



VIETNAM BY RAIL

Classic Tour | 18 Days | Physical Level 1

Saigon – Phan Thiet – Dalat – Hoi An – Hue – Hanoi
– Ninh Binh – Halong Bay – Hanoi

Snaking from Saigon to Hanoi, Vietnam's Reunification Line is more than a train route: it is the symbol of a reunified Vietnam, painstakingly rebuilt after the joining of North and South. Join us on this 18-day tour of this fascinating country, travelling by train, coach, plane and ship as you explore the very best the country has to offer. Discover historic cities, war-era tunnels, sun-soaked beaches, colonial hill towns and imperial citadels, along with mountain vistas and charming rural herb farms. End your tour with two nights cruising in the iconic Halong Bay before boarding your final train to Hanoi.

- Travel on the Reunification Express route
- Explore the fascinating Cu Chi Tunnels
- Take a vintage train ride in Dalat
- Enjoy a walking tour of delightful Hoi An
- Admire mountain scenery in Ninh Binh
- Spend two nights in magnificent Halong Bay

To book call **0800 936 3998** or visit your local travel agent

Visit wendywutours.co.nz

TOUR MAP



VIETNAM BY RAIL DISCOVERY TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and 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 Escorts (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Vietnam visa fees for NZ passport holders (see visa section below for further information)
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with IATA

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late check out 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'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience. The maximum group size on Vietnam by Rail is 18.

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.

'Vietnam by Rail' 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 travellers 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 18 days in duration including international flights. Please note that depending on flight schedules passengers may arrive/depart on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only, 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 Reservations. Join the tour on Day 1 in Saigon and end the tour on Day 17 in Hanoi. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

TRAINS IN VIETNAM:

Train travel in Vietnam is relatively modern, though not as developed as infrastructure in China or Japan. We book soft-seat carriages with air conditioning for all inter-city travel in Vietnam. Soft-seat carriages have a Western-style toilet at the end of each carriage.

Scheduled journey times are as below. Timings may be adjusted to fit the local schedule for your convenience.



Saigon to Binh Tuan (for Phan Thiet): 4 hours on the SE6 service (Day 3)

Danang to Hue: 2.5 hours on the SE2 service (Day 8)

Hanoi – Ninh Binh: 2 hours 50 mins on the SE5 service (Day 12)

Haiphong – Hanoi: 2 hours on the LP8 service (Day 16)

Timetables are relatively reliable, but subject to change. Delays do sometimes occur, so please listen to your national escort for the latest information.

Your scheduled rail journeys in Vietnam do not coincide with any mealtimes, as restaurant cars in Vietnam offer only a limited menu. However, you may wish to purchase something from the snack cart if in service. These carts come down the train at occasional intervals and sell noodles, crisps, chocolate, boiled eggs, soft drinks and beer.

This itinerary also features a ride on the vintage diesel train in Dalat, which lacks the above features, but instead offers a panoramic journey from Dalat to Trai Mat. With its open-air

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Fly to Saigon

Meals: D

You will be met at the airport by your Local Guide or National Escort. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, travel to your hotel and check in.

Any time before this evening's dinner and welcome briefing is at leisure to start your explorations.



Destination Information

Saigon - The exuberant city of Saigon is driving Vietnam forward into the modern world, but is also a treasure trove of fascinating heritage. Today, the old mixes seamlessly with the new; timeless alleys and French colonial landmarks rub shoulders with designer boutiques and sleek skyscrapers.

Day 2: Cu Chi & Saigon

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, visit the fascinating Cu Chi Tunnels to learn the history of the Viet Cong and their guerilla tactics during the Vietnam War. Sightseeing here involves two hours on foot on wide but uneven paths through the forest, seeing examples of reconstructed bamboo traps, Viet Cong kitchens, and tunnel entrances.



Should you choose, you will have the opportunity to spend a few minutes underground, on a short, crouched walk through an example section of the tunnel network. The tunnels have been slightly enlarged for visitors' safety.

Stop for lunch at an organic farm en route back to Saigon. Explore the city's heady mix of local culture and colonial influences. See the Notre-Dame Cathedral and visit the Central Post Office before spending time at the poignant War Remnants Museum. The latter is an emotional visit; you will be given time to explore independently.

Destination Information

Cu Chi Tunnels - The Cu Chi tunnels are an immense network of connecting underground passages and rooms. The 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. VC fighters used them hiding spots during combat, as well as communication and supply routes, hospitals, weapon caches and living quarters.

Notre-Dame Cathedral – The 60-metre bell towers of Saigon's Notre-Dame Cathedral overlook downtown Saigon. It was consecrated in 1880 by the Roman Catholic Church to provide religious

services for French colonialists. All the building materials were imported from France, including the red bricks, which came from Toulouse and have retained their vivid colour.

Central Post Office – This colonial-era landmark, constructed in the late 19th century, stands beside the Notre Dame Cathedral. Its Gothic and neoclassical design is strongly reminiscent of 20th-century European train stations.

