

Vietnam



Saigon to Hanoi Bike Tour

12 days Saigon to Hanoi

The classic bike tour of South East Asia down Vietnam's beautiful coastline war days, now so many people have a link to Vietnam through social contacts, work contacts or commercial trade for which this country of 80-something million people is well known.

Those who have travelled here speak of a stunning and diverse geography of towering mountains, picturesque coastline and endless green rice fields. They speak of the naturally friendly people, of the delicious cuisine and of the intrigue at such a long culture of independence and national pride.

Our bike trip is the best of all these aspects of Vietnam. We take a classic cycling route between the commercial hub of Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) and the capital of Hanoi. We then Grasshopper-ize it by traveling on the most charming back road and trails to see the real countryside and not just the highway countryside. With very minimal driving and maximum cycling, this is a truly unique cycling trip. We took months to map out our route, so that you can take just twelve days to see the coast of this amazing country.

With many kilometres of stunning beaches and dramatic coastal roads as well as some of the freshest seafood going this trip is an indulgent experience. We are never far from a beach and stay in comfortable hotels to make this trip our most cushy adventure tours.



Itinerary

Day 1 | Saigon

Today group members will be arriving throughout the day so the day will be free to explore the sights of this charming city. We'll all meet in the evening for a group meeting and head out for our first dinner together. (D)

Day 2 | Quy Nhon

After a morning flight to Quy Nhon, we spend the afternoon exploring this pleasant seaside town and learning about the work of a dedicated lady who has single handedly established a centre to provide vocational training for young, disabled Vietnamese. We will fit our bikes and test them out around town. (B,L,D)

Day 3 | Quy Nhon to Quang Ngai | 42km

This morning we set out on our bikes for our first real day of riding. We leave the city by a huge suspension bridge and then cycle along a sand-dune peninsula and u some beautiful coastline. We have a few hills today where we get a great view out over the sea. Small fishing villages are nestled into each valley where squid fishing earns most household incomes. We reach highway number one in time for lunch and we then drive the remainder of the distance up to our home for the night, the steadily growing city of Quang Ngai. This city is well and truly off the tourist route. (B,L,D)

Day 4 | Quang Ngai to Tam Ky | 89km

This morning we start with a short cycle to the site of one of the many dark moments of the Vietnam War - the My Lai Massacre Memorial. The Monument stands as a great antiwar statement. We then proceed down to the coast to a fishing village and back up through bright green rice paddies and sleepy villages. The last part of today's ride will be on the famous highway number one. This is the main north south highway, linking Saigon to Hanoi. (B,L,D)

Day 5 | Tam Ky to Hoi An | 49km

Today we cover a surprisingly remote section of coast. We ride on a peninsula, lined with small houses that have evidently been battered by many a typhoon. Children who don't often see foreigners here will be delighted to see you and will yell out hello! We eat lunch in a local home before taking a boat up the river into Hoi An, world Heritage listed old town. (B,L,D)

Day 6 | Hoi An

Hoi An has a long history. It was the home to the largest port in SE Asia in the 1st. century when the Champa people inhabited this area and controlled the lucrative spice trade. In the 15th and 16th centuries the estuary town of Hoi An served as an important trading port and was settled by Chinese, Japanese, Indians and even Dutch. Today Hoi An is a charming town where you can wander for hours, soaking up the atmosphere and inspiring old architecture of the various parts of town. Hoi An is also famous for it's tailors who number in the hundreds and are eagerly waiting to create a garment for you. You may also wish to spend some time on the beach, a good place to sip a fresh coconut. (B)

Day 7 | Hoi An explorer | 50km

Today we explore the surrounding countryside by bike. The area surrounding Hoi An is a collection of sleepy villages and picturesque countryside. We may see rice paper making, silk lantern making or one of many ancient traditions that the people of Hoi An keep alive. We will visit the beach in the late afternoon and may have a chance to paddle a round basket style boat, just the way the locals do. (B,L)



Day 8 | Hoi An to Lang Co | 69km

We start out up the beach road to Danang. This city has suddenly exploded with development in recent times, and as such there is a new bridge to improve our ride a little. We pass many of the new multi-million dollar Condo and Resort projects before popping out the other end of our own into the Vietnam we have come to know and love. We then climb Hai Van Pass and while the incline is a challenge, the view is more than sufficient reward. Each turn in the road brings us around a bluff and serves us another stunning ocean view. As we descend the other side, we see the famous Re-unification express, weaving its way out of the tunnel and along the base of the mountain. At the foot of our descent, on a sandy peninsula between a lagoon and the sea, sits Lang Co, a peaceful, less visited beach where you can soak your muscles in the ocean while we wait for our fresh seafood dinner to be prepared. (B,L,D)

