

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: VBT Bicycling Vacation begins / Hanoi / Orientation tour

This afternoon, all guests gather in the lobby, where you will meet your trip leaders for an eye-opening walk through the Old Quarter. The shops in the Old Quarter sell everything from therapeutic herbs and prayer flags to shoes and hardware, as you'll see.

The last stop is the Tang Long Theater, where you watch a mesmerizing water puppet performance. Then, return to your hotel to relax and rest before meeting with your VBT trip leaders, who provide a briefing of the week ahead. Enjoy a welcome reception, and dine with the group 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 shakes off its slumber. You may see locals practicing tai chi by the lake, families out for a stroll, and street vendors setting out their wares. Return to the hotel for breakfast.

Later this morning, rejoin your trip leaders for a guided excursion that includes visits to the exterior of Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, One Pillar Pagoda, and the Temple of Literature. Visit the oldest Buddhist temple in Hanoi, Tran Quoc Pagoda, located on an island east of the West Lake District. Face a sobering reminder of the impact of war and catch a glimpse into what life was like at the notorious *Hanoi Hilton* during a visit to the site of the Hỏa Lò Prison, where American POWs were kept, and the current-day museum occupying its former gatehouse.

Linger over lunch at a local restaurant before picking up the pace with a *cyclo* (rickshaw) ride through the French quarter. The ride ends at the hotel, where there is time for a rest or a swim.

Tonight, you'll dine at a local restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

What to Expect:

Non-biking day: Explore Hanoi

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3: Fly to Hue / Imperial Citadel and Forbidden Purple City / Warm-up ride

After breakfast, travel to the airport for your flight to Hue. From 1802 to 1945, this was Vietnam's Imperial City; it boasts a vast citadel and the tombs of its emperors. On arrival in Hue, travel to the Imperial Citadel, situated along the Perfume River. Your walking tour here takes you inside this walled fortress: within the citadel, just past Hien Nhan Gate, lie the Imperial City and the Forbidden Purple City. You'll enjoy a walking tour of this massive enclosure.

After you check into your Hue hotel, enjoy lunch on your own in the resort's fine restaurant or a light lunch by the pool. This afternoon, attend a safety and bike-fitting session with your trip leaders. Then, participate in a warm-up ride that includes a visit to the Mausoleum of Khai Dinh. At dinner, feast on local specialties in the hotel's dining room.

Please note: In order to operate this trip, VBT keeps two fleets of bikes in the country, one in central Vietnam and another in southern Vietnam. Your trip leaders will ensure that both bikes are tuned to your liking.

Today's Ride Choices

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

What to Expect:

Hue is an ideal place to ride, with quiet roads and beautiful countryside. Starting from the resort, you'll pedal through rolling hills to the nearby Emperor Khai Dinh's tomb, arguably the most spectacular of all the Nguyen Dynasty emperors. You will have a chance to enter this tomb and to pass by many other tombs throughout the ride today. The roads are mainly paved, but there may be some stretches of

unpaved road. This ride is designed to help you adjust to cycling on Vietnamese roads. Please note that a rain jacket may be required during the wet season.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 km (9 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4: Cycle country villages / Dragon boat ride on the Perfume River

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

Enjoy an included lunch while cruising along the Perfume River (30-45 minutes), 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 over two centuries ago, it has weathered many storms, floods, and wars, and it has been the soul of the Thanh Toan villagers for generations. While in the village, stop at the market for a truly authentic local experience.

You'll return by bike to the resort in plenty of time to enjoy a luxurious treatment, a swim in the spectacular pool, or a nap before dinner.

Tonight, you get another view of the city's splendid past. Your dinner venue is a garden restaurant comprising five authentic 19th- and early-20th-century Hue houses.

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 back roads in the countryside close to the Perfume River, viewing farming villages with vegetable gardens and rice paddies. As you head toward the center of Hue, traffic will become busier. The most impressive site you'll pass is Thien Mu pagoda, where you will finish the ride

and embark your Perfume River cruise.

This afternoon, you will cycle farther away from the city center, past fish and duck farms. Ride across the old Japanese bridge, dating back several centuries, before passing by a small war memorial. You'll know you're in the home stretch when you glimpse the Nhu Y River. This route is mainly on paved roads.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5: Cycle coastal roads / Shuttle to Hoi An

The coastline between Hue and Hoi An is one of the most spectacular stretches of landscape in the country. It is here that the mountain range running through central Vietnam reaches down toward the South China Sea, affording stunning views of pristine coast on one side and towering mountains on the other. The Lang Co peninsula and the nearby Hai Van (Ocean Cloud) Pass form a natural border between the city of Da Nang and Thua Thien Hue province. If the weather allows, excellent views can be taken in from the top of the pass all the way to Hoi An.

Starting from the outskirts of Hue, pedal through local communities where you see small children being driven to school on the backs of motorbikes and older children cycling along next to you.

