



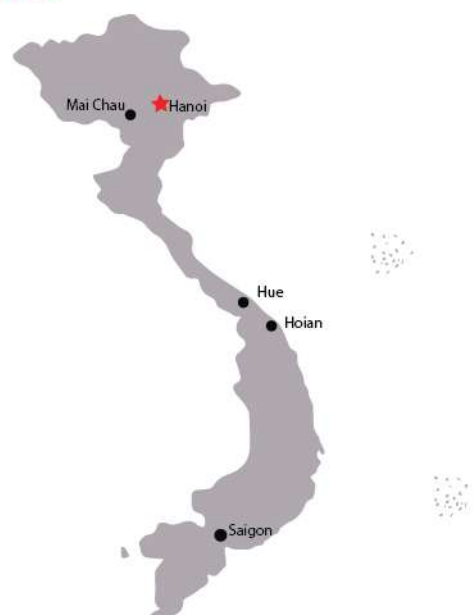
Vietnam

A Culinary Adventure

ITINERARY

Food and drink - 9 Days/8 Nights

- 1 Arrive in Hanoi
- 2 Hanoi
- 3 Hanoi to Mai Chau
- 4 Mai Chau to Hue
- 5 Hue
- 6 Hue to Hoian
- 7 Hoian
- 8 Hoian to Saigon
- 9 Departure from Saigon





Trip Overview

From the colorful dragon boats that glide across the Perfume River to the sparkling skyscrapers that tower over Saigon, Vietnam is home to a breathtaking assortment of architectural and natural wonders. But what you see is only half the story—there's a world of history, culture, and tradition that's best experienced through taste, not to mention what's arguably the best street food on the planet. On this nine-day journey, we'll explore the country through its unique cuisine, tasting our way across north, central, and south Vietnam by way of steaming pork belly meatballs in Hanoi's Old Quarter and the white rose dumplings of Hoi An. Along the way, we'll learn from local chefs, sample street eats, and savor freshly caught seafood. Between bites, we'll meet with artists, authors, veterans, and friends to learn about the history of these different regions. Come with an eager palate, an empty stomach, and, possibly, a flexible return ticket—once you've had a taste of this place, it's difficult to say goodbye.

Highlights

- Distinct flavors of north, central, and south Vietnam
- Street eats, soup stalls, and outdoor markets
- Hands-on cooking classes with local chefs
- Conversations with local artists, journalists, veterans, and more
- UNESCO World Heritage Sites





HANOI

Day 1: Welcome to Hanoi

Arrive today in Hanoi and settle into our hotel in the heart of Hanoi's Old Quarter. In the late afternoon, we'll head to a historic village just outside the city on the Red River for welcome drinks in the courtyard of a traditional Mandarin home accompanied by traditional music. For dinner, we'll savor our first bites of Vietnamese food at one of the capital's finest restaurants, set within an elegant French villa. Stroll through the buzzing night market of the Old Quarter before turning in for some well-deserved rest.



Day 2: Hanoi Food Crawl

We'll start the day with a stroll along Hoan Kiem Lake, a prime destination for early morning joggers, tai chi practitioners, and more. If you're feeling a little grumpy or groggy from the jet lag, you might benefit from partaking in some lakeside laughter yoga. Later, we'll stop into a local cafe to learn how to make egg coffee, a sweet, frothy, and distinctly Hanoian beverage made of egg yolk and condensed milk. With some caffeine in the system, we'll wind through the maze-like alleyways of the Old Quarter, pausing for our first slurp of pho, followed by a hands-on class for making bun cha (pork belly meatballs), and a meal at one of the city's iconic courtyard restaurants, nestled in a French villa. Between bites, we'll be learning about Vietnam and the many wars it has endured—meeting with a former fighter pilot and talking with former PBS host and journalist Nguyen Qui Duc. In the afternoon, we'll enjoy a cyclo tour, our driver pedaling us through the sights and sounds of Hanoi.

