



VIETNAM & ANGKOR WAT 16 DAY SAMPLE ITINERARY

With its ancient culture, beautiful scenery, Chinese and French influences, Vietnam is one of today's most exciting destinations in South East Asia. Extend your tour to include Cambodia to experience the iconic Angkor complex, one of the architectural wonders of the world.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: ARRIVE HANOI

Hanoi, Vietnam's capital, is a city of lakes, parks, trees and villas. You will be met on arrival and transferred to your hotel in old town Hanoi. Spend two nights here.

The rest of the day is at leisure to recover from long flights and begin to explore the city.

Day 2: HANOI

Suggested inclusions in your city tour today:

Visit the **Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum** to learn about the man who led Vietnam's campaign for independence from French colonial rule. After dedicating his life to the liberation of his country from foreign rule, albeit into Communism, Ho Chi Minh died in 1969 and his body was preserved for posterity. Wander the grounds to see the one pillar pagoda and the beautiful yellow presidential palace.

Visit the 11th century relic, the **Temple of Literature**, which was built in homage to Confucius.



Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, photo by Graham Vos

Visit the **Museum of Ethnology**, widely acknowledged as the best in the country, with an extensive display dedicated to Vietnam's 54 ethnic minority people.

Enjoy a **Water Puppet Show**, a traditional art still being performed today.

Take a thrilling **cyclo ride** through the Old Quarter's 36 streets, named for the products sold from their shops. This bicycle rickshaw will be pedalled by a local who knows how to negotiate the Hanoi traffic.

Overnight in Hanoi.

Day 3: HANOI – HALONG BAY

Early breakfast followed by a 4 hour scenic drive to the coastal town of Halong, for a 2 night cruise aboard a luxury junk in this spectacular UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Check in to the lounge at Tuan Chau pier and enjoy a cold drink before walking a short distance to board the boat. Once on board, there will be a short safety briefing followed by lunch. While eating, admire the stunning beauty of the bay as you pass by Soi Sim Beach and Coconut Tree Island.



Halong Bay , photo by Custom Touring

After lunch enjoy the spectacular close up views of Halong Bay by taking a rowing boat to Cua Van Floating Village. Spend time learning about life in the bay before cruising on to the overnight dock at Coconut Tree Island. Pass by a series of caves along the way.

Enjoy a cooking demonstration on the sundeck this evening to learn some of the secrets of Vietnamese cuisine. Also learn to toast in the Vietnamese way with the local rice wine.

At a memorable dinner this evening, you will have the option of wearing traditional Bao Dai dress, which will be provided. After dinner, relax and enjoy the rest of the evening by watching a movie, playing board games, going squid fishing, enjoying the on-board spa services or just relaxing.

Day 4: HALONG BAY

Wake up to the majestic beauty of Halong Bay and enjoy some morning exercise by practicing the ancient art of Tai Chi on the sundeck. Enjoy a delicious breakfast before disembarking onto the day boat to explore some of the gems in the bay.

- Climb to the top of Ti-Top Island to admire a panoramic view of the bay.
- Visit picturesque hidden caves
- Watch the sun set over Halong Bay while enjoying "happy hour" cocktails on the sundeck.



Cua Van Floating Village, photo by Judy Vos

Day 5: HALONG BAY – HOI AN

Enjoy another morning of Tai Chi on the sundeck, followed by delicious Vietnamese coffee and breakfast. As the boat winds its way through the islands, there will be time to pack and check out before arriving at Tuan Chau Island from where you transfer to Hanoi airport for a flight to Hoi An.

If time allows, stop on the way at a beautiful temple and also at Star Gems to buy some beautiful embroidered products, marble carvings, lacquer work and exclusive clothing.

On arrival at Danang airport, you will be met and transferred to your hotel in Hoi An, about a 15 minute ride. Spend three nights here.

