Highlights of Vietnam Explorer

Trip Code: SGVN

Version:

CULTURE	SELF-GUIDED	1 LEISURELY



HIGHLIGHTS

- Pedal through idyllic villages in the Mekong delta
- Explore the historic UNESCO World Heritage Listed cities of Hoi An & Hue
- Experience the Reunification Express linking north and south Vietnam
- Immerse yourself into the bustling capital city, Hanoi
- Relax on a 3 day, 2 night Halong Bay cruise

AT A GLANCE

- 2 days self-guided cycle sightseeing
- 1 day guided tour and cycling in Ben Tre
- 5 days self-guided/independent sightseeing
- 3 day/2 night guided Halong Bay cruise
- Standard bike hire included
- Daily departures
- Join at Ho Chi Minh City / End In Hanoi

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

Cupped around the south-eastern corner of the Asian continent, Vietnam is home to a veritable smorgasbord of stunning coastline, lush emerald peaks, buzzing cities, enticing flavours, and a fascinating melting pot of cultures and historical legacies. This two week self-guided holiday packs in the unmissable highlights that stretch along the notable length of the country; from the juxtaposition of traditions with modern internationalism in Saigon and the languid countryside of the Mekong delta, the imperial city of Hue and historic port town of Hoi An in central Vietnam, to the captivating capital city of Hanoi in the north and of course, the awe-inspiring natural wonder that is Halong Bay.

Travelling independently with the guidance of a self-guided app, you decide on the pace of your explorations on your holiday in Vietnam. With a carefully balanced itinerary combining guided experiences with self-guided discovery, you will benefit from valuable cultural insights with your local guide, and also have the flexibility to take your time and delve into the sights and history of the places visited with the freedom of your self-guided travel app.

Journeying from the south to the north of Vietnam on the Reunification Line that links the previously divided halves of the country, you can enjoy a slow pace of travel and experience authentic and incomparable interactions with friendly locals that you will meet along your shared journey.

Staying in a carefully curated selection of modern, boutique 3* hotels, ideally located for your discovery of the highlights of Vietnam, you can be sure of a warm welcome each day. Some have pool and spa facilities for a cool off and relax after your day of exploration. You will also spend two nights on board a modern, comfortable junk boat for the must-do of any visit to Vietnam: cruising around Halong Bay.

Is this holiday for you?

This holiday is perfect for you if you enjoy the freedom of travelling independently from a group, while having the ease of holiday logistics and arrangements taken care of for you. With your self-guided app, you will have a local guide in your pocket to help you along your way as you explore the sights, tastes and culture of Vietnam at your own pace. The sightseeing cycle rides on this holiday are of a leisurely nature and you are free to decide when to stop for photos and refreshment breaks. The distances cycled are short to moderate on flat terrain, no more than around 28km in a day and typically on paved or concrete

roads.

This holiday involves two overnight journeys on the sleeper train, with journey times averaging around 15 hours. You will be accommodated in simple, shared 4-berth cabins. While facilities on the train are basic, on these rail journeys you will have the opportunity to interact with local travellers, experience the culture of Vietnam and watch the changing scenery as you journey the length of the country.

You will also spend two nights on board a modern junk boat which will have other guests on board. You will have a private double/twin cabin with en-suite facilities. This is a great way to meet some fellow travellers from around the world and exchange tales of your adventures, rounding off your holiday on a high as you discover the spectacular Halong Bay.

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- All accommodation as described
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Self-guided travel app
- An airport transfer on arrival
- Guided tour of Ben Tre in the Mekong Melta
- Transfer from Ho Chi Minh City to Hoi An with overnight train
- Transfer from Hoi An to Hue
- Transfer from Hue to Hanoi with overnight train
- Guided two-night Halong Bay cruise including transfers from Hanoi
- Standard bike hire and helmet for self-guided cycling tours as described

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Travel to Ho Chi Minh City
- Travel from Hanoi
- Visas (if applicable)
- Entrance tickets
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Personal equipment
- Any additional activities/excursions indicated as optional

GPS Travel App

This holiday is led by a self-guided travel app, which contains the personalised details of your complete holiday itinerary. This includes the GPS-led routes for you to follow on your self-guided cycling and walking tours, as well as attractions, coffee stops and points of interest in the towns and cities along the way. The app does not need to have Wi-Fi connection to work, you simply follow the instructions we provide you to download the app to your personal smartphone device before you leave home and you are ready to go.

