

IMPRESSIONS OF VIETNAM

Saigon, Can Tho, Hanoi & Halong Bay



From the ancient waterways of the Mekong Delta to the bustling cities of Hanoi & Saigon, this captivating 9 day tour is a great introduction to this unique and vibrant country. Steeped in its own rich traditions and history, yet irrevocably shaped by the major ideas and events of the 20th century, all taking place against the backdrop of stunning landscapes and architecture, Vietnam really is a traveller's dream.

This document aims to give you all the information that you require for a smooth and comfortable trip to Vietnam. Please take the time to read this dossier to familiarise yourself with all the aspects of our tour. It includes important information such as flight details, visa requirements and travel insurance.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 1: UK to Saigon

Depart London on your scheduled, overnight flight to Saigon International Airport.

DAY 2: Saigon (D)

On arrival in Saigon, also known as Ho Chi Minh, you will be met by your local guide and transferred to your hotel. Relax in the afternoon before enjoying a welcome dinner at a local Vietnamese restaurant.

DAY 3: Saigon (B/L/D)

After breakfast travel to the Cu Chi Tunnels, an impressive network of underground tunnels used by the Viet Cong during the Vietnam War. En route your tour will pass through a traditional rice paper making village before your lunch at a local restaurant. After lunch, start your city tour with a visit to the Reunification Palace, the former home and workplace of the president of South Vietnam during the war. Continue to the nearby Notre Dame Cathedral which was built between 1877-1883 and is the major seat of the Catholic religion in Vietnam. You will then travel to the French-style Saigon Post Office followed by the Thien Hau Pagoda and a local lacquer ware workshop.

DAY 4: Saigon to Can Tho (B/L/D)

In the morning you will drive to My Tho where you will board a boat for a cruise down the Mekong River, passing floating markets, local villages and the four islands known as Dragon, Unicorn, Phoenix and Turtle. Your boat will

dock at Unicorn Island, giving you the chance to visit farms selling exotic fruits and a coconut sweet workshop where you can sample these local delights. A horse drawn cart ride will follow, arriving at a bee farm to enjoy their traditional honey tea, then a tour down the Vam Chua Canal on a rowing boat. Continue to Can Tho where you will spend the night.

DAY 5: Can Tho to Hanoi (B/L/D)

Your morning in Can Tho will begin with a gentle trip through the picturesque canals and waterways in a small boat, taking in the sultry scenery and daily activities of the small boat vendors of the floating markets who live along these Mekong canals, as well as stopping at the spectacular Cai Rang floating market – the largest in the entire Mekong Delta. Before cruising back to land enjoy tasting tropical fruits at the Ba Cong Garden House. After enjoying lunch at a local restaurant you will be transferred to the airport in Can Tho for your flight to Hanoi where you will then have the night to settle in.

DAY 6: Hanoi (B/L/D)

Your full day tour of Hanoi begins with the ancient Temple of Literature, then the Presidential Palace and the famous One Pillar Pagoda. A short drive out of the city centre follows where you can take part in a local Vietnamese cooking demonstration and enjoy your delicious creation for lunch. The afternoon continues with a visit to the Vietnam History museum, and a photo opportunity at the Hanoi Opera House, a beautiful colonial building, then a walking tour of the Old Quarter. In the evening sit back and enjoy a thousand year old Water Puppet Show.

DAY 7: Hanoi to Halong Bay (B/L/D)

This memorable day takes you to the awe-inspiring Halong Bay where you will explore these tranquil islands on a luxury cruise boat, passing local towns and intricate limestone formations on the way. Take a tour of Vung Vieng fishing

