

## Vietnam: Hanoi, Hue, Hoi An & Saigon

### Bike Vacation Only

If you ever wondered what it's like to live in Vietnam, this cycling vacation immerses you deep in its culture. At VBT, we've been biking in Vietnam for over 20 years—and we know where to find the hidden gems. Explore local markets in Cau Ngoi Thanh Toa and Hoi An, and learn to cook a traditional Vietnamese meal—discovering the rhythm of Vietnamese daily life. View the tomb of Emperor Khai Dinh in the Imperial City, and ride a colorful dragon boat on the Perfume River. As you cycle the lush green rice paddies and river valleys of Vietnam, our dedicated team of local VBT trip leaders and assistants will pamper you and keep your bike in tip-top condition—ensuring you have nothing to worry about but having the time of your life.

### Cultural Highlights

- Explore Hanoi on two guided tours and a *cyclo* (rickshaw) ride.
- Attend a performance that's unique to Vietnamese culture: a water puppet show.
- Delve into Vietnam's ancient history on a guided tour of the Imperial City and the Forbidden Purple City of Hue.
- Admire shifting landscapes of fish and duck farms, rice paddies, palm forests, mountains, and coastline on scenic cycling routes.
- Savor the local cuisine—including a hands-on class at a cooking school.

### What to Expect

This tour offers easy terrain throughout the trip and is suitable for beginning cyclists and ideal for regular recreational cyclists. Roads are carefully selected but in general are not of the same standard as in Europe or the U.S. Road surfaces can be a mix of pavement and packed soil. Potholes are not uncommon, and defined lanes are not a given. A mix of vehicles, animals, and pop-up enterprises can be found along urban roadways.

**Tour Duration:** 11 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 6-29 miles

**Average Cycling Time:** 1-4 hours

**Group size:** 14-20 max

### Climate Information

**Average High/Low Temperature (°F)**

January 66°/58°, February 67°/60°, March 72°/65°, October 82°/73°, November 76°/66°, December 71°/60°

**Average Rainfall (in.)**

January 0.7, February 1.1, March 1.5, October 3.9, November 1.7, December 0.8

## **DAY 1: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Hanoi Orientation Tour**

Meet your VBT trip leaders and fellow travelers at 2:00 p.m. in the lobby of your Hanoi hotel to begin your tour with a guided afternoon excursion. Highlights include the exterior of Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, the iconic One Pillar Pagoda, and the historic Temple of Literature. You'll also visit Tran Quoc Pagoda—the oldest Buddhist temple in Hanoi—peacefully set on an island in West Lake.

Next, visit Hỏa Lò Prison, known to American POWs as the "Hanoi Hilton." Today, a museum occupies the former gatehouse, offering a sobering and powerful glimpse into life during the Vietnam War.

Afterward, return to the hotel to relax before gathering again for a welcome briefing, reception, and group dinner at the hotel.

Included Meals: Dinner

## **DAY 2: Explore Hanoi / Cyclo Ride**

Sleep in today or join an early-morning walk to Hoan Kiem Lake to experience the city as it awakens. You may see locals practicing tai chi by the water, families out for a stroll, and street vendors setting out their wares. Return to the hotel for breakfast.

Later this morning, join your trip leaders for an eye-opening walk through the Old Quarter, where shops sell everything from therapeutic herbs and prayer flags to shoes and hardware.

Linger over lunch at a local restaurant before picking up the pace with a *cyclo* (rickshaw) ride through the French Quarter. Your final stop is the Thang Long Theater, where you'll enjoy a mesmerizing water puppet performance.

This evening, dine at a local restaurant.

## Today's Ride Choices

### What to Expect:

Non-Biking Day: Explore Hanoi: Today is a non-biking day focused on cultural discovery. Enjoy guided walks through Hanoi's Old and French Quarters, a cyclo (rickshaw) ride, and a traditional water puppet show. Walking is primarily on city streets with uneven pavement in some areas.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 3: Fly to Hue / Explore the Imperial Citadel and Forbidden Purple City / Warm-Up Ride**

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight to Hue. From 1802 to 1945, Hue served as Vietnam's Imperial City and is home to a vast citadel and the tombs of its emperors. Upon arrival, visit the Imperial Citadel, located along the banks of the Perfume River. Your walking tour takes you inside this walled fortress—beyond Hien Nhan Gate lie the Imperial City and the Forbidden Purple City, both part of a vast and historic enclosure.

