

# THE Nation. TRAVELS

## VIETNAM ITINERARY | NOVEMBER 4–16, 2017

### DETAILS & PRICING

*Breathtaking Beauty and Indomitable Spirit: Immerse yourself in the rich and complex history of this resolute country on a true insider's tour of Vietnam.*

**B: BREAKFAST**

**L: LUNCH**

**D: DINNER**

**R: RECEPTION**



### SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Depart the United States for Ho Chi Minh City.

### SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5: HO CHI MINH CITY R, D

- Arrive in Ho Chi Minh City and independently transfer to rooms at the five-star Hotel des Arts Saigon, located in the heart of the business, shopping, and entertainment district.
- This evening, gather in the hotel's iconic rooftop bar, which has been welcoming patrons since 1959 and is still a great place to watch the sunset as the city lights up. The view, overlooking Lam Son Square and the heart of the metropolis, offers a glimpse into Ho Chi Minh City's bustling street life. Enjoy a cocktail reception with fellow travelers before dinner at the hotel.

### MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6: HO CHI MINH CITY B, L, D

- Begin the morning with a lecture on contemporary Vietnamese history by Dr. Bùi Trần Phương, former president of Hoa Sen University.
- Continue on to a sightseeing tour of Ho Chi Minh City, including the grand Independence Palace, French colonial architecture, a statue of Ho Chi Minh, the Giác Lâm Pagoda, and the harrowing War Remnants Museum.
- Lunch with Nguyen Cong Khe, former editor of Thanh Niên, a newspaper known for exposing some very well-connected Vietnamese families in the theft of public funds. Always concerned with politics and social issues, Khe was also involved in the Vietnam conflict in the early 1970s, when he agitated against the American presence and spent three years behind bars.

- Drive to 22 Lý Tự Trọng Street in Ho Chi Minh City's District 1. It was from this rooftop that one of the last US helicopters took off on April 29, 1975, as North Vietnamese Army troops began their final push into the city, a scene captured by Dutch photojournalist Hubert van Es in one of the most iconic and dramatic photographs from the Vietnam War.
- Dinner at a wonderful local restaurant located near the hotel.



## TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7: MEKONG DELTA, HO CHI MINH CITY

B, L

- Take a full-day excursion to the Mekong Delta. We'll begin with a drive to the natural beauty of the Bến Tre province. Known as "Coconut Island," it's home to people who still rely on centuries-old methods of production. Our program focuses on the Giồng Trôm and Phong Nam districts, areas relatively untouched by commercial tourism. We'll meet with a group of local people to learn about the villages they call home and the idyllic rivers they use as a part of their daily lives.
- Upon arrival in Bến Tre, take a xích lô (cycle rickshaw) ride through the local village of Hữu Định to admire the green fields and gardens. Continue with a short walk to Hữu Phước Bridge, where we will meet a private boat for a cruise through small canals surrounded by beautiful tropical scenery.
- Visit a family-owned coconut-processing business, where we will learn the hundreds of uses of the coconut. Return to our boat and cruise across the water to a brick-making factory, where the locals still use ancient methods to produce bricks by hand.
- Enjoy a very easy cycling trip and visit a local rice-noodle factory that produces hủ tiếu noodles, one of the most popular dishes in the region. Take a short walk to a private home to enjoy fresh fruits and tea before boarding a

rowing sampan to continue our canal tour, an ideal way to experience the tranquility and lush beauty of the region.

- Enjoy an incredible lunch of local cuisine before meeting with Sau Tuong, a former Việt Cộng soldier who survived two years fighting the Khmer Rouge in Phnom Penh. Now he and his wife make rice paper for a living. We'll look at samples and learn how the paper is made. After the visit, our private boat will take us back to Bến Tre, where a bus will meet us for the return to Ho Chi Minh City in the late afternoon.
- Enjoy a cocktail reception at the Craig Thomas Gallery with several emerging artists. The gallery is focused on supporting the development of young and mid-career Vietnamese artists and providing them with a platform to present their work to a wider audience. The group will also be joined by owner Craig Thomas, who has lived and worked in Vietnam since 1995.
- Dinner tonight is at your leisure.



## WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8: HO CHI MINH CITY

B, L, D

- For those who would like to try a traditional and very local Vietnamese breakfast, rise early and join the morning rush for a cup of Vietnamese black coffee (cà phê đá) or condensed-milk coffee (cà phê sữa) and a Vietnamese baguette. It's a great chance to see how the city wakes up and observe the crazy morning traffic made up of cars, rickshaws, and bicycles.
- Enjoy a presentation this morning with poet and literary critic Inrasara. From textbooks and poetry to literary criticism and publishing, this accomplished literary jack-of-all-trades will discuss the preservation of his culture, the challenge that launched his impressive career, and the state of contemporary Vietnamese poetry today.
- After the presentation, meet with Nguyen Hai, an expert calligrapher who practices Thư Pháp, an ancient art form with





Chinese origins. Over time, Vietnamese calligraphy's own unique style evolved, serving as a vessel for the country's many artistic traditions. Hai will provide a workshop and an opportunity to replicate some of his beautiful calligraphy.

- Enjoy lunch at the Café-Restaurant Ho Chi Minh City.
- After lunch, there will be some time for shopping in Ho Chi Minh City, including a visit to the lively Bến Thành market, where one can purchase jumping frogs, fragrant local cuisine, and áo dài, the Vietnamese national dress traditionally worn by women.
- Return to the hotel for a roundtable discussion led by Tim Doling on "Saigon Through the Ages," offering a comprehensive introduction to Ho Chi Minh City (formerly known as Saigon) and its history and heritage with a focus on the city's current role in the Vietnamese economy.
- Dinner tonight is at Huong Lai, a restaurant opened by a Japanese expatriate, Jin Shirai, in 2001. Enjoy superb food served by disadvantaged youth who Shirai has mentored and trained. You will love the purple-yam soup!
- After lunch, visit two of the royal tombs of the emperors of the Nguyen dynasty. Most of the tomb complex consists of a temple for the worship of the emperor and empress, a stele pavilion that details a glorified history of the emperor, a lotus pond, and a sepulcher where the emperor's remains are buried.
- Overnight in superior rooms at the La Residence Hotel, an enchanting boutique hotel on the banks of the Perfume River overlooking the former imperial citadel.
- Before dinner, meet with Thái Công Nguyen—a historian, veteran, and intellectual of Vietnam. He will share many fascinating stories of Vietnamese history, especially about the last imperial dynasty in Huế. We'll also hear about his experiences fighting in the Vietnam War, when he served as a special reconnaissance officer for the North in the Tri Thien Command Unit. After the war, he worked for 15 years as director of the Huế Monuments Conservation Centre and had been in charge of Huế's application to be recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- Dinner this evening at the charming Les Jardins de la Carambole. Located close to the main door of the Forbidden City, this magnificent restaurant is beautifully decorated, taking one back to the days of Indochina. The food is incredible!

## THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9: HUE

**B, L, D**

- Take a morning flight to Huế, Vietnam's political capital from 1802 to 1945 under the 13 emperors of the Nguyen dynasty. This 19th-century capital of regal pavilions has preserved its air of gracious reserve and faded glamour.
- Before lunch, enjoy a private cruise on the Perfume River to the Thien Mu Pagoda, one of the most famous structures in all of Vietnam. Continue by bus to the Citadel of Huế, built at the beginning of the 19th century by Emperor Gia Long.

## FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10: HUE, DMZ

**B, L**

- Spend the day in the former demilitarized zone (DMZ), two hours north of Huế. The DMZ was established as a dividing line between North and South Vietnam as a result of the First Indochina War. During the Vietnam War, it became important as the battleground demarcation separating North Vietnamese from South Vietnamese territory.

- We'll explore this area that divides the mid-region of Vietnam from Laos and Cambodia in the west and funnels south into the Central Highlands. Our time here will include meeting with members of an emergency response team that detonate unexploded munitions, which are still regularly found in the area. We'll also have an opportunity to hear from villagers who have made these discoveries.