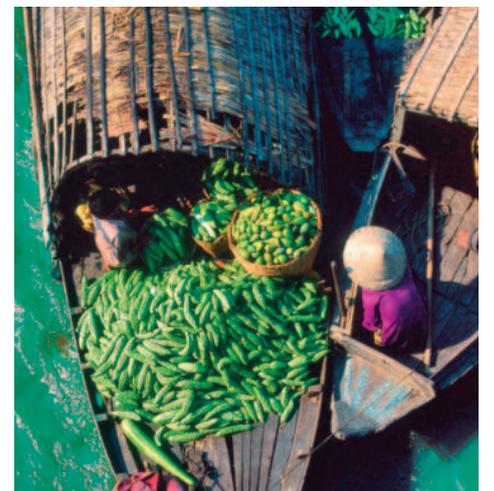
village by rowing boat, a settlement completely floating on water and dating back hundreds of years. Anchoring at Ho Dong Tien, a Vietnamese cooking demonstration will take place on the sundeck, followed by a sumptuous seafood dinner on board before you retire to your cabin for the evening.

DAY 8: Halong Bay to Hanoi (Brunch/D)

Start your day with some calming Tai Chi before your boat then takes you to discover the prehistoric Sung Sot 'Surprise Cave' before cruising through the labyrinth of islands on your way back to the mainland. In the afternoon you will travel back to Hanoi for a local dinner and your overnight stay.

DAY 9: Hanoi to the UK London or Extension (B)

Following breakfast the day is left at leisure before transferring to the airport for your evening flight back to London., or continue on to your chosen extension.



Hotel Information

Saigon (2 nights): 4★ Golden Central Hotel - 140 Ly Tu Trong, Ben Thanh Ward, District 1, Saigon. Contact number: 0084 838 270 666

Can Tho: 4★ Ninh Kieu 2 - 2 Hai Ba Trung, FTan An, Ninh Kieu District, Can Tho City. Contact number: 0084 710 3821 171

Hanoi (3 nights): 4★ Sunway Hotel - 19 Pham Dinh Ho Street, Hai Ba Trung District, Hanoi, Vietnam. Contact number: 0084 439 713 888

Halong Bay: 1 night cruise on board the Victory cruise boat, Halong Bay

All accommodation is at least 4★ and features an en suite bathroom, air-conditioning/heating, satellite TV, safety deposit box and tea and coffee making facilities. Mercury Holidays has visited and inspected all of the hotels to ensure that they meet the high standards of service which we require for our clients. If the hotels detailed are not available alternatives will be used of a similar standard. Final confirmation of your hotels will be sent in a document approximately two weeks before you travel.

Meals

Breakfast is always western style and served in the hotel each morning. Lunch and dinner will be taken in local Vietnamese restaurants. A variety of restaurants are visited giving you the chance to experience a range of dishes and flavours.



On your arrival

On your arrival in Saigon you will be met by a representative from our local agent, Lac Viet (LV) Travel, holding a sign displaying: "Mercury Holidays". The Mercury Holidays/Vietnam Travel Service representative will show you to your transfer vehicle. Your guide will be able to answer any queries. However, if you need to contact LV Travel during your stay the details are:

Lac Viet Travel (LV) Head Office, Hanoi
Floor 18,
VTC Online Building,
No 18,
Tam Trinh Str,
Hai Ba Trung District,
Hanoi,
Vietnam
Telephone : 0084 439 413 748

Emergency contact information

Please find below the emergency contact details for LV Travel head office, Hanoi

Contact	Telephone number
Anna Hanh	Office: 0084(0) 983 096 032
Ms Ly	Office: 0084 439 413 750 Mobile: 0084 989 200 119

Visas

Until 30th June 2016 a visa is not required for stays up to 15 days. From the 1st July 2016 and for longer stays a visa is required for entry into Vietnam. We work closely with The Travel Visa Company who will be able to arrange your visa for you on your behalf. Please call them on 01270 250 590 and quote "Mercury Holidays". The cost of the visa is £98.50. The visas take around 10 working days to issue and are only valid for 3 months from the date of entry. We therefore recommend that you apply for your visa 8 weeks before travel, however please be aware that your passport will be required for the application so make sure that you will not need it during this time. Alternatively you can visit the Embassy of Vietnam in London: 12-14 Victoria Road, London, W8 5RD. If you have booked the Temples of Cambodia extension following your tour, you will need to purchase a visa for Cambodia costing USD \$30 on arrival at the airport in Siem Reap. Please note that you will be required to bring a passport photo with you as well as USD \$30 cash in order to apply for your visa on arrival in Cambodia.

