

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide[®]



Immersion in Vietnam: Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City
2026

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world on one of Overseas Adventure Travel's (O.A.T.'s) NEW **Immersions** itineraries.

As you may already be aware, **Immersions** itineraries are shorter versions of some of our most popular O.A.T. adventures. For our more active travelers who wish to make the most of their limited time abroad, these itineraries have been carefully crafted to include all the iconic must-sees of a destination along with O.A.T.'s signature people-to-people interactions that connect you to local culture and create the most treasured travel memories.

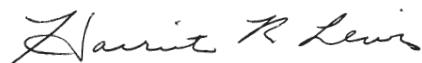
Like all our adventures, **Immersions** itineraries provide you with an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You may find yourself spending **A Day in the Life** of a local community, sharing a meal during a **Home-Hosted Visit**, or discussing **Controversial Topics** that impact everyday life. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of one of our local Trip Experience Leaders. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to arrive a few days early* to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

*Early arrival option unavailable on **Immersion in Iceland: Selfoss to Reykjavik**

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Thien Mu Pagoda, Huế

New! Immersion in Vietnam: Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City Small Group Adventure

Vietnam: Hanoi, Halong Bay, Huế, Hoi An, Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

12 days starting from \$2,995

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/svl2026pricing

Vietnam is a nation reborn, and we invite you to discover the depth of its beauty. Traversing the entire country from north to south, you'll journey from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City. We'll also explore the ancient city of Huế and enjoy 1 night aboard a privately chartered traditional sailboat in Halong Bay. Let Vietnam's warmth and beauty amaze you—in all its diversity.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 10 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation and 2 internal flights
- 23 meals—10 breakfasts, 8 lunches, and 5 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch)
- 19 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, ship-crew, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.

Immersion in Vietnam: Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City



ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Hanoi, Vietnam
2-4	Hanoi
5	Halong Bay
6-7	Fly to Hué
8-9	Hoi An
10-11	Fly to Dalat
12	Nha Trang

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Hanoi** before your main adventure from **\$100** per room, per night

WHAT TO EXPECT

①②③④⑤ Moderately Strenuous

Pacing: 5 locations in 12 days with one 1-night stay aboard a traditional boat on Halong Bay

Physical Requirements: Travel over some bumpy unpaved roads, walk along city streets and ancient ruins, and visit monuments, often with uneven paths and walkways with no handrails

Flight Time: Travel time will be 25-30 hours and will most likely have two connections

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/svl

VIETNAM: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: Meet with a nun in Hué for an insightful conversation about why she chose this path in life. Plus, spend **A Day in the Life** of Tho Ha Village, where you'll meet with the village chief and other residents to learn about rice paper production.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Throughout your adventure, you'll meet with locals to discuss **Controversial Topics** such as land reform. Plus, visit Phuoc Phuc Women's Shelter, supported in part by **Grand Circle Foundation**, to learn how this organization helps young mothers and their children.

Immersion in Vietnam: Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Activity Note: Due to different air carriers and varied flight schedules, some travelers will fly from their home city to the domestic gateway city later today. Not all travelers will depart for a gateway city on Day 1. If you are already located in a gateway city, you will likely depart directly from that city on Day 2.

Morning/Afternoon: Depart today for Hanoi, Vietnam.

Day 2 Arrive in Hanoi, Vietnam

- Destination: Hanoi
- Accommodations: May De Ville Corner Hotel or similar

Evening: Arrive in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital and second-largest city. Transfer to your hotel, where you'll meet your fellow travelers, including those who chose to arrive early in Hanoi before the main adventure.

Day 3 Hanoi city tour with cyclo-rickshaw ride • Water puppet demonstration at local puppet master's home

- Destination: Hanoi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: May De Ville Corner Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After a short briefing with our Trip Experience Leader at the hotel, we'll begin a city tour of Hanoi, a pulsing city of about seven million people. From 1883 to 1945, Hanoi was the heart of French Indochina, and the French influence is still clearly visible today. Our tour features a cyclo-rickshaw (or *xich-lo*) ride through the streets of Hanoi's historic Old Quarter, a dense collection of markets, cafés, and restaurants lining the bustling, narrow streets. We'll stop to visit Hoa Lo, the notorious prison referred to by American POWs confined here during the Vietnam War as the "Hanoi Hilton."

We'll also stop at Truc Bach Lake to see the John McCain Memorial. After being shot down in 1967, the U.S. Navy pilot was forced to parachute into the lake before being held as a POW in Hoa Lo for five years. .

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Hanoi's Old Quarter.

Afternoon: You'll have a couple of hours to relax back at the hotel or continue exploring the Old Quarter independently.

Later, we'll head to the home of a local water puppet master. After watching traditional water puppets in action during a private show, we'll enjoy a hands-on demonstration on how to manipulate the puppets to make them move—an O.A.T.-exclusive experience. Then, we'll learn how these intricate puppets are made. In Vietnam, the art form of water

puppetry continues to thrive at least 1,000 years after it originated with peasants in the Red River Delta of the north. Puppets are suspended over water and directed by puppet masters who must sit, semi-submerged, for hours at a time. The French used to call these puppets “the souls of the Vietnamese rice fields”—made of lacquered, water-resistant fig wood, they depict villagers, farm animals, dragons, and more.

Following our visit, we’ll head right to dinner.

Dinner: Enjoy a Welcome Dinner this evening at a local restaurant.

Evening: We return to the hotel and the rest of the evening is on your own. Settle in with a drink at the bar, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations for entertainment or exploration.

Day 4 Hanoi • *A Day in the Life* of Tho Ha Village • Optional Hanoi street food adventure

- Destination: Hanoi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: May De Ville Corner Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We’ll begin our *A Day in the Life* discoveries of Tho Ha Village, where we’ll see what daily life is like in rural Vietnam. We’ll set off on a journey north, stopping along the way at a local market for ingredients we’ll enjoy at lunchtime.

We’ll then head to a nearby ferry station, where we’ll board a ferry and ride across the Nhu Nguyet River to reach our destination: Tho Ha. This quaint village showcases traditional architecture, winding streets, terracotta buildings, and an ancient community hall. Boasting a population of about 3,000 people,

the main industry here is rice production, a business we’ll learn about in greater detail this morning.

Upon arrival, we’ll take a walk through the village, navigating small alleys and witnessing scenes of daily life as we explore. We’ll also make a brief stop to learn how to make *banh da*, a sesame rice cracker.

Then, we’ll be welcomed into the home of a village chief. A Vietnam War veteran, the chief fought with the Viet Cong along the Ho Chi Minh trail. After the war, he came back to Tho Ha, where he met his wife and started a family. Currently, he serves as the village chief, as well as the leader of a traditional music club.

