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INSPIRE

TRAVEL

SECRET OF VIETNAM 14 days/13 nights

Itinerary Code: INS-PA03
Tour Operator / Agent: Inspire Travel
Quotation date: March 20, 2013
Validity: March 13, to Dec 31, 2014

OVERVIEW

The secrets of Vietnam await you on this two-week exploration that brings you to the highlights as well as some less-traveled locations. Beginning in the ancient capital of Hanoi, travel North to Sapa, nestled high in the mountains and experience a unique ethnic culture and stunning vistas. Enjoy an eco-travel experience that gets you in touch with the people and the environment of the North. We next head to the coast and Ha Long Bay, a natural wonder that you simply must see. Further south we discover the jewels of the centre, Hue, Da Nang and Hoi An. Each city offering a different clue to the secrets and history of this land. We arrive in Ho Chi Minh City and tour the Mekong Delta region and this great city which is the modern face of Vietnam.

ITINERARY

Day 1 | Arrive Hanoi (D)

Upon arrival, meet your guide and driver then transfer to hotel. The rest of the day is free to spend at your leisure. In the evening, enjoy a traditional "Water puppet" show, followed by your welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Hanoi, The capital of Vietnam welcomes you with very special oriental beauty which lies in the lovely and friendly smiles of the locals you meet. During the first day, you will stay at one of the most comfortable hotels in the city centre. It is located near and within the Old Quarter, therefore you will find it easy to explore the vibrant life of a true Hanoian, go shopping and visit many cultural spots within easy walking distance.

*Accommodation: In Hanoi
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

Day 2 | Hanoi City Tour - Sapa (B/L/)

Today, you will visit some beautiful spots which are regarded as the heart and soul of Hanoi such as Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum and Stilt House, then continue our visit to the Temple of Literature, the first National University of Vietnam, where you may take part in music exchanges with local people. Lunch is served at a local restaurant. In the afternoon, learn about the 54 traditions of Vietnam through an excursion to the Museum of Ethnology, then continue to Ngoc Son temple in a beautiful Jade island of Hoan Kiem Lake. In the late evening, you will catch a night train to Sapa.

Sapa is one of the small towns in the Northern mountainous region which features many marvelous natural scenery. Sapa has many natural sites such as Bac Waterfall, Lao Chai, Ta van village, Ta Phin village – all of much interest to the many travellers who take the time to visit the area.

*Accommodation: Sleeper Train
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch*

Day 3 | Lao Cai - Bac Ha - Sapa (B/L)

You will arrive at Lao Cai station around 5.00am and have breakfast before travelling on to Bac Ha market. After that, you will be transferred to Sapa for check in at your Hotel. The remaining time will be for you to rest and relax at the hotel surrounded by the stunning scenery of the mountains

Bac Ha Market is a famous market because it has retained it's pristine look and the bold characteristics of the highland people of Vietnam.

*Accommodation: In Sapa
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch*

Day 4 | Lao Chai – Ta Van village – Topas Ecolodge (B/L/D)

This day you will visit Lao Chai and Ta Van village to see how the local ethnic people, H'mong and Days live. The simple and spontaneous life of those people give Lao Chai and Ta Van a peace beauty and attractive to tourist. We continue on to stunning Topas Ecolodge for the evening.

*Accommodation: At Topas Ecolodge
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner*

Day 5 | Topas Ecolodge – Ban Ho – Lao Cai (B/L)

After breakfast, we leave for Sapa. On the way, you will visit Ban Ho village which is known for it's fascinating natural scenery. Most visitors are left speechless when leaving Ban Ho village because of it's sheer beauty.

*Accommodation: Sleeper Train
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch*

Day 6 | Hanoi / Ha Long Bay (B/L/D)

Arriving at Hanoi station around 5.00am, you will be transferred to a local hotel to freshen up after the night train trip from Sapa before taking a three and half hour drive (4hrs for the big bus, with a rest stop half way) to Halong Bay. Once you reach your destination, board a traditional junk for a fantastic cruise to explore the magnificent rock formations and grottos that this area is famous for. After lunch, take a rowing boat to visit one of the fishing villages on the bay. In the late



afternoon, an optional Kayaking trip is available to discover more parts of the area on your own, or just relax and enjoy watching the sun go down. Dinner will be served on board with local seafood specialities.

Halong is a UNESCO World Natural Heritage site which should never be missed on a visit to Vietnam. It has a lot of beautiful caves and grottoes around with characteristic limestone cliffs. It doesn't matter whether you are a nature lover or not, this bay is truly majestic.

*Accommodation: On Ha Long Bay Junk Boat
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

Day 7 | Ha Long Bay – Hanoi (B)

Early in the morning enjoy a cup of tea or Vietnamese coffee then join the Vietnamese Tai Chi class on the sundeck and catch the first rays of sunrise for another beautiful day on the bay. Continue our cruise among the breathtaking scenery, visit one of the most beautiful limestone cave, and open your eyes, your mind and your ears to nature. At 9.30am we will check-out and then have a delicious brunch before disembarking. Around 11:00 meet the driver at the pier then enjoy the drive back to Hanoi.

*Accommodation: In Hanoi
Meals: Brunch*

Day 8 | Hanoi – Danang (B/L/D)

Breakfast at your hotel then transfer to the airport for the morning flight to Da Nang. Upon arrival, travel to the Cham Museum to see the best collection of Champa artifacts. Lunch in a local restaurant. Continue the drive to Hoi An with a photo stop at the beautiful Marble Mountain. Check-in at your hotel in Hoi An then free time until dinner.