Day 6: HOI AN PRIVATE TOUR

After breakfast, begin your tour of Hoi An, a former trading port that welcomed Chinese, Dutch, French, Japanese, Portuguese and Arab merchants during the 16th to the 18th centuries. Today Hoi An is famous for its restored architecture, homemade silk, custom tailoring and delicious noodles and seafood. Its relaxed vibe and attractive pedestrian streets invite exploration and discovery of new things.

Suggested inclusions:

Chua Ong Pagoda, dating back to 1653 and built in honour of the Chinese general Quan Cong, who is worshipped by many as a symbol of loyalty and justice.

Phuc Kien Assembly Hall to see the **Jinshang Temple** which is dedicated to the goddess of the sea and the protector of sailors.

A 200 year old **ancestral house**, Tan Ky

Stroll across the often photographed **17th century covered bridge** built by Japanese craftsmen. The beautifully built bridge doubles as a temple and is a major landmark of Hoi An.



Temple in Hoi An, photo by Judy Vos

End the afternoon with a boat trip along Thu Bon river, one of the prettiest waterways in Vietnam. Return to your hotel for overnight.

Day 7: HOI AN

Today is a free day in Hoi An, to explore this delightful town further on your own. Perhaps visit a tailor to have some custom garments made. This is accomplished in a day and the garments will be delivered to your hotel.

Day 8: HOI AN – HO CHI MINH CITY (SAIGON)

After breakfast transfer to the airport for your flight to Ho Chi Minh City, still known by the locals as Saigon. You will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel in central Saigon. Spend two nights here.

Suggested inclusions in a city tour this afternoon:

Visit the **War Remnants Museum** where you will see the story of the city's darkest and most tragic hours during the Vietnam War, known by the locals as "the American War." The museum contains displays of military aircraft, weaponry and many photographs - some quite disturbing in nature. Although many of Vietnam's people are now too young to remember the war, its legacy is still felt strongly across Vietnamese society.

Visit the **Reunification Palace**, once a symbol of the South Vietnamese Government, where on 30 April 1975 the war ended when a North Vietnamese Army tank crashed through its gates. See the war room, the banquet hall and the presidential office with the unusual gifts which have been received.

Visit the **Central Post Office**, a museum and still a functioning post office which was designed and constructed by the renowned architect Gustave Eiffel. Take a moment to send a postcard or buy some souvenirs of Saigon.

Visit the **Notre Dame Cathedral**, an iconic Saigon landmark built in neo-Romanesque style by the French between 1863 and 1880.

The **Saigon Opera House** which has an interesting history of having been both a bomb shelter and later the parliamentary Lower House.



Saigon Post Office, photo by Graham Vos

End your day with a speedboat trip along the city's ancient canals where life carries on unchanged. Overnight in Saigon.

Day 9: CAO DAI TEMPLE & CU CHI TUNNELS

Travel about 90 kilometres to the town of Tay Ninh to visit the home of the unique Cao Dai sect, a religion described by scholars as a hybrid of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Christianity. Patron saints include Joan of Arc, Victor Hugo and Winston Churchill to name a few! Built in 1941, the temple is a kaleidoscope of colour, with brightly painted walls, mosaic tiled pillars and religious icons throughout. Today about two million Vietnamese follow the religion, and smaller Cao Dai temples are scattered throughout the southern part of the country. If you are lucky, your visit may coincide with a service and you will hear the chanting and prayers of the congregants who kneel in reverence for up to two hours.

On to the Cu Chi Tunnels, which formed an underground city for Viet Cong soldiers during the Vietnam War. The tunnels stretched more than 250km from Saigon to the Cambodian border and were in some places three levels deep. Today they still contain the remains of an American tank and some craters made by American B52 bombers – a stark reminder of the war. You may want to crawl through a 20m long tunnel to experience how small they were.

In the late afternoon, head back to your hotel in Saigon.



Cao Dai Temple, photo by Custom Touring

Day 10: HO CHI MINH CITY – MEKONG DELTA

Leave Ho Chi Minh City behind and drive about 2 hours to the Mekong Delta town of Cai Be where you hop aboard a small boat and take a trip around the floating market and along narrow waterways, seeing how the locals live in the Delta.