Accommodation

Leah Silk - Deluxe room

2 nights





MAI CHAU

Day 3: Hilltribes & The Mai Chau Valley

This morning, we'll drive southwest, snaking through suburbs, villages, rice fields, and rolling farmland en route to the Mai Chau River Valley. We'll stop to visit a local hill tribe here in the valley, and learn about the community's farming practices. For lunch, we'll prepare a regional dish under the guidance of our hosts. In the afternoon, we'll venture deeper into the valley, pausing to stop in and say hi at a local school before ending the day at a nearby village.



Accommodation

Mai Chau Ecolodge - Deluxe room
1 night



Day 4: Hue - The Imperial Capital

We'll start the day with a rousing walk through the local hill tribes market. Afterward, exploring the making of handicrafts in a Thai hill tribe village, learning about the production of traditional silk and cotton textiles, and also rice wine made there. We'll then return to Noi Bai Airport and hop on a short flight to the old imperial capital of Hue. Arguably the most beautiful city in the country, it was the capital from which Vietnamese emperors ruled the country until French colonization in the late 1800s. After a full day of travel, we'll stay put and dine in the scenic countryside setting of our hotel.





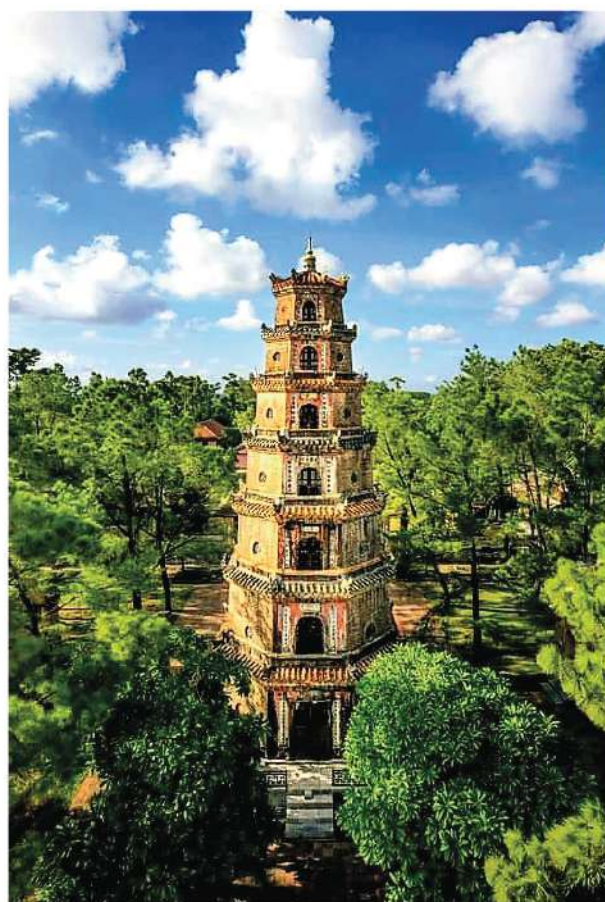
HUE

Day 5: Imperial Tombs & Cuisine

Hue is known for its iconic royal tombs: seven imperial structures adorned with intricate carvings. We'll visit the tombs of Tu Duc, the longest-reigning monarch of the Nguyen Dynasty, and Khai Dinh, whose intricate, if not flamboyant, tomb took over a decade to construct. After, we'll board a dragon boat back to Hue, where we'll visit a Buddhist monastery and the vast imperial citadel, modeled after Beijing's Forbidden City. Of course, we'll be doing all of this while steadily snacking—munching on some of the world's most savory banh mi (Vietnamese sandwiches), visiting the local market of Dong Ba, and trying an assortment of treats, including me xung, an addictive sugary sesame snack.

After lunch, spend some free time this afternoon relaxing at our atmospheric guest house in the countryside or exploring attractions in Hue on your own, such as the Dong Ba Market.

This evening, we'll meet up for drinks and views from a rooftop lounge before digging into some distinctive Hue dishes in a Mandarin-style wooden home hosted by a royal ancestor.



