled fortress accompanied by cannons, artilleries and surrounded by a moat for protection. Inside the Citadel are numerous gates, courtyards and the Forbidden Purple City.

**Royal Tomb of Minh Mang** - Emperor Minh Mang reigned in the Nguyen Dynasty, the last of the Vietnamese dynasties, from 1820-1840. The construction of his tomb was completed after his death and is said to have taken approximately 10,000 workers to complete. The complex comprises of almost 40 monuments and is surrounded by gardens and pools, making it one of the more beautiful tombs in Vietnam.

**Day 8: Hue - Hanoi**

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Transfer to the airport for your 1 hour and 20-minute flight to Hanoi. On arrival visit Viet Phu Thanh Chuong, a 21<sup>st</sup> century house with traditional Vietnamese architecture. Whilst in Hanoi, enjoy a spa treatment of your choice at your hotel.

*You will be given a voucher today for a free spa treatment, of which you have a choice between an aromatherapy body massage or a traditional Vietnamese massage. You have the freedom to book your treatment with your hotel reception at a time of your choice.*

**Destination Information**

**Hanoi** - With a population of approximately 4 million, Hanoi is a charming and richly historic city of lakes, shaded boulevards and leafy open parks. The centre is an architectural museum piece housing groups of ochre coloured buildings holding the air of provincial French towns of the 1930s, a “Paris of the Orient” as people have called it.

**Day 9: Hanoi**

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

This morning you will visit the Ho Chi Minh Complex for a look at the life of the father of modern Vietnam. First, pass by Ho Chi Minh’s Mausoleum. In the same complex, we will see the Humble House on Stilts, the Ho Chi Minh Museum and the One Pillar Pagoda. Drive to the serene Temple of Literature, Hanoi’s first university dating back to 1070 and a historical centre of learning, now dedicated to Confucian worship. Later visit the home of a water puppet artist, the descendant of a family of water puppet performers. This Vietnamese traditional performance art has roots dating back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. You will have a chance to talk with the artist, watch the process of making the puppets and enjoy a private water puppet show.

**Destination Information**

**Ho Chi Minh Quarter** - Dedicated to the father of modern Vietnam and where Ho Chi Minh’s Mausoleum stands in Ba Dinh Square. Ho Chi Minh first declared independence from French rule in 1945.

**One Pillar Pagoda** - Rebuilt in 1955 after damage during the French evacuation, the pagoda is made of wood and sits on a single pillar. Designed to reflect the shape of a lotus flower emerging from the water, it has become a popular spot for locals to enjoy the tranquil surroundings.

**Humble House on Stilts** - In the grounds of the Presidential Palace sits the 2-storey wooden home of Ho Chi Minh who ruled Vietnam from here until his death in 1969.

**Temple of Literature** - Hanoi’s first university dating back to 1070 and a historical centre of learning, now dedicated to Confucian worship.

**Water Puppets** - Vietnamese Water Puppets were invented thousands of years ago by farmers in the Red River Delta region near Hanoi, as a means to entertain themselves when the rains flooded their paddy fields. Today puppeteers stand in waist deep water and control the puppets via pole and strings. Most plays focus on folklores and tales of rural life.

#### Day 10: Hanoi – Halong Bay

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning drive to the coastal town of Halong, about 4 hours from Hanoi. On arrival in Halong, you will take an overnight cruise to the far-most corners of the bay. Enjoy lunch onboard as you cruise out into the bay, stopping to anchor for an afternoon of activities. End the day on deck watching the sunset over the bay followed by a freshly prepared dinner.



*Please note: Weather conditions such as mist, fog, wind, rain and storms may delay the departure time of your cruise, or in some cases your cruise may be cancelled. Notifications of any delays or cancellations may not be known until your group's arrival in Halong Bay. If your cruise is cancelled after your arrival in Halong Bay, you will have lunch in Halong City and return to Hanoi. If notification of the cruise cancellation is given prior to your departure for Halong Bay an alternative day trip will be arranged to Hoa Lu and Tam Coc or 'Halong Bay on Land', an area located approximately 2 hours from Hanoi. Our guides will make every effort to inform the group at the earliest possible moment should there be any itinerary changes.*

*You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for your trip to Halong Bay. Main luggage will be left in safe storage at the hotel in Hanoi and picked up your return.*

#### Destination Information

**Halong Bay** - Compared to the landscape of the limestone islets of Guilin in China and Krabi in southern Thailand, Halong Bay shares a common border with China in the north and harbours some of the most stunning scenery in Vietnam. Unique rock sculptures jut out dramatically from the clear emerald waters of the Gulf of Tonkin and numerous grottoes have created an enchanting, timeless world, looking out onto the horizon with the sails of the junks and sampans completing the picture.

#### Day 11: Halong Bay – Hanoi

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Spend the morning soaking up the scenery, enjoy a hearty breakfast mid-morning before heading back to the harbour and returning to Hanoi for an afternoon tea at La Fée Verte Bar in the Hotel de l'Opera around 3 - 6 pm. A tea set of L'opera propose 2 menu options for you to choose: English afternoon tea or Vietnamese high tea. Later enjoy a farewell dinner at Home Hanoi Restaurant.



