



Smiling Albino's

## Epic Vietnam Family Adventure

A sophisticated approach to city life, stunning vistas,  
charming back streets & glorious beaches

Background:

## The Ascending Dragon (Vietnam)



Simply put - this is the ultimate Vietnam experience. You will arrive in Saigon from overseas and transfer to one of Asia's most talked-about resorts, the stunning Six Senses Ninh Van Bay. After a few days of southern beach bliss, you'll fly up to northern Vietnam and shuttle out to the UNESCO preserved, supernatural region of Halong Bay. Spend two nights on a luxury junk, with grand meals fun paddling and magnificent views.

From here the party gets started with a north-to-south exploration of Vietnam's essential gems with well-paced days exploring Hanoi, Hue, Hoi An, and Saigon, and introducing you to unique local characters along the way.

This adventure is designed with an eye to quality, seamlessness and value.

It will be an honor to host you!

Day 1:  
Welcome to Vietnam -  
Saigon to Nha Trang



Flight Details: Arrival to Vietnam -  
TBA  
SGN-NHA - TBA  
[Six Senses Ninh Van Bay](#),  
2 Bedroom Beachfront Pool Villa

Arrival to Saigon and transfer for a short flight to Nha Trang. Our local transport partner will coordinate fast-track immigration services to ensure a speedy arrival and transfer through customs. The connecting flight is short and scenic, full private van and boat transfers are provided to the resort - you'll be on the sand in no time.



### About Six Senses Ninh Van Bay

Six Senses Ninh Van Bay sits on a dramatic bay, with impressive rock formations overlooking the East Vietnam Sea. A white sand beach and towering mountains add to the sense of being intimately at one with nature. The resort presents luxury with an architectural style incorporating traditions of Vietnam.

### About Two-Bedroom Beach Front Pool Villa

The Beachfront Pool Villas are constructed of all natural and sustainably sourced materials, and are characterized by providing generous personal space with their own garden, plunge pool and direct beach access. They offer separate sleeping and living areas with open-air bathrooms, with two cushioned teak day beds, separate vanities and a beautiful handcrafted wooden bathtub.

Days 2-4:  
Enjoy the beach!



Meals: Breakfast daily  
[Six Senses Ninh Van Bay](#),  
2 Bedroom Beachfront Pool Villa

You've just arrived from overseas, and deserve a few days relaxing from work and school. Enjoy this idyllic setting while being as active or sedate as you desire.

Re-Energize yourself and get ready for the second stage of your Vietnamese adventure!

Day 5:  
To Hanoi and Ha Long  
Bay



Meals: B, L, D

Hotel Pickup: 05:45am

Flight Details: VN 1552 Depart Nha Trang 08:15am Arrive Hanoi 10:00

[Bhaya Legend private three-cabin junk](#)

\*\*note that as tides and weather change constantly, the exact program may differ slightly from what is written\*\*

This morning fly from Nha Trang to Hanoi, from here meet your Hanoi guide for a 3-hour overland transfer highway to Ha Long Bay. Upon arrival board your private luxury junk, and set sail with thousands of precipitous limestone peaks jutting dramatically out of the water.

Ha Long Bay is a geographic marvel and you'll spend the next two nights on a private junk, enjoying superb Vietnamese cuisine, kayaking, caving, swimming on private beach fronts and some of the world's most treasured views. Today we set sail through Bai Tu Long Bay passing the setting where the French epic *Indochine* was filmed. If time allows you can swim or kayak the turquoise waters and watch the sun slowly set amid the peaks of Ha Long while cruising to your over-night anchorage. Dinner served on board.

### About The Bhaya vessels



The Bhaya vessels are a flawless combination of traditional Vietnamese aesthetics and western luxury. Sailing in the midst of the wonder and natural beauty that distinguishes Ha Long Bay, your Bhaya vessel features 3 Bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms and a sundeck.

