



Smiling Albino's Vietnam Grand Slam

Hanoi, Ha Long Bay, Hoi An, Hue and Saigon

A sophisticated approach to city life, stunning coastal vistas & backstreets of Southeast Asia's most enigmatic country





Background



This customized itinerary features a variety of activities and venues from the 1,000-year old capital, Hanoi, to the supernatural islands and coves of Ha Long Bay. Continue on a memorable and charming journey through the heritage town of Hoi An, UNESCO world heritage town of Hue, and end in the frenetic hub of Saigon.

The pace is methodical but practical and is enhanced by kayaking, cycling, and multiple forms of transport throughout. This is a journey into the heart of a nation on the move.

Prepare to be dazzled!

Day 2: Hanoi Inside Out



Today we'll conquer all sides of Hanoi using multiple forms of transport. There are a couple of great ways to get around. We'll hit a few of the must-sees using cyclos and motorcycle-taxis. On our short list is the Temple of Literature, the Parisian boulevards of the French Quarter and if you're up for it, Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum complex and the area around Ba Dinh Square.

As Hanoi has been the capital since 1010 A.D., there's plenty of history to be discussed, and we can do just that while enjoying a couple of essential experiences: *Pho* soup and *Café Sud Da*.

Meals: B, L

Accommodation: *Hanoi De L'Opera*

Dinner Suggestions - here are a couple of our favorite recommendations:

1 – Don's Westlake by Legendary Montreal-born chef, Monsieur Donald Berger.

16 Lane 27 Xuan Dieu, Tay Ho, Quảng An, Tây H ã T: +84 (4) 3719 2828

2 – Club de l' Oriental - 22 Tong Dan, Hoàn Kiem, T: +84 (0) 4 3826 8801

Day 3: Eat, Drink Vietnam



Grilled meats, fresh seafood, tangy salads and a cornucopia of sesame, garlic, cilantro, chili and lime are just the starting point for one of Asia's darling cuisines. This morning we'll enjoy an introduction to Vietnamese food and drink, the basic ingredients, various styles, and of course lots of sampling. Starting out on foot from our hotel in the old quarter, we'll make our way to Chau Long fresh market for a visual and sensory overload of produce. Sampling is key, and we'll make a couple stops at cafés to experience a few bedrock culinary experiences: spring rolls, salad wraps and of course Vietnamese coffee, not necessarily in that order.

We'll stretch out the walk, even tuck into the Hanoi Hilton for a peak and then let loose on simply outstanding local cuisine. Lunch is a treat of local specialties – vermicelli noodles with fantastic grilled pork, broth and herbs, fresh garlic and chilies. Late afternoon is open, we have several suggestions such as an art gallery stroll in the cathedral district, shopping, spa, or a nap of course. There is plenty of food still to find in the capital.

Meals: B, L

Accommodation: [Hanoi De L'Opera](#)

Day 4: To Ha Long Bay



A (3 hour) morning drive takes us to Ha Long Bay along the Red River delta. Upon arrival the crew will welcome everyone aboard the junk and set sail into the gorgeous island-studded bay to see the amazing karsts, caves and coves. Ha Long Bay is a geological marvel and we'll explore a couple of the area's deep caves before a sunset paddle and a dinner sail.

Driving: approximately 3 hours

Meals: B, L, D

Accommodation: shared 4 - 5 bedrooms Junk, Private Cabin

Day 5: Caves and Kayaking



Enjoy a full day cruising through Ha Long Bay with kayaking options to discover hidden lagoons and stunning inlets. We'll visit a remote floating fishing village that has retained, largely intact, its traditional fishing culture.

After our Barbecue lunch, we'll check out a nearby pristine island and explore well-hidden caves. Save time this afternoon to squeeze in a swim before relaxing on deck to soak up the atmosphere.

How about fish for dinner?

Meals: B, L, D

Accommodation: shared 4 - 5 bedrooms Junk, Private Cabin

Day 6: On to Charming Hoi An



With Ha Long Bay's stunning sunrise for a backdrop, things come curiously into light. Enjoy the morning cruising the bay, taking it all in from the upper sundeck. Before noon we'll disembark from the junk and drive back to Hanoi airport for your flight from the capital into Central Vietnam.

Upon arrival you will have a short transfer to Hoi An, a charming and ancient town with a rich heritage that still maintains its unique character and history. Enjoy your evening at leisure.

Driving: 3.5 hours from Ha Long Bay to Hanoi Airport

Flight: Hanoi - Danang, departing around 18:00

Meals: Brunch

Accommodation: Anantara Hoi An Resort, Deluxe Balcony Room

Day 7: Everything Hoi An



For early-risers, a visit the Fish and Central markets is like going back in time when life in Hoi An centred around this market. Watch locals preparing for their day, then set out on a walk to explore interesting nooks and crannies.

Next we'll hop on bikes and head further afield into the countryside where we'll dig into a local gourmet feast after exploring a local organic farm and unique monasteries along the way. Take a load off with a foot massage before riding to the ocean to try your hand at rowing a 'coracle fishing boat' which is super-tipsy.

The late afternoon is clear for shopping, beach time or admiring one of SE Asia's most charming towns!

Biking: 10-20 km on flat, paved/countryside roads

Meals: B, L

Accommodation: [Anantara Hoi An Resort](#)

*Option: for a photography focus, there is the option to join a photo gallery owner and avid local photographer, **Mr. Tuan Kiet**, on a deep exploration inside the local fishing community. Additional charges applied.*

Day 8: Cycling Adventure to Hue



Today we'll make our way across Vietnam's geographical and psychological boundary between the north and south.

