



CHRISTMAS IN VIETNAM

Classic Tour | 13 Days | Physical Level 1

Saigon - Hoi An - Hue - Hanoi - Halong Bay

December is a perfect month to visit Vietnam, so why not celebrate Christmas with us? Explore the historic cities of Saigon and Hanoi and immerse yourself in the charms of Hoi An and imperial Hue. Come Christmas Eve, embark on a wonderful two-night cruise into the waters of Halong Bay.

- Delve into historic Saigon
- Discover the astonishing Cu Chi Tunnels
- Explore the Mekong Delta
- Be charmed by lantern-lit Hoi An
- Marvel at Hue's Imperial Citadel
- Celebrate Christmas Eve and Christmas Day swimming, kayaking and sailing in Halong Bay
- Experience the beauty of Lan Ha Bay – Halong's lesser-known twin!

TOUR MAP



CHRISTMAS IN VIETNAM TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes & current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Vietnam visa fees for Australian passport holders (please see visa section below for further information)
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

The only things you may have to pay for are personal expenditures, e.g., drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.

CLASSIC TOURS:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Southeast Asia on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully inclusive basis so you will travel with the assurance that all arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts or local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

PHYSICAL LEVEL 1:

Our tours come with a physical rating to guide you in selecting a holiday that suits your comfort level. Joining any of our tours involves independent mobility and the ability to stay active throughout the day, which is essential for fully enjoying the unique charm of each destination.

'Christmas in Vietnam' falls under a Physical Level 1 category. This indicates a level of fitness that allows you to comfortably remain on your feet with occasional rests. Expect to effortlessly navigate boarding and disembarking from various modes of transport, including coaches, trains, and boats. You'll be walking around remarkable sites and ascending steps to capture those awe-inspiring views!

Please Consider:

- Sightseeing may often involve walking for a reasonable duration, sometimes over multiple steps, or uneven surfaces.
- Boarding and alighting from various boat sizes independently is part of the experience.

Our National Escort is dedicated to providing a high level of service and support throughout your journey. However, their primary role is to manage the daily aspects of the tour. They are unable to offer extensive personal physical assistance. We kindly ask our travelers to be prepared for the physical aspects of the tour to ensure a comfortable and enjoyable experience for everyone.

JOINING YOUR TOUR:

The tour is 13 days in duration including international flights.

Travellers booked on a 'Land Only' package, the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to our reservations team.

Join the tour on Day 1 in Saigon and end the tour on Day 12 in Hanoi. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

We intend to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours, or as dictated by local conditions. In these circumstances, we will endeavour to make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Days 1: Fly overnight to Saigon

Meals: D

Fly to Saigon, where you will be met at the airport in the arrival hall by your Local Guide or National Escort. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer 45 minutes to your hotel.

The rest of the day is at leisure until this evening's welcome briefing.

Early check-in is not included. Additional nights before and after your tour can be arranged. Please contact our Reservations team to book.



Destination Information

Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) - The exuberant city of Saigon is driving Vietnam forward into the modern world but is also a treasure trove of fascinating heritage. During the 1960s and early 1970s, there were many different subcurrents of emotion in response to the American occupation. Today, the old mixes seamlessly with the new.

Day 2: Saigon & The Cu Chi Tunnels

Meals: B, L, D

Discover the story of the Viet Cong at the Cu Chi Tunnels. These cramped tunnels were central to some of the Vietnam War's strategic operations, including the famous 1968 Tet Offensive. Hear about their use by VC soldiers during combat, and learn about their role as underground hospitals, food and weapon caches and living quarters.

You will also see recreations of some of the infamous bamboo traps of the VC. If you choose, you can also crouch or crawl through a short section of the tunnels.

This afternoon, explore modern day Saigon and its heady mix of local culture and colonial French influences. See the Reunification Palace and Notre Dame Cathedral, visit the impressive Central Post Office, and spend some time at the poignant War Remnants Museum, which displays military equipment, photographs and artefacts Vietnam War from 1961-1975. This museum can be emotional; you will have time to explore independently.

Please note: The Notre Dame Cathedral will be under renovation until further notice. During this time we are unable to enter the Cathedral; however, it can be viewed from the outside.