Day 6:  
Ha Long and Bai Tu Long  
Bay



Meals: B, L, D  
[Bhaya Legend private three-cabin junk](#)

This morning, if you desire, rise early to enjoy the fresh sea air and gentle breeze of Ha Long. We'll start with a cruise to Vung Vieng floating fishing village where we can explore by kayak or rowboat to see firsthand a unique local way of life. This is a floating village, and has been here for centuries with no structures built on land. A place where most children learn how to swim before they can walk!

We'll climb back onboard and enjoy a seafood lunch while we set sail for further bays. Halong Bay has rich biodiversity, and we'll enjoy kayaking alongside the giant Karsts, swimming and relaxing on the beach with clear waters and soft sand. This is one of the most remote parts of the Gulf of Tonkin!

Day 7:

Return to Hanoi 36  
Streets of Fancy



Meals: B, L

Accommodation: Sofitel Metropole  
Hotel Hanoi, Grand Premium Rooms

This morning you have options for more kayaking or island visits, before a light brunch on board. Your boat will cruise back to Ha Long and dock around 10:00. From here you'll transfer back to Hanoi, arriving approximately 14:00 to your landmark hotel.

We'll arrive to Hanoi in time to enjoy the hotel during the early afternoon, and of course head out through the neighbourhood to check out the bustling activity around Hoan Kiem Lake and stretch our legs from the drive to the city.

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The capital basks in golden light late afternoon around the lake and Ly Thai To Square. We'll go for a stroll in the French Quarter, passing the Opera House and other landmarks to take in the energy of Hoan Kiem in its best moment, followed by a signature 'fun and noisy' Hanoi meal to kick things off.

As this is arrival day we can adjust the schedule as you see fit.

### About Metropole Hanoi



Metropole Hanoi is a colonial building proudly standing since 1901. The hotel has a century-long tradition of welcoming writers, heads of state, and entrepreneurs. Features include beautiful interior gardens, French cuisine, and Hanoi specialities. Located downtown, Metropole blends the hospitality of Vietnam with European luxury heritage.

## Grand Premium Rooms



Bright, spacious, and boldly coloured, The Grand Premium Rooms combine colonial elegance with modern sophistication. Featuring a contemporary interior with an open-plan design, guests also enjoy Club Metropole privileges including butler service, internet, breakfast, afternoon tea, cocktails, etc.

Day 8:  
Hanoi from 1010 A.D.  
until the 19th Century

(Multi-Transport  
Adventure: 9:30am –  
15:30)



Meals: B, L (Dinner on own account)  
Accommodation: Sofitel Metropole  
Hotel Hanoi, Grand Premium Rooms

Hanoi has been the capital for 1,003 years and there's plenty of history and symbolism to be discussed. This works best with a combination of walking through the maze of Old Quarter streets to gain an understanding of the city's roots, as well as short zips on cyclos to essential sights.

Hanoi's old quarter is the holy grail of North Vietnamese culture, be it architectural, spiritual, musical, culinary, or otherwise. Simply walking around is an eye-popping experience and we've arranged a couple of special encounters with Hanoi insiders to bring the essence of the city to life for you.



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We'll explore the Temple of Literature of course, for an introduction to the Vietnamese temple concept and the Vietnamese educational system. The Temple of Literature is one of the most important religious and cultural landmarks in Vietnam, and formed the center of learning for the new Ly Dynasty in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century.

History runs deep in Hanoi, but there is also a couple of essential experiences that shouldn't be missed: *banh* vermicelli rice noodle lunch, or Vietnam's most famous dish, *Pho Bo*, and traditional Vietnamese coffee and tea. We know just the place!



This afternoon, Carol has arranged a sweet treat at the Metropole. We'll enjoy pralines, ganaches, éclairs, mille-feuille pastries, chocolate fountain...the list goes on. This chocolate buffet has an irresistible selection of every kind of French patisseries and delectable chocolates in every shape and form, courtesy of Carol Pilon.

