



VIETNAM AND LAOS EXPLORERS

15 days/14 nights

Itinerary Code: INS-PA06
Tour Operator / Agent: Inspire Travel

OVERVIEW

From the rich diversity of culture in Vientiane to the buzzing metropolis of Ho Chi Minh City, from exploring the twisting alleys of Hanoi's Old Quarter to journeying through the mountainous region around Luang Prabang, the rich ancient history and divine cuisine of Central Vietnam this journey captures the highlights of Vietnam and Laos. Learn about these neighboring countries, their cultural differences and their shared history as you travel through cities and natural wonders alike.

ITINERARY

Day 1 | Arrive Ho Chi Minh City (D)

Arrive in Ho Chi Minh City, meet your guide and driver then transfer to your hotel for check-in. In the evening enjoy a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

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

*Accommodation: In Ho Chi Minh City
Meals : Dinner*

Day 2 | 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. Reunification Palace, the former residence of the South Vietnam president. Then continue the morning with a stop at Notre Dame Cathedral & Central Post Office, which was designed by Gustave Eiffel company from 1886. Enjoy a vietnamese lunch at a local resataurant, then continue 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. Have 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 3 | Mekong Delta Exploration (B/L)

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 home cooked 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.

*Accommodation: In Ho Chi Minh City
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch*

Day 4 | Ho Chi Minh City – Da Nang – Hoi An (B/L/D)

Breakfast at hotel. Transfer to airport for 1 hour morning flight to Da Nang. On arrival at Danang airport, meet your new driver then transfer to Cham Museum to see the collection of Champa artifacts. On the coastal way to Hoi An, stop for a beautiful photo opportunity at Marble mountain. Arrive in Hoi An, have lunch in a charming restaurant in the old town. In the afternoon, check-in to the hotel and enjoy some free time for shopping or swimming at the hotel's pool. In the evening take a walk through the colourful streets of the Old Town to dinner.

Hoi An is called "ancient town", one of quietest city in Vietnam with plenty lantern shops along the streets, silk shops, tailors shops. 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 5 | Hoi An (B)

After breakfast, start the beautiful morning 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. The afternoon will be free for you to relax at the pool side, go shopping, explore the town or join the optional tour to My Son Sanctuary.

*Accommodation: In Hoi An
Meals: Breakfast*

Day 6 | 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 chance for a photo stop at the china beach, then drive over the beautiful pass which geographically divides Vietnam into two different climate zones. Another stop at Lang Co Beach will allow you to have chance to step onto the water of one of most beautiful beaches of the central coast of Vietnam. Lunch on arrival in Hue. Afternoon have the boat trip along romantic Perfume river to visit Thien Mu pagoda, then continue drive to the Imperial City. Have a walking tour



to visit the last Royal Nguyen dynasty's monuments. Check-in at the hotel then free time.

Hue is famous with 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 7 | Hue – Hanoi (B/D)

After breakfast, check-out then transfer to visit the Mausoleums of the Nguyen Kings Tu Duc and Khai Dinh. Continue to the airport for the early afternoon flight to Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam. Upon arrival, transfer to hotel for check-in. In the evening, you will enjoy a Hanoi style dinner in a local restaurant.

Hanoi, The capital of Vietnam welcomes you with very special oriental beauty which lies in the lovely and friendly smiles from the locals you meets. During your holiday, you would stay at one of the well located hotels in the city centre. It is near or within the old quarter, therefore you could find it easy to explore the vibrant life of truly Hanoian, go shopping and approach many cultural spots within an easy walking distance.

Accommodation: In Hanoi

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 8 | Hanoi City Tour (B/L)

Today, you will visit some beauty 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 at a local restaurant. In the afternoon, learn about the 54 traditions of Vietnam through an excursion to the Museum of Ethnology, then transfer to downtown for an interesting cyclo trip around the Old Quarter. Plenty of photo opportunities around Hoan Kiem Lake then end the day with a special unique traditional Water Puppet show.

Accommodation: In Hanoi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 9 | Hanoi - Ha Long Bay (B/L/D)

After breakfast, take a three and half hour drive (4 hours for the big bus, with a half way rest stop), to Halong Bay then embark on a traditional junk boat for a fantastic cruise exploring the magnificent rock formations and grotto caves that this area is famous for. After lunch, take a rowing boat to visit one of the fishing villages in the bay. In the late afternoon, an option Kayaking trip is available to discover more parts of the area on your own, or just relax and enjoy watching the sunset. Dinner will be served on board with local seafood specialities.



Halong is a UNESCO's World Natural Heritage which shouldn't be missed on your visit to Vietnam. It has a lot of beautiful caves and grottoes with characteristic limestone cliffs. It doesn't matter if you are a nature lover or not, this bay is truly majestic.

