

Silk Steps

EXPLORE AND EXPERIENCE



Vietnam

Vietnam is the backbone of eastern Indochina and boasts over 2,000 kilometres of coastline from north to south. With mountains rising to over 3,000 metres and neighbours including China, Laos and Cambodia, Vietnam is located in a honey pot of rich and traditional culture, complimented by scenery that is as diverse as its people and history.

Vietnam today is a country filled with a fascinating blend of ancient and modern sights and a mix of Western and Oriental values. Through all of its turmoil and violence, the people of Vietnam have remained incredibly welcoming and friendly and are proud of their heritage. It is over twenty five years since hostilities ceased and the once slow and tentative steps of tourism have now become a constant flow as Vietnam continues to open her doors to economic liberalisation.



WEATHER

In the north, the winter is from November to April, with average temperatures dropping to 16°C with light rainfall. In the summer, from April to October, temperatures rise to 30°C accompanied by heavy rainfall. In central Vietnam the rainy season is from May to December, with heavy rainfall from October onwards. Between January and May the best weather is experienced with temperatures around 28°C.

In the south the temperatures are constant throughout the year, with an average of 27°C with the highest temperatures from March to April. The dry season is from November to April and the wet season is from May to October.



When in Vietnam...



WHEN IN VIETNAM WHY NOT...?

Get away from it all and spend a few days on **Whale Island**. Escape to the rustic resort of Whale Island with its simple traditional bungalows, tropical gardens and hammocks slung between coconut palms. Complete with a coral reef, life couldn't get better than this.

Escape to **Le Domain de Tam Hai**, an island getaway 45km from Hoi An. Get that Robinson Crusoe feeling on the island of Tam Hai which has only 12 villas, separated by private gardens, a glorious beach and facilities for diving and fishing.

Go down south and relax on tropical **Phu Quoc** and enjoy the clear waters. Only just making its way on to the tourist map, the island of Phu Quoc, off the south coast of Vietnam in the Gulf of Thailand, has clear water, undiscovered beaches, a forested interior and a range of small resorts to suit every budget.

Relax in a beachside spa at the **Life Resort** at Quy Nhon or experience unadulterated luxury on a remote hideaway, the Six Senses. The Life Resort has put Quy Nhon on the map, once just a staging post en route from Nha Trang to Hoi An. It has a private beach, stylish, relaxed atmosphere and range of spa treatments - a real sanctuary. The coastal drive from Quy Nhon to Nha Trang is spectacular, passing miles and miles of unspoilt beaches. Those who want the ultimate pampering experience, and have the budget to match, should escape to the 6* Evason Hideaway and Six Senses Spa in a secluded bay which can only be reached by boat from Nha Trang.

Spend an overnight cruising through the **Mekong Delta** on board the Bassac. Join the Bassac at Cai Be and cruise the Mekong Delta to Tra On with time spent at the early morning floating market at Cai Rang.

Discover the **Central Highlands** of Pleiku and Buon Ma Thuot. The Central Highlands have not experienced the same level of development as other regions of Vietnam. Here you can spend time with the ethnic minorities who live there, such as the Jarai, ride an elephant through the lush landscape and paddle a traditional pirogue.

Join a **cooking class** in Hoi An. Vietnamese cuisine has some of the most delicate textures and flavours so spend half a day learning how they do it. First of all you are taken to the market to purchase the food required for the meal you are to help prepare. You will then join a local chef to learn the art - and it is art - of Vietnamese cooking. Then the best part - you get to eat it!

Home stay in Mekong Delta. Discover life in the Mekong by travelling around the waterways by boat and then spend a night with a local family in simple accommodation and experience Vietnamese hospitality at its best.

Ecoprojects

TOPAS ECOLODGE SAPA

Located 18 km from Sapa, deep in the Hoang Lien Mountains. The 25 lodges, made from white granite from a nearby quarry with roofs thatched with palm branches, overlook the entire valley, with the ethnic minority villages of Ban Ho and Than Phu 400 metres below you. Both the water and electricity are solar powered and activities on offer including walking, trekking and mountain biking.