Insurance

You must obtain suitable travel insurance prior to departure. Mercury Holidays is partnered with Holiday Extras which offer insurance at the following prices:

Age in years	Up to 64	65-74	75-85
Up to 17 days cover	£42	£79	£135
Up to 24 days cover	£48	£94	£146

Worldwide (excluding USA)

For all persons 86 years and over, please contact us for insurance prices. Please ensure you provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number as soon as possible. Mercury Holidays will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Health and Vaccinations

We recommend that you consult your local GP for advice on vaccinations & travel health before departure. It is not advisable to drink the tap water.

Physical Accessibility

This tour is accessible to most people with an average level of fitness and normal mobility. It involves full days of sightseeing, often on foot, and includes some climbing of stairs and getting on and off coaches and boats. This tour is not suitable for anyone with walking difficulties.

Group Size

The minimum number of travellers in your group will be 10, and the maximum will be 40. If in the unlikely event there are less than 10 people booked on your tour date then you may be asked to change to a different date. A full refund will be made available to you should this alternative not be suitable.

Tour Guides

This is a fully escorted tour, meaning that you will be met by a local guide in each of the cities which you visit, ensuring that you have first-hand knowledge at all times.

Tipping

It is customary to tip both your driver and guide approximately £2.00 (\$3.00) per person per day in total. This will be collected at the end of each destination visited for your convenience. Tipping for the porters at your hotels and the crew during the Halong Bay Cruise will be at your discretion. Tips are accepted in the local currency, US dollars and British pounds.

Currency Exchange

The currency in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Dong, known as VND. You can exchange your currency in Vietnam, however US Dollars are widely accepted in Vietnam should you wish to keep an alternative currency on you.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take some extra money with you to cover any personal purchases, such as souvenirs, laundry and extra drinks and snacks. Approximately £200 - £300 per person will be sufficient for the duration of the tour.

Credit card information

As normal practice you will be asked for your credit card details on check-in at the hotel in order to cover any extras incurred during your stay. If you do not have a credit card you may be asked for a cash deposit. American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted in hotels.

Itinerary Changes

The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. The schedules of the domestic airlines in country are subject to frequent changes. For this reason, we have indicated approximate times only. Your local guide will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Some road construction and/or weather conditions may lengthen the driving times. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however order of events & sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

What to Pack

- Sunscreen and hat in summer
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Camera and charger
- An electric plug converter - the electricity in Vietnam/Cambodia is 220-240 V. You will need a 2 round pin plug or 2 flat pin plug adapter
- Loo paper for public WCs • Binoculars
- A small overnight bag to take on your cruise of Halong Bay

Flight and Airport Information

Your flight is to **Saigon International Airport** with **Vietnam Airlines (VN)**, departing from **London Heathrow Terminal 4**.

Route	Depart	Arrive	Flight Duration	Flight Number
London Heathrow - Saigon	11:00	06:00	12 hours 25 mins	VN50
Can Tho - Hanoi	16:30	18:40	2 hours 10 mins	VN1202
Hanoi-Siem Reap	15:30	17:10	1 hour 40 mins	VN837
Siem Reap-Hanoi	19:50	21:30	1 hour 40 mins	VN838
Hanoi-London Heathrow	00:30	06:40	12 hours 10 mins	VN55

IMPORTANT: Please note that all flight times are subject to change. Final flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

Baggage Allowance

Baggage allowance (per person): Each passenger is entitled to **30kg** of hold luggage. Hand luggage: One piece not exceeding **7Kg** and with maximum total dimensions not exceeding **115 cm** (56 cm x 36cm x 23 cm). Should you wish to take additional luggage you will need to pay extra at check-in.