**Day 12-13: Depart Hanoi**

Meals included: Breakfast

Today transfer to the airport for your flight home, any time before your flight will be at leisure. On arrival at the airport in Australia, be met by your airport chauffeur who will transfer you back home.

Late check-out is not included in our South East Asia group tours. If you wish to book a late check-out for your final day, please contact our reservations department who can confirm additional pricing and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel.

## Jewels of Vietnam Travel Information

### Visas

Entry visas are required by all visitors to Vietnam and Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa.

We will supply you with all paperwork and submit the visa application on your behalf. Visas for Vietnam are issued with specific start and expiry dates which are based on the dates stated on the visa application form. Travel must be completed within those dates. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

Visa application forms and all relevant documentation are **due in our office 60 days prior to departure**; if received after this, urgent visa processing fees will apply. Also, please note we do not accept passports and visa applications within 30 days prior to departure. Passports will be returned with your Final Documentation 2-3 weeks prior to your group tour's scheduled departure. If you require your passport to be returned earlier, a \$15.00 courier fee will apply.

### Insurance

We strongly encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the originals.

### Eating in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in most local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region actually has its own distinct characteristics. Vietnam, for example, is perhaps best known for its fresh and aromatic dishes – relying heavily on flavours from fresh herbs such as mint, basil and dill.

Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead. When dining in Southeast Asia, although some restaurants have adopted a western approach to dining, expect some restaurants to follow the traditional communal style of eating. Typically, this will mean each diner has their own small bowl and may serve themselves from a variety of shared dishes.

### Evenings at Leisure

To give you more flexibility and choice when travelling on selected Exclusive Collection tours; we have carefully balanced special highlight meals with evenings at leisure so that you can explore the many culinary delights that Vietnam has to offer. Alternatively, you can use this time to enjoy the facilities of your luxurious accommodation. Your National Escort or Local Guide will be happy to provide you with advice about good places to eat and assist in the booking of transportation to get you there (at your own expense).

### Accommodation

As 'Jewels of Vietnam' tour is part of our Exclusive Collection, you will be staying in 5\* accommodation throughout your tour. We have provided time in your itinerary to have the opportunity to experience the facilities of your accommodation, or relax, allowing you to get the most out of the hotel experience.

## Transport

**Australian Airport Transfers** - Your Deluxe Collection tour includes private chauffeur-driven transfers from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Canberra and Cairns based on executive sedan or similar. Available within a radius of 60 driven kilometres from the nearest international airport. After hours surcharges apply between 12:00am-6:00am. Please contact reservations for further information.

**Coaches:** Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. **However, mini buses may be used for smaller groups (under 10 passengers).**

Roads in South East Asia have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

**Seatbelts:** Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in South East Asia and therefore the local people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason, some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that customers use seatbelts where available and remain seated while the vehicle is moving. If you have any concerns, please notify your National Escort/Local Guides.

**Air:** Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Pre-flight seat allocation is not available on international and internal flight sectors.

## Development in Vietnam

Although Vietnam is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in Australia. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in Australia; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday, so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides.

## Vietnam Public Holidays

If you are travelling within the below Vietnamese Public Holidays please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Tourist attractions will be open but may be crowded. Tet Holiday is between 24th – 28th January 2020, Reunification Day is on 30<sup>th</sup> April every year, International Labour Day is on 1<sup>st</sup> May every year and National Independence Day is on 2<sup>nd</sup> September every year.

## Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs, so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone, so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

## Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 18 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling. The minimum age of customers on this tour is 18 years old.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with Local Guides instead of a National Escort.

## Tipping Policy

Local tipping is customary in Asia. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in US Dollars and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy, but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

## Packing List & Climate

You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the 'Suggested Packing List', which will be included in your final documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

## Luggage

All travelers are limited to 2 items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of 5kg. It is essential that your luggage is lockable.

## Exchanging Cash

It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling outside major cities in Vietnam. US Dollars are easily exchanged throughout Vietnam, however other currencies such as Australian Dollars can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are new and undamaged. We suggest for your convenience that you ensure your US Dollars are from the new series (2003 onwards) to avoid any difficulties exchanging money during your trip. Old series notes can be difficult to exchange, apart from in some national banks in Vietnam, such as Vietcombank.

We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

## Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover additional drinks or laundry services and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of AU\$450.00 per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that cannot resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour at an additional cost. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide.

## Climbing Steps

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

## Cultural Difference

Vietnam has many religions, cultures and histories. Please be considerate of the local beliefs and customs and dress with consideration.

## Appropriate Dress

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques.

Religious sites and homes throughout South East Asia – for Hindus, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory, so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove your shoes, you will have to remain outside.

We recommend shoes that easily slip on and off and carry a pair of thick socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces. The following itinerary will indicate when you need to consider this.

### Vaccinations & Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful [www.travelvax.com.au](http://www.travelvax.com.au)

### Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

### After Your Booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice, which includes a link to our Visas, Passports and Health page. Here you will find the applicable visa application form, and a help sheet (if required). Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

**Last updated: 09 September 2019**