### Dinner Recommendation: 7:30pm - Don's Bistro Westlake

a grand dinner by Montreal-born chef par excellence of Hanoi, Chef Donald Berger - one of Hanoi's most celebrated and accomplished chefs. Venue is a corner in Don's Bistro Westlake, a nouveau rich Hanoi community, befitting today's trip. <http://www.dons-bistro.com/>

Day 9:  
Hanoi since Ho Chi Minh  
(Multi-Transport  
Adventure:

9:30am–15:30.)



Meals: B, L (Dinner on own account)  
Accommodation: Sofitel Metropole  
Hotel Hanoi, Grand Premium Rooms

Today we'll focus on contemporary Hanoi history, including a visit to Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum complex, and the area around Ba Dinh Square (roughly equivalent to Red Square), such as One Pillar Pagoda and the stunning Parisian-Vietnamese architecture of the Presidential Palace environs.

Note that actually entering the tomb of President Ho Chi Minh is rather time costly, and somewhat anti-climatic, thus we don't suggest this as essential.



We'll explain Vietnam's "glasnost" through lesser visited Hanoi neighborhoods and walk through inner city villages in various states of ancient decay and stoic 1980's modernity. This is a walking outing, with support by a "gang of students" on scooters and short zips in a van.

From here we'll enjoy a light local lunch in town.

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Later this afternoon we have several suggestions to discuss such as art galleries or boutique clothes shopping in the cathedral district, but the hotel is very special and shouldn't be ignored either!



Water Puppet Theatre is distinctly Vietnamese, but in recent years has only available in large theatres. However there's a local family of artisans who've been perfecting the craft for 3 generations and have re-designed a floor of their house as a mini theatre where we can have a tea chat, followed by concert. This is an authentic and memorable way to take part in supporting local artists trying to preserve a craft, and finish with a private 30 minute performance.

Tonight, if you still have some space: dinner is on your own, here are our recommendations:

**Note:** We have tentatively booked Club de l'Oriental as it is always a winner, as well as walking distance to the hotel.

### Dinner Recommendation:

- 1. Club de l'Oriental:** modern Vietnamese haute cuisine a few steps from the Opera House. [www.oneasia.biz](http://www.oneasia.biz)
- 2. Le Beaulieu:** Exquisite winning French restaurant, located inside the Metropole.  
<http://www.sofitel-legend.com/hanoi/en/bars-restaurants/le-beaulieu.shtml>

## Day 10: To Hue



Hotel Pickup: 6:45am  
Flight Details: VN1541 Depart Hanoi  
08:50am Arrive Hue 10:00am  
Meals: B, L  
Pilgrimage Village, 2 Vietnamese  
Family Pool Houses

Enjoy an early breakfast and then a private van to the airport for your flight to Hue, the ancient Central Vietnamese capital wrapped in mystery, controversy and charm.

With a little background up our sleeves we'll explore Hue and the principle structures around the Citadel and Forbidden Purple City, home to the Nguyen Emperors. We'll return to Pilgrimage Village late-afternoon for some spa and pool time.



Dinner options to be discussed, but two great ideas are a nice private dinner at Pilgrimage Village, or a Royal style meal at a local restaurant such as Tinh Gia Vien (note that most top restaurants have dinner/dance shows, which can feel a bit touristy, but still a reasonable experience).

## About Pilgrimage Village



A member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, Pilgrimage Village is a family project-turned boutique resort. The 'Village' is designed by local artisans as a luxurious take on the traditional Vietnamese home. Located just outside the old city, the environment is tranquil, relaxing and chic. A great restaurant, pool, spa and bar make it a hard place to leave.

## Vietnamese Family Pool Houses



Rooms and separate house with private kitchen, dining room, spa, pool and outdoor shower.