Airport Extras

If you wish to arrange Airport car parking or accommodation at preferential rates, we recommend you book this in advance with Holiday Extras - Tel. 0871 360 2000, quoting HX313.

Weather and Climate

Weather can vary quite considerably throughout the year, so please familiarise yourself with the climate charts below.

Average Temperature (°C) Graph for Saigon



Average Temperature (°C) Graph for Can Tho



Average Temperature (°C) Graph for Hanoi



Halong Bay

SAPA, NORTHERN VIETNAM



Your add-on of 5 days, 4 nights in Sapa will allow you to delve a little deeper into Vietnam. Originally established as a hill station in 1922 by the French, Sapa is located in the beautiful north-west of the country. Providing spectacular views, the town overlooks a deep valley of rice terraces surrounded by mountains.

This document aims to give you all the information that you require during your add-on to Sapa.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

Day 9: Hanoi to Lao Cai (B)

Following a day at your leisure, depart Hanoi in the evening for your overnight train journey to Lao Cai.

Day 10: Lao Cai to Sapa (B/L)

Upon arrival at Lao Cai station you will be met by your local guide and transferred to your hotel. After breakfast travel to the Cat Cat Village, an age-old village of the H'mong ethnic minority. Located just two kilometres from Sapa and at the foot of the Muong Hoa Valley, this area affords a unique landscape of green mountains and layered rice terraces. From here you can enjoy views of Fansipan, the highest peak in Indochina. You will have the chance to observe the H'mong people's traditional weavings, flowers and crafts before returning to Sapa for lunch. The afternoon is at your leisure to explore the town, famous for both its rugged scenery and rich cultural diversity.

Day 11 Sapa (B/L)

After breakfast at your hotel embark on a scenic trek along ancient buffalo paths and trails, where the local buffalos have the right of way due to their importance to agriculture. You will journey through several hill tribe villages to Lao Chai. Here you can watch the H'mong people going about their daily life as children play and adults work on the rice terraces. Stopping to enjoy the panoramic views, the tour will continue to Ta Van village- home to the friendly Giay minority people. Once on the valley floor you can truly appreciate the wonderful scenery of vast fields and many scattered villages. Following an unforgettable morning, transfer back to Sapa where you are free to spend the afternoon as you wish.

Day 12 Sapa to Hanoi (B/L)

Today your tour visits the region's largest market in Bac Ha, a relaxed mountain town. With charming houses and beautiful scenery, this quiet town comes to life with its colourful market selling authentic goods, handicrafts, clothes and food. Many of the area's ten minority groups gather here to buy and sell handmade produce, wearing their traditional dresses. Next, enjoy a leisurely walking tour through the mountainous countryside surrounding the village. That afternoon depart for Lao Cai railway station for your overnight train back to Hanoi.

Day 13 Hanoi to the UK (B)

Arriving early at Hanoi station, your guide will transfer you to your hotel for breakfast. The morning is at leisure, until your afternoon coach to the airport for your return journey to the UK.

Hotel Information

Fanxipan Express Train (2 nights)

Sapa (2 nights): 4★ Chau Long 2 Hotel - 24 Dong Loi, Lao Cai Province, Sapa 21000, Vietnam.

Tour Guides

This extension tour to Sapa is **semi-escorted**. Your guide will meet you at your Hanoi hotel and take you to the train station. Day 10 to 12 will be fully accompanied. You will be met by your guide on day 13 to take you to the hotel for breakfast then you have the morning at leisure before your coach transfer to the airport for your return flight to to the UK.

Tipping

It is customary to tip both your driver and guide approximately £2.00 (\$3.00) per person per day in total. This will be collected at the end of each destination visited

for your convenience. Tipping for the porters at your hotels and the crew during the Halong Bay Cruise will be at your discretion. Tips are accepted in the local currency, US dollars and British pounds.

Currency Exchange

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Weather and Climate