MANGO BAY RESORT

15 minutes north of Phu Quoc airport, the Mango Bay Resort offers eco-friendly accommodation in 20 hectares of land and a one-kilometre stretch of beach surrounded by a protected forest along the Gulf of Thailand. The 8 bungalows are constructed from solid, rammed earth and leaf-thatched roofs. Outdoor bathrooms with solar-powered hot water look straight out into the jungle. In addition there are three Phu Quoc's fishermen's bungalows, transported and reassembled. This is the island's first eco-resort and there is no air conditioning, TVs or telephones.

A Silk Steps inclusive holiday price includes:

- Private return transfers between airports and hotels (unless otherwise specified)
- The services of English speaking guides and representatives at each stage of the tour. Between most places you will travel unescorted
- Accommodation in a standard room (shared twin) with private facilities (unless otherwise specified) with breakfast
- Government taxes and compulsory service charges
- All tours and sightseeing as specified, inclusive of entrance fees
- Economy class air travel within all countries on the scheduled services of the national or domestic carrier as specified in each tour
- The services of our local representative

Extras

- International flights - please contact us for up-to-date prices
- Travel insurance
- Meals - unless otherwise stated
- Optional sightseeing other than specified
- International airport departure tax payable overseas
- Visa fees
- Single supplement (on request)



Suggested Itineraries

Nights stay at:
1 Hanoi
2
3 Halong Bay
4 Hue
5
6 Hoi An
7
8 Nha Trang or
9 Whale Island
10 Ho Chi
11 Minh City

UNVEILING VIETNAM

We have selected several of the highlights of Vietnam to bring you a taste of this extraordinary country without being too rushed.

Start with the faded grandeur of Hanoi, with its elegant wide boulevards, French colonial buildings and bustling Old Quarter before spending a night sailing through tranquil Halong Bay. There is no better way to experience the bay than by spending a night on a traditional junk under skies unaffected by light pollution. Be charmed by the former imperial capital, Hue, with the remains of the royal palace, and mausoleums of several Emperors and then travel over the spectacular Hai Van Pass to traffic-free Hoi An with its narrow streets of traditional houses and myriad of shops and cafés. Spend a couple of nights relaxing either in the seaside resort of Nha Trang with its long, sandy bay or at the rustic resort on nearby Whale Island. Refreshed, you will love the dynamism of Ho Chi Minh City with its streets overflowing with people, bicycles, motorbikes and markets and also have time to explore the Viet Cong tunnels at Cu Chi.

Cost per person

(based on two people travelling in a twin/double room)

FROM £926



Nights stay at:
1 Hanoi
2
3 Mai Chau
4 Son La
5 Dien Bien Phu
6 Lai Chau
7 Sapa
8
9 Hanoi
10 Halong
11 Tam Dao or Hanoi

NORTHERN HILL TRIBES AND NATURE

The northwest of Vietnam is an extraordinary region with dramatic alpine scenery, which is home to several hill tribes who still wear their colourful traditional tribal clothing. The itinerary allows time to learn about the French colonial era and the infamous battle of Dien Bien Phu, enjoy the stunning scenery and meet villagers from various ethnic minorities and learn a little about their way of life.

Start with the faded grandeur of Hanoi, with its elegant wide boulevards, French colonial buildings and bustling Old Quarter before travelling west up into the mountains and the villages around Mai Chau, home to the White Tai minority where you will spend the night in a traditional long house. The journey to Son La, to visit the former French prison, passes through Black Tai and Flower Hmong villages and tea plantations and then the mountain road to Dien Bien Phu becomes truly spectacular. The route takes you through numerous Black Tai and Red Hmong minority villages, coffee plantations and over picturesque Pha Din Pass. At Dien Bien Phu there is time to explore the famous battlefield sites before continuing to remote Lai Chau where you will have the opportunity to visit villages of the White Hmong minority.

Still high up in the mountains you continue to Sapa, stopping at Black Zao minority villages, before Mount Fansipan comes into view and you arrive at the delightful town of Sapa. Here you will encounter a myriad of ethnic minorities who gather in the market, including Flower Hmong and Red Zao, and enjoy walks along mountain trails and through the villages.

