



Vietnam Panorama Dossier Classic Tour | 18 Days | Moderate

Saigon – Mekong Delta – Dalat – Nha Trang – Qui Nhon – Hoi An – Hue – Halong Bay

Travel overland through the verdant south of Vietnam – from the riverside life of the Mekong to lush and fresh Dalat, then up the beautiful coastline to ancient Hue. Finish off by exploring colonial Hanoi and cruising on tranquil Halong Bay.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS:

- Sightsee in Saigon
- Drift along the Mekong Delta
- Enjoy Dalat's cooler climate
- Relax on Nha Trang's beach
- Wake to a Halong Bay sunrise
- Stroll through old Hanoi



Vietnam Panorama tour inclusions

- Return international flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English-speaking National Escort (If your group is 10 or more travellers)

Personal expenditures 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 are at your own expense.

Classic Tours

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of South East Asia on an excellent value group tour travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and Local Guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

Moderate Tour

'Vietnam Panorama' is a **moderate** tour. This means that the itinerary requires a good level of fitness.

- This itinerary includes some lengthy driving distances particularly between Saigon to Dalat and Nha Trang to Qui Nhon.
- On several days there will be sightseeing on foot for extended periods of time.
- You will stay in basic accommodation during the Mekong Delta home stay.
- Throughout the itinerary 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 revolution now underway 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 18 days in duration including international flights.

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 17 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.

Changes:

- **Day 2:** The Notre Dame Cathedral will be under renovation for two years, starting in July 2017 and finishing in 2019. During this time, customers are unable to enter the Cathedral; however they can view it from the outside.

Important Information Regarding Itinerary Changes and Flight Delays

Due to unforeseen circumstances, flights can be delayed, and therefore connecting flights may be missed. If you find yourself in this situation, please contact our Vietnam office on **+84 989 559 488 (24 hours)** to urgently advise your arrival details have changed. Please ensure you have your trip number, tour name (both included in your final documentation) and new arrival details (flight number and arrival time) handy to pass on to our local office in Vietnam. This will ensure your National Escort/Local Guide can be informed of your most up to date information and ensure someone is at the airport to meet you on arrival.

If we are not advised of late changes and missed connections, Wendy Wu Tours cannot guarantee someone will be able to meet you upon arrival in Vietnam as our local office will have no way of knowing which flight you will be arriving on. Wendy Wu Tours will not be responsible for providing reimbursement of transportation costs from the airport to your hotel in the event that our local office was not advised of changes to arrival time.

Vietnam Panorama Itinerary

DAY 1: FLY TO SAIGON

Fly to Saigon, where you will be met at the airport in the arrival hall by your Local Guide or National Escort.

Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer 45 minutes to your hotel and check into your room or store any luggage if your room is not ready yet. There is no sightseeing today.

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

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. This

afternoon, explore modern day Saigon with its heady mix of local culture and colonial influences. You'll pass by the Notre Dame Cathedral, the Central Post Office, the Reunification Palace and the chilling War Remnants Museum.

Please note: The Notre Dame Cathedral will be under renovation for two years, starting in July 2017. During this time we are unable to enter the Cathedral; however we can view it from the outside.

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. The tunnels were used by Viet Cong soldiers as hiding spots during combat, as well as serving as communication and supply routes, hospitals, food and weapon caches and living quarters for numerous North Vietnamese fighters. The tunnel systems were of great importance to the Viet Cong in their resistance to American forces, and helped to counter the growing American military effort.

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 and 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 30th 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 TO CAN THO

Drive two and a half hours down to the picturesque province of Ben Tre, situated along the mighty Mekong. This area is known as the 'Rice Basket of Vietnam', because its rich and fertile lands produce large amounts of rice, coconuts, vegetables and tropical fruit. Spend the day cruising and exploring these waterways before travelling to Can Tho for an overnight stay. You will travel by motorised, wooden boats between the islands and then change to smaller, paddleboats in the palm fringed canals; sightseeing involves hopping on and off these boats, often on unsteady and slippery surfaces, sometimes without handrails or assistance. Remember to take insect repellent and sun protection for your overnight trip to Can Tho, as it can get very hot and humid in the Mekong.

