

Vietnam – Northern Exploration Trip (7 days)



Departs anytime (2018-19)



Please note: This itinerary can be modified in any way to best suit your school's particular aims, learning objectives and budget.

Please contact us detailing any changes.

With its bustling cities featuring high rises side by side with splendid French colonial architecture, quiet country villages reliant of rice agriculture and ornate Confucius temples, Vietnam is a country of contrasts.

Students travelling on this 7-day trip will enjoy all these places as well as a cruise on the emerald waters of Ha Long Bay, authentic interaction with minority hill tribes villagers and the many delights of the country's capital, Hanoi.

As this trip is designed especially for students, a significant component of the itinerary is concerned with a cultural understanding of Vietnam, its turbulent history and the rapid social changes it is currently undergoing.

Most importantly, this trip is designed to be highly enjoyable and features several outdoor educational activities to provide students with a very memorable and fulfilling introduction to one of the friendliest countries in Asia.



David Eales
Asia Manager

Day 1

 Arrive Hanoi  Mai Chau



On arrival in Hanoi we will be greeted by our tour leader and board our coach for a three-hour trip to Mai Chau province. Mai Chau is a short distance from Vietnam's western border with Laos and home to a variety of hill tribes, most notably the White Thai ethnic minority group. The White Thai maintains a traditional lifestyle, practicing an animistic religion and a variety of other cultural practices, such as singing and dancing to elicit bountiful harvests.

Once arriving in Mai Chau, we will begin our exploration of the hinterland with a vigorous walk to our guest house. We will have time to freshen up before preparing tools and foundations for a dwelling construction project in the coming days.

Tonight, our host family will prepare a delicious evening meal as we learn about the local customs and folklore of the region's inhabitants.

*Please note: While Mai Chau is truly one of the trip highlights, the facilities are quite basic. A thin mattress, pillow and mosquito net will be provided in the long-house. Toilets and showering facilities are simple. Good quality walking shoes/boots are necessary. Main packs may be left back in the Hanoi hotel so you will only need to carry a small pack while trekking. A local cook will prepare all meals on route. (lunch, dinner) **Flight details to be advised***

Day 2 & 3

Mai Chau (community dwelling project)



Following breakfast, we begin our community project under the instruction of our highly experienced tour leaders and local villagers. Our project will take the form of practical building and some substantial laboring tasks as we undertake a construction project to assist a remote village. Breaking into groups, there will be a variety of activities to undertake each day of the project. This includes cutting bamboo flooring, assembling frames, hammering, sawing and transporting of materials. Local tradesmen and tour leaders will be supervising and assisting throughout the project, often identifying students with particular skills to perform the more difficult or skill orientated tasks. Groups will be rotated throughout the project.

During our time in this region we will be expected to assist with the preparation and cooking of meals for our group and local family. The days will be long and the results rewarding as we see our project come to fruition and as curious villages from all around come to see our efforts.

Whilst here we will learn of the rituals of the local White Thai inhabitants and gain an understanding of their sense of community, customs and see how the villagers have adapted to their environment, especially in agriculture. There will be ample opportunity to experience the daily lives of the various tribes that inhabit this regions whose lives have changed little over the centuries. On our final evening in Mai Chau, it is likely that the local people will perform a dance ceremony for us which will encourage significant student participation. (2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners)

Day 4

Mai Chau  Hanoi



This morning we will return to Hanoi to enjoy the energy of this Asian metropolis. Despite decades of upheaval and suffering, Vietnam's capital city today portrays much of the majesty of its colonial heritage, all the while contending with the unrelenting surge of humanity (and scooters!) vying for right of way amid the din of constantly blaring horns.

We will quickly experience this vibe today as we visit the city's 'Old Quarter' where each street is names after the product it sells. The prefix "Hang" on street signs means "merchandise". A stroll down Hang Dong (copper bells and gongs), Hang Cot (bamboo) and Hang Non (hats) reveals the quintessential Hanoi.