Hoi An is called the "Ancient Town", one of quietest cities in Vietnam with plenty of lantern shops, silk shops and tailors shops along the streets. Hoi An is one of the exciting and gaudy trading port centers of Southeast Asia from the 16th century. Hoi An is also known for Chinese and Japanese architecture and tasty central Vietnamese cuisine.

*Accommodation: In Hoi An
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

Day 9 | Hoi An (B)

After breakfast, start the day with a walking tour in the small quiet streets in the old heritage town. Visit one of the old traditional houses, Japanese bridge, Chinese Assembly hall, handicraft workshop, and vibrant market. In the afternoon you will be free to join one of these optional tours:

Option 1: Half day My Son

Option 2: Cooking class



Option 3: Fishing village

Accommodation: in Hoi An

Meals: Breakfast

Day 10 | Hoi An – Hue (B/L)

After breakfast, enjoy a scenic drive to Hue via Da Nang and Hai Van (Sea Cloud) pass. En route you will have a chance for a photo stop at the China Beach, and then drive over the stunning pass which geographically divides Vietnam into two different climate zones. Another stop at Lang Co Beach will allow you the chance to step into the water of one of most beautiful beaches of the central coast of Vietnam. Lunch on arrival in Hue. In the afternoon take a boat trip along the romantic Perfume River to visit Thien Mu pagoda, then continue on to the Imperial City. Take a walking tour to visit the last Royal Nguyen dynasty's monuments. Check-in at the hotel then free time.

Hue is famous for it's magnificent monuments and architectural buildings. Located in the centre of Vietnam, with a simple life and pleasant local people, Hue brings to you a warm welcome feeling.

Accommodation: In Hue

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 11 | Hue – Ho Chi Minh city (B/L/D)

After breakfast, check-out of the hotel then drive to visit the Mausoleums of King Tu Duc and Khai Dinh. Lunch at a local restaurant. Transfer to Hue airport to fly to Ho Chi Minh City. On arrival, meet your new driver then transfer to the hotel. Free time after check-in. Tonight's dinner will be on a special Saigon river cruise.

Ho Chi Minh City formerly named Saigon, is the largest city in Vietnam and much more crowded and exciting than Hanoi. It overcame the war history to become a modern and dynamic city. The boast of Saigon is it's French Colonial architecture and wide boulevards.

Accommodation: In Ho Chi Minh City

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12 | Ho Chi Minh City - Cu Chi Tunnel (B/L)

Today you will visit Ho Chi Minh City, the former Saigon – capital of the South Vietnam during 1954-1975. The tour will include the War Remnants Museum, which shows the Vietnam War through many left-over weapons and photos taken by international journalists, then travel on to see the Reunification Palace, former residence of the South Vietnam President. Continue the morning with a stop at Notre Dame Cathedral and the Central Post Office, which was designed by the Gustavo Eiffel Company in 1886. Enjoy a Vietnamese lunch at a local restaurant, and then drive to Cu Chi to see the tunnels which were built over a period of 20 years from 1940s to 1972 by Vietcong to hide themselves. Take a walking tour at the site, try a short part of the tunnel (if you wish to) to understand more about the life of guerrillas in the war time. Return to the hotel by late afternoon.



Accommodation: In Ho Chi Minh City

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 13 | Mekong Delta Exploration (B/L/D)

Depart to Cai Be, a small town deep in the Mekong Delta. Here board a private boat and visit the colourful Cai Be floating market, where you'll cruise among local barges full of fruits and vegetables. Later a special visit will be made to an ancient Mandarin's house, dating from the 19th century, where the family will host you with a delicious lunch. You will also visit some local home factories that produce rice paste, rice popcorn and coconut candies. After lunch, your boat trip will cruise deeper into the countryside on smaller canals and creeks passing under small traditional bridges made from wood and bamboo. You will discover beautiful landscapes and observe typical Mekong Delta rural life. At the end of your cruise, return by road to Ho Chi Minh City.

Farewell dinner tonight at a local restaurant.

Accommodation: In Ho Chi Minh City

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 14 | Ho Chi Minh city – Departure (B)

Breakfast then free time for any last minute shopping or sightseeing until your departure. Hotel check-out time is at 12:00.

Accommodation: On your flight

Meals: Breakfast

INCLUSIONS:

- Accommodation in a double or twin share room with daily breakfast
- Overnight cruise on board in Halong Bay (non-private boat)
- Return train ticket on soft sleeper with airconditioner in 4 berth cabin.
- Private air-conditioned vehicle during all tours and transfers.
- Local Experienced English speaking guide where mentioned
- Entrance fees for all visits as mentioned in the itinerary
- Meals as specified in the itinerary
- Water puppet show
- Private boat in Mekong
- 1 bottle of Water, 1 soft drink and tissues/day/person

EXCLUSIONS:

- Flight in and out of Vietnam
- Domestic flight
- Single supplement
- Vietnamese visa (a visa is compulsory and must be arranged in advance)
- Meals, if not specified in the itinerary
- Travel insurance (we highly recommend that you purchase adequate insurance)
- Gratuities for guides and drivers
- Personal expenses, such as laundry, telephone, drinks, etc.
- All other services not mentioned in the itinerary