- We will stop at the Trường Sơn National Cemetery, the burial ground of many who died fighting to protect the legendary Ho Chi Minh Trail, a supply route for the Viet Cong that spanned the country from the North to the South. More than 10,000 graves dot these hillsides, each marked by a simple white tombstone. However, many graves are empty, simply bearing names in honor of a fraction of Vietnam's 300,000 soldiers missing in action.
- Explore the Khe Sanh Combat Base and the Dakrong Bridge, just east of the Khe Sanh bus station. The bridge was rebuilt in 2001 and bears a marker hailing its importance as a conduit for the Ho Chi Minh Trail.
- Return to Huế in the early evening. Dinner is at your leisure.

## SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11: HOI AN

**B, L, D**

- Enjoy a morning drive along a spectacular coastal road to Danang. The road, which crosses coastal mountains between Huế and Danang, forms a natural barrier across Vietnam's tiny waist.
- Upon arrival in Danang, stop first at the Museum of Cham Sculpture, which houses the finest collection of Cham sculpture in the world. Many of the sandstone carvings are absolutely stunning. Meeting the group here will be Dr. Tran Ky Phuong, an expert on the Cham civilization and former museum director.
- Meet with staff from the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange, which was founded in 2004 to support and

mobilize victims of Agent Orange and aid them in receiving assistance. Agent Orange is a potent defoliant that was sprayed by American forces during the Vietnam War, causing many kinds of severe diseases for Vietnamese people in the affected regions, including cancers, neurological disorders, and birth defects. Staff will talk about the current situation of Agent Orange victims in Vietnam.

- After lunch, stop at China Beach, where at 9:03 am on March 8, 1965, 3,500 US Marines disembarked from their landing crafts and waded onto Vietnam's shores, becoming the first American ground troops to arrive in the country.
- Afterward, take a short ride south to Hội An, and check into the deluxe rooms at the Hotel Royal Hội An.
- Before dinner, enjoy a discussion on climate change and its impact on Vietnam. Some studies rank Vietnam (along with Bangladesh), and particularly the Mekong Delta, as the place most seriously threatened by rising sea levels.
- After dinner, enjoy a water-puppet performance. The water-puppet dance is a tradition that dates back as far as the 11th century, when it originated in the villages from the Red River Delta area of northern Vietnam. While puppets play their roles according to the direction of puppeteers, singers of chèo (a kind of traditional theater in Vietnam) sing along to tell the story in words.

## SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12: HOI AN

**B, L, D**

- Morning excursion to Mỹ Sơn, considered to be one of Vietnam's most impressive Cham sites. Monuments are set in a verdant valley surrounded by hills and overlooked by Hon Quap Mountain. This site of 70 redbrick temple towers, dedicated to Hindu deities, represents the height of Cham spiritual and artistic expression, and a sense of ruined majesty provides the backdrop to the jungle not far away.
- Return to Hội An by private boat and enjoy a delicious lunch at Brother's Café. After lunch, begin exploring Hội An, which at one time was one of Southeast Asia's major ports. More than perhaps any other place in Vietnam, Hội An retains the feel of centuries past. Explore the Japanese Covered Bridge and the Tan Ky House.
- Visit the Chùa Chúc Thánh Pagoda, which was built at the end of the 17th century in a combination of Chinese and Vietnamese architectural styles. Today, the pagoda is managed by the Buddhist priest Thích Trí Nhẫn, whom we will have the opportunity to meet.
- Enjoy dinner this evening at a local restaurant in Hội An.



**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13: HANOI****B, L, D**

- Take a morning flight to Vietnam's capital, Hanoi, a charming city with pleasant lakes, shaded boulevards, and lush public parks. The city center is an architectural museum piece and its blocks of ocher buildings retain the air of a provincial French town of the 1930s.
- Drive to the Temple of Literature, which was erected in 1070 under Emperor Lý Thánh Tông during the construction of the royal city. The temple is home to two very important institutions: a shrine to Confucius as well as the site of the country's first university. The cluster of well-preserved buildings is considered an excellent example of traditional Vietnamese architecture.



- Enjoy lunch at KOTO (Know One, Teach One). This stunning restaurant overlooking the Temple of Literature is also a training facility that works with disadvantaged children, who are each paired with a mentor.
- After lunch, check into the MK Premier Boutique Hotel.
- Before dinner, enjoy a discussion with a local expert on the one-party rule in Vietnam. From 2000, the rate of economic change has accelerated and the political balance has shifted. We'll explore the tensions arising from communist rule and Vietnam's new role as a member of the World Trade Organization and the globalized capitalist economy.
- Dinner at a local restaurant.

