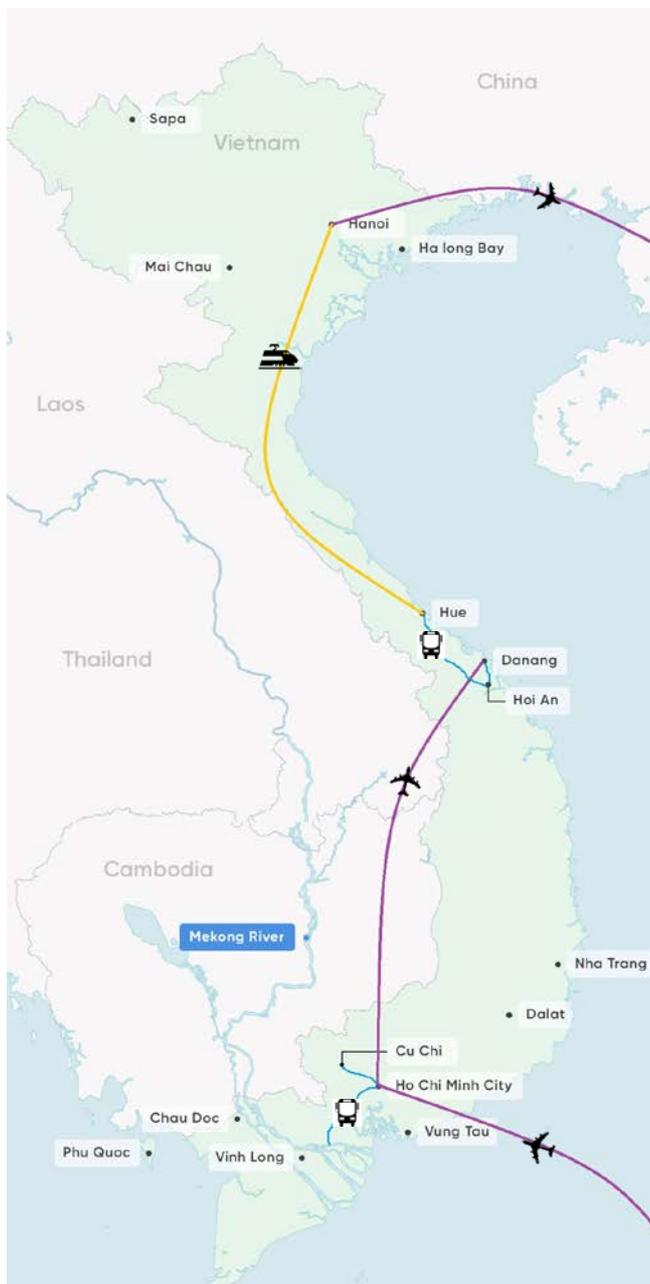


Vietnam for Inquiring Minds: Society, Culture & Service (11 days)



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 you'd like to make.

No visitor comes away without a measure of admiration and fondness for the inhabitants of this enigmatic nation. Vietnamese culture is complex, diverse and represents something of a history lesson for all young students, who are among the first to grow up thinking of Vietnam as a country and not as a conflict.

This 11-day itinerary will take students the length of the country to enjoy a thorough exploration of its major cities, less travelled central provinces and to the remote reaches of the Mekong Delta.

Highlights of the trip will include a plethora of cultural and leisure activities, an excursion to the Cu Chi Tunnels, an urban exploration 'Great Race' style activity as well and a hands-on cooking class and a range of *student-initiated* activities. It will also include a challenging community-service project working alongside a remote community to construct a dwelling in an effort of foster comradeship and solidarity.

Most importantly, this trip is designed to be highly enjoyable as is intended to foster students' Asia literacy and awareness. We hope to provide a very memorable introduction to Vietnam, one of the most intriguing countries in Asia.