The journey back to Hanoi takes up most of the day but the journey is a feast for the eyes. From Hanoi you travel east to the coast where you will board a traditional junk for an overnight cruise through Halong Bay with its intriguing limestone islets emerging from the sea. You can just relax on the boat, visit one of the cave complexes or even try your hand at kayaking.

From Halong Bay it is an easy journey back to Hanoi for the final night or the adventure could continue with a night in the little-visited former hill station of Tam Dao where you can see the remains of grand colonial buildings and walk through the forest.

Cost per person

(based on two people travelling in a twin/double room)

FROM £790

Suggested Itineraries

Nights stay at:	
1	Ho Chi
2	Minh City
3	
4	Dalat
5	
6	Phan Thiet
7	
8	Can Tho
9	Return to Ho Chi Minh City or 1 night Chau Doc
10	Take boat to Phnom Penh

SOUTHERN EXPLORER

Southern Vietnam alone is as varied as the whole country and this tour highlights the differences.

Ho Chi Minh City is the starting point and here you will be amazed by the energy of the city and its people and also find pockets of tranquility in its temples and parks. The drive up into the Central Highlands, through coffee plantations and past waterfalls, is a spectacular one, and Dalat itself is a surprise with its alpine lakes and array of delightful French colonial architecture. The sandy dunes of Mui Ne, near Phan Thiet, are a great place to get away from it all before travelling south again, via Ho Chi Minh City, to the capital of the Mekong Delta, Can Tho. Here you will get a taste of life on the river by travelling by boat to the colourful morning market where fruit and vegetables traders and shoppers are all in boats and by climbing to tree-top level and watching the birds coming into roost at Thot Not Stork Sanctuary.

From here you can return to Ho Chi Minh City or, if travelling on to Cambodia, continue to the border town of Chau Doc with its stilt houses and fish farms before taking the boat along the Mekong River to Phnom Penh.

Cost per person

(based on two people travelling in a twin/double room)

FROM £648



Hotel Selection



The choice of hotels in Vietnam is endless and those detailed below are recommendations only. We can book most hotels throughout Vietnam, so please contact us if you would like alternative hotels.

HANOI

The **Sunway Hotel** is situated on Pham Dinh Ho Street in a quiet location on the edge of Hanoi's famous old district. A variety of entertainment, shopping opportunities and some of the renowned tourist attractions are close by with Hoan Kiem Lake only 10 minutes walk away.

The grand, colonial-era **Sofitel Metropole Hotel** is one of the finest in Vietnam and has a superb location close to Hoan Kiem Lake and within walking distance of the Old Quarter. Its long history means that it has seen some illustrious visitors such as Graham Greene and Charlie Chaplin and the original rooms retain much of their character which is now combined with excellent standards of service.

HO CHI MINH CITY

The renovated colonial **Grand Hotel** is located on the city's main shopping street and close to the Saigon River and nightlife and features a restaurant, swimming pool and gym.

The ever-popular **Majestic Hotel** is a class example of French colonial architecture located by the Saigon River and on the corner of the main shopping street in Ho Chi Minh City. The traditional rooms are grand with high ceilings with European furniture from the period. The 5th floor open-air bar has wonderful views over the constant hustle and bustle of the river.

HALONG BAY

Cruise through the islands on a traditional wooden **Huong Hai Junk** and enjoy the bay at its best at night under a starry sky. Each of the cabins has a private bathroom as well as air conditioning and there is a bar and restaurant.

The **Emeraude** is a replica of a classic French steamship from the colonial era with 37 air-conditioned cabins with private bathrooms and a restaurant and sundeck where you can enjoy cocktails as you cruise through the islands.

HUE

The renovated colonial-era **Saigon Morin Hotel** is located close to the Perfume River and has a lovely garden restaurant, swimming pool and gym. Built in 1901 and restored in 1998 it saw many celebrity guests in its heyday up to World War II including Charlie Chaplin.