After introductions, we’ll be joined by the chief’s wife and several local women who will guide us in making rice paper, an industry which supports most of the village. We’ll combine white rice flour, tapioca flour, salt, and water to conjure this staple ingredient commonly found in dishes like spring rolls, which we’ll also be making with our hosts.

Next, we’ll take a break in the kitchen and sit down to get to know our hosts and discuss various topics. We may be curious to learn how things have changed since the dissolution of the Indochinese Federation in 1954, or perhaps we’ll ask the chief about his experience fighting in the war. Take this opportunity to glean further insight into the daily lives of our hosts, and if you’d like, you can also use this time to share a little bit about yourself and what brought you to Vietnam.

Lunch: We’ll share a meal with the chief, his wife, and fellow villagers in his home that includes the fruits of our labor, as well as other traditional dishes.

Afternoon: We’ll make the return ferry ride and drive to the hotel. Upon arrival, you’ll have the remainder of the day to explore independently.

Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide you with recommendations. Perhaps you'll seek out a café in the Old Quarter, or discover the Temple of Literature, built in 1070 and home to Vietnam's first national university. Or, maybe you'd be interested with a visit to the Vietnamese Women's Museum to discover the many contributions women have made in Vietnam throughout the country's history.

Later this afternoon, you may choose to join an optional street food adventure through the backstreets of Hanoi to discover the city's cuisine. We'll explore aboard a unique form of transportation as we ride a UAZ (a Russian military vehicle similar to a jeep) through the narrow lanes of Hanoi's backstreets, viewing scenes of life in city neighborhoods that tourists rarely visit. We'll stop at a local market to see the wares on display, and witness locals carry out their daily routines, followed by a visit to Hanoi's "Train Street", where shops and homes closely flank a narrow (and active) train track. We'll pause for refreshment, enjoying a drink as we observe the frantic rhythm of this neighborhood, where shoppers and diners sit a stone's throw away from passing locomotives.

Dinner: Travelers on the optional tour will dine on a sampling of street food specialties, such as various noodle dishes, local beer, and unique beverages like *cà phê trứng*—Vietnamese dessert coffee topped with a foam of egg yolk and condensed milk. Otherwise, dinner is on your own—your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

Evening: Today's optional tour concludes with a night tour of the city's highlights, including the historic French Quarter, the Presidential Palace, the Temple of Literature, Truc Bach Lake, and more.

Day 5 Overland to Halong Bay • Embark on overnight cruise

- Destination: Halong Bay
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Traditional Vietnamese boat

Activity Note: Today, our transfer from Hanoi to Halong Bay will involve a 4-hour bus ride over roads that may be bumpy or uneven at times. We'll be spending the rest of the day—and the night—aboard a wooden sailboat, except for a visit into a cave, which features uneven surfaces.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll head east to Halong Bay, the "emerald bay of Vietnam" and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. With clear waters and mountains draped in velvety cloaks of vegetation, it's little wonder that the bay has served as inspiration for generations of Vietnamese poets. Along the way, we'll stop at a war cemetery and speak with some NVA (North Vietnamese Army) veterans and learn about their experiences and the life of North Vietnamese fighters during and after the war.

Upon our arrival in Halong Bay, we'll embark a traditional wooden sailboat. Thanks to our small group size, this boat will serve not only as our vessel for the afternoon, but also our accommodations for the night.

Lunch: Onboard the boat.

Afternoon: While relaxing on our boat's sun deck, we are free to marvel at daily life on Halong Bay—whose name translates to "the bay of the descending dragon." Resting peacefully across the Gulf of Tonkin near the Chinese border, the bay is dotted with more than 1,600 mountain islands, whose jagged profiles seem to rise out of nowhere. Against the backdrop of

innumerable caves, beaches, soaring cliffs, and grottoes, the Vietnamese go about their daily lives: Harvesting and fishing, they reap the riches of the land and sea. Vietnamese fishermen nimbly navigate in lacquered and woven-wood *coracles*, lozenge-shaped and rudderless vessels that resemble oversized tubs. Flat-bottomed and oar-propelled fishing boats, or *sampans*, abound as well—many occupied by entire families.

Later this afternoon, we'll stop to explore Sung Sot Cave, whose stone formations seem to drip like candlewax from the ceiling or down the walls.

Following our discoveries, you may want to come and watch a demonstration of garnishing techniques by our onboard chef.

Dinner: Onboard the boat.

Evening: On your own aboard our boat. You're free to rest up before tomorrow's discoveries, enjoy a book in the boat's common spaces, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for even more insights into the history of life on the bay.

Day 6 Halong Bay cruising • Fly to Hué

- Destination: Hué
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Cherish Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today will be a long travel day. Our transfer from Halong Bay to the airport in Hanoi will involve a bus ride of about 3.5 hours. The day also includes a flight of a little more than an hour.

Early Morning: For early risers interested in a healthy start to the day, join a session of *tai chi* on the sundeck, led by a certified instructor. *Tai chi* is a Chinese martial art practiced for self-defense, health benefits, and meditation.

Breakfast: Onboard the boat.

Morning: This morning, we can spend our last few hours here soaking up the scenery of Halong Bay while our boat cruises back to port. After disembarking the boat, we'll begin our transfer to Hanoi Airport.

Lunch: On your own. Our Trip Experience Leader will accompany us to a spot where you can grab snacks before we head to the airport, or you may wish to enjoy lunch at the airport after going through security.

Afternoon: Our flight south to Hué departs this afternoon. Upon landing, we'll transfer to our hotel.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: On your own, with the freedom to kick off your discoveries before tomorrow's city tour.

Day 7 Explore Hué • Perfume River boat cruise • Meditation lunch with local nuns • Grand Circle Foundation visit: Minh Tu or Hope Orphanage

- Destination: Hué
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Cherish Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll depart to explore Hué. The former imperial capital, Hué was built by the first king of the Nguyen Dynasty during a time recognized as the golden age of Vietnam. For centuries, the city has been a main cultural, religious, and educational center—and that reputation continues with the many students who live here today.

The older section of the city is a moated, walled citadel surrounded by eleven stone gates. Nguyen empires ruled from the citadel until 1945, although in a mostly symbolic

form after the French established Indochina in the 19th century. As we tour the citadel—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—we’ll find the Imperial Enclosure and see its inner Forbidden Purple City, a once-private area reserved for the emperor. During our explorations, we’ll also learn about surprise attacks that were carried out here by the Viet Cong during the Tet Offensive. After visiting the citadel, we’ll drive to Thien Mu Pagoda and discover its history that dates back to the 17th century and the symbolism of its seven stories.

After that, we’ll drive to the nearby pier and enjoy a 30-minute boat cruise along the Perfume River, the picturesque waterway that flows through the heart of the city. Afterwards, we’ll take another short drive to a Buddhist nunnery, where we’ll enjoy our lunch.