After checking into your Hue hotel, enjoy lunch on your own—perhaps in the resort's fine dining room or with a light meal by the pool. This afternoon, join your trip leaders for a safety and bike-fitting session. Then, set out on a warm-up ride that includes a visit to the Mausoleum of Khai Dinh.

This evening, gather in the hotel's dining room for a dinner featuring local specialties.

Please note: To operate this itinerary efficiently, VBT maintains two fleets of bikes in Vietnam—one in the central region and another in the south. Your trip leaders will ensure both bikes are properly adjusted to your preferences.

## Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Hue Warm-Up Ride — 14 km (9 miles)

### What to Expect:

Hue is an ideal place to ride, offering quiet roads and beautiful countryside. Starting from the resort, you'll

pedal through rolling hills to the nearby Tomb of Emperor Khai Dinh—arguably the most spectacular of all the Nguyen Dynasty tombs. You'll have the opportunity to explore the site and pass by several other imperial tombs along the way. Most roads are paved, though there may be some short unpaved sections. This ride is designed to help you get comfortable cycling on Vietnamese roads. Please note that during the wet season, a rain jacket may be necessary.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 km (9 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 4: Cycle Country Villages / Dragon Boat Cruise on the Perfume River**

This morning, shuttle from the hotel to the start of your ride, then cycle along the banks of the Perfume River, where you may see dragon boats, sampans, and traditional houseboats adorned with rooftop shrines. Pedal on quiet country roads through villages to Thien Mu Pagoda.

Enjoy an included lunch during a 30–45-minute cruise along the Perfume River, then continue cycling southeast of the city through rice fields and past duck and fish farms. In the village of Cau Ngoi Thanh Toan, look for a small covered bridge. Built more than two centuries ago, it has withstood storms, floods, and wars, and remains the heart of the village. While in Thanh Toan, stop at the local market for an authentic glimpse of daily life.

Return by bike to the resort with time to enjoy a luxurious spa treatment, a swim in the spectacular pool, or a relaxing rest before dinner.

Tonight, dine at a charming garden restaurant featuring five authentic 19th- and early-20th-century Hue houses—an atmospheric setting that offers a glimpse into the city's elegant past.

### **Today's Ride Choices**

Morning: Hue to Thien Mu Pagoda — 22 km (14 miles)

Afternoon: Return to Hue — 17 km (10 miles)

What to Expect:

This morning's ride follows quiet back roads near the Perfume River, passing through farming villages with vegetable gardens and rice paddies. As you approach the center of Hue, traffic increases slightly, culminating at the impressive Thien Mu Pagoda, where the ride concludes and you embark on a scenic cruise along the Perfume River. In the afternoon, cycle farther from the city center past fish and duck farms, cross a centuries-old Japanese bridge, and pass a small war memorial before spotting the Nhu Y River, a sign that you're nearing the end of your ride. Most of today's route is on paved roads.

Cumulative Distance Range: 22 – 39 km (14 – 24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 5: Cycle Coastal Roads & Lang Co Peninsula / Shuttle to Hoi An**

The coastline between Hue and Hoi An is one of the most spectacular stretches of landscape in Vietnam. Here, the central mountain range descends toward the South China Sea, offering stunning views of pristine coastline on one side and towering peaks on the other. The Lang Co Peninsula and nearby Hai Van ("Ocean Cloud") Pass form a natural border between Da Nang and Thua Thien Hue province. If the weather is clear, you'll enjoy sweeping vistas from the top of the pass all the way to Hoi An.

Today's ride begins on the outskirts of Hue, where you'll pedal through vibrant local communities, passing schoolchildren riding bikes or being ferried on the backs of motorbikes.

Pause for lunch in the village of Lang Co before continuing to the Hai Van Pass. Stop at the top for photos of the breathtaking scenery on both sides of the 1,600-foot (488-meter) mountain ridge. Those seeking a challenge may choose to cycle up the pass, while others can enjoy a more relaxed route along Tam Giang Lagoon, observing an oyster-fishing community and the region's iconic water buffalo before shuttling to the summit.