Alongside the self-guided app, you will also have support from our local self-guided assistants with a welcome briefing on arrival in Ho Chi Minh City. Our local partners can easily be reached by phone, text or on WhatsApp at any point during your holiday and they will be happy to assist you.

While the travel app is running, your phone battery charge can be consumed faster than normal, so we strongly recommend that you pack a power bank with you just in case you require it.

If you would like to have mobile data connectivity on your holiday, a local SIM card is available on request through KE. The cost is £25 per SIM card with a data package of 4GB/day. You just need to make sure that your device is unlocked to accept an additional SIM card.

Just order this in advance through our sales team; the cost will be added to your booking to be paid with your final balance. The SIM card will be provided at your welcome meeting on arrival in Ho Chi Minh City.

Self-Guided Families

Our Self-Guided Holidays are perfect for your next family holiday and are suitable for children of all ages.

Our partner hotels and accommodations are able to provide cots for young children, and some offer family rooms. We can also arrange hire of children's bikes and tag along bikes for most of our self-guided cycling trips and with trips such as Lake Constance and the Danube offering routes on designated cycle paths you can rest assured in keeping your family safe.

As a parent we trust that you know your own child's capabilities, so please read the itinerary details to ensure the distances covered each day are suitable for your family. If this is a first time walking or cycling holiday for your family, a centre-based trip is a fantastic option as it allows you to easily opt out of a day's walking if a day of building sand castles, swimming in the pool, or visiting museums is calling instead.

Please discuss this further with our Sales Team who will be happy to assist in picking the best trip for your family.

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The trip starts in Ho Chi Minh City and ends in Hanoi. All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you.

For this trip we have included a pick up transfer from Ho Chi Minh (Saigon) Tan Son Nhat International Airport to take you to your hotel in Ho Chi Minh City on Day 1 of the itinerary. A driver will be waiting to meet you upon exiting Ho Chi Minh International Airport. Please ensure you inform our customer sales and support team as early as possible of your flight time so that we can arrange your transfer for you.

The holiday ends in Hanoi city on Day 13. Taxis are readily available to Hanoi Noi Bai International Airport; your hotel in Hanoi can assist with this. A private transfer can also be pre-booked through KE at additional cost. Please contact our sales team for a quote.

Meal Plan

At hotels, your stay is arranged on a bed & breakfast basis to offer you the most flexibility in the towns and cities where there are a wealth of options available.

Meals are not included on the sleeper train; Vietnamese options are available to order on board, or you might like to buy some food and drink from the various hawkers on the station platforms. You can also bring food on board if you prefer. The train has hot and cold water dispensers on board. When you arrive to Hanoi early in the morning of Day 9, early check in is included for you to have direct access to your hotel room on arrival, and breakfast is also available at the hotel this morning.

All meals are included when you are cruising Halong Bay on board the Calypso Cruise, from lunch on the day of boarding (Day 10), to brunch on the day of disembarkation (Day 12).

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide for special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your meals with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. You should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a Water-To-Go bottle) to treat your water. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

Vietnamese cuisine is a delightful and diverse gastronomic experience with varied regional specialties, rooted in local geography, history and cultural influences, but with a common theme of fresh herbs, fragrant flavours that dance on the tongue, seafood (unsurprisingly, with its long coastline) and plenty of noodles.

In the southern region, produce is abundant with heaps of fresh fish, lush herbs, and ripe and juicy sweet fruit. In addition to the fresh and light noodle broths, you can find creamy coconut curries and refreshing salads with local fruit such as papaya and pomelo.