Traditional Vietnamese Pool House Benefits:

- Villa Host butler service
- aromatherapy flower bath set up upon arrival
- complimentary ironing and laundry 2 pcs per person/day
- daily breakfast in villa or restaurant
- afternoon tea with sweets selection
- 1 hour of body treatment for 2 persons in room or at Vedana Spa followed by flower bath, manicure and pedicure per stay

Day 11:  
Hue – the Tombs and the  
Emperors: 1805 – 1945



Meals: B, L  
[Pilgrimage Village](#), 2 Vietnamese  
Family Pool Houses

This morning we'll join smiling locals on scooters (optional – but really a great way to get around), and explore key sights. Known as the Imperial City and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Hue was home to the Nguyen Dynasty from 1805-1945, making it one of Vietnam's most historically important sites. We'll visit essential tombs, such as Khai Dinh, Tu Duc, and the communities around the citadel, along the way sneak through local villages and take in the phantasmagorical architecture for which Hue is famous.



This afternoon we have a unique lunch planned with a unique local, Mr Vinh. This is a wonderful traditional Vietnamese home owned by an architect from a former prominent Hue family, and a nice change of pace from restaurants. The rest of the day is yours to enjoy the resort. This evening we'll head out at sunset to enjoy the soft light along the citadel, Hue's imposing monument.

Day 12:  
Crossing Hai Van Pass to  
Hoi An (Depart roughly  
09:00am)



Meals: B, L

Cycling: Typically cyclists can take in the first 30-40km of the ride, while opting for the van ride over Hai Van Pass. There are also some nice sections along the main highway leading from Da Nang into Hoi An if you still have energy.

Driving: Approx 3 hours with scenic stops to break up the ride

[Nam Hai Resort](#), Three-Bedroom Beachfront Pool Villa

Pedal-power is the order of the day as we cycle towards our next destination Hoi An, passing quaint villages, fantastic sandy beaches, endless green rice paddies and over three mountain passes. Today we'll make our way across Vietnam's geographical and psychological boundary between the north and south. You can bike as little or as much as you like on this day. Along the way you'll see the Marble Mountains and spectacular Hai Van Pass overlooking Da Nang's coastline and the tele-famous sites around China Beach.



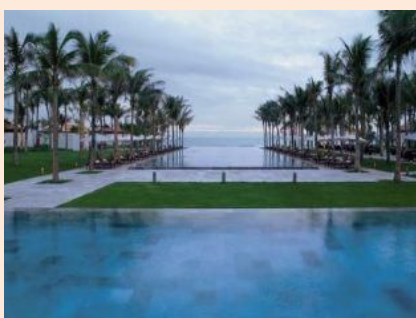
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We'll opt for bicycles and aim for Hoi An via a series of lovely village roads, lakeside communities, passing rice paddies and sobering monuments to the millions of 'boat people' and their loved ones who fled Central Vietnam during the exodus after the fall of Saigon. We'll arrive at the beautiful Nam Hai around 2pm. The rest of the afternoon is yours. Settle into your stunning resort located on a pristine beach. Perhaps make an appointment at their spa, already rated as one of the world's best.

We suggest a private meal in your amazing suite tonight.

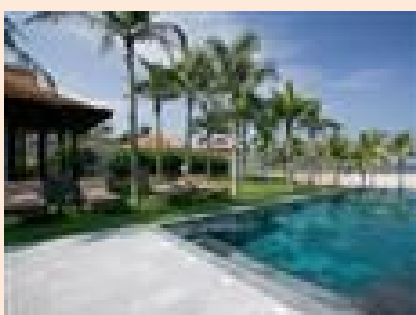
This medieval port town of Hoi An dates to the 16th century, and boasts an eclectic mix of Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese and French architecture.

### About Nam Hai Resort



The stunning all villa resort located on Hoi An Beach features sixty one-bedroom retreats, each with a private infinity pool. Enjoy impeccable service amid lush landscaping and unobstructed views of the sea. The unique and gracious culture of Central Vietnam combines with The Nam Hai's unprecedented splendor to deliver one of the world's foremost luxury experiences

### Three-Bedroom Beachfront Pool Villa



Directly on Vietnam's most famous shoreline this villa allows guests to erase the distinction between privacy and the seemingly endless horizon at one's own discretion inside the 520-metre compound. Rest and relax among three individual bedroom villas, dine in pitched roof, pillared living pavilions and swim in the suitable extended private pool then frolic on Vietnam's rightly famous Ha My Beach.