David Eales
Asia manager

Day 1

Arrive Ho Chi Minh City



On arrival in Vietnam this morning we will be greeted by our tour leader at Ho Chi Minh City International Airport. With no time to lose, we will begin our exploration with an excursion to Cu Chi Province located a short distance from the city. En route our tour leader will discuss with us our itinerary and provide us with a thorough run down of all the things we need to know when travelling in Vietnam, as well as giving us a short history and Vietnamese language lesson.

If the tenacious spirit of the Vietnamese can be symbolised by a place, few sites are more symbolic than the guerrilla tunnels of Cu Chi that were established in this unassuming, southern district of the country.

Whilst the tumultuous events of the conflict are scantily evident at first glance, we will quickly glean some perspective of what happened here as we explore the maze of tunnels beneath our feet built by the local inhabitants. It is this area of south Vietnam that witnessed the fiercest fighting and was also subjected to a damaging defoliation program, the results of which can still be observed in the area today.

After lunch we will make our way to Ho Chi Minh City – the powerhouse of Vietnam and the epitome of a bustling Asian metropolis. After a short time to relax, we will meet to discuss our program over the coming days before heading out to dinner. Following our meal there will be ample time this evening to enjoy the city's main walking thoroughfare before we return to our hotel for a well anticipated night's rest. **Flight details to be advised**

Day 2

Ho Chi Minh City (City tour & 'Great Race' activity)



This morning we will set out for a thorough exploration of Ho Chi Minh City – This famous city is Vietnam at its most vibrant: a high-octane city of commerce and culture that has driven the country forward with its vivacious energy. During our city tour today, we will also visit the city's Chinese district and as well as the War Remnants museum to learn of the American War in Vietnam from a local perspective.

This afternoon we will enjoy a 'Great Race' around Ho Chi Minh City. This activity is designed to facilitate urban exploration and to enhance students' knowledge of this historic city as well as our appreciation of Southeast Asian culture. We will complete tasks, navigate and collect information and take

part in activities that will be challenging, fun and educational. Later we will take time to visit some of the city's other most important sites including its historic post office, French inspired cathedral and its colonial inspired streets.

Dinner this evening will be at a popular local eatery followed by an optional session of one of Asia's favourite pastimes – karaoke!

NB: As the great race requires a significant amount of time complete, race activities will take place in the morning and the afternoon. Students who are not racing will visit the attractions described above in the morning and compete in the Great Race in the afternoon (and vice-versa). (breakfast, dinner)

Day 3

Ho Chi Minh City Mekong Delta



There will be a short time this morning to explore some of Ho Chi Minh's city's epic markets. These sweltering bazaars are a must when travelling in Vietnam, and whilst we can't vouch for the authenticity of everything, the experience, colour and interaction are the real attraction of these markets.

A new adventure begins this afternoon as we depart the city for our journey into the waterways of the Mekong Delta. Vietnam's own 'rice bowl' - the Mekong is a dizzying maze of green tributaries that move to the rhythms of the mighty Mekong. It is also home to nearly one-fifth of the country's population and is the lifeblood of south Vietnam.

On arrival we will board our private boat to cruise through tributaries, stopping to visit various cottage industries including confectionary manufacturing, incense production and pottery

making. This afternoon we will enjoy a bike ride through villages to get a feeling of the lifestyles of the local people and later make our way to a small island nestled in the heart of the Delta, the site of our local family home stay.
NB: The homestays is a private home overlooking the Mekong River. Accommodation is very basic featuring basic bedding, pillows and blankets, mosquito nets, ceiling fans, electric lights, mosquito coils and western toilets. Main luggage may be left in our city hotel storage room while on the community project. (All meals included during building component) (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 4 & 5 Mekong Delta



Life in the Mekong Delta begins early, as we will to have breakfast and begin our building project. This will take the form of practical building and some labouring tasks as we work alongside a local community in a construction effort to build a dwelling.