Destination Information

Cu Chi - The tunnels of Cu Chi are an immense network of connecting underground tunnels located in the Cu Chi district of Saigon. The Cu Chi tunnels were the location of several military campaigns during the Vietnam War and were the Viet Cong's base of operations for the Tet Offensive in 1968.

Central Post Office – Located next to the Notre-Dame Cathedral. The Central Post Office building was constructed in the late 19th century. It counts Gothic, Renaissance and French influences.

Reunification Palace – A landmark of Saigon, it was the home and workplace of the President of South Vietnam during the Vietnam War, and the site of the end of the war during the Vietnam War, and the site of the end of the war during the Fall of Saigon on 30th April 1975, when a North Vietnamese Army tank crashed through its gates.

Day 3: Mekong Delta

Meals: B, L, D

Drive two and a half hours down to the picturesque province of Ben Tre, situated along the mighty Mekong. This area is known as the 'Rice Basket of Vietnam', because its rich and fertile lands produce huge amounts of rice, coconuts, vegetables and tropical fruit.

Spend the day cruising and exploring, travelling by motorized, wooden boats between the islands and changing to smaller, paddleboats in the canals.

Sightseeing involves hopping on and off these boats. There may be unsteady and slippery surfaces, sometimes without handrails or assistance. Return to Saigon this afternoon.



Destination Information

Mekong Delta - Although primarily rural, the Mekong Delta is a densely populated area where life progresses around its fertile banks. The Mekong Delta is the 13th longest, and the 10th largest, by volume alone and people live, trade, travel and go to school on the riverbanks. The rice which is cultivated in the many farming lands is said to be enough to supply the entire country with a little extra.

Day 4: Saigon – Hoi An

Meals: B, L, D

Fly 1 hour and 15 minutes to Danang and transfer to the charming town of Hoi An, which wins the hearts of all its visitors through its atmospheric, lantern-lined streets.

This afternoon, enjoy a walking tour of Hoi An's narrow ancient streets. Visit one of the town's oldest homes, built by a merchant family over 200 years ago and still owned by their descendants. You will also visit the traditional Hoi An Market, the Quan Cong Chinese Temple and the Japanese Covered Bridge.



You may also wish to visit one of Hoi An's famous 24-hour tailors or sandal-makers, who are famous for creating custom pieces overnight – they can even deliver them to your hotel.

Destination Information

Hoi An - With its famous lanterns and traditional ochre buildings, Hoi An retains the feel of centuries past. Once known as Faifo, Hoi An was an influential port along the Silk Road. For over 500 years, merchants from China, Japan, France and Portugal settled in the prosperous town, resulting in a distinctive blend of culture, cuisine, religion and architecture.

Japanese Covered Bridge - First constructed in the 1590s to link the Japanese and Chinese quarters of the town, this iconic pink-hued bridge has been restored to its former splendour.

Day 5: Hoi An

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, visit a local co-operative farming project just outside of Hoi An – Tra Que village, where the community has come together to create a large vegetable farm. Learn the traditional methods the farmers use to plant, fertilise and harvest the crop, then try your hand at raking the ground and sowing seeds.

The remainder of the afternoon is free at your leisure to explore the ancient town, or perhaps go to the beach.

**Destination Information**

Tra Que Village - Located a few kilometres from Hoi An, this picturesque village is renowned for its agriculture. Witness local farming techniques and learn about different exotic Vietnamese produce.

Day 6: Hoi An – Hue

Meals: B, L, D

Drive approximately 4 hours to Hue; a journey that will take you over the famously scenic Hai Van Pass. Hue is considered a scholarly city, and the embodiment of Vietnam's dynamic imperial era.

Upon arrival, explore the Royal Tomb of Emperor Minh Mang; the beautiful complex comprises of almost 40 monuments and is surrounded by gardens and pools.

Later, visit the Imperial Citadel and the Forbidden Purple City, heavily influenced by the Forbidden City in China. Continue by road to Thien Mu Pagoda and take a cruise on the Perfume River.

**Destination Information**

Hue - Having been the imperial capital from 1802 until 1945 after the last emperor abdicated; Hue is still regarded as the center of Vietnam's culture and religion. The city is dominated by the Imperial Citadel that is modelled on the Forbidden City in China. There are many wonderful pagodas and temples of high significance, and it contains the Grand Tombs of the Nguyen Emperors.