You'll arrive in Hoi An by van and check into your hotel on Hoi An Beach. Dinner is included at your resort this evening.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hue to Hoi An — 33 km (20 miles)

Afternoon: Hai Van Pass — 14 km (9 miles) OR Lagoon Loop Ride — 14 km (9 miles)

### What to Expect:

Today's ride begins on the outskirts of Hue, following a scenic route through local communities, over undulating hills, and across bridges spanning small rivers flowing from the mountains before finishing near Tam Giang Lagoon. In the afternoon, those seeking a challenge may opt to climb the Hai Van (Ocean Cloud) Pass by bike. For a more relaxed experience, enjoy the Lập An Lagoon ride, a picturesque route flanked by high mountain ranges and oyster farms, with plenty of opportunities to stop for spectacular photos.

Cumulative Distance Range: 33 – 47 km (20 – 29 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 6: Cycle Through Rural Vietnam / Walking Tour of Hoi An**

This morning's cycling route crosses the Thu Bon River, passing fishing boats and small houses. Along the way, stop to observe family temples and Areca-nut gardens, then continue through a water-coconut palm forest and past fish farms, mat weavers, and other hallmarks of local life. You'll pause at a shady, scenic spot for a picnic lunch.

After lunch, choose between a second countryside ride or a shuttle back to the seaside resort for some well-earned relaxation.

Later, enjoy a guided walking tour of Hoi An's Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site. This remarkably preserved area features tile-roofed shop houses, pagodas, and colorful communal halls. Highlights include the local market, Tan Ky House, the Japanese Bridge, and a Chinese temple.

This evening, you're free to enjoy dinner on your own at one of the many open-air restaurants along Hoi An's scenic waterfront road, Bach Dang.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hoi An to the Coast — 29 km (17 miles)

Afternoon: Hoi An Countryside — 17 km (10 miles)

What to Expect:

Hoi An is surrounded by picturesque countryside where farmers and fishermen continue their traditional way of life. This morning's ride winds through small villages along the Thu Bon River, then reaches the coast before looping back inland through rice paddies and farming hamlets to your resort. In the afternoon, you may choose to continue exploring the scenic Hoi An countryside, passing fishing villages and visiting the tranquil Cam Thanh Coconut Village.

Cumulative Distance Range: 29 – 46 km (17 – 27 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 7: Hoi An / Red Bridge Cooking School Experience**

After breakfast, board your bike and ride into Hoi An, where you'll meet the chef at Hai Café for a brief introduction and welcome drink. Then, stroll through Hoi An's bustling central market with the chef, taking in the vibrant sights, sounds, and aromas while learning how to choose the fresh produce and ingredients essential to Vietnamese cuisine.

Next, enjoy a 20-minute boat ride to the cooking school—keep your camera handy for snapshots of daily river life. Upon arrival, visit the school's herb garden before participating in a hands-on, join-in cooking class. Afterward, sit down at the school's scenic riverside restaurant to savor the delicious meal you've created.

Following lunch, you'll be shuttled by van back to the Boutique Hoi An Resort. The remainder of the afternoon and evening are yours to explore Hoi An at your own pace—perhaps visit the shops and lantern-lit streets of Old Town or enjoy dinner at one of the many local restaurants along the river.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Red Bridge Cooking School — 10 km (6 miles)

What to Expect:

From your beachside resort, enjoy a leisurely morning spin past farm fields and over quiet waterways. The final stretch follows the Thu Bon River, delivering you into the heart of Hoi An's Old Town, where your

cooking class experience begins.

Cumulative Distance Range: 10 km (6 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 8: Fly to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) / Independent Exploration**

Enjoy breakfast and a leisurely start to the day at your resort. In the late morning, travel to Da Nang for your flight to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City). Upon arrival, transfer to the centrally located Hotel Majestic, a welcoming and well-situated base for exploring Vietnam's most vibrant city. The rest of the day and evening are yours to enjoy at your own pace.

Be sure to visit the hotel's M Bar—ranked among Saigon's top rooftop venues—for signature cocktails, panoramic views of the Saigon River, and live performances by local musicians.

Today's Ride Choices

What to Expect:

Non-Biking Day: Fly to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) and enjoy time to explore this vibrant city at your leisure.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 9: Explore the Cu Chi Tunnels / Cycle to Ben Duoc**

After breakfast, shuttle about one hour north of Ho Chi Minh City to Cu Chi, site of the infamous military tunnels. Upon arrival, you'll hop on your bike and ride to the tunnel complex, where you'll have the unique opportunity to speak with a local Vietcong. Then, explore the tunnels themselves—a 75-mile-long (120.7-km-long) underground maze where the Vietcong quite literally dug themselves out of harm's way. You'll also visit a rice paper workshop before descending into the narrow passageways.

