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Discover Vietnam Tour -09 nights/10 days

A Vietnam discovery tour that covers all the main highlights of this amazing country with a special focus on the mountainous area of Sa Pa. As well as exploring the town and surrounding areas of SaPa, visiting local villages and markets where the colourful ladies from the Ethnic minority tribes will happily sell you their craft produce.

You will also discover the vibrant town of Hanoi, the enchanting Ha Long Bay area with the enchanting scenery, the bustling city of HCM in the south finishing your tour in the calmer, quieter area of the Mekong Delta exploring how locals live and thrive on, in or by the mighty Mekong River.

Detailed Itinerary:

Day ONE

- Day 1- Arrival in Hanoi

You will be greeted at the airport by our Vietnam Travel Centre representative and taken directly to your hotel to rest or explore as you choose. Ha Noi is the capital city of Vietnam. It's a 1000 year old city that is packed full of diversity, character and vitality. The heart of the city is Hoan Kiem Lake where locals and tourists alike sit, walk or join in with daily Tai Chi and exercise groups.

To the north of the Lake is the Old Quarter where an ancient style of living among the narrow streets and tiny buildings dominates. To the south of the Lake is the elegant French Quarter with its wide tree lined boulevards and Colonial style architecture.

If flights allow, after a rest and lunch, you can enjoy a Cyclo ride around the central area to get a snapshot of this vibrant and busy city centre. After the cyclo ride, you can enjoy the unique Water Puppet show accompanied by talented local musicians playing traditional instruments. The rest of the evening is at your leisure.

Day TWO

- Day 2- Hanoi – Lao Cai - Sa Pa (Overnight on board)

After breakfast, your guide will take you on a tour of the major historical and cultural sites of the city starting with the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum. Ho Chi Minh was the revered Vietnamese leader who still commands huge respect throughout the country. The Mausoleum is in a commanding and impressive setting adjoining the Palace and government buildings. In the same development there are also the Museum, some lovely gardens, a Pagoda and Ho Chi Minh's last house before he died. You will next visit the Temple of Literature, the oldest university in Vietnam. It was established in honour of Confucius and, for 6 centuries was the centre of learning for the Mandarins, the intellectuals, the administrators and politicians of the day when Vietnam was strongly connected with China.

For lunch, you will be taken to a local restaurant to try the famous Ha Noi Pho, a delicious noodle soup.

After lunch, the next stop is at the Trấn Quốc Pagoda situated on the largest lake in Ha Noi called Ho Tay or West Lake. The Pagoda is the oldest one in Ha Noi, Originally constructed in the sixth century. The last stop for the day brings you back to Hoan Kiem Lake to visit the lovely Ngoc Son Temple which was built on an island on the Hoan Kiem Lake in the 19th century. Here you will learn about the story of the soft shelled turtle and the sword that was reputed to have been recovered to save Ha Noi from destruction. It is said that turtles still live in the lake and to see one brings luck!

After an early dinner you will be transferred to the railway station to board a train to Lao Cai, from where you will be transferred to the hills of Sapa. Overnight on the train.

Day THREE

- Day 3 - Lao Cai – Sa Pa – Ta Phin Village - Sa Pa (14km, 5-6 hours trek)

Your train arrives into the town of Lao Cai which is located on the Vietnam- China border and the nearest point for your travel to Sa Pa which is located an hour away. A guide and your driver will be waiting to receive you at the station. Drive through scenic settings into Sa Pa town.

On arrival you will be taken to your hotel where you can have some breakfast and take a short rest before you embark on your trek. The trek will take you through captivating mountains, terraced rice fields and enchanting bamboo forests. En-route you will encounter splendidly dressed traditional hill tribes at the local markets and quaint villages where time seems to have stood still for centuries.

You will arrive at the Ta Phin village in time for lunch. After lunch, your car will be waiting to take you back to Sa Pa to your hotel or you can choose to walk back if you prefer.