Imperial Citadel - A walled fortress accompanied by cannons, artilleries and surrounded by a moat for protection. Inside the Citadel are numerous gates, courtyards and the Forbidden Purple City.

Forbidden Purple City - Constructed for personal use by the former Imperial family, their concubines and eunuchs. This royal structure is still being restored many years after the destruction caused by street fighting and bombing during the war.

Royal Tomb of Minh Mang - Emperor Minh Mang reigned in the Nguyen Dynasty, the last of the Vietnamese dynasties, from 1820 - 1840. The construction of his mortuary complex is said to have taken approximately 10,000 workers to complete.

Thien Mu Pagoda - This seven-storey octagonal tower, built on a hillock overlooking the Perfume River, is Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda. Wander the grounds, where bonsai, ponds and the smell of incense create a peaceful backdrop.

Day 7: Hue - Hanoi

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to the charming city of Hanoi. The afternoon is at leisure to explore this historic capital.



Day 8: Hanoi

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, we delve into the story of Ho Chi Minh, the 'father of Vietnam'. Visit the Ho Chi Minh Quarter, passing Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum enroute to the One Pillar Pagoda. Visit the Humble House on Stilts, Ho Chi Minh's simple house in the grounds of the Presidential Palace.



Next, drive to the serene Temple of Literature: Hanoi's first university, now a temple to figures like Confucius. Later, experience an exhilarating cyclo ride through Hanoi's Old Quarter. Each cyclo takes one passenger and is operated by a cycle driver behind the carriage. This afternoon, you will also have the opportunity to taste some traditional egg coffee – a Hanoi specialty!

Destination Information

Ho Chi Minh Quarter - Dedicated to the father of modern Vietnam and where Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum stands in Ba Dinh Square. Ho Chi Minh first declared independence from French rule in 1945.

Humble House on Stilts - In the grounds of the Presidential Palace sits the 2-storey wooden home of Ho Chi Minh who ruled Vietnam from here until his death in 1969.

Temple of Literature - Hanoi's first university, dating back to 1070; now dedicated to Confucian worship.

Day 9: Christmas Eve in Ha Long Bay

Meals: B, L, D

Travel to Halong and embark on an unforgettable adventure – a two-night cruise out to the far-most corners of the bay. Settle in with lunch on board and enjoy the passing scenery as you journey out into the waters.



This afternoon, enjoy the included activities on offer, such as swimming and sunbathing at Trinh Nu Beach, or exploring Trinh Nu Cave. End the day on deck with a drink in hand and the sun sets.

Tonight, relax and enjoy Christmas dinner - Vietnamese style! The festive meal is served on Christmas Eve in Vietnam as a result of French influences left over from the Indochina period. Enjoy the celebrations with newfound friends and your National Escort as the stars glimmer over the bay.

You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for your trip to Halong Bay. Main luggage will be left in safe storage at the hotel in Hanoi and picked up on your return.

Please note: Weather conditions may delay the departure time of your cruise, or in extreme cases your cruise may be cancelled. This is rare, but such delays may not be known until your group's arrival in Halong Bay. If your cruise is cancelled after your arrival in Halong Bay, you will have lunch in Halong City and return to Hanoi. If notification of the cruise cancellation is given prior to your departure for Halong Bay an alternative day trip will be arranged to Hoa Lu and Tam Coc or 'Halong Bay on Land', an area located approximately 2 hours from Hanoi.

Destination Information

Halong Bay - Compared to the landscape of the limestone islets of Guilin in China and Phang Nga in southern Thailand, Halong Bay harbours some of the most stunning scenery in Vietnam. Unique rock sculptures jut out dramatically from the clear emerald waters of the Gulf of Tonkin and numerous grottoes have created an enchanting, timeless world.

Day 10: Christmas Day in Ha Long Bay and Lan Ha Bay

Meals: B, L, D

Begin a Christmas Day like no other – with sunrise over Halong Bay. Set sail into Lan Ha Bay – Halong's equally beautiful but quieter, lesser-known twin!

Today, choose from included activities such as kayaking at Ho Ba Ham (Three Tunnel Lake). Here, limestone tunnels connect three peaceful lakes within the bay – an extraordinary place where time seems to stand still. Alternatively, join a boat tour of Cua Van Fishing Village, a colourful floating village inhabited by multiple generations of fishermen and their families. Exact excursions will be known on board based on current weather and sailing conditions.