Breaking into groups, there will be a variety of tasks to undertake each day of the project from cutting bamboo scaffolding, assembling frames, bricklaying, hammering, sawing and transporting of materials. Local tradesmen and tour leaders will be supervising and assisting throughout the project, often identifying students with 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. Curious villagers from all around will come to watch and assist us. (all meals)

Day 6 Ho Chi Minh City ✈️ Danang (Hoi An)



This morning we will put the finishing touches on the dwelling followed by a short handover formality before farewelling the villagers whom we have worked alongside. Although there will be a few tasks required before the dwelling is completed, it is expected we will have finished the great majority of the building.

Following this we will farewell our village and journey back to Ho Chi Minh City from where we will transit straight to the airport for our short flight to the country's central provinces.

Arriving in the city of Danang this afternoon, we will visit *Marble Mountain* and climb to its peak to enjoy views of the surrounding hinterland and *China Beach*. Following this we will travel to Hoi An – a picturesque silk route trading town overlooking the South China Sea (known in Vietnam as the East Sea). Hoi An is famous for its clever preservation of architecture, unique cuisine and friendly locals. It is also famous for its enticingly rural and coastal scenery.

This afternoon we will venture out on bikes along back roads and buffalo tracks to visit a secluded beach.

Later this evening we will take part in a hands-on cooking class hosted by one of the town's talented chefs, who will reveal the secrets to cooking some of Vietnam's essential dishes. We will also learn more about Hoi An's rich history and architecture and of its heyday as an important trading port during the 15th & 16th centuries (breakfast, lunch, dinner) (**flight time to day to be advised**)

Day 7 Hoi An (Student-initiated activities)



Prior to travelling, a Student Educational Adventures staff member will talk to teachers and students about specific activities that your students might like to add to their overseas experience. These activities can be included based on students' knowledge of the country or their interests or passions for any aspect of a country's culture.

The activities we can include are many and varied. These may include: an introduction to a country's creative or performing arts scene, visits to international and local schools, great race activities, outdoor educational pursuits such as abseiling, basket boating, snorkelling or mountain biking or a

plethora of cultural programs. Please contact us for further ideas.

OPTION 1:

Cham Island Boat trip: After breakfast this morning we will travel to the seaside to board our private boat to delightful Cham Island. On arrival we will have the chance to enjoy snorkelling (wet suits and life jackets supplied) in the shallow waters off a delightful beach. Whilst here there will be also be ample time to enjoy lazing in hammocks as well as enjoy and visit an isolated fishing village. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

OPTION 2:

Abseiling: This morning we will board our bus and travel to the historic Marble Mountain where we will climb to the top to take in views of My Khe Beach. After a thorough exploration of the grottos and caves featured through this complex, we will undergo instruction from our specialist abseiling guides and later practice our skills around the mountain's surrounding caves and cliffs. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)



OPTION 3:

Basket boating: We will venture out after breakfast to explore the hidden waterways and palm laden backwaters in the Hoi An hinterland by way of basket boats. These quintessential Vietnamese vessels have changed little in 600 years and will provide us with a fun and physical way to access the canals and experience the lives of local rural dwellers. We will also enjoy a delicious lunch and visit a ceramics community to try our hand and tradition pottery making (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 8

Hoi An  Hue



Today we will depart Hoi An and travel further north to the beautiful imperial city of Hue. Pronounced 'hway', this evocative capital of the Nguyen emperors still resonates with the glories of imperial Vietnam.

Students of history will quickly begin to appreciate that Hue is in fact, a city of loss - loss of prestige to colonial France, loss of purposes as a deposed capital and loss of innocent owing to decade of conflict at which Hue was at the epicentre. It is also a truly charming city, rich in character and surely the most photogenic city in all of Vietnam.