Day FOUR

- Sa Pa - Ha Noi

This morning you can take a 5 km walk through the Cat Cat village which is home to the Black H'mong hill tribe. Take part in a traditional music performance put on by the tribe and visit some traditional houses to see how people live. On your return to the hotel, you will have time to shower and change if you choose to before heading to Lao Cai for the overnight train back to Ha Noi.

Note: If your tour dates are on a Sunday, you can choose to travel to the largest market in the province at Bac Ha. This is a colourful and vibrant market that appeals to the local community and tourists alike. It will be an early start from Sa Pa and then to leave the market and travel directly to Lao Cai to connect with the overnight train to Ha Noi.

Day FIVE

- Day 5 - Arrival in Ha Noi

You arrive in Ha Noi at 5.00am. Your driver will be waiting for you to transfer you to your hotel for the rest of the day and the night.

The rest of the day is at your leisure to relax or to explore the city in your own time. You might want to visit one of the museums in Ha Noi. The Women's Museum presents stories of women through the times and demonstrates the significance of women in the Vietnamese culture.

Day SIX

- Day 6 - Hanoi - Ha Long (Bai Tu Long Bay)

This morning, after breakfast you will depart for Ha Long Bay. The four hour drive to the bay passes through Vietnamese countryside and lush rice paddy fields. When you arrive at the port around noon, the boat's (Junk Red Dragon) crew will be ready to welcome you on board. Check-in, enjoy a welcome drink & attend the cruise briefing.

Enjoy a cruise along this fascinating bay that features thousands of limestone karts and isles in various sizes and shapes. Savour a fresh, local seafood lunch while cruising on to Bai Tu Long Bay. Stop in between for a swim, visit the mysterious Thien Canh cave and relax on a secluded beach. You will also get the opportunity to kayak and explore the bay up close. Back on the boat to enjoy a relaxing sunset dinner. Overnight on board.

Day SEVEN

- Day 7 - Ha Long- Hanoi, flight to HCM City (Saigon)

The boat will resume its cruising before sunrise. Early risers can take benefit from seeing the lovely sun risers over the water before heading for breakfast. As the boat heads slowly towards the docks, you will have the opportunity to go swimming at Hon Co Island and exploring the hidden Thien Canh Son Cave. It's a steep walk to get to the opening but well worth the effort. Back on board, lunch will be ready. You'll arrive back on land around midday where your driver will be waiting to take you back to Ha Noi to connect with your flight to the south, to HCM City, the commercial capital of Vietnam. Your local driver and guide will be waiting to transfer you to your hotel. The evening is at your leisure. Overnight in HCM City.

Day EIGHT

- Day 8 - HCM City - City Tour

This morning, we have organised for you to visit the Cu Chi war tunnels which is a network of underground tunnels used by the Viet Cong during the Vietnam War. The tunnels were the location of several military campaigns during the Vietnam War and besides being used as hiding spots, were also used as communication and supply routes, hospitals, food and weapon caches and living quarters for numerous North Vietnamese fighters.

Later this morning you will also have the opportunity to visit a rice paper workshop. In the afternoon, visit the Reunification Palace. Discover real Saigon through the eyes of a local. Visit the bustling Cho Lon market, a hidden Chinese pagoda, the Notre Dame Cathedral, the historic Central Post Office, and the City Hall. Return to your hotel and spend your evening at leisure. Overnight in HCM City

Day NINE

- Day 9 - HCM City - Mekong Delta - HCM City

You will leave HCM City this morning at 8:00 am and head south to Cai Be. Upon arrival, board a small local boat for a journey through the Mekong's floating markets where you can experience life on the river and watch trading between merchant ships and local farmers.

Then continue the journey through the secluded canals and venture into the mighty Mekong to an island where you will stop at an ancient house to enjoy lunch and fresh seasonal fruits. You will also stop off on a river island to visit the local orchards before returning to HCM City. Spend your evening at leisure. Overnight in HCM City.

Day TEN

- Day 10 - HCM City - Homebound Flight

On the last day of the tour, the day will be at your leisure until it is time for the driver to meet you at the hotel for your transfer to the International Airport for your homebound flight.