You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for your trip to Can Tho. Main luggage will be left in safe storage at the hotel in Saigon and picked up your return.

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 10th 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.

DAY 4: CAN THO TO SAIGON

Can Tho is the largest city along the Mekong Delta and central for trade. Continue sightseeing around the canals and in the city of Can Tho, stepping in and out of boats again today. Stop at the Cai Rang floating markets and soak up its vibrant atmosphere. Later, visit a local rice husking

mill and a factory that produces vermicelli rice noodles before returning to Saigon, stopping for lunch en route.

Destination Information

Cai Rang Floating Markets - The largest markets along the Mekong Delta, witness the grand scale of produce on sale and the local lives of the Vietnamese along these teeming waterways.

DAY 5: SAIGON TO DALAT

Depart the bustling city of Saigon for the cooler climate and picturesque scenery of Dalat. Sample some locally grown tea from one of the many plantations in the region at Bao Loc. The journey is around six to seven hours, arriving into Dalat this afternoon, where the remainder of the day is at leisure.

Destination Information

Dalat - Referred to once as "Le Petit Paris", a French physician by the name of Alexandre Yersin promoted the charming town of Dalat to French colonials, recommending the mountain air. Nestled in amongst the green, rolling hills of central-southern Vietnam, temperatures sit between 15 to 25 degrees offering visitors a cool break from the baking plains of the Mekong Delta to the south. The beautiful greenery, reminiscent of Europe, the romantic flavour and the graceful architecture of the buildings add to Dalat's charm.

DAY 6: DALAT

A full day of sightseeing in Dalat today, firstly with a visit to Domain de Marie Church built in 1943 followed by a visit to the Flower Gardens. Next stop is an embroidery workshop. Here, you will gain an understanding of this special handicraft, kept alive for generations in Dalat. After lunch, visit the former railway station, where you will enjoy an open-air train ride to Trai Mat hamlet (one way only). Disembark the train and drive to the colourful Dalat market, where you can stroll through and witness the daily life of the locals. End your day at a local coffee shop overlooking Xuan Huong Lake; the perfect position from which to watch the world go by.

Please note the train ride can only be taken by groups of 20 travellers or more. If you are travelling in a smaller group alternative transport will be arranged.

Destination Information

Domain de Marie Church – Located on a hill with sweeping views of Dalat, this church is admired for its beautiful French colonial architecture.

Flower Gardens – Overlooking Xuan Huong Lake, there are over 300 varieties of plants and flowers on display.

Open Air Train Ride to Trai Hamlet - Witness serene views of the Dalat plateau, with its clusters of multi-coloured housing, ravines, valleys, greenhouses and outdoor farms from the carriage of your open-air train.

DAY 7: DALAT TO NHA TRANG

This morning, leave the highlands of Dalat behind and drive three hours to the coastal city of Nha Trang. Upon arrival at the port, board a boat for an afternoon cruise on the turquoise waters. Boarding your boat may involve navigating your way over and through other boats, moored between it and the dock, sometimes without handrails, ladders or assistance from staff. These 'cruise boats' are old fishing boats which have had benches and seats fitted for tourist groups. They are quite basic but have ample room for the group to sit and relax while cruising. The deck has a roof providing shade. You will have the opportunity to stop at one of the many islands where you can enjoy a swim in the balmy water before returning to Nha Trang.

Today's boat trip is weather dependant. Your national escort or local guide will do their best to inform the group of any changes to the itinerary as early as possible.

Destination Information

Nha Trang - The high-energy resort town of Nha Trang offers one of the nicest beaches in Vietnam boasting turquoise waters, excellent fishing, snorkelling and scuba diving.