Accommodation

Pilgrimage Village- Deluxe room

2 nights



HOIAN

Day 6: The Emerald Coast

We're hitting the road early and heading to Hoi An! This is one of Vietnam's most scenic routes. It'll be a full day on the road, but we'll pause at local farms, relics from the French and American Vietnam Wars, and, if we're lucky, a local spot that makes nuoc mam, the highly addictive, oh-so-pungent Vietnamese fish sauce made from concentrated fish brine. With fish on our minds (and possibly our breath), we'll arrive at our destination. Only 80-odd miles from Hue, Hoi An feels like a separate world from its northern cousin. We'll spend our first night exploring its distinct architecture, charming coastal city life, and unique cuisine, sampling dishes like savory cao lau soup and delicate white rose dumplings. Tonight, we'll board a ferry to an island to dine at one of the best restaurants in the country.

Day 7: The Ancient Town

Having spent a few days doing lots of eating, we're going to do some cooking of our own today. This morning, we'll tour the local market at sunrise, just in time to see local fishermen begin selling their catch. Inspired by the sights and smells, we'll pick out our own ingredients and tote them to a private studio for a hands-on cooking class. After trying our hand at a few dishes, and sampling our creations for lunch, we'll take a well-earned break. Feel free to stroll through the city, to explore its galleries, temples, and tailoring shops on your own. Tonight we'll enjoy dinner along the water-



Accommodation

Little Riverside - Little Suite River
2 nights

SAIGON

Day 8: Saigon - Skyscrapers and Soup Stalls

After a leisurely morning in Hoi An, we'll depart for the south around midday. It might feel like we've hopped a few centuries into the future—or more precisely, to the futuristic Ho Chi Minh City. Also known as Saigon, the city is swarming in an endless sea of scooters (over eight million of them!), battling for space with new luxury sedans. Hidden between gleaming skyscrapers and fast-food chains, however, are alleyways crammed with vendors selling small bowls of soup, grilled meats, sugary sweets, and more. After some serious snacking, we'll clink glasses atop one of Saigon's towering skyscrapers overlooking the up-and-coming megalopolis and head to a beloved local restaurant for our farewell dinner.



Accommodation

Grand- Deluxe

1 night

CAMBODIA

Day 9: Departure or Angkor Extension

Today, you'll either head home or continue on our three-day cultural and culinary tour of Cambodia's magnificent Angkor Wat. For those joining for the extension, we'll take a short (1-hour) afternoon flight to Siem Reap, home to both a "bug restaurant" and street spas where adorable, tiny fish nibble on your toes. Much more than just a base for exploring the nearby Angkor temples, Siem Reap boasts vibrant night markets, a renowned street circus, world-class restaurants, and shopping boutiques. This afternoon, we'll get our first taste of Khmer cuisine in town before heading out during the day to visit the Rolous group, some of the oldest standing temples built by the Khmers.



Day 10: Legacy of Angkor (optional extension)

Today, we're exploring some of the most enigmatic temples of Angkor, including the famous Ta Prohm. Erected in 1186 AD by King Jayavarman VII, Ta Prohm has long been abandoned, and powerfully reclaimed by nature—strands of silk cotton hang like delicate tentacles and thick fig tree roots strangle the surviving stones of the ancient monastery. Around midday, we'll visit a local farm to learn about the ingredients, methods, and preparation of classic Khmer dishes like fish amok. After tasting our creations, we'll wander through the walled city of Angkor Thom until we arrive at Bayon, a colossal, dizzying 12th-century temple erected for Cambodia's most celebrated king. Gazing up at its 54 towers—each bearing the softly smiling faces of Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of compassion—is an otherworldly experience. Enjoy the rest of the afternoon on your own, exploring local markets or taking a dip in the pool. We'll regroup in the evening for dinner. Following our meal, we'll have the chance to witness a dazzling performance put on by a local street circus troupe.