Lunch: At the Buddhist pagoda, featuring simple vegetarian fare enjoyed by the local monks and nuns. This meal will not only introduce us to the dishes that the nuns are accustomed to, but also the manner in which the nuns dine—quietly, as this is a meditation lunch.

Afternoon: After lunch, we’ll enjoy an insightful conversation with one of the nuns that lives here. She’ll tell us about why she decided to become a nun, how she is able to financially support herself, and what her family thinks of her decision. Afterward, we have the opportunity to ask our host any questions we may have.

Following some free time to explore on your own, we’ll regroup to visit either the Minh Tu Orphanage (described below) or the Hope Orphanage, each supported in part by **Grand Circle Foundation**.

Grand Circle Foundation

Minh Tu Orphanage

Total donated: **\$376,374**

Partner since: **2002**

Minh Tu Orphanage is run by 23 staff members and serves as the home for 167 orphan children whose ages range from just a few months to 17 years old. Their mission is to assist children in securing an education, as well as to provide a safe, healthy living environment.

During our visit, we’ll witness the safe space here at Minh Tu and learn about the kinds of educational resources available to the young residents. We’ll also interact with some of the children and have the opportunity to see the improvements the Foundation has made to the orphanage, including renovating the dining hall and providing computers.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening: You’re free to retire to your room, chat with your fellow travelers in the hotel’s common spaces, or to ask your Trip Experience Leader where to find *me xung*, Hué’s beloved sesame candy.

Day 8 Overland to Hoi An

- Destination: Hoi An
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hoi An Central Boutique Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today’s transfer to Hoi An includes a total of about three hours traveling by bus along roads that may be bumpy and uneven at times—including a winding mountain pass.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, we’ll check out of our hotel in Hué and travel overland to the coastal village of Hoi An. Along the way, we’ll make a

brief stop at Lang Co Beach, followed by a visit to My Khe Beach, which is better known to Americans as China Beach. This is the setting for the eponymous TV show about a U.S. army base in Vietnam, and now a peaceful 18 miles of white sand and waves. After our visit, we'll continue our drive to Hoi An, arriving in time for lunch.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Hoi An.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll check in to our hotel in Hoi An, and you'll have a few hours to relax or begin exploring independently.

Dinner: At a local restaurant, where we'll participate in a hands-on cooking lesson before sitting down to enjoy the fruits of our labor.

Evening: You're free to explore Hoi An as you'd like, and your Trip Experience Leader will be ready with recommendations to help you make the most of your time here.

Day 9 Explore Hoi An • Countryside Cruise & Street Food Experience optional tour

- Destination: Hoi An
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hoi An Central Boutique Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Drive to Hoi An's Old Town where we'll embark on a walking tour. A well-known feature in this port town is its Japanese covered bridge, complete with its own temple and statuary. We'll amble through Hoi An's historic streets and observe the city's mossy houses, including the Phuc Kien Congressional House. Most of Hoi An's historic houses have been maintained in their traditional design, with brick exteriors and wooden interiors. And after many centuries of maritime trade, the town boasts a multicultural air: Traders from Persia,

Arabia, China, Japan, and India, as well as the first Christian missionaries to reach Vietnam, have all left their marks.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: You can enjoy the afternoon on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations on what to do and where to go during this free time.

Or, if you'd prefer, you can choose to join an optional tour that gives us the chance to view the area by land and water. We'll drive to the village of Cam Thanh—where we'll witness rural life, meet local families, and visit their farms—before continuing on to a nearby boat station for a cruise along the Thu Bon River. Apart from the stunning views, this optional tour also provides the opportunity to sample traditional street food as we explore a central market frequented by locals, followed by dinner.

Dinner: For those who did not join the optional tour, tonight's dinner is on your own. Perhaps you'll dine with fellow travelers in the hotel, or venture out for a meal at a local restaurant. Dinner will be at a local restaurant for those on the optional tour.

Evening: On your own, with freedom to discover more of the city as you'd like. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations.

Day 10 Fly to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

- Destination: Ho Chi Minh City
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Central Palace Hotel or similar

Activity Note: We'll rise around 5am today so we have plenty of time to grab breakfast and finish packing before we transfer to the airport.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll head to the airport, and depart for our flight to the southernmost point of our adventure: Ho Chi Minh City. Upon landing, we'll dive into our explorations with an included city tour.

Formerly known as Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City is now a modern seaport and Vietnam's largest city. During our tour, we'll see the city's long and complex history on full display: Centuries' old Buddhist temples and buildings built by French colonists. Continuing on, we'll see the Catholic Cathedral of Notre Dame, completed in 1880 and said to stand on the site of an old pagoda. We'll then witness the majestic Post Office—also built in the late 19th century, it features a pair of enormous murals with maps of Vietnam as it was years ago. We will also drive by the former U.S. Embassy, an iconic Vietnam War site.

Lunch: At a local noodle soup restaurant. Rich and flavorful, *pho* (noodle soup) is Vietnam's national dish, having originated in the north and spread across the nation. It's considered a homey comfort food here, and locals note that different regions add their own nuances to the dish.

Afternoon: We'll drive to the hotel and check in. You'll have some time to explore on your own this afternoon—perhaps you'll venture out to the nearby Ben Thanh market. You may also visit the War Remnant Museum. The North Vietnamese captured this city on April 30, 1975, and as you explore the artillery and armor collection, you'll gain more northern insights into the "American War."

Later, we'll regroup for an orientation walk around the neighborhood.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend some local dining options.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the evening as you wish. You may choose to enjoy a beverage at the hotel's bar, retire to your room, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on exploring Ho Chi Minh City independently.

Day 11 Explore the Cu Chi Tunnels • Discussion about postwar life for Viet Cong veterans

- Destination: Ho Chi Minh City
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Central Palace Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart for the village of Cu Chi—the namesake for a vast network of tunnels that stretch for more than 160 miles. During the Vietnam War, these tunnels allowed the Viet Cong to control a large area near the former Saigon. But they were so much more than a means of transport: Soldiers and local civilians alike took to the tunnels as aerial bombing raged overhead, and there they lived, with homes, kitchens, medical facilities, and more.

Upon arrival, we'll begin our guided tour of the tunnels. As we explore the rough-hewn passageways and see the community spaces, we'll gain invaluable insight into the war. Plus, thanks to our small group size, we'll benefit from a unique glimpse of the site, as we explore an area of the tunnels most American tourists don't typically visit.

Lunch: We'll share a meal with a local family in their home, providing an opportunity to discuss our experience this morning.

Afternoon: After we eat, we'll delve deeper into what life is like for former Viet Cong fighters during a conversation that will examine the

Vietnam War—or “American War,” as it’s referred to in Vietnam—and whether or not veterans are satisfied with the outcome.