Specialties of central Vietnam include banh beo, delicate steamed cakes made from rice and tapioca flour, with savoury toppings such as shrimp, pork, or mushrooms; and com hen, a rice dish with tiny clams or river mussels, peanuts, pork rind, shrimp paste, sesame seeds, all delightfully married by a shellfish broth and the ever-present herbs and fresh vegetables. You will also find baguettes a familiar sight in central Vietnam - a remnant of French colonialism.

In the north, the cuisine bears influence from its Chinese neighbour, with soy sauce, vinegar and black pepper used more commonly than in other parts of the country.

Accommodation

For this holiday we have hand-picked a lovely selection of 3* modern, boutique hotels in Ho Chi Minh City, Hoi An, Hue and Hanoi; carefully chosen for their great locations and wonderful hospitality. All hotels offer twin/double rooms with air conditioning and are stylishly decorated, offering a comfortable home away from home each night. Hotels offer a wide range of options at breakfast, including Vietnamese and Asian dishes alongside international options; the buffet spread generally includes bread, pastry, eggs and fruit, with plenty of tea, coffee and juices available. All hotels have Wi-Fi connectivity and some offer spa and pool facilities, ideal for a cool down and relax after your day of exploration.

Your holiday includes travelling on the overnight sleeper train from Ho Chi Minh City to Danang (Day 3), and from Hue to Hanoi (Day 8). Travelling on the sleeper train is certainly a part of the experience and provides an inimitable taste of Vietnam. These two journeys on the Reunification Line will be in "soft-sleeper" air conditioned, 4-berth sharing cabins. Each berth has a reading light and is supplied with a pillow, sheet and duvet. You keep all your luggage with you; luggage space is available for each cabin. The air conditioning can be effective, so it would be a good idea to have a warm layer and extra socks to hand on these journeys. There are basic shared washroom facilities at the end of each carriage, with both squat toilets and sit down toilets. Private cabins can be arranged at a supplementary cost, subject to availability. Please contact our sales team for a quote.

You will also spend 2 nights in Halong Bay on board a modern junk boat with typically 20 double/twin cabins. You will have a private cabin, with en-suite bathroom, air conditioning, and large windows for you to enjoy the tranquil scenery. The boat is staffed by friendly crew and an English-speaking guide, and includes sightseeing excursions from the junk, snorkelling, kayaking, and a wonderful sundeck where you can enjoy some morning tai chi, or simply lie back and drink in the stunning 360 degree vistas of the world-famous bay.

Bike Hire

Standard bike hire is included for the days that you will be exploring on two wheels.

On your guided tour of Ben Tre in the Mekong Delta, a city bike and a helmet is provided for the very easy and short cycling tour around the village.

For your self-guided cycle tours around Hoi An and Hue, you will have use of a mountain bike and helmet, which will be delivered to your hotel in the morning and collected in the early evening. The mountain bikes have flat pedals, front suspension forks and disc brakes. A puncture repair kit and pump is supplied with the bikes. We would recommend you bring a handlebar mount that is compatible with your smartphone, and a day pack for carrying your essential items whilst you are out exploring.

We recommend that you take your own EN1078 compliant cycling helmet, as the locally available helmets do not necessarily meet this standard.

We also suggest you consider packing a gel seat for extra comfort or a pair of padded cycling shorts, as whilst you will be riding at your own pace and there will be plenty of opportunities to stop and explore, it is always nice to have some padding for a more comfortable ride.

Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage and a day pack for your daily essentials. Keeping your luggage limited to one piece in a soft, lockable bag such as a duffle bag would be most practical when travelling by train. You may also like a second fold away bag for your two night Halong Bay cruise, while leaving your main luggage at your hotel in Hanoi for safekeeping.

For international flights please check your baggage allowance with your airline.

General Information

Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders.

A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required**,** and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

For other nationalities, please refer to your own Government website for the latest information.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates *(see Health & Vaccinations below),* **and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check the FCDO for the latest advice for **each country visited** before travel.

Visa Vietnam

British Citizen passport holders do not normally need a visa for durations of stay up to and including 45 days for tourism and transit.

NB. Irish and US and some EU country passport holders do need a visa to enter Vietnam.

For information about multiple entry visas, longer stays or different nationalities please contact the relevant embassy. The Vietnamese Embassy in the UK is in London.