After your visit, continue cycling to Ben Duoc for an included lunch, then return to the hotel by shuttle.

This evening, explore another of the city's excellent restaurants on your own.



## Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Cu Chi to Ben Duoc — 29 km (18 miles)

### What to Expect:

The Cu Chi landscape is known for its clay-rich soil, rubber plantations, and rice paddies. Today's ride leads you off the main roads and into the region's quieter agricultural areas.

Cumulative Distance Range: 29 km (18 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 10: Cycle the Mekong Delta / Farewell Dinner

This morning, shuttle about one hour to the town of Tan An in the Mekong Delta region. Then begin cycling through lush countryside rich with orange, papaya, grapefruit, and mango trees. Along the way, observe local life as motorists resourcefully transport pigs and coconuts on their mopeds. Your ride concludes with lunch in My Tho City.

In the afternoon, travel back to Ho Chi Minh City (approximately two hours). This evening, visit the former residence of a U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam and meet the current owners during a special farewell dinner.

## Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Mekong Delta — 34 km (21 miles)

### What to Expect:

Today's scenic ride winds through peaceful villages, rice paddies, and vibrant fruit orchards. The route includes a mix of quiet dirt paths and busier paved roads as you approach Highway 1. Along the way, expect warm greetings from curious locals—many on bikes themselves—cheerfully calling out “Xin chào!” (“Hello!”) as they pass.

Cumulative Distance Range: 34 km (21 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 11: Your VBT Vacation Ends**

Your trip concludes after an included breakfast at our Ho Chi Minh City hotel. You are responsible for arranging your own transportation to the Ho Chi Minh City airport for your departing flight. Taxis can be booked directly through the hotel and typically cost between \$8 and \$12 USD, depending on traffic. Be sure to confirm the fare with your driver in advance and request the most direct route to the airport, which is approximately 30 minutes away (7.5 miles).

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **Accommodations**

**May vary depending on departure date.**

### **Melia Hanoi Hotel (Days 1-2)**

A 5-star hotel ideally situated in Hanoi's city center, Melia Hanoi Hotel is within walking distance of all of the city's major attractions. It features two restaurants, a swimming pool, and a fitness center. The lobby lounge is spacious yet cozy. Located on the ground floor, the Cava Lounge is the perfect place to relax with a cocktail. The hotel's El Patio Restaurant is a spacious modern dining area with a Mediterranean feel. And the elegant El Oriental Restaurant specializes in Vietnamese and Thai cuisine, with an emphasis on fine seafood. You can also pick up a deli snack or a pastry treat at the Melia Deli. Air conditioning and WiFi are available throughout.

### **Pilgrimage Village (Days 3-4)**

The Pilgrimage Village in Hue is a boutique resort constructed of natural materials and set amid a lush green forest of palms. Its thatched-roof villas evoke a historic jungle village in a tranquil setting. The Vedana spa offers various massages and other bodywork to relax your muscles. In its Junrei Restaurant—a large traditional house supported by indigenous laterite-clay columns—dine on artfully prepared fusion cuisine. The Candle Bar offers a quiet space to unwind with fellow travelers. Each guest room features two private terraces, air conditioning, satellite television, minibar, daily flowers, and a fruit basket. WiFi is available throughout.

## **Boutique Hoi An Resort (Days 5-7)**

Boutique Hoi An Resort is ideally located on Hoi An Beach, just five minutes (3 miles / 4.8 km) by complimentary hotel shuttle from Hoi An town center. Guests may choose to unwind by the pool surrounded by tropical gardens, grab a beverage at the poolside bar, and enjoy the hotel spa and private beach. Each room offers views of the sea and a private balcony. Rooms are air conditioned, generous in size, and offer clean, contemporary furnishings. Free WiFi is offered in all guest rooms and public areas.

## **Hotel Majestic (Days 8-10)**

Established in 1925 as Saigon's finest hotel, the Majestic has gone through several incarnations over the years. In World War II, the Japanese Imperial Army used this French Colonial structure as a military barracks, and it was frequented by foreign correspondents during the Vietnam War. Today, it remains a hotel of tradition, hospitality, and elegance. Hotel Majestic is located within walking distance of the beautiful Opera House, Reunification Palace, Notre Dame Cathedral, Ben Thanh Markets, and reflexology and other therapy boutiques, as well as most major commercial office buildings. Air conditioning and WiFi are available throughout.