Day 9 | Lang Co to Hue | 80km

Today we spend only a short time on highway one before riding the back roads to Hue. The areas we are cycling through today were the leaving point for many of the "boat people". As the communist forces declared victory over the South and their American allies, many families who were fearful of persecution and a grim economic future chose to exit overloaded and poorly maintained fishing boats. While many made it to the shores of Australia and some neighboring Asian countries, many did not. After 80km of cycling, we reach the last Imperial city of Vietnam before the French Occupation, Hue. Time permitting, we will pay an afternoon visit to our friend Oanh who paints egg-shell lacquerware paintings of a more contemporary style. (B,L,D)

Day 10 | Explore Hue | 40km

We start off today with a visit to the Forbidden City. This was the seat of power in Vietnam during the most recent Imperial rule. We then take a ride up small paths, alleyways and country trails to see a variety of places, including a small produce market, some old French gun positions and even a fighting arena where beasts once did battle for the Emperor's entertainment. What a way to finish our ride. We head back into Hue City for a victory lap around the walls of the Citadel. (B,L,D)

Day 11 | Hanoi

We take a morning flight to Hanoi today. We then take a walk to explore this bustling and vibrant city where the old and the new hold close quarters with each other and Vietnam's rapidly increasing wealth is immediately evident. We will visit some famous sights and some not so famous sights as we wrap up our great adventure. A celebratory meal this evening will be our last one as a group. (B,D)

Day 12 | Conclusion of the tour

Our tour concludes today. You are free to leave any time that suits. (B,D)

Tour Details

Style

Fully supported cycling tour

Inclusions

Entrances, English speaking, Vietnamese tour leader, most meals, support vehicle.

Group Size

Minimum 2, maximum 14.

Accommodation

10 nights comfortable hotel, 1 night local guesthouse



In the towns with some hotel choice we use very comfortable 3 or 4 star hotels while in the smaller towns we have selected the best hotel available - these are generally 2 to 3 star. In Binh Duong we stay in a local guesthouse for one night. The guesthouse is simple but clean and still comes with private bathrooms and air conditioning.

Single Room

On Grasshopper Adventures tours single travellers do not have to pay any extra to join our trips - we will match you up with another same sex, single traveller. However, should you wish to choose to take a single room we are happy to book rooms for you for an extra charge. This single supplement is completely voluntary and only applies to hotel accommodation, on overnight train trips there are no single rooms available. We should point out that on occasion single rooms may not be available and in these instances you may need to share for a night or two - we will refund part of your single supplement in these cases.

Extra accommodation

We can book additional accommodation before the tour in Hanoi or after the tour in Saigon at competitive rates. Please book extra nights when you book your tour.

Arrival Details

Our starting point hotel for this tour is the Palace Hotel in Saigon. Upon arrival in Saigon, you will be able to find taxi at the official taxi rank where a suitably identified person will assign you a taxi. All taxis use meters and it should cost the equivalent of about \$10USD to get to the hotel. If you would like us to arrange a pickup from the airport, we can do so for a cost of \$25USD.

Palace Hotel Saigon
56 - 66 Nguyen Hue Street . District 1
Ho Chi Minh City. Viet Nam
Telephone : (84-8) 38292860

Additional accommodation

Additional nights of accommodation can be booked at our trip hotels. If you wish to book any extra nights, please let us know at the time of booking.

Palace Hotel, Saigon. Recently renovated 4 star hotel in the French Quarter/Dong Khoi area. Rooms are \$130 per room, per night, including breakfast. Price quoted is for Signature Deluxe room.

Imperial Hotel, Hanoi. 3.5 star hotel, located close to the old quarter and Hoan Kiem Lake. Rooms are \$96 per room, per night, including breakfast. Price quoted is for Deluxe room.

Food

Included meals: 11 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 8 dinners, plus water, fruit and biscuits on cycling days. You should consider bring some of your favourite energy snacks and electrolyte powder for the cycling days.

Cycling Days & Distance

8 days, 420km

Difficulty

Moderate - this trip involves some longer days over 80km and a couple of hills. Riders should be of reasonable cycling fitness. We have a support vehicle on hand at all times if you have difficulty with any sections.