DAY 8: NHA TRANG TO QUI NHON

Today drive five to six hours to the coastal city of Qui Nhon. Along the way visit the Dam Market and the Po Nagar Cham Towers, a complex of granite temples. There will also be time to stop for lunch, rest and photo opportunities along the way.

Destination Information

Po Nagar Cham Towers - Ruins from the Hindu Kingdom of Champa, which ruled this region of Vietnam from the late 2nd century through to 1471.

Qui Nhon – Surrounded by green mountains on three sides and the ocean on the forth, the city of Qui Nhon is known for its beautiful surroundings, Cham temples and nearby beaches.

DAY 9: QUI NHON TO HOI AN

Leave Qui Nhon and travel approximately four hours to Son My, where you can pay homage to the victims of the My Lai massacre, known for the most notorious massacre during the Vietnam/American conflict. The memorial and museum

are simple; most people find this quite confronting and emotional so you will be given time to explore on your own. In the afternoon, drive a further four hours arriving into Hoi An, where the remainder of the evening is at leisure.

Destination Information

Son My - This memorial and museum are a poignant reminder of this pivotal moment during the Vietnam/American conflict.

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 10: HOI AN

Enjoy a walking tour this morning of this laid back and wilfully traditional UNESCO listed town to see the elaborate Japanese Covered Bridge, Chinese temple, a traditional house occupied by the same family for over 200 years, and lastly a trip to the bustling markets. Visit the Reaching Out Arts and Crafts Workshop. After lunch, the rest of the day is free at your leisure to explore Hoi An's narrow and ancient streets, or go to the beach.

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.

Reaching Out - Provides opportunities for people with disabilities to learn skills and gain meaningful employment. The arts and crafts workshop provides a platform for local people to showcase their talents.

DAY 11: HOI AN TO HUE

This morning, drive approximately four hours to Hue, this journey will take you over the scenic Hai Van Pass. Hue is the epitome of Vietnam's dynamic past, and considered a scholarly city. Upon arrival, explore the Royal Tomb of Minh Mang. The complex comprises of almost 40 monuments and is surrounded by gardens and pools, making it one of the more beautiful tombs.

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.

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 12: HUE

This morning, you visit the Imperial Citadel and the Forbidden Purple City which is still being restored many years after the destruction caused by street fighting and bombing during the American War in Vietnam. Afterwards you will drive to the outskirts of Hue to visit An Hien House, which was the original residence of Emperor Tu Duc's 18th daughter. This afternoon, enjoy a one-hour cruise along the Perfume River to the Thien Mu Pagoda, Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda, built on a hillock overlooking the river. Boarding your cruise could involve navigating your way over and through other boats, moored between it and the dock, sometimes without handrails, ladders or assistance from staff.

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.

Forbidden Purple City - Constructed for personal use by the Imperial family, their concubines and eunuchs. This royal structure is still being restored many years after the destruction caused by street fighting and bombing during the American war in Vietnam. Wander the grounds and foundations whilst viewing the remaining woodwork and architecture.

An Hien House - This house is an excellent example of traditional Vietnamese architecture. Massive pillars support a large tiled roof, with the family altar in the middle.

Thien Mu Pagoda - This seven-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 13: HUE TO HANOI

This morning, fly one hour and 20 minutes to Hanoi. Upon arrival, you will visit the Fine Arts Museum for an overview of art and its development in Vietnam. After lunch,

experience an exhilarating cyclo ride through Hanoi's Old Quarter. Each cyclo takes one traveller and is operated by a cycle driver behind the carriage. Wrap up your cyclo ride with a strong Vietnamese coffee at a café overlooking Hoan Kiem Lake - an important symbol of Vietnamese folklore. Tonight, enjoy a performance of the famous Water Puppets.

Destination Information

Hanoi - With a population of approximately four 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.

Fine Arts Museum - Housed in what was once the French Ministry of Information with a classical colonial structure. The artefacts on display range from ancient to contemporary.