Pause for lunch in the village of Lang Co. Then, travel up the Hai Van (Ocean Cloud) Pass, stopping at the top to take photos of the breathtaking views on both sides of the 1,600-foot (487.7-meter) mountain ridge. Those who like a challenge may choose to climb the pass by bike. Those who prefer more leisurely riding may cycle along Tam Giang Lagoon for a close-up look at an oyster-fishing community and the water buffalo common to the area before shuttling to the top of Hai Van Pass instead.

Arrive in Hoi An by van and check into your hotel on Hoi An Beach. Dinner is 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:

The base ride starts from the outskirts of Hue and pedals through local communities. The route will have some undulating hills and will cross a series of bridges covering small rivers flowing down from the mountains before finishing near Tam Giang Lagoon.

Those who like a challenge may climb the Hai Van (Ocean Cloud) Pass by bike on this afternoon's option.

For those who prefer a more leisurely ride, try the Lập An lagoon ride, where you'll see picturesque scenery with high mountain ranges and oyster farms lining the route. Enjoy lots of opportunities to stop for a spectacular photo along the way.

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 many fishing boats and small houses. As you bike, stop to observe family temples and Areca-nut gardens. You continue cycling through a water-coconut palm forest and past fish farms, mat weavers, and any number of examples of local livelihood. You'll stop at a shady and scenic point along the way to enjoy a picnic lunch.

There is a second ride option in the countryside after lunch, or you may shuttle back to the seaside resort for some well-deserved rest and relaxation.

Later, take part in a walking tour of Hoi An's Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site. What makes Hoi An remarkable today is that its Old Town has been beautifully preserved, the streets still lined with old tile-roofed shop houses, shady pagodas, and colorful communal halls. Discover the local market, Tan Ky House, the Japanese Bridge, and a Chinese temple.

Tonight, you are free to enjoy dinner on your own at one of the many open-air restaurants on Bach Dang, the waterfront road in Hoi An.

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 attractive countryside where you can observe the traditional way of life of farmers and fishermen. This morning's ride winds its way through small rural villages alongside the Thu Bon River before reaching the coast. You'll return inland, through rice paddies and farming villages before returning to your resort.

In the afternoon, if you wish, you can continue to explore the picturesque Hoi An countryside, where you will be able to observe daily life, fishing villages, and 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

Board your bike and head into Hoi An, where you'll meet up with the chef at Hai Café for a brief introduction and a welcome drink. Then, meander through Hoi An's central market with your chef to enjoy the sights, sounds, and aromas. This is your chance to learn how to select fresh produce and ingredients essential for Vietnamese cuisine. Embark on a 20-minute boat trip to the school. Get your camera ready, as the cruise offers glimpses of local river life. You visit the school's herb garden before enjoying a join-in, hands-on cooking class. Then, sit down in the lovely restaurant overlooking the river to enjoy what you have created.

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 waterways. The final stretch is along the Thu Bon River and leads you to 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 and the airport for your flight to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City). Upon arrival, drive to the centrally located Hotel Majestic, a comfortable home base for exploring Vietnam's liveliest city. The rest of the day and evening are yours to explore at your leisure.

Today's Ride Choices

What to Expect:

Non-biking day: Fly to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) and explore this lively city.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 9: Explore the Cu Chi tunnels / Cycle to Hoc Mon

After breakfast, shuttle (about one hour) north of Ho Chi Minh City to Cu Chi, the site of the infamous military tunnels. You arrive by bicycle and talk with a local Vietcong before visiting the passageways themselves. The Cu Chi tunnels are a 75-mile-long (120.7-km-long) underground maze where the Vietcong quite literally dug themselves out of harm's way. You will also explore a rice-paper workshop before getting down and dirty in the tunnels.

After your visit, you continue to cycle to Ben Duoc for an included lunch, after which the van shuttles you back to the hotel.

Try another of the city's wonderful restaurants on your own tonight.

Today's Ride Choices

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

What to Expect:

The Cu Chi landscape is famous for its clay-like soil, rubber plantations, and rice paddies. Your ride will take you away from the main roads and into the quieter agricultural regions.

Cumulative Distance Range: 29 km (18 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 10: Cycle the Mekong Delta

This morning, shuttle (about one hour) to the town of Tan An in the Mekong Delta area. Then, start cycling through the lush land, rich with orange, papaya, grapefruit, and mango trees. As you ride, note motorists resourcefully transporting pigs and coconuts on their mopeds. Your ride today ends when you stop for lunch in My Tho City.

In the afternoon, travel back to Ho Chi Minh City (about two hours). This evening, visit the former home 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:

This scenic ride will take you through local villages, rice farms, and fruit orchards on a mixture of small dirt roads and busier paved roads as you draw closer to Highway 1. You will also be greeted by many friendly and curious locals en route, often traveling on bikes themselves and shouting “Xin chào,” or “Hello,” as they pass by.

Cumulative Distance Range: 34 km (21 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 11: VBT Bicycling Vacation ends / Departure

Your trip ends after an included breakfast at our Ho Chi Minh City hotel. You are responsible for your own transportation to the Ho Chi Minh City airport for your flight home. You can book a taxi (approximately \$8-\$12 USD, depending on traffic) directly from the hotel. Please confirm the fare with your driver in advance to ensure the most direct route to the airport (about 30 minutes, 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.