Health & Vaccinations

Vaccinations:

You should be up to date with the routine vaccinations recommended in the UK for overseas travel.

You must also contact your doctor or travel clinic to check if there are specific vaccinations or other preventive measures that you need for the area you are visiting, in good time before you are due to depart.

Please ensure you are looking at the recommendations for all countries visited on your holiday plus recommendations for any borders you cross.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dental check-up.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates.

Please check the FCDO and Travel Health Pro. For all of your intended destinations for up-to-date advice.

Severe Allergies:

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips.

Currency

The unit of currency in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Dong.

Preparing for your Holiday

The advantage of a self-guided holiday is that you decide the pace, however getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday would be a good idea. The sightseeing cycle rides on this holiday are of a leisurely nature and you are free to decide when to stop for photos and refreshment breaks. The distances cycled are short to moderate on flat terrain, no more than around 28km in a day and typically on paved or concrete roads. We would recommend you dust off your bike and head off on a few rides before your holiday.

Climate

Vietnam has a tropical climate with two distinct monsoon seasons. From May to September the country is dominated by the south monsoon winds and from October to April, the north monsoon is dominant with northerly to northeasterly winds affecting the country. There is a transition period between each monsoon season when winds are light and variable. Vietnam's single rainy season occurs during the south monsoon with June, July and August the wettest months. At this time daytime temperatures are typically in the range of 25 - 30 degrees Celsius. During the north monsoon, northern Vietnam has cloudy days with occasional light rain, while southern Vietnam tends to be dry and sunny. Temperatures during this period are in the range of 25 - 30 degrees Celsius in the south and 15 - 20 degrees Celsius in the north with the occasional chilly night. During September to January coastal areas can be affected by typhoons in the South China Sea bringing short-lived tropical storms.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's **'Travel Aware'** campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. All other nationalities should check their government websites for relevant information.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

The Tunnels of Cu Chi - Tom Mangold and John Penycate

A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain - Robert Olen Butler

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our Travel Insurance page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

- Comfortable walking shoes
- Cycling shorts
- Cycle helmet - helmets are provided locally but you may wish to bring your own for the best comfort
- Functional base layer
- T-shirts
- Lightweight travel trousers/shorts
- Scarf / neck buff
- Hat
- Windproof jacket
- Fleece / extra layer
- Rain protection
- Rucksack (approx. 20 l)
- Small first aid kit for your rucksack
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle or hydration pack (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Camera (batteries/memory card)
- Mobile Phone (unlocked to accept an additional SIM card)

- Handlebar mount that is compatible with your smartphone
- Power bank
- Sun glasses
- Personal wash kit
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping to avoid the use of plastic bags
- Tupperware for picnics
- Ear plugs
- Swimsuit
- Small travel towel
- Sandals
- Insect repellent
- Hand sanitiser
- Toilet paper (for the train journeys)

Land Only Information

Please note our 'from price' listed is based on 4 persons in double or twin occupancy, however we can quote for any number of travellers, including solo travellers - contact our Sales Team for a quote.

When considering your travel dates, you might like to investigate any seasonal opening times of attractions and points of interest.

All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. You may even wish to make this holiday part of a bigger adventure or pair it with one of our other holidays. We can arrange additional nights' accommodation before or after your self-guided trip - ask our Sales Team to find out more about this.

Please DO NOT book your flights before you have received your booking confirmation and your deposit has been taken.

Our Sales Team will also be happy to provide you with a quote for scheduled flights from your nearest regional airport (where possible). Flight prices are subject to change depending on availability and seasonality. Flight prices will only be confirmed to you when all services have been arranged and confirmed for your requested dates.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

This self-guided holiday ticks off the unmissable highlights of north, central and south Vietnam with a blend of independent self-guided exploration and guided experiences for an added cultural insight. Travelling the length of the country on the Reunification Line, you will be able to partake in a more sustainable approach to travel while experiencing an inimitable taste of Vietnam.Standard bike hire is included in the cost of your trip so you can relax knowing that this is all taken care of for you.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 19/11/2026 and the trip is subject to change