Later, enjoy a relaxed Christmas cocktail reception before dinner on board.

Day 11: Boxing Day | Ha Long Bay Caves and Return to Hanoi

Meals: B, L, D

Begin the morning with a choice of activities – a revitalising Tai Chi session on deck at sunrise, or an early morning adventure to Sung Sot Cave! This vast grotto has two impressive chambers filled with stalactites and stalagmites and is one of the biggest and most beautiful caves in Halong Bay.

Return to the ship and enjoy brunch on board as you sail back to the embarkation point. Drive back to Hanoi, where the rest of the day is at leisure before this evening's farewell dinner and The Quintessence of Tonkin show, a famously artistic open-air performance celebrating the rich history of northern Vietnam.



Day 12-13: Depart Hanoi

Meals: B

You will be transferred 1 hour from the hotel to the airport, according to the departure time of your international flight. Any time before your flight is at leisure.

Fly overnight, arriving in Australia the following day.

Check out is usually at noon – please contact our Reservations team if you would like to prebook Late Checkout. Please note: Only breakfast is provided on the group's day of departure.

CHRISTMAS IN VIETNAM TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

Entry visas are required by all visitors to Vietnam and Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate, Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa.

Wendy Wu Tours does not accept responsibility for lost or undelivered items.

All information with regards to visas will be updated regularly on our website as we find visas process' are changing on regular basis.

For the latest information on visa procedures, processing times and requirements, please kindly refer to our website <https://www.wendywutours.com.au/help-and-advice/passports-and-visas/>

INSURANCE:

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original.

EATING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

Southeast Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in many local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region actually has its own distinct characteristics. Vietnam, for example, is perhaps best known for its fresh and aromatic dishes – relying heavily on flavours from fresh herbs such as mint, basil and dill.

When dining in Southeast Asia, although some restaurants have adopted a western approach to dining, expect some restaurants to follow the traditional communal style of eating. Typically, this will mean each diner has their own small bowl and may serve themselves from a variety of shared dishes. At some local restaurants, appetizers and main courses might be served when they are ready instead of following a particular order.

Determining when it's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. In Vietnam, dishes are normally placed in the centre and people serve food for themselves with their own chopsticks and bowl. Usually, chopsticks or other utensils are provided to scoop the food into your bowl to prevent your own chopsticks from touching the food that remains on the table. Dining in Southeast Asia is fairly casual with not too many rules. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Those with dietary requirements - just make sure to inform your booking agent of any specific requirements well in advance of your trip. Please read your travel guide, which you will receive with your final documents for more information about eating in Southeast Asia. We recommend that when it comes to Asia food, you stay open minded and try to be adventurous!

GROUP SIZE:

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a national escort. There will usually be no more than 28 travellers in a Classic Tour group, although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only.

ACCOMMODATION:

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and Vietnam. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

Solo travellers: If you are a solo traveller and willing to share a room, you will not have to pay a single supplement for any hotel rooms. Willing to share single travellers booking within 75 days of the first day of a group tour will be subject to availability. If no suitable match is available at time of booking you will be required to pay all single supplements.

PORTERAGE:

Please be aware that portorage is not included on our tours in Southeast Asia. You will therefore need to be able to handle your own luggage within the hotel and when using transportation like trains and coaches.

TRANSPORT:

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. **However, mini buses may be used for smaller groups (under 10 passengers).** Roads in Vietnam have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

Planes: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

TIPPING POLICY:

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and Vietnam is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed to local guides and drivers throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the national escort.

If you are travelling in a smaller group with local guides only, then tipping is paid in each destination. To be fair to the guides we ask for slightly higher amounts per traveller with small groups.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

Although Southeast Asia is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in Australia. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in Australia; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides.

SOUVENIRS:

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs, so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions which demonstrate a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone, so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

LUGGAGE:

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each: a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of 5kg. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

PERSONAL EXPENSES:

You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of \$300AUD per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

CLIMBING STEPS:

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.travelvax.com.au

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.smartraveller.gov.au as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

AFTER YOUR BOOKING:

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice including a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

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