Drive on to the city of Can Tho where you will check into your hotel for a two night stay.

Day 11: CAN THO

Make an early start to take a boat trip to the floating market of Can Tho. Experience the flurry of vendors trading their wares while boats, teeming with fruit, vegetables and household goods, ply the waters.

Return to your hotel for a leisurely breakfast. The rest of the day is at leisure to explore Can Tho.

Day 12: CAN THO - HO CHI MINH CITY

Return by road to Ho Chi Minh City for your last night in Vietnam.

Leisure time until a very special dinner experience this evening: **NOIR - DINING IN THE DARK** where you will step away from the busy city streets, close our eyes and embark on a sensory journey.

The experience begins in the pitch black dining room where blind or visually impaired staff members guide you to your table. Transfer your trust to these skilled guides as they lead you through this new way of sensing the environment around you. Being deprived of sight, your other senses come alive and the unique menus have been created to take full advantage of this. Textures and subtle flavours become more intense and identifying ingredients with your fellow diners is the best part of the night's entertainment. Discover the amazing truth that people tend to experience food with their eyes, rather than with their palates.



Mekong river traders, photo by Judy Vos

Day 13: HO CHI MINH CITY – SIEM REAP

After breakfast transfer to the airport for your flight to Siem Reap in Cambodia. You will be met and transferred to your hotel for a three night stay.

Your day ends with a sunset cruise along the moat of Angkor Thom where your gondola glides quietly along the water to the southwest corner of Angkor Thom and the small 12th century sandstone temple of Prasat Chrung, the *Shrine of the Angel*.

Day 14: ANGKOR THOM & ANGKOR WAT

Your programme over the next two days may vary, depending on the best time to visit the various sites in the great Angkor complex. Included visits:

Angkor Thom where statues of the gods of good and evil line the entrance.

Take a walk to the top of the temple for impressive views of the Angkor complex.

Explore the magnificent **Angkor Wat**, the world's largest religious monument. This visually spectacular temple is a massive three-tiered pyramid, rising 65 metres from the ground and crowned by five lotus towers. It is the national symbol of Cambodia and is proudly displayed on the country's flag.

Return to your hotel to rest during the midday heat.

This evening, enjoy the very best of Cambodian cuisine while being treated to an Apsara dance performance, displaying the brilliance and richness of this culture, in a spectacular setting. In Hindu and Buddhist mythology an Apsara is a female spirit of the clouds and waters, able to change her shape at will. The dancers are youthful and elegant, and superb performers in the art of dancing.



Angkor Wat, photo by Graham Vos

Day 15: BAYON & TA PROHM

Visit **Bayon**, known for the hundreds of smiling faces gracing the towers. The impressive bas reliefs tell stories of daily life and the great battles fought between the Khmers and ancient Thais. Further exploration will reveal rows of trunks forming the wall of the **Terrace of the Elephants** with its platform from which King Jayavarman surveyed his army. Close by is the Terrace of Leper Kings, which includes a statue depicting Yana, the Hindu god of death.

Then it's a short drive to one of the most loved temples of all - **Ta Prohm**, a small crumbling temple held together by giant tree roots, giving it a magical feel. There is much restoration work in progress here and you will be amazed at what has been accomplished to retain this treasure for posterity.



Ta Prohm, photo by Graham Vos

This evening take a tuk-tuk (local taxi) into Siem Reap to browse the shops and markets for last minute souvenirs and inexpensive clothing. Wander down "Pub Street" to experience the nightlife and the music enjoyed by the younger set in this intriguing city.

Day 16: DEPARTURE

Breakfast

After breakfast you will be transferred to the airport for connection with onward flights.

CUSTOM TOURING
Dare to Dream

Tel/WhatsApp +27 83 287 9912
Telegram @JudyVos
frontdesk@customtouring.com
www.customtouring.com