Day 13:

A taste of Hoi An with  
Markets and Cooking:  
10:00 – 12:00 time  
approximate



Meals: B, L (snacking while cooking)  
[Nam Hai Resort](#), Three-Bedroom  
Beachfront Pool Villa

After a light breakfast we'll head out for a walking introduction to this charming port town, and meet up with **Chef Ms Vy** for today's main event: Vietnamese cooking. We will be joined by well-known chef and cookbook author, [Ms Vy](#). We'll explore the market frenzy of Hoi An and learn about the bedrock ingredients of Vietnamese cuisine, its substitutes, as well as local delicacies. From here we'll join Ms Vy on a private and extensive cooking experience in large space at her new private cooking academy in Hoi An.

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This half-day session includes a market tour, some cuisine theory, lots of snacking, lots of sampling, cooking, etc. Roll up your sleeves as Ms Vy is a fun gal and great host – this will be a wonderful intro to Hoi An. We'll add in some local specialties and some menu items to ensure a grand feast at the end! Before heading back to the hotel, we'd like to take you on a detour out to the beaches of Cau Dai and the small villages beyond Hoi An which are delightfully peaceful, and full of youthful energy.

Tonight, dinner options abound as you wish.

Day 14:  
Hoi An monastery and  
village adventure – 3hrs  
(11am – 2pm) or  
(1pm-4pm)



Meals: B, L (Dinner on own account)  
[Nam Hai Resort](#), Three-Bedroom  
Beachfront Pool Villa

The world is our oyster today so time is flexible, but let's plan a biking adventure to capture some of Hoi An's lesser visited regions, specifically the Mahayana Buddhist Monastery outside of the town peninsula, as well as local mangrove communities. In these villages the ubiquitous form of water-craft is the traditional Vietnamese coracle boat, or basket-boat, to some. It is in these dense canals that the Viet Cong evaded US Forces by hiding underwater and relocating en masse while cavalry approached.

An additional idea for this afternoon after lunch would be visit to the ancient holy sanctuary of My Son. The UNESCO site of My Son is a cluster of abandoned and partially ruined Hindu temples constructed between the 4th and the 14th century AD by the kings of Champa (Chiêm Thành in Vietnamese).[1][2] The temples are dedicated to the worship of the god Shiva, known under various local names, the most important of which is "Bhadresvara."



### Dinner Recommendation:

Mango Mango is a fun restaurant in town with a variety of Vietnamese favourites. It is also a nice location to enjoy a stroll through town before/after dinner, and have a glass of wine at a nice old wine bar near the river.

Day 15:  
Brace yourself for Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)



[Hotel pickup](#): 06:30  
[Flight Details](#): VN1305 Depart Danang 08:00am Arrive Saigon 09:15  
[Meals](#): B, L (Dinner at a top local restaurant, such as Shri Saigon, on guests own account)  
[Park Hyatt in Saigon](#), Park King Suite (2 rooms King Bed only in each room)

With an early flight from Hoi An we'll by-pass city center and go straight to an old boat pier nearest to Than Son Nhat airport. Here we'll arrange a nice private, large boat to cruise into Saigon in style! We'll bisect town center and continue west to old *Cholon*, one of Saigon's densest population centers and the home of Vietnam's largest ethnic Chinese population. Here we'll take a walking trip through narrow streets and Chinese spice shops, garment makers and electronics wholesalers. Up next we'll get a wonderful full-frontal view of Saigon via a cyclo trip all the way to District 1, the heart of modern Saigon. This is a brilliant cacophony of old world and new colliding in from of our eyes.