Cycling Conditions

Road conditions in Vietnam are good. Apart from some short section on unsealed roads this tour is on sealed roads. We do spend a little time on Highway One for these sections be prepared for traffic that can include trucks and buses, motorbikes, pedestrians, children, dogs, chickens and other fun surprises. You will need to stay alert at all times!



Bikes

You can bring your own bike for this trip. The best bike for conditions in Vietnam would be a good working mountain or hybrid bike with 21 gears or more and hybrid tyres to cope with the varying conditions. You should have your bike serviced by a professional bike mechanic before travelling to ensure that it is in good working order. While we do provide mechanical assistance and carry some spare parts during the trip you will need to bring spare parts (including tubes) for your bike as different bikes use different parts and we cannot guarantee that we will have a part to suit your bike.

Bike Hire

If you don't have a bike or don't want to bring your own you can hire a bike from us for the entire trip. We provide well maintained Trek or Merida mountain bikes in various sizes and will be responsible for any maintenance required during the trip for these bikes. All bikes are fitted with one bottle cage. Pannier racks are not supplied. For added comfort you may consider bringing your own seat and pedals which we can easily fit to your rental bike. Please note, renters will be liable for any damage caused to rental bike which is a result of riding accidents.

Helmets

Helmets are compulsory on all our bike tours. If you don't have a helmet, please let us know in advance and we can supply a rental helmet for \$20 for the length of the trip.

Transporting Your Bike

Most international airlines consider bicycles as part of your regular luggage weight allowance, so you will need to pack light. The best way to transport a bicycle is to package it in a bike box. Most bicycle stores are happy to give away boxes for free. You will need to remove the front wheel (and sometimes the rear wheel), handle bars, pedals and seat post. Tape any loose parts to the bike frame and pack a few extras in the box such as your helmet. You can keep your box until the end of the trip to pack it for the trip home.

Support Vehicles

For the cycling days we will have the backup support of a small bus that will carry our luggage, snacks, water, and anybody not cycling. You can use the support vehicle whenever you feel like no longer cycling.

Travel Details

Visas

In Vietnam 30 days visas need to be obtained in advance from your embassy. Make sure that you enter the correct dates for properly.

Before you travel check your passport to ensure that there is room for a visa and entry/exit stamps (at least 3 pages) and that it has at least 6 months validation remaining.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of participating in a Grasshopper Adventure that you hold travel insurance for the duration of the trip. Insurance must include comprehensive medical and emergency evacuation. Your travel insurance details will be checked by your group leader on arrival at the starting point hotel.

If you are looking for an insurer we can recommend World Nomads. [Click to see more details.](#)

Flights

International flights to the starting point and from the finish point are not included in the price of this tour. We can assist with the purchase of inter-Asia flights and/or provide advice if you are considering overland travel. All domestic flights as per itinerary are included.

Money



The official currency of Vietnam is the dong which should be used for all transactions. Vietnam has a modern banking system with ATMs and money changers in everywhere. When in Vietnam it is possible to use Visa/Mastercard or Cirrus/Maestro cards to access cash with an ATM. You should, however, carry travelers cheques as a backup. Most international currencies can be exchanged so it is not necessary to bring only US dollars - AUD, EUR, CAD, NZD are all accepted at banks in major centres.

For current exchange rates visit:
www.oanda.com

Costs

We recommend that you allow approximately US\$20 for food and general living costs per day while travelling. It is customary to tip the guide and support crew in Laos. You should allow approximately US\$30 for tips. Note: this is a guide only, feel free to tip more or less (or nothing) depending on your satisfaction. If you think your tour leader has done a good job you may also tip him/her. Again this is completely up to you.