Day 11: Temples & Silk (optional extension)

Nestled in the jungles of Angkor lies one of the site's most mysterious and quietly alluring marvels. At Kbal Spean, or "Valley of 1,000 Lingas," water rushes over a series of intricately carved stones. Likely dating back to the 11th or 12th century, the carvings depict a variety of designs, from Hindu deities to circles believed to be phallic symbols of divine power. Once we return from our hike, we'll visit a temple known as Banteay Srei, or "the citadel of women," an old moniker meant to suggest that the carvings are too elaborate and fine to have been completed by men. Later, we'll learn about the longstanding impact of war and genocide on the country, and the many victims of landmines in Cambodia. Then, it's off to a silk farm and cooperative that supports the local village of over 100 people. We'll take a tour, learn about the production of silk products from cocoon to loom, and even try our hands at weaving. After returning to town for lunch, enjoy a free afternoon on your own; relax at the hotel, take a dip in the pool, or explore the local marketplace.



Day 12: Angkor Wat Farewell (optional extension)

Built in the 12th century by King Suryavarman II, Angkor Wat is the largest religious building on the planet. The spellbinding structure was once the centerpiece of what is now thought to have been the largest pre-industrial city in the world, with an elaborate water management system connecting at least 620 miles of urban sprawl and over a million inhabitants. This morning, we'll explore the grounds and check out the delicately carved bas-reliefs, which chronicle eight different Hindu stories. Later, we'll return to Siem Reap to say farewell to Cambodia while munching on street snacks and a traditional Khmer lunch. With full hearts and bellies, we'll say our goodbyes. Until our next adventure!

Accommodation

Shinta Mani Shack - Deluxe

3 nights



Upcoming departures

Main trip		Angkor Wat Extension:	
Single Supplement		Single Supplement	
May 27–Jun 4, 2023	From \$4,435 \$530	\$1,250	\$360
Nov 4–Nov 12, 2023	From \$4,870 \$660	\$1,380	\$380
Jan 20–Jan 28, 2024	From \$4,870 \$660	\$1,380	\$420
Feb 24–Mar 3, 2024	From \$4,870 \$660	\$1,380	\$420
Mar 16–Mar 24, 2024	From \$4,870 \$660	\$1,380	\$420
Apr 6–Apr 14, 2024	From \$4,870 \$660	\$1,380	\$420

Pricing

The listed price of this trip is per person based on double/twn occupancy.

Arrival & Departure

When planning your travel, we recommend arriving in Hanoi by 12pm on Day 1 and departing from Ho Chi Minh City anytime on Day 9. If taking the Angkor Wat extension, we recommend departing Siem Reap, Cambodia, after 5pm on Day 12.

Luggage Restrictions

We have an internal/domestic flight included on this tour from Hanoi to Hue on Day 4. Luggage restrictions include: maximum weight per luggage is 23kg/50lbs. Max total dimensions (width+height+length) must not exceed 158cm/62inches.

Activity Level

This trip is fairly active; travelers should feel comfortable walking three to five miles over the course of each day, and remaining on their feet for long periods of time. Several parts of the tour involve some longer walks, including up and down stairs and on uneven ground. There will also be an optional cycling opportunity in the countryside.

Included	Excluded
- Accommodation throughout the trip at a boutique hotels - All meals as described in the itinerary - Transportation throughout the trip - An experienced Trip Leader to accompany you for the duration of the trip as well as special guests throughout - Admission to all proposed activities, locations, and events - A curious group of fellow Atlas Obscura travelers! - 24/7 emergency assistance during your trip, provided by Global Rescue (terms apply) - Special access to unique places and extraordinary experiences - Arrival and departure airport transfers	- Transportation and flights to and from Vietnam - Pre- and post-trip accommodations - Additional meals and drinks outside of Atlas Obscura offerings, including most alcoholic beverages - For Angkor Wat extension: Internal domestic flight from Ho Chi Minh City to Siem Reap (priced separately) - Passport and visa fees, if applicable - COVID-19 testing requirements - Customary gratuity for Trip Leader

Headquater & Operation

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