Today we will also visit the infamous 'Hanoi Hilton' Prison Museum that once held US pilots shot down during the Vietnam War in the in the 1960's. Dinner this evening will be at a popular outdoor restaurant. (breakfast, lunch)

Day 5

Hanoi 🚗 Ha Long Bay



No trip Hanoi would be complete without a visit to the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum which we will visit today. This very imposing Soviet style block is the final resting place of President Ho Chi Minh. Born Nguyen Ai Quoc, Ho Chi Minh was the leader of North Vietnam when war with the United States broke out. As a young man, 'Uncle Ho' as he is affectionately referred to today, was deeply resentful of the French elite who governed Vietnam and subsequently became the country's most prominent nationalist leader. During the 1950s & 60s Uncle Ho organised resistance against the French whose expulsion created a vacuum, leading to American intervention in Vietnam and the tumultuous decades of conflict that followed. Whilst Ho Chi Minh was to never see his country free of foreign rule (passing away in 1969), he is credited as the individual most responsible for its eventual liberation. When *Saigon* fell in 1975, the city was renamed Ho Chi Minh City in his honour. After lunch, we will begin our drive to magnificent Ha Long Bay. Arriving mid-afternoon, we will board our private sleeper-boat to go cruising in this secluded haven with its 2000 odd limestone peaks. Topped with thick jungle vegetation, each island rises spectacularly from the ocean amongst clear waters dotted with floating fishing villages. This evening we will motor to a remote part of the bay where we will moor and enjoy the serenity of this secluded expanse. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Please note: The sleeper-boat is equipped with life jackets, a shower and toilet facilities. All meals will be prepared on board. Sleeping arrangements will be twin/triple or quad room-share. The boat trip is calm as Ha Long Bay is sheltered from the open sea. NB2: Please note the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum is closed Mondays and Fridays and can only be viewed from outside on these days.

Day 6

Ha Long Bay



Ha Long Bay's scatter of islands, dotted with wind and wave-eroded grottoes, is a vision of ethereal beauty, best enjoy by kayak. The calm, waters of the bay make a perfect setting for the kayaking excursion we will enjoy this morning as our tour leader tells us of the myths and legends (and later geography) that formed the amazing karst topography, which makes up the dense cluster of monolithic islands. Later we will motor to a different area of the bay to view other vistas of this UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today we will also visit a spectacular cave, before spending another evening in Ha Long Bay tonight aboard our sleeper boat. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 7

Ha Long Bay 🚗 Depart Hanoi ✈️ Home

We start with breakfast before heading back to port for our journey back to Hanoi and home. Time permitting, we will visit a delightful artisan village to learn of Hanoi's rural origins and the rich heritage of lacquer painting which is a unique Vietnamese art form. Our tour leader will take care of all our onward travel arrangements and wave us farewell. (breakfast) **Flight details to be advised**

Summary

Grading

Moderate: Students & teachers with reasonable fitness should be able to take part. There are no real physical difficulties. You will however be expected to walk in and out of the project site area. It will be necessary for you to carry your own luggage throughout the trip but only for short distances

Accommodation

Student accommodation is on a twin/triple share basis. Teacher accommodation is on a single room basis. The group will be staying in 3-star equivalent hotels and Homestay in the Mekong Delta.

Transport

Modern air-conditioned bus and boat.

Group Size

Minimum group size 20 students & 2 staff members travelling free of charge.

▲Smaller group sizes can be quoted upon application

Your Tour Leader

Your tour leader is probably the person who most influences the success of your trip. Thus, Student Educational Adventures employs our own team of meticulously trained student dedicated, local tour leaders - not foreigners, imported at your students' expense with no language skills or insight into your host culture.

These nationals are not only the best folk to show you their country. They are your teachers, translators and an enthusiastic purveyor of authentic experiences. They are there to facilitate your immersion into new cultures and are the bridge between you and the world of education and new experiences.

Your tour leader is always with your students throughout your trip and is thoroughly versed in safety protocols and duty of care responsibilities. This ranges from assisting in the most basic of health and safety measures to ensuring that teachers & students are always safe during our trips. All have been chosen because of their ability to deal with the needs and unique issues associated with escorting young people through this wonderful and at times, most foreign of regions.

Service Learning Program

All service-learning programs initiated by Student Educational Adventures in Vietnam are conducted after careful consultation with the local community and with the local People's Committee.

These projects are initiated based on a model of mutual learning and designed as an immersion experience. An understanding of the importance of an integrated approach to community development is useful to frame what students and teachers might see, learn or experience during a student immersion.

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Inclusions

- All accommodation, transport, activities, entrance costs and other programs as described in the itinerary
- *Student Educational Adventures* tour leader throughout the trip & additional specialist guides
- All breakfast & dinners (+ drinking water) as listed in the daily itinerary. Some lunches
- Pre-departure support, briefings & planning meetings for students and parents
- 24/7 in-country support
- **Cost of community project**

Exclusions

- International flights to/from Vietnam
- Some lunches
- Vietnam Visa (if required)