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

Day 10 | Ha Long Bay - Hanoi (B)

Early morning enjoy a cup of tea or coffee then join the Vietnamese Tai Chi class on the sundeck and catch the first rays of the sunrise for another beautiful day on the bay. Continue our cruise among the breathtaking scenery, a visit to one of the most beautiful limestone caves, and open your eyes, your mind and your ears to the stunning nature. At 9.30am check-out, have a delicious brunch before disembarking. Around 11.00am meet the driver at the pier then enjoy the transfer back to Hanoi.

*Accommodation: In Hanoi
Meals: Brunch*

Day 11 | Hanoi - Vientiane (B/D)

Breakfast at your hotel then free time for any last minute shopping or sightseeing until your departure for Vientiane. Upon arrival, meet our guide and transfer to the hotel. After that, we take a sightseeing tour of Vientiane, to visit the religious museums of Wat Sisaket, the oldest temple to have survived from the Siamese war of 1828 and its cloister which contains more than 8000 Buddha statues, Wat Ho Prakeo, the former home-temple of the Emerald Buddha statue or Pra Keo, antiques and all artifacts found in around Vientiane, That Luang Stupa, Symbol of Lao nation the single most important monument in Laos, which was built to cover the original small stupa containing a piece of the chest bone of Buddha and Patouxay (Victory Gate), built quite recently in commemoration of those who died during the wars and it is today the central landmark of Vientiane.

*Accommodation: In Vientiane
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

Day 12 | Vientiane – Xiengkhoang – Plain of Jars (B/L)

Breakfast at hotel, free at leisure until your short afternoon flight to Xiengkhoang (QV401 13.20-13.50) which was devastated by the American bombings between 1964 and 1973. Upon arrival, we transfer out to visit the Plain of Jars, an impressive archaeological site where hundreds of large stone jars are littered all over the plateau. We also have time this afternoon to see the old capital of Muang Khoun Province and the nearby villages, home to the Hmong hill tribe and Tai Dam people. They have an interesting local culture and a colorful history.

*Accommodation: In Xiengkhoang
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch*

Day 13 | Xiengkhoang – Luang Prabang (B/L)

Early morning, we visit the Central Market of Phonsavanh to watch different Hill



Tribes barter and exchange merchandise. Then heading out the small town of Luang Prabang, approximately 6-7 hours drive. On the way, we'll stop to see a site of the 200 year old Buddha images in Thampra and various Hmong and hill tribe minority villages along the road. After a refreshing break at Sala Phoukhoun, where borders of Vientiane-Xiengkhouang-Luang Prabang meet, the journey will take us over mountainous region to Luang Prabang. The tranquility and charm of this town with it's beautiful natural scenery and cultural sights make it one of the most delightful places to visit in Laos. After checking into your hotel, we will visit the impressive stupa of Wat Visoun , the shrine of Wat Aham, and Wat Mai and then explore the vibrant Night Bazaar, where you can browse the collection of handmade textiles made by local hill tribe people from the surrounding area.

Accommodation: In Luang Prabang

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 14 | Luang Prabang – Pak Ou Cave (B/L)

We depart the hotel in the morning to the boat landing, and take an excursion upstream on the magnificent Mekong to visit Pak Ou caves cut into the side of a limestone cliffs and opposite the mouth of the Mekong and Ou rivers. The sanctuaries at Pak Ou consist of two large caves, both repositories for thousands of Buddha images, which range from a mere centimeter to two meters in height. En route, typical Lao villages are barely visible behind the thick foliage. Slender canoes bobbing by the shore, bamboo poles and floats mark the location of nets and fish traps. Our first stop will be at Ban Muangkeo, a village well-known for it's Lao traditional rice whisky, namely Laoh-Khao which we will have a tasting of. Lunch is served at a riverside restaurant. We arrive back at Luang Prabang in late afternoon, then climb up to the top of Mount Phousi for an exploration of the sacred, gilded stupa as well as a beautiful sunset view of the city and the Mekong River.

Accommodation: In Luang Prabang

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 15 | Luang Prabang – Departure (B)

Free time for last minute shopping or exploring until transferring to the airport for your onward flight.

Accommodation: On flight

Meals: Breakfast

INCLUSIONS:

- Accommodation in a double or twin share room with daily breakfast
- Overnight cruise on board a wooden boat in Halong Bay (non-private boat)
- Private boat in Mekong
- Sightseeing tours, transfers and all services as mentioned in the itinerary
- Private air-conditioned vehicle during all tours and transfers
- Local Experienced English speaking guide where mentioned in the itinerary
- Meals as specified in the itinerary



- Water puppet show
- Elephant ride
- 1 bottle of Water and tissues/day/person

EXCLUSIONS:

- Flights in and out
- Flight Hanoi – Vientiane: 415\$/ticket
- International airfares and departure taxes
- Vietnam visa, Laos visa (visa is compulsory and must be arranged in advance)
- Single supplement
- 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

Note:

- 25 seat coaster is not allowed to enter the Old Quarter, support local Tuk Tuk or minivans are to be used for city tour in Laos.
- For Scandinavian Nationals, visa is exempt if your stay in Vietnam is less than 15 days.
- Surcharge for peak season may be required