Hanoi Old Quarter - A maze of streets weaving through Hanoi and dating back to the 13th century. Each street specialises in merchants and artisans selling their wares of silk, silver, wood and more.

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 14: HANOI

Discover the sights of Hanoi today. First stop will be the Ho Chi Minh Quarter and visit Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, followed by the Humble House on Stilts and the One Pillar Pagoda. Next, drive to the serene Temple of Literature, Hanoi's first university. Your afternoon is at leisure.

Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum is closed for entry on Mondays and Fridays every week and from September to December each year (the maintenance time is subject to change based on the decision of local authorities). During these times we are unable to enter the Mausoleum; however, we can view it from the outside.

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 two 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.

DAY 15: HANOI TO HALONG BAY

Drive four hours today from Hanoi to Halong, where you will take an overnight cruise to the far-most corners of the bay by boat. Boarding your boat could involve navigating your way over and through other boats, moored between it and the dock, sometimes without handrails, ladders or assistance from staff.

Enjoy lunch onboard as you cruise out into the bay, stopping to anchor for an afternoon of activities (which are subject to change due to cruise selection and weather conditions). Sightseeing includes visiting underground caves on the islands, which require climbing up and down steps inside and outside of the caves. End the day on deck with a drink in hand to watch the sunset over the bay followed by a freshly prepared dinner, before retiring to your cabin for the night.

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.

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 two hours from Hanoi. Our guides will make every effort to inform the group at the earliest possible moment should there be any itinerary changes.

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 16: HALONG BAY TO HANOI

Spend the morning sailing through Halong Bay. After an early lunch (or brunch meal), disembark your cruise and return to Hanoi. The remainder of the evening is at your leisure.

DAYS 17-18: HANOI TO AUSTRALIA

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Australia, arriving home the same or following day.

Please note: Only breakfast and lunch are provided on the groups day of departure; no refund will be given for meals missed.

VIETNAM PANORAMA 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 four weeks prior to your group tour's scheduled departure. If you require your passport to be returned earlier, a \$15AUD 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 South East Asia

South East 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. The 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. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from dinner on the day of your groups' arrival until breakfast on your day of departure. When dining in Vietnam, 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. At some local restaurants, appetizers and main courses might be served when they are ready instead of following a particular order.

Determining when it's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. In Vietnam, dishes are normally placed in the centre and people serve food for themselves with their own chopsticks and bowl. In Thailand and some other countries in South East Asia, forks and spoons are used for most dishes and chopsticks are typically provided to eat noodles. Usually chopsticks or other utensils are provided to scoop the food into your bowl to prevent your own chopsticks from touching the food that remains on the table. Dining in Vietnam is fairly casual with not too many rules. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Please refer to your travel guide for more information on Vietnamese cuisine, including information for travellers with restricted diets.

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and South East Asia. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide.

Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

Please note double bed requests can be made at time of booking but cannot be guaranteed.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. 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 where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times 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 15th to the 20th February 2018, International Labour Day is on 1st May every year, Reunification Day is on 30th April every year and National Independence Day is on 2nd 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 both a National Escort/Local Guides. There will usually be no more than 29 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of eight 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 only.

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 paid in US Dollars, MYR or other local currencies as specified. 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.

Packing List and Climate

You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the 'Suggested Packing List', which will be included in the pre-departure information link sent within your deposit documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on www.weather.com.

Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

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. US Dollars should be from the new series from the year 2003 onwards. Old series notes can be difficult to exchange, apart from in some national banks in Vietnam, such as Vietcombank. We suggest for your convenience that you ensure your US Dollars are from the new series to avoid any difficulties exchanging money during your trip.

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

You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of AUD\$250 per person, per week should be sufficient; however for those that cannot resist a bargain, 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 and 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.

Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with 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 with deposit documentation via email. This includes important information and links to access the visa application form and instructions sheet online (if applicable). Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately four weeks prior to departure.

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