Pho Saigon for lunch: Pho Saigon is different from its northern cousin, with more greens and sprouts to blend into the broth. We'll choose Saigon's most famous, and one of the oldest, Pho restaurants for our final lunch in Vietnam. This brings us to roughly 2pm, which surely is the right time to check into the Park Hyatt, located right on Lam Som Square. The afternoon is yours for spa, shopping along Dong Khoi Avenue (formerly Rue Catinat in the days of Graham Greene). If you'd rather get out and have more walking, we can take you through the Ho Chi Minh Museum – worth it for the grand neo-classical architecture

alone, as well as several key historical and cultural sights within District 1.

Saigon at night!



Tonight we'll navigate the landmarks of Saigon as well as some SA-approved unique hidden corners with some two-wheeled fun! There is much to be seen in Saigon on the back of a motor scooter, driven by a safe team we know well. We'll cross town and have a few snacks and capture the essence of the city in its glory – and get a sense for the amazing symphony of movement of Saigon traffic.

We'll end this escapade in style with a final send-off meal at a signature Saigon restaurant.

### About Park Hyatt Saigon



Located in the nostalgic heart of the city, the Park Hyatt Saigon is a luxury hotel in the true sense of the word. Located at Lam Son square, Park Hyatt is within walking distance of main city attractions, boutiques, restaurants and parks. Rooms are elegant and reflect colonial-style wooden floors and shutters with luxurious amenities.

### Park Suite King



Park Suite Kings are 70 square metres and feature French wooden shutters that provide a warm residential setting. Room characteristics include a separate living room area, a spacious bedroom, one king bed with plush feather pillows and duvets, wooden floors, a white marble bath with a walk-in rain shower, and high-speed Internet access.

Day 16:  
Homeward Bound



Hotel pickup: 09:00  
Departure flights: TBA  
Meals: B

This morning enjoy breakfast at the hotel, and we'll arrange your departure transfer for your flight back home. The ride to the airport is roughly 25-30-minutes.

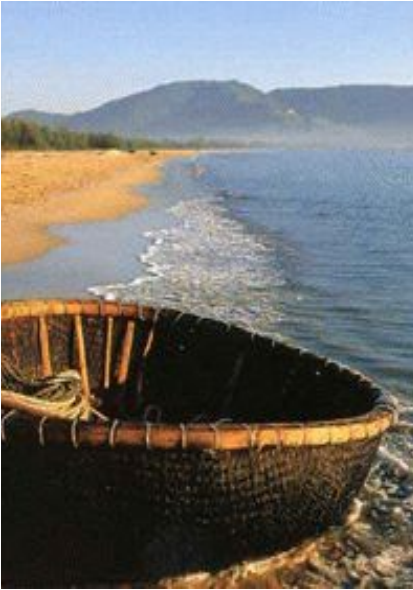
Until next time!

**INCLUDING:**

- All Accommodation with daily breakfast
- All indicated flights in economy class
- Touring in Vietnam, including hosts, indicated meals, admissions, snacks & water
- All logistics and costs for activities discussed
- All Airport Transfers

**EXCLUDING:**

- Alcohol, visas, souvenirs, laundry expenses, meals not outlined in itinerary



## The Smiling Albino Service Difference

We understand implicitly that a perfect adventure is much more than nice hotels, great meals and hassle-free logistics. For a travel experience to be perfect, all pieces must work together like a symphony. It is the fine details which our guests appreciate most, like cold face towels after a hike, electrolyte beverages for your day cycling, and wine uncorked when the moment is right. From local maps to bottled water and colorful anecdotes on the areas we visit, a Smiling Albino adventure is a thorough, intimately hosted experience. We will also provide you with a complimentary mobile phone for your use throughout your stay. You'll be treated with executive care during your Smiling Albino adventure.

We look forward to hosting you!

## The Team at Smiling Albino

Smiling Albino - Bangkok, Thailand

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"See a different part of the world, differently."