Later, we’ll return to Ho Chi Minh City. You’re free to explore on your own, or continue exploring.

Dinner: We’ll enjoy a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own—with freedom for you to enjoy your final night in Ho Chi Minh City as you’d like.

Day 12 Return to the U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: A boxed breakfast will be provided.

Early Morning: Depart for the airport to catch your return flight to the U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.

Hanoi Street Food Adventure

(Day 4 \$75 per person)

Join us on an excursion through the backstreets of Hanoi to discover the city’s cuisine. We’ll explore aboard a unique form of transportation as we ride a UAZ (a Russian military vehicle similar to a jeep) through the narrow lanes of Hanoi’s backstreets, viewing scenes of life in city neighborhoods that tourists rarely visit.

We’ll stop at a local market to see the wares on display, and witness locals carry out their daily routines, followed by a visit to Hanoi’s “Train Street”, where shops and homes closely flank a narrow (and active) train track. We’ll pause for refreshment, enjoying a drink as we observe

the frantic rhythm of this neighborhood, where shoppers and diners sit a stone’s throw away from passing locomotives.

Throughout our optional tour, we’ll dine on a sampling of street food specialties, such as delectable noodle dishes, fresh local beer, and unique concoctions like *cà phê trứng*—Vietnamese dessert coffee topped with a foam of egg yolk and condensed milk.

After dinner, enjoy a night tour of the city’s highlights, including the historic French Quarter, the Presidential Palace, the Temple of Literature, Truc Bach Lake, and more.

Countryside Cruise & Street Food Experience

(Day 9 \$65 per person)

We'll travel by electric car to Cam Thanh village, visit local family farms, and witness Hoi An's historic cityscape from a different vantage point during a cruise along the lovely

Thu Bon River. We'll also sample a slice of daily life at the central market, where we'll experience various street food delicacies. Later, we'll round out our discoveries with dinner at a nearby restaurant, the glowing lights of Hoi An reflected on the nearby river.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.

Visas Required

We’ll be sending you a detailed Visa Packet with instructions, application forms, and fees about 90 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This information is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Vietnam: Visa required. Can only be obtained in advance.** You must obtain your visa for Vietnam before you leave home; it cannot be obtained on arrival.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

PACING

- 5 locations in 12 days with one 1-night stay aboard a traditional boat on Halong Bay
- International flights from Los Angeles to Hanoi depart around midnight, crossing the International Date Line, and 2 internal flights, which require early wake-up
- Airport transfers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City take approximately 1 hour

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 2–3 miles unassisted and participate in 4–6 hours of physical activities each day
- Agility and balance are required for embarking riverboat, and wooden “drawing boats”
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group’s experience

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 80–90°F
- April–June are the hottest months, with high levels of humidity and heavy rains likely

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Travel over some bumpy unpaved roads, walk along city streets and ancient ruins, and visit monuments, often with uneven paths and walkways with no handrails
- Travel by 35-passenger coach, riverboat, and wooden “drawing boats”
- 2 internal flights, each about 1 hour

FLIGHT INFORMATION

- Travel time will be 25–30 hours and will most likely have two connections

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- All accommodations feature private baths and Western-style toilet facilities

- Asian squat-style toilets must be used in some locations without other facilities

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **www.cdc.gov/travel** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Prescription pain medication in the unlikely event of an injury in a remote location

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to "Find International Travel Information", select "Country Information", then enter the country into the search bar; if you don't see any medications specifically mentioned under the "Health" section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.

- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water on this adventure is not safe to drink, so we recommend you use only bottled water for drinking and brushing your teeth.
- Avoid drinks with ice or salads/fruits unless you first confirm that the ice is made with safe water or the salad/fruit has been washed in safe water. (Fruit you peel yourself should be fine.)
- Hot drinks made with water are safe if they have been boiled.
- Bottled water is readily available for purchase; just be sure to check that the cap is sealed properly before buying.

Food

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals. Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest restaurants for meals you take on your own.
- When dining on your own, keep in mind that meats sold by street vendors may not have had proper refrigeration.
- Be cautious with non-pasteurized milk products—they may or may not upset your stomach.

Electricity Supply

A constant electricity supply cannot be guaranteed during overnight stays. Travelers dependent on electricity supply for health reasons (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) may want to consider a different O.A.T. adventure.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as U.S. dollars, local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card. Traveler's checks are not accepted in the countries you will be visiting.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and are rarely accepted in shops and restaurants.
- **U.S. dollars should be in excellent condition.** Torn, worn, dirty, or taped U.S. bills may not be accepted.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Vietnam: Vietnamese dong (₫)

How to Exchange Money

You can change money when you arrive at banks, most hotels, and money exchange offices. In some countries you do not even need to exchange money at all—you can use U.S. dollars. For information on what type of currency can be used on this trip, see the “Currency” section.

You can also obtain local currency from an ATM. Using a local ATM on an international network will allow you to withdraw money from your U.S. account in local currency; your bank at home will calculate the conversion rate and charge you in U.S. dollars.

Throughout the trip, your Trip Experience Leader can advise you of ATM availability and warn you before you enter areas where there are no ATMs, but will not be able to guarantee which ATM will take your card.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

Vietnam: ATMs are fairly common in Vietnam. Occasionally travelers report having to try more than one bank to find an ATM that works with their U.S.-based card.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Vietnam: Credit cards are commonly accepted. However, some businesses in Vietnam do not accept them, so you should carry some cash on you.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$8–\$12 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1–2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** If the service is excellent you may leave about 10% of the bill in appreciation. Your Trip Experience Leader will handle any tips, if appropriate, for included meals.

- **Taxi drivers:** If you are taking a taxi by yourself, keep in mind that tipping is not common practice, but many people simply let the driver keep the change by rounding up the fare to the next whole number.
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides, drivers, ship crew, and luggage porters on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

Please note: For your convenience, tips to O.A.T. staff can be paid in U.S. dollars or local currency. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: www.rome2rio.com

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype, FaceTime, or WhatsApp. We recommend you use WhatsApp to communicate with home while abroad and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet

Most hotels in Vietnam have Internet services available, some for free, some for an hourly charge. Most hotels will provide WiFi service in a common area, like the lobby or reception, or in the rooms. However, the WiFi connections in Vietnamese hotels can vary in quality from “good” to “not stable”. One place that Internet access is not available is on board the junk during the cruise of Halong Bay.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Vietnam: +84

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Checked bag is limited to 44 lbs total . Carry-on is limited to 15 lbs total .
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+ width + depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Please do not bring a hard-sided (clamshell) suitcase.

REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS
<p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p> <p>Reminder to bring a small additional bag: All travelers should bring a small bag for the one-night stay on the <i>junk</i> in Halong Bay because there is no space for your suitcase on board. A waterproof bag is preferable, as is a bag that locks. Some previous travelers have suggested re-purposing your carry-on for this overnight cruise as a way to keep your luggage light.</p> <p>Lastly, keep your luggage light as you may need to carry to the plane on some internal flights if you are boarding from the tarmac.</p>

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** One duffel bag or suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **A Small Additional Bag:** All travelers should bring a small bag for the one-night stay on the junk in Halong Bay because there is no space for your suitcase on board. A waterproof bag is preferable, as is a bag that locks. Some previous travelers have suggested re-purposing your carry-on for this overnight cruise as a way to keep your luggage light.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

Consider the heat and humidity when picking clothing for this trip. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet and walking a lot, sometimes over rough and slippery surfaces, so choose your footwear carefully. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction. You can find especially supportive shoes designed for walking. Light hiking boots might be useful for the ankle support, but they are optional. Other travelers suggested sports sandals as a way to combine comfort and function.
- **Winter Season (December–March):** If you are traveling during these months, a couple pieces of warm clothing are recommended, as nighttime lows drop into the 50s in Hanoi. Long underwear, sweatshirts, and long-sleeve shirts are highly recommended. Some restaurants, hotels and shops that you visit during your tour may not have heating, so warm clothing and/or clothing you can layer is a must.
- **Walking sticks:** Many past travelers have recommended bringing a folding walking stick, sold in most camping stores. An alternative is a folding ski pole. This is very useful when exploring ruins and trails that have no handrails.
- **Consider bringing less clothing** and paying for laundry along the way. Laundry services are readily available and less expensive than the U.S. However, most hotels do not have irons or ironing boards in the room.

Style Hints and Dress Codes

- **Dress on our trip is functional and casual.** The most formal you might need for a city evening would be a sport jacket with no tie for men, a dress and dressy sandals for women—but this is not necessary on this trip—the decision is yours.
- **Wearing shorts and sleeveless shirts are acceptable in most places, except at some religious sites.** Specifically, shorts, knee-baring skirts, sleeveless shirts, and tank tops, are often forbidden in temples, so we suggest that you stick to trousers or a long skirt for temple visits. If you forget and wear shorts on a day that includes a temple visit, all is not lost—temples will generally loan cover-ups to visitors who are perceived as “too bare”—but you must cover up to go inside.
- **It is common practice to remove your shoes inside the temple,** so consider a pair that you can get on/off easily and perhaps a couple extra pairs of socks. (Use these to replace the ones that will get extra dirty in the temples. Or you could designate a couple pairs as your “temple socks” and wear them more than once.)

Recommended Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. Each travelers packing list may be different depending on the climate you are used to. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don’t forget a reusable water bottle—you’ll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

Reminder: Laundry services are readily available on this trip, so you can pack light by bringing less clothing and having laundry done part-way through.

- ☐ **Shirts:** A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts. Sleeveless shirts are OK in most situations, but not at temples or religious sites (including some of the Angkor temples on the post-trip extension in Cambodia).
- ☐ **Trousers and/or jeans**
- ☐ **Walking shorts:** A longer cut shows the more sensitivity to the local culture, which tends to be modest. Shorts are viewed as inappropriate for visiting a temple, so we suggest you stick to trousers or a long skirt (below the knee or longer) for temple visits. In a pinch you could wear one of the temple’s cover-ups.

- ☐ Shoes and socks: Shoes should be comfortable walking/ running shoes or low-cut hiking shoes, with arch support. A pair of sport sandals with secure ankle strap (such as Tevas) are recommended; flip-flops are not. Because it is common to remove your shoes inside the temples and local homes, bring at least one pair of shoes that you can get on/off easily. You might want a couple extra pairs of socks.
- ☐ Light cotton or wool sweater: Because motor coach air conditioning can be cold.
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat
- ☐ Underwear and sleepwear
- ☐ Swimsuit

Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

For winter (December–March):

- ☐ A couple pieces of warm clothing are recommended for the main trip, as nighttime lows drop into the 50s in Hanoi.
- ☐ Long underwear, sweatshirts, and long-sleeve shirts are highly recommended.
- ☐ If you are taking the extension in Northern Vietnam during these months, then warm clothing and/or clothing you can layer is a must—the nighttime lows can be in the 40s and the daytime high might only be in the 50s. This is especially true since some restaurants, hotels and shops that you visit during your tour may not have heating.

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses
- ☐ Sunglasses, 100% UV block
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 30 or stronger
- ☐ Insect repellent with DEET (30–35% strength)
- ☐ Hand-wash laundry soap and possibly plastic clothespins

- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Packets of pocket-size tissues or small roll of toilet paper
- ☐ Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- ☐ Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Flashlight or headlamp, extra batteries/bulb
- ☐ Electrical converter & plug adapters
- ☐ Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger
- ☐ Optional: Washcloth, and small thin towel. Hotels will provide towels, but not washcloths. Having your own small towel can be useful on extremely hot/humid days.

Medicines

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- ☐ An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- ☐ Optional: A strong prescription pain medication for rare emergency purposes
- ☐ Optional: Motion sickness medicine if you are susceptible
- ☐ Optional: Anti-malarial medication for the Cambodia extension ONLY. At the time of writing, the CDC reported that the risk of malaria was low in Vietnam, but moderate in Cambodia. Anti-malarial medications can have strong side effects so be sure to discuss with your doctor.

Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to

consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

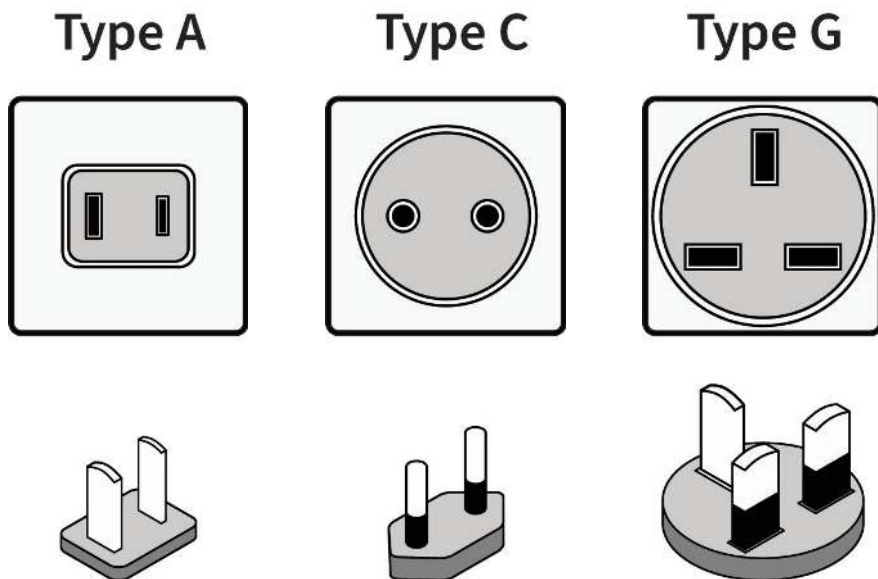
Electricity in Vietnam is 220–230 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because there are many different types of plugs in this region, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Vietnam: A (same as the U.S.), C, or G



Availability

A constant electricity supply cannot be guaranteed during overnight stays. In some places, the electricity may be supplied by a generator, and lighting may not be as bright as you are used to. Travelers dependent on electricity supply (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) should consider a different adventure or ensure their apparatus has back-up battery power.

CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Northern Vietnam: The climate in this region is cooler than the rest of the country. Summertime highs are usually in the 70s, although it can get hotter. But it's winter that surprises most travelers. From December–March the low temperatures can be in the 40s and the daytime high might only be in the 50s. So if you're traveling during these months, be sure to bring some warm clothing and/or clothing you can layer.

Vietnam: Vietnam lies entirely within the tropics. It has wet and dry seasons, which vary from north to south and with elevation changes. In the south, temperatures are fairly constant throughout the year, ranging between 75° and 85° F. The dry season runs from November to April and the wet season from May to October. The hottest period is during April to August, before the rains have broken. In the north, there's also a short “winter” season, which runs from December to February. At this time, temperatures can drop to the 50s, with some drizzle. Typhoons are quite common in coastal areas between September and January.

NOTE: To prepare for weather differences and pack appropriate clothing, we recommend the following world weather sites:

- www.intellicast.com
- www.weather.com
- www.wunderground.com

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	HANOI, VIETNAM			HUE, VIETNAM		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	66 to 59	85	0.8	74 to 63	87	7.1
FEB	66 to 59	85	1.1	76 to 65	87	3.7
MAR	73 to 64	90	1.8	81 to 68	84	2.6
APR	79 to 70	90	3.6	87 to 72	79	2.4
MAY	88 to 75	85	7.2	92 to 75	74	3.3
JUN	90 to 77	85	9.0	94 to 77	69	3.8
JUL	90 to 79	85	10.1	94 to 77	67	2.0
AUG	90 to 79	90	11.7	94 to 76	70	5.4
SEP	88 to 77	85	9.9	88 to 74	79	19.8
OCT	82 to 72	80	5.8	83 to 72	84	27.1
NOV	75 to 66	80	1.8	79 to 69	84	25.5
DEC	70 to 59	80	0.5	75 to 65	86	14.8

MONTH	HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	88 to 72	87 to 51	0.6
FEB	90 to 73	85 to 50	0.1
MAR	92 to 76	83 to 52	0.4
APR	93 to 79	83 to 56	2.0
MAY	92 to 79	86 to 65	8.4
JUN	89 to 77	89 to 71	12.2
JUL	89 to 77	90 to 70	11.6
AUG	88 to 77	91 to 71	10.7
SEP	88 to 76	92 to 72	13.5
OCT	87 to 76	92 to 73	10.3
NOV	87 to 74	90 to 65	4.7
DEC	87 to 72	87 to 58	1.8

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

The Culture of Vietnam

Vietnamese culture has been shaped by a variety of outside influences, including China, which colonized the region for a thousand years; and a period of French colonization that began in the 19th century. Chinese Influences are reflected in Vietnamese values like Confucianism teachings while French influences show up in the cuisine and architecture. Vietnam was also exposed to Western cultural Influences, of course, during America's Involvement In the war.

There are 54 different ethnic groups and almost as many different languages among the 100 million or so people living in the long, slender country of Vietnam. There are also 11 recognized religions In Vietnam, with most of them rooted In Buddhism. But rather than being strict adherents of one religion, most Vietnamese practice what amounts to a harmonic fusion of animistic beliefs with the teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and even Christianity. Family is the glue that holds It all together. If there Is any guiding principle of Vietnamese society, it would be a respect of age and status. It's why the oldest member of a family or any group is greeted first or served first at a meal. And the wisdom of elders is always sought in important family or community matters. Ancestor worship, respect for elders, and strong family values are long-held traditions In Vietnamese society. While the trend is beginning to change, It Is still not unusual for three or even four generations of the same family to be living together.

Along with a respect for elders, many Vietnamese customs and etiquettes are informed by the teachings of Confucianism, which places a strong emphasis on traits like duty, honor, loyalty and sincerity. So exhibiting selfish or aggressive behavior or taking any action that could potentially damage a person's dignity or reputation Is highly frowned upon. Like in some other Southeast Asian countries, things like dressing conservatively, removing shoes when entering homes and temples, bringing small gifts, or trying to finish all of your meal will always make a better Impression.

Animism is more significant among the indigenous communities in the highlands, especially in people whose lives revolve around agriculture, where yearly or even monthly rituals take place to request blessings from the gods. But even In Vietnam's major cities, small altars are placed outside homes, shops, and businesses to bring fortune. And before each spring, Vietnamese throughout the country head to pagodas and temples to pray for health, peace, and happiness.

Vietnamese people welcome visitors with a kindness and warmth that is genuine. And foreigners who transgress local cultural norms are easily forgiven. One area you may wish to exercise caution is bringing up the topic of the “American War” with a local, which is still a sensitive issue; and one area not to exercise caution is when you are crossing a busy street—it’s not for the timid. As a guest in any foreign country, showing respect for local traditions deepens our cultural understanding and enriches our travel experience.

Flights in Vietnam

Domestic air travel in Vietnam is frequently subject to flight delays and schedule changes on short notice. Your Trip Experience Leader will do everything possible to keep your trip running smoothly, but your own acceptance that some unpredictability is part of the adventure will help.

Our Vehicles

We use a variety of transportation, making our travel between destinations part of the fun. We cruise Halong Bay on a traditional wooden junk, and we cruise the Mekong Delta in a wooden sampan boat. When traveling overland from city to city, we’ll use a comfortable full-size coach. We take three fairly short flights within this trip, the longest taking two hours. Domestic air scheduling in Vietnam is not as reliable as in the U.S., and delays and routing changes are often part of the picture here. Our Trip Experience Leader will do everything possible to make the appropriate adjustments to our itinerary. We hope, that like most of our travelers, you take it in stride and develop an accepting and even lighthearted attitude. It’s part of the adventure.

Your International Flight: A Reminder

The “rule of thumb” is to check in for international flights about three hours before departure. But because many flights to Asia leave just after midnight or in the early morning hours (one and two a.m.), you could be checking in before midnight, which is technically the day before. For example: If the flight to Asia leaves at 12:05 a.m. on May 2nd, you would want to arrive for check-in at 9 p.m. on May 1st. You can confirm the date and time of your international flight by referring to your preliminary air itinerary.

Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

Vietnamese Cuisine

Vietnam cuisine was shaped by myriad influences including France, China, India and Thailand, all of which combined to make a truly unique food scene. One of the key building blocks of Vietnamese cuisine—and of Vietnamese culture in general—is rice. Many kinds of meat, most commonly pork and fish, are also heavily featured. Dishes are flavored with basil, parsley, coriander, chilies, lemon grass, lime, and laksa leaf, meaning they can range from mild to very spicy. Peanuts are a common topping. Some typical dishes are:

- **Pho:** Pronounced “fuh,” this iconic soup is typically made with rice noodles and thinly sliced beef in a bone broth
- **Banh mi:** Vietnam's version of the sub sandwich, with meat (usually pork) and veggies served on crusty French-style bread. They are popular all over the country, but many say the best ones are found in Ho Chi Minh City and Hoi An.
- **Bun bo hue:** Similar to pho, but with flat vermicelli-like noodles instead of cylindrical noodles.
- **Vietnamese coffee:** Vietnam is also the second-largest producer of coffee beans worldwide, with as many coffee shops as that suggests. Try the *ca phe nau* (also called *ca phe sua*) which is a strong dark brew cut with sweet condensed milk.
- **Nuoc mam:** Vietnam's national condiment is a fermented fish sauce that is served with every meal.

- **Snacks:** Rice cakes and spring rolls are typical snacks, as is fruit. The Vietnamese grow and consume a variety of tropical fruits, including coconuts, bananas, melons, pineapples, lychees, mandarin oranges, and exotic items such as the green dragon fruit and the three-seeded cherry. Remember to stick to fruit with a peel or rind and avoid fruit washed in local tap water.

To get the most enjoyment from your trip, be open-minded about sampling different dishes and even using chopsticks. While we will make every effort to accommodate dietary restrictions, please note that choices may be limited and that special requests are not guaranteed.

Etiquette

Don't let the fine points of local customs worry you; locals know that visitors can't be expected to know every detail. Much of what is considered polite in this region is similar to what's polite in the U.S. But as a matter of interest, here are a few "finer points" that might surprise you:

- Body posture is important. Sprawling, resting your feet on furniture or chairs, or pointing your feet at someone are seen as impolite.
- In temples you may notice locals sitting on the floor with their feet tucked under them or in a cross-legged position. This is to avoid pointing their feet at the Buddha, which is rude.
- A woman may speak to a Buddhist monk, and a man may speak with a Buddhist nun, but generally the correct thing is to let them approach you.
- You may see people greeting one another with a bow of the head, and in some countries this will be accompanied with hands pressed together as in prayer. Traditionally, the deeper the bow, the more respect one is showing, with the greatest respect being towards elders and clergy. For you, a gentle western-style handshake is an acceptable greeting, but if you wish to try the more traditional head bow, that's OK too.
- Avoid wearing clothing imprinted with a Buddha logo or image as this may offend some of the locals.

Language Barrier

You can have some great 'conversations' with local people who do not speak English, even if you don't speak a word of the local language. Indeed, this non-verbal communication can be a highly rewarding part of travel. To break the ice, bring along some family photographs, or a few postcards of your hometown. If you want to meet kids, bring a puppet or other interactive toy. Your Trip Experience Leader can help get the ball rolling.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Vietnam

Vietnam offers many fine craft items at good prices. Traditional souvenirs include silk, precious stones, hilltribe handicrafts, including elaborate jewelry, colorful textiles, and opium pipes, bronzeware cutlery, nielloware silver inlaid items, and lacquerware. Local products include hand-woven cottons, decorative items made of silver, teakwood carvings, and gems. The best bargains in gems are jade, rubies, and sapphires, but buy from reputable dealers only.

Merchants enjoy negotiating prices almost everywhere but if you make an offer you should be prepared to buy at that price. It is not unusual for the clerks in some stores in Vietnam to follow, assist, and advise you throughout the store—much as a personal shopper would do in the U.S. This is meant to be polite rather than pestering.

Note about antiquities: Think carefully before purchasing an expensive “antiquity.” It is illegal to remove antique furniture or ceramics from Vietnam. To complicate matters further, any item that looks old can only be exported with the written permission of the Antique Art Business Division of the government Fine Arts Department. Some stores will offer to arrange this for you, but this may be unreliable.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.

- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Vietnam

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 127,800 square miles
- **Capital:** Hanoi
- **Languages:** Vietnamese (official), English (increasingly favored as a second language), some French, Chinese, and Khmer; mountain area languages (Mon-Khmer and Malayo-Polynesian)
- **Ethnicities:** Kinh (Viet) 85.7%, Tay 1.9%, Thai 1.8%, Muong 1.5%, Khmer 1.5%, Mong 1.2%, Nung 1.1%, other 5.3%
- **Location:** Vietnam is bordered by the South China Sea (“the East Sea”), China, Laos, and Cambodia.
- **Geography:** It is about a thousand miles long and ranges in width from 30 miles in the central region to 400 miles in the north. There are five principle geographic areas. There are two mountainous areas, covered largely by forests or jungles: the Northern Highlands, located in the northwest, and the Annamite Range that extends from it down the western portion of the country towards Ho Chi Minh City. The two delta areas—the Red River Delta in the north and the Mekong Delta in the south—hold most of the country’s population and also provide the majority of the country’s farmland. The Coastal Lowlands, which lie between the delta areas, are also heavily populated.
- **Population:** 97,205,000 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Buddhist 9.3%, Catholic 6.7%, Hoa Hao 1.5%, Cao Dai 1.1%, Protestant 0.5%, Muslim 0.1%, none 80.8%. (Although Communists have discouraged the practice of religion, those who do practice are generally Buddhists.)
- **Time zone:** Vietnam is twelve hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 6pm in Hanoi.

National Holidays: Vietnam

In addition to the holidays listed below, Vietnam celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

February Tet Lunar New Year (moves each year; see note above)

April Hung Kings Commemoration Day (moves each year; see note above)

04/30 Reunification Day

05/01 Labor Day

09/02 Independence Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas Day

12/31 New Year's Eve

Vietnam: A Brief History

Vietnam's earliest known residents were hunters and farmers who migrated into the area from the north and south. In 111 B.C., armies of China's Han dynasty conquered the region of present-day Vietnam and would go on to rule the region for more than a thousand years. It was not until A.D. 939 when the Vietnamese were finally able to oust the Chinese to begin self-rule while renaming the country Dai Co Viet. Powerful family dynasties went on to rule Vietnam for the next 900 years. Power struggles among feuding families in the north and south persisted until 1802, when Nguyen Anh unified the country and named it Vietnam, giving himself the title Emperor Gia Long.