Our journey is through quaint villages, fantastic sandy beaches, endless green rice paddies and over three mountain passes including the spectacular Hai Van Pass overlooking Da Nang's coastline and the tele-famous sites around China Beach.

You can bike as little or as much as you like on this day. If you'd like to cycle, typically pedal power takes in the last 40km of the ride, while opting for the van ride over Hai Van Pass. Today, your wish is our command and the effort will be rewarded with gorgeous accommodations in the ancient capital of Hue.

Driving: approximately 2 hours

Cycling: biking is optional along sections of the drive, between 30-60 km on flat paved roads

Meals: B, L

Accommodation: Pilgrimage Village, Deluxe Room

Day 9: Historical Hue



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 explore by bicycle as we visit the Forbidden City, Tu Duc Tomb, and some out of the way sites to see stunning views of the perfume river and hilltop bunkers still remaining.

Next up, savoury Vietnamese cuisine... let's enjoy some local style dumplings for lunch!

We'll return to the resort mid-afternoon and cut the cord for the day. Pilgrimage Village is the kind of place that should be enjoyed.

Cycling: 15 - 25 km mostly flat, village roads

Meals: B, L

Accommodation: [Pilgrimage Village](#)

Day 10: Brace Yourself for Saigon



Catch a morning flight south to the energetic commercial heart of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City, or Saigon as most locals call it. On the way into the city we can stop at the Cu Chi Tunnels where the Vietcong dug 250 km of passageways from the Cambodian border towards Saigon, eventually capturing it. While heavily visited, it's astounding what they constructed and you'll have the opportunity to squeeze through most of these very narrow passageways. This visit gives an endearing appreciation for the tenacity and sacrifices of the Vietnamese people.

Saigon moves at a pace that may be a shock to the system after cerebral Hue and Hoi An. We'll have some time off later in the afternoon which affords ample time to check out some of Saigon's many worthwhile museums.

This evening we'll take Saigon by storm and experience the amazing energy and movement of the southern capital via a colourful scooter journey around the historical district, and then street-side food with a perfect view of Saigon's motorcycle medley!

Flight: Hue - Saigon, departing around 8:00

Meals: B, L, D

Accommodation: The Grand Hotel, Deluxe Room

Day 11: Onwards



Take the morning to hit that final site of interest or enjoy it at your leisure before your Smiling Albino host transfers you to the airport for your homeward flight.

What a journey it's been! *Hen Gap Lai* - See you again!

Meals: B

Departure flight: independently arranged

Prices

- Group of 2-3 people: \$3,890 US /pax (Double / Twin Sharing)
- Group of 4 people: \$3,165 US /pax (Double / Twin Sharing)
- Single room supplement for 3rd traveler: \$1,200 US

Remark: These prices are valid until December 19, 2017

Inclusions

- 8 night accommodations with daily breakfast
- 3 Days, 2 Nights experience on a shared junk
- Daily activities, including most meals (as indicated), drinks and snacks, English speaking hosts, all transportation and logistics, admissions and executive care
- All airport transfers
- 2 internal flights in economy class
- Vietnam invitation letter (to apply for Visa on Arrival)
- The only surprises are good ones. We've got you covered

Exclusions

- Vietnam Visa on Arrival (\$25 US per person stamping fee)
- Flights to and from Vietnam (we can help with recommendations)
- Personal expenses such as spa, laundry, souvenirs, meals not indicated

About Accommodation

Hanoi De L'Opera, Hanoi

Part of Accor's M Gallery, a collection of hotels with personality, Hotel De L'Opera is modern and bold, especially in its high ceilings, picture windows and splashes of bright colour. The ground-floor Bentley boutique announces that this is the heart of uptown, on what is the Fifth Avenue of Hanoi - but it's also a short walk from the central lake and the Old Quarter.



Indochina Junk (Prince)

The Indochina group have nicely re-fitted several classic Vietnamese trading junks into comfortable, 2 and 4 bedroom shared cruising yachts. The Junks have a nice communal area and wide sun deck. A coffee machine – of course – and selection of wines make sure mornings and evenings are set to sail.



Anantara Hoi An

Anantara Hoi An Resort has arguably the best of everything possible in this charming ancient town, ideally located in the Old Quarter with luxury facilities, riverfront view, and colonial architecture. The Anantara also offers probably the best breakfast in town. Rooms are clean and crisp, with white minimalist design and dark wood and glass interior trimming.



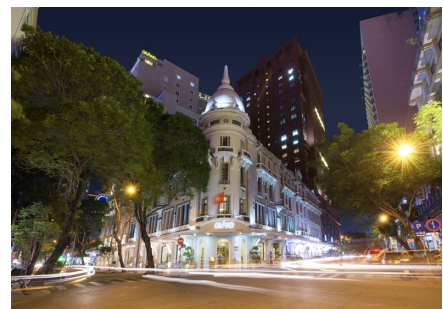
Pilgrimage Village, Hue

Pilgrimage Village is a beautiful boutique resort located in Hue, the ancient capital of Viet Nam. The charm of this unique Vietnamese property is its tranquility and design, a sense of the past in an updated rustic village setting. The resort offers a harmonious balance of natural environment and local culture, modern art concept and traditional style



The Grand Hotel, Saigon

Located at the southern end of famous Rue Catinat, The Grand is an elegant landmark that has stood proudly since 1930. As one of Indochina's original stately city hotels, The Grand is art deco, French chic, even features an iron-caged antique elevator. Get out your Graeme Green novel and step back into vintage Saigon.



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. You'll be treated with executive care during your Smiling Albino adventure.

We look forward to hosting you!

The Team at Smiling Albino

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"See a different part of the world, differently"