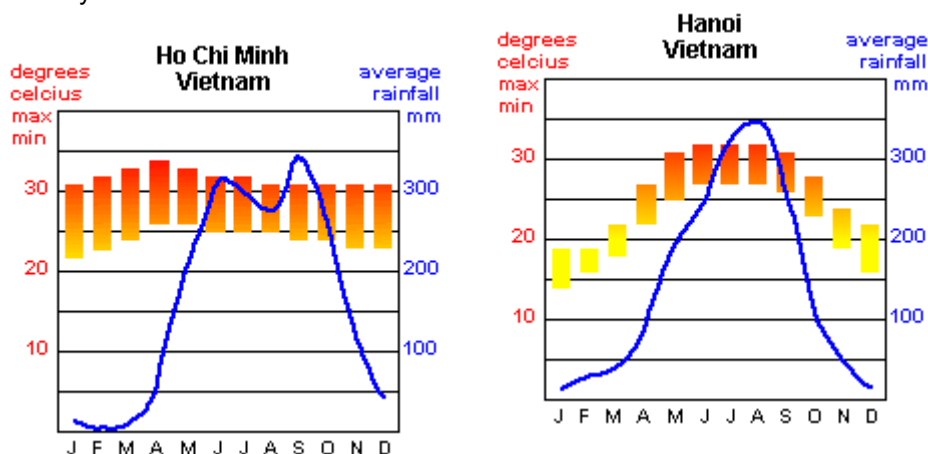
Health

There are no specific health requirements for travelling in Vietnam, however, we recommend that you visit a travel medicine doctor before travelling. You should carry a well stocked first aid kit with you when you travel. All Grasshopper Adventures Group Leaders are first aid trained, however, they are not permitted to distribute any medications.

Climate

Most of Vietnam is a classic tropical climate with generally warm to hot days and warm nights. The north is sub-tropical so if visiting in winter (Dec-Feb) expect cool days and nights (January average is 14 to 19 degree). Being

such a long country there are many sub-climate throughout the country so expect rain and heat all year round - chances are you'll experience all Vietnam's climate has to offer as you travel through the country.



Electricity

Vietnam works on a 220 volt system and uses American/Asian 2 flat pin plugs. For more on plug types visit the [World Electric Guide](#). You can easily buy an adapter in Vietnam for much cheaper than in your home country.

Packing

While we do have a support vehicle to carry your luggage during the cycling days, you will be required to carry your own luggage at times. Luggage will need to be loaded on and off buses and up and down stairs at hotels. For this reason we recommend that you pack as lightly as possible in a backpack or small wheeled bag. If traveling to Vietnam in December/January in the north it is quite cool at night and in the early morning. You should bring a wind breaker and cold weather clothing.

You should consider bringing the following items:

Personal Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Backpack or small sized wheellie bag (some of the guesthouses we have do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passport with 6 months validity and spare pages Passport photo
---	---



<p>not have lifts so you may need to carry your luggage up some flights of stairs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long trousers • Shorts • Shirts • Hat • Sandles/light shoes • Swimming costume • Sunglasses • Light rain jacket • Warm clothing if travelling in Dec/Jan • Toiletries • Small towel • Sunscreen • First Aid Kit • Mosquito repellent • Camera • Alarm Clock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel insurance details • Flight tickets • Money - cash/credit cards/travellers cheques • Phrase book <p>Cycling Gear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicycle • <i>if renting</i> - your own seat & pedals (optional) • Something to carry your personal belongings in while cycling, eg. day pack, bum bag, handlebar bag • Helmet • Cycling gloves • Bicycle water bottle • Bike shorts with something to put on over the top while off the bike
---	--

Positive Impact

An integral part of traveling is to have a positive impact on the country that you are visiting. On this trip there are a number of things you can do to have a positive impact on the communities that we visit.

Phrase Book

A highly memorable part of your travels will be the local people that you meet. In the tourist areas some people will speak English but away from these areas it is great to learn a few words of Vietnamese. We will teach you some of the basics but if you want to really interact we recommend bringing a phrase book.

Donations

Often when coming on trips overseas people like to bring items such as sweets, pens and books for children or old clothing for families. While this is a fantastic idea, if distributed in the wrong way it can actually create more problems. Giving items away to local people can create an expectation that a visiting foreigner equals free give away's. In some communities in Asia this has created whole villages where the only interaction is the locals asking for things. If you would like to donate anything to the communities that we visit we suggest that you give the items to Grasshopper Adventures which we will then pass on to development organisations, schools or whole communities. In this way items are distributed by those working in the communities who understand better the local needs.

Poverty

There is poverty in Vietnam which you will see, particularly in tourist areas. If you choose to give something to a beggar you must bear in mind the value of money in the country you are visiting. Many beggars can earn more than those who work unskilled jobs. There are organisations in Vietnam who are working to alleviate this poverty issue and may be able to do more good with donations that you might like to make. Your Tour Leader will be able to provide more information about this.

Important

All information in these tour notes is researched with care and provided in good faith. The information subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Grasshopper Adventures.