Arriving this afternoon, we will set out at a leisurely pace, taking in Dong Ba market, the moated ruins of the Imperial Citadel and the famous Thien Mu

Pagoda. Dinner this evening will be at as popular river side restaurant or depending on what we are in the mood for, a meal of pizza or similar! (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 9

Hue (Reunification Express Train)  Hanoi



Today we will head into the countryside on bicycles venturing through rural villages, crossing ancient bridges and climbing up an old royal colosseum once used for tiger and elephant fighting. We will visit an intriguing tomb of one of the Nguyen Emperors to learn of Vietnam's royal heritage that has since adopted a socialist doctrine. En route we will see remnants left over from the conflict - not used since the 1968 Tet Offensive. After dinner in the early evening we will board the overnight *Reunification Express* train heading north.

Guaranteed to rock us to sleep in every direction, our train journey this evening - enjoyed by rail buffs from around the world - will this evening take us through the former *Demilitarized Zone* (DMZ) on route to Vietnam's capital city Hanoi.

Train compartments are 4-berth soft sleepers. Each compartment has fold out beds, pillows, sheets, blankets, air conditioning and lockable doors. The train departs Hue in the early evening and arrives in Hanoi the following morning. Dinner and breakfast on the train are not included but can be purchased cheaply before the train trip to Hanoi. (breakfast, lunch)

Day 10

Hanoi



We will awake early this morning as our train arrives in the delightful capital city of Hanoi. This gracious city, one of Asia's most beautiful, was virtually off limits to foreigners until the early 1990's in this period when Vietnam was considered a pariah state by other most other nations. Today its streets surge with scooters vying for right of way amid its delightful period architecture telling of its French and Chinese occupation.

We will deposit our luggage at our hotel this morning before setting out to breakfast and then to explore some of the city's charming highlights. No visit to Hanoi would be complete without a visit to the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and One Pillar Pagoda, now a pilgrimage site for the locals. Later we will visit

the Hanoi's intriguing Old Quarter and wander through narrow lanes packed with a myriad of goods, including exotic fruits and foodstuffs, copied designer clothes and electronic items. This afternoon there will be time to visit the famous Hoa Lo prison – nicknamed the 'Hanoi Hilton' by the American airman who survived and were incarcerated here.

There will be time to rest this afternoon before we head out in the early evening to enjoy a performance of Hanoi's famed *Water Puppet Troupe* to learn something about Vietnam's folklore and legends followed by our final dinner in Vietnam at a popular lake side restaurant. *NB; as we will be arriving in Hanoi very early it will not be possible to check in to our hotel until late-morning. In this time our tour leader will take us to breakfast and around Hanoi to enjoy some light morning activities) (breakfast, lunch, dinner)*

Day 11

Depart Hanoi ✈ Home



We will visit B52 Lake to learn about the US bomb raids over Hanoi in the 1970s before travelling around the narrow laneways of Ngoc Ha suburb to see how the locals live in close quarters. We dine at KOTO restaurant for lunch. KOTO is a non-profit organisation established to train disadvantaged teenagers in the hospitality industry. There will be a short, final time this afternoon for another guided (or independent) exploration of the city's old quarter before we check out of our hotel and prepare for our homebound flight.

Our tour leader will then escort us to the airport and help us with all onward travel arrangements before waving us farewell. (breakfast) **Flight details to**

be advised

Summary

Grading

Challenging; Students will be required to be in good health to get the most out of this trip while any one of reasonable fitness will be able to take part. There are no real physical difficulties however students will be expected to walk every day, particularly during the community project component of the trip.

Students will be expected to work diligently during the days of the community service project.

Students will also be expected to be able to ride a bike and be able to participate in a light hiking activity. 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. Hotels hold a 3-star equivalent rating.

Transport

Modern air-conditioned bus, boat, plane, cyclo/bicycle and train.

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.

Vietnam for Inquiring Minds Society, culture & service (11 days)

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
- **Additional internal flight Ho Chi Minh – Da Nang**
- Meals (+ drinking water) as listed in the daily itinerary
- Pre-departure support, briefings & planning meetings for students and parents
- 24/7 in-country support

Exclusions

- International flights to/from Vietnam
- Cost of community project (US\$1,800)
- Some meals
- Vietnam Visa (if required)