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14: HANOI****B, L**

- This morning, meet with Chuck Searcy, an enlistee in the US Army from 1966 to '69. After military duty, he joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War. In 2001, Searcy became a representative of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and helped launch Project RENEW in the Quang Tri province, in order to clean up unexploded ordnance (UXO)

and provide medical assistance, rehabilitation, and income for UXO victims. In 2003, Searcy was awarded Vietnam's National Friendship Medal.

- Visit Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum. Built in 1975, it's the final resting place of the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary, revered father of modern Vietnam, and liberator from French colonialism, who died in 1969.
- Nearby is the One Pillar Pagoda. Built of wood on a single stone pillar, the pagoda is designed to resemble a lotus blossom, a symbol of purity, rising out of a sea of sorrow.
- Travel to Hanoi's Old Quarter, the city's beating heart of commerce. Narrow streets, each named after the produce sold from its confines, create an intricate web of activity and color. Turn into Hàng Mã Street, where Hanoians shop for paper-votive offerings to be burned on the anniversary of a loved one's death.
- Hanoi's street food has been recognized as some of the best in the world, and this morning we will stroll through the bustling markets and hidden alleyways of Old Hanoi, where hawkers sell everything from exotic fruits and spices to live seafood. Learn about the traditions and intricacies of Vietnamese food and culture. During the walk, purchase ingredients for our lunch, which you will learn to prepare.
- Dinner at your leisure.

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15: HANOI****B, L, D**

- After breakfast, meet for a discussion with a local expert on how the death of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal will impact Vietnam, which was positioned to be one of the major beneficiaries of the deal via slashed tariffs on its manufacturing exports. We'll explore another side of the TPP debate from the Vietnamese perspective.
- After the discussion, drive to the Trúc Lâm Sùng Phúc Zen Monastery. Visit the main hall to meet and have a private

talk with several of the monks. Travelers are freely allowed to ask questions about Buddhism, meditation, and daily life at the monastery.



- Return to Hanoi and, after lunch, meet with Bill Nguyen, the co-founder of the Manzi Art Space. Nguyen is an artist and curator who works closely with the young generation of contemporary Vietnamese artists to curate exhibitions, host artists' talks, and develop opportunities for up-and-coming creatives. The afternoon will combine history with the personal experiences of artists who studied, fought, witnessed, and documented major changes in Vietnam's history, offering a better understanding on the artists' essential role in the resistance, revolution, and reconstruction of a nation.
- Celebrate your adventure with a farewell dinner at the Home Vietnamese Restaurant.

## THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16

**B**

- After breakfast, return to the airport for flights home.

## PRICING

Double (per person):	<b>\$6,280</b>
Single:	<b>\$7,320</b>

\*Rates are based on standard accommodations. Suites, superior rooms and other upgrades carry an additional fee.

## INCLUDED

- Accommodation, based on double occupancy, in hotels as listed
- Meals as listed in the itinerary, including bottled water
- Bottled water on the bus at all times
- All sightseeing and excursions in a private air-conditioned bus
- All private events and speakers as listed
- All entrance fees listed
- Services of an English-speaking local guide/tour manager who will travel with the group from the beginning to end
- Services of a local Vietnamese guide
- Cocktail reception at the hotel in Ho Chi Minh City
- Meeting rooms as listed
- Porterage
- Gratuity to tour managers/guides and bus driver

## NOT INCLUDED

- International airfare to Ho Chi Minh City and from Hanoi
- The following economy class flights within the itinerary which will be billed at a rate of \$250
  - Ho Chi Minh City to Hue
  - Da Nang to Hanoi
- Drinks with meals
- Passport fees
- Visa fee for Vietnam, which is currently \$70 per person plus a visa service fee of \$50 per person
- Excess luggage charges
- Travel insurance
- Items of a purely personal nature
- Theater tickets
- Any item not listed

## PAYMENT

A \$1,500 deposit is due in order to register for the trip. This is due immediately. Full payment will be due **75 DAYS** prior to departure: **AUGUST 21, 2017**.

[Download the Registration Form](#)