The art deco **La Residence Hotel & Spa** has brought new standards to accommodation in Hue. Located on the banks of the Perfume River it has stunning views across to the Imperial Citadel. The interior is chic, taking you back to a gentler era. The spa is an ideal place to relax after the sightseeing exertions of the day.

HOI AN

The stylish **Life Heritage Resort**, built in colonial style, is located on the banks of the Thu Bon River, right on the edge of town. Set in tropical gardens, facilities include a restaurant, swimming pool, bars, traditional Chinese medicine centre and Thai massage. There is no better base from which to explore the town.

If you prefer to stay on Cua Dai beach, just 4km from Hoi An, the **Victoria Hoi An Resort** is a perfect location with its combination of bungalows and rooms laid out with interconnecting paths and small ponds. The hotel offers stylish rooms, a superb restaurant, sandy beach and the opportunity to ride on the hotel's elephant, Darling.

NHA TRANG

The beachside **Saigon Nha Trang Hotel** offers 174 rooms, all with an ocean view and an international standard of service. There are two restaurants, swimming pool, fitness centre and tennis courts.

Set right on the beach, the rooms of the traditional-style **Ana Mandara Resort** are surrounded by tropical gardens. The restaurant has a deservedly excellent reputation and the popularity of this small resort means it is advisable to book early to guarantee a room.



Hotel Selection

DIEN BIEN PHU

The **Hanoi Hotel** is well located in the centre of town, with just 33 simple rooms, all with air conditioning.

LAI CHAU

The attractive **Lan Anh 1 Hotel** is located in the heart of the Lai Chau valley within easy walking distance of ethnic minority villages. The rooms all have mountain or garden views and air conditioning.

SAPA

The **Chau Long Hotel** is located in the heart of Sapa with excellent facilities including a heated indoor swimming pool and beautiful views.

The attractive alpine chalet-style **Victoria Sapa Hotel** has stunning views of the surrounding mountain scenery. The hotel reflects the local hill tribes with artefacts and wall hangings. A great base from which to explore the surrounding hills and visit villages and relax in front of a roaring log fire in the cool winter evenings.

TAM DAO

The small, characterful **Mela Hotel** has balconies with panoramic views of the mountains and forests and an excellent restaurant serving Vietnamese and international cuisine.

DALAT

The former French hill station is full of old colonial buildings and the **Novotel Dalat** is a faithfully renovated colonial hotel dating from 1932. Close to the sumptuous Sofitel Grand Palace the Novotel is ideally placed to explore the town and lake.

Experience a little of how the French lived by staying in the **Ana Mandara Villas**, 17 villas converted into 52 rooms with a restaurant and spa. The villas are located on a hillside overlooking the town and with lovely views of the surrounding countryside. Each of the villas has been restored to reflect its original character and the décor has been lovingly preserved.



PHAN THIET

The first resort to open on this stunning stretch of coastline, Mui Ne, the **Coco Beach Resort** is still a firm favourite with visitors with its thatched beachside bungalows and excellent restaurant, the best around. The bungalows are well spread out and are designed simply with a touch of style.

The **Victoria Phan Thiet Resort** comprises 50 traditional bungalows on a hillside surrounded by lush tropical gardens and overlooking their own private beach on the South China Sea. The hotel has a new infinity edge swimming pool and you can be pampered at its spa. Ideally placed to explore the sand dunes, home to rare flora and fauna, and for excursions to the fishing village and up 1000 steps to the huge reclining Buddha.

CAN THO

Enjoy the location of the city centre **Saigon Can Tho Hotel** from where you can explore the town and observe life on the river.

Built in colonial style, the **Victoria Can Tho Hotel's** tastefully furnished rooms all have views over the Hau River. The large swimming pool overlooks the river and the restaurant serves a superb selection of Vietnamese and European dishes.

CHAU DOC

The **Ben Da Nui Sam Hotel** is an excellent base for an overnight stay to explore this border town.

The **Victoria Chau Doc Hotel** is an attractive low-rise building right on the banks of the river looking out on nearby Cham villages and stilt houses. The restaurant serves local and European cuisine and it is very pleasant to dine on the terrace overlooking the confluence of the Hau and Chau Doc rivers.