After stiff resistance, Vietnam would finally fall to French colonial rule in 1884. Now part of French Indochina, Vietnam remained under French domination until 1940, when Germany occupied France during World War II and Germany's ally Japan took control of Vietnam. After Japan's defeat, in September 1945, the communist Vietminh led by Ho Chi Minh gained control of many regions of the country. Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam an independent nation—the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. France re-asserted its claim on the region, and French forces regained control in the south. However, resistance from the Vietminh continued, and the Communists still controlled the north. By late 1946, the Indochina War was in full progress, continuing until 1954, when the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu. In 1954, delegates to an international conference in Geneva agreed to a temporary division of Vietnam into two separate countries—North and South Vietnam. In 1955, elections were held in South Vietnam, and Ngo Dinh Diem was chosen leader. By 1957, the Vietminh in the south, now called the Viet Cong, had begun an armed revolt against Diem's government, supported by North Vietnam. More countries were drawn in as the fighting continued, including the U.S., which became deeply embroiled in the conflict by the late 1960s. The U.S.S.R. and China supported North Vietnam. In South Vietnam, a series of coups eventually brought army general Nguyen Van Thieu to power; he was then elected president in 1967. In North Vietnam, the Communist Party Politburo took over following Ho Chi Minh's death in 1969. The war ended in 1975 with the withdrawal of American troops. In 1976, the country was unified under the Communists as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City.

More than three million Vietnamese had been killed in the decades of war, and the country's economy had been devastated. Many Vietnamese emigrated to the U.S. and other countries. In 1978, Vietnam severed its ties with China and aligned itself more closely with the Soviet Union. That same year, Vietnam drew China's wrath by invading Cambodia, an incursion that lasted into the 1980s. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the loss of its economic support, Vietnam began to liberalize its trade policies, allow private enterprise, and encourage foreign trade. From 1990 to 1997, Vietnam's economy grew rapidly. In 1994, the U.S. lifted its trade embargo, and in 1995, full diplomatic relations were restored.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

General Southeast Asia

A Traveller's History of Southeast Asia by J.M. Barwise and Nicholas J. White (2002, History) As compact history of a diverse region, this book packs a wealth of information into its well-written and well-organized pages. (And yes, the title has two "L"s; the series is British).

The River's Tale, A Year on the Mekong by Edward Gargan (2002, Travel Narrative) Describes in beautiful detail a year spend on the Mekong River during a 3,000-mile journey from its source in China through Tibet, Burma, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

What the Buddha Taught by Walpola Sri Rahula (1959, Religion) A useful overview of Buddhism as it is practiced in Southeast Asia by an internationally recognized authority who just happens to also be a Buddhist monk.

Vietnam

The Sympathizer by Viet Thanh Nguyen (2016, Fiction) The taut story of a double agent who secretly sympathizes with the Communist forces during the fall of the South Vietnamese government in 1975. A brilliant page-turner of a novel that won numerous awards including the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

Communion: A Culinary Journey Through Vietnam by Kim Fay (2012, Food). Part cookbook and part travelogue, this book follows Seattle native Kim Fay, who had lived in Vietnam for four years in the '90s, as she returns to Vietnam for a 5-week culinary safari from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City. Beautiful, bold photographs and stories about the chefs accompany authentic recipes.

Last Night I Dreamed of Peace: The Diary of Dang Thuy Tram by Dang Thuy Tram (2008, Diary) As a young doctor working for the North Vietnamese Army, Dang Thuy Tram kept a diary of her experiences between the years 1968 and 1970 until she was killed by American forces near where she worked. Found by an American soldier, the diary was returned to her family and published for the first time almost 30 years later.

When Heaven and Earth Changed Places: A Vietnamese Woman's Journey from War to Peace by Le Ly Hayslip (1989, Memoir) The true-life story of a Vietnamese girl forced into the war (on both sides), where she faced constant danger, near starvation, and torture. A riveting, emotional, and brutally honest look at what it takes to survive a war. The sequel, ***Child of War, Woman of Peace*** describes the author's life in America after the war's end.

The Quiet American by Graham Greene (1956, Literature) Quite possibly the most famous novel set in Vietnam, and a classic love triangle too. A knowing British war correspondent and a hopeful American are caught up in both revolutionary politics and whirlwind romance in 1950s Saigon. Unfortunately, they both fall for the same Vietnamese woman.

Suggested Films & Videos

Vietnam

Anthony Bordain: No Reservations—Vietnam (2009, Travel/Food) Three episodes of the popular series were filmed in Vietnam and offer rich insights about life in modern-day Vietnam and regional cuisine from bustling Saigon to the countryside of Da Lat. Also worth viewing is Bordain's **Parts Unknown: Hanoi** (2016) the classic episode featuring former U.S. President Barack Obama and Bordain sitting down together at a small restaurant in Hanoi enjoying beers and bun cha, a local specialty.

Good Morning Vietnam (1987, Comedy) While the irreverent humor of Armed Forces Radio Service host Adrian Cronauer (played by Robin Williams) amuses the troops stuck in 1965-era Vietnam, he clashes with the Army brass who try to censor his show.

Hearts and Minds (1974, Documentary) This landmark documentary offers an unflinching portrait of America's involvement in the Vietnam War using newsreel footage and interviews. Many consider it the most important film ever made about this period.

Apocalypse Now (1979, Drama) Francis Ford Coppola's surreal Vietnam War epic was inspired by Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and stars Martin Sheen as an Army captain on a secret mission to track down a renegade Special Services colonel played by Marlon Brando.

The Quiet American (1958, Classic) A love triangle between a British journalist, a young Vietnamese woman, and a U.S. official, based on the Graham Greene novel—although Greene would disavow the film for flipping the book's message. Instead of a cautionary tale about foreign intervention, the film's focus is anticommunist advocacy of American power (Audie Murphy, the film's star, reportedly said he wouldn't have done the movie if it stuck to Greene's anti-American message). The 2002 remake starring Michael Caine and Brendan Fraser sticks much closer to Greene's novel and received widespread acclaim. It suffered bad timing though—Its "unpatriotic" message did not go over well with audiences after 9/11.

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel

www.oattravel.com

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security

Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

History & Culture

en.wikipedia.org

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App, Skype, or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

TripWhistle

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



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Submitted by Joy and Don Janke,
8-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



Submitted by Julia Schneider,
5-time traveler from Pinellas Park, FL



Submitted by Martin Schwartzman,
30-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



Submitted by Paul Stark, 17-time traveler
from Edina, MN



Submitted by David Fong, 16-time traveler
from Foster City, CA



Submitted by Steven dos Remedios,
23-time traveler from Oakland, CA



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