War Remnants Museum - Comprised of numerous buildings displaying military equipment, photographs and artefacts relating to the Vietnam War from 1961-1975.

Day 3: Reunification Palace – Chinatown – Train to Phan Thiet

Meals: B, L, D

Enjoy a leisurely morning taking in Saigon's Chinatown district. See Cha Tam Church and the stunning Chua Ong Pagoda, an excellent example of Chinese-inspired architecture. Wander down a traditional herbal medicine street and learn about local beliefs in natural remedies.



Continue to the Reunification Palace, formerly the home and workplace of the President of South Vietnam, and tour its fascinating rooms.

After lunch, your guide will escort you to the train station for the SE6 train to Binh Tuan, the station for the coastal resort area of Phan Thiet (15.30 – 19.24). On arrival, transfer to your beach hotel for dinner. Please note that luggage rules on the train restrict suitcases to maximum 20kg, with a maximum height of 80cm and maximum width of 50cm.

Destination Information

Reunification Palace - This landmark building was the home and workplace of the President of South Vietnam and was the site of the end of the Vietnam War during the Fall of Saigon on 30th April 1975, when North Vietnamese Army tanks crashed through its gates. Visitors can see its political reception rooms, presidential living quarters and private cinema, along with the fascinating underground war rooms and historic telecommunications room.

Reunification Express – Not a train but rather a nickname given to the North-South Railway route. The original line was completed by the French in 1936, and operated until the country was divided in 1954. It was rebuilt after major destruction in the Vietnam War, reopening in 1976. The full 1,726km journey takes 35 hours, with 4 trains operating daily; the southernmost section, from Saigon to Phan Thiet, takes just under four hours.

SE6 – This service departs from Saigon at 15.30 each day. SE6 trains were overhauled with modern seats in 2018. Your tour includes soft seats in air-conditioned carriages.

Phan Thiet – This area covers a large stretch of coastline in Binh Thuan Province in southern Vietnam. It shares its name with the main town, a bustling fishing port with a harbour filled with colourful boats.

Day 4: Morning at leisure – Drive to Dalat

Meals: B, L, D

The morning is at leisure to relax or enjoy the beach. This afternoon, drive 4 hours into the Central Highlands to Dalat, watching as the scenery transitions from low-lying coastal plains to tea-covered hills and mountains.

Arrive in charming Dalat, the capital of Lam Dong Province, sitting at 1500 metres above sea level on the Langbian Plateau.



Destination Information

Dalat – Also called Da Lat, this is the largest city in Vietnam’s Central Highlands. At an altitude of 1500 metres, it enjoys temperate weather year-round. It was developed as a hill station by French colonialists in the early twentieth century, who aimed to offer colonials respite from the tropical climate in the rest of Vietnam. It remains a popular tourist spot, with romantic names such as ‘The City of Eternal Spring’ or ‘The City of Flowers’.

Day 5: Summer Palace – Train to Trai Mat – Tea Plantation

Meals: B, L, D

Begin your explorations at the Art Deco-style ‘summer palace’ of King Bao Dai, the last king of Vietnam. Built in the 1930s, this was once a retreat for the royal family to escape the summer heat.

Continue to Dalat train station, also built in the 1930s, and take the vintage open-air train to the village of Trai Mat, the site of King Bao Dai’s holiday and hunting camp. Enjoy a leisurely walk through the village before driving to Cau Dat Tea Hill, established in 1927 and still a hub of tea production.



En route back to Dalat, stop by an embroidery workshop, and learn how this local craft has been kept alive for generations.

Destination Information

Bao Dai Summer Palace – This two-storey palace, built in the Art Deco style, was constructed between 1933 to 1937. It was designed as a country escape for Vietnam’s last feudal king, Bao Dai. Its rooms still retain their historic furnishings, providing a fascinating window into the life of the royal family in twentieth-century Vietnam.

Dalat Railway – French colonialists built a railway into the mountains to escape the summer heat; the track was completed in 1932. Throughout the Vietnam War, the railway network was a military target

and was gradually abandoned. Most of the old track was removed to repair the Reunification Line following the North's victory in 1975. However, a small 7-kilometre stretch has been restored between Dalat and Trai Mat.

Dalat's Open-air Train – The diesel-hauled vintage train offers a half-hour ride through the Dalat Plateau, with views of the multi-coloured houses, valleys and ravines.

Cau Dat Tea Hill – Sitting at 1650m above sea level, Cau Dat Tea Hill enjoys excellent tea-growing conditions and famously picturesque views over the highlands, sometimes romantically wreathed in mist. It has been a hub of tea production since 1927, with more than 600 hectares of tea farms.

Day 6: Dalat – Hoi An

Meals: B, L, D

Visit Domain de Marie Church, built in 1943, followed by a relaxed walk through Dalat's lovely Flower Gardens. Enjoy a stroll through the grounds here, admiring its topiary and vibrant flower collections.



After lunch, take an 80-minute flight to Danang in Central Vietnam. Transfer 45 minutes through the verdant countryside to the UNESCO-listed town of Hoi An. With its charming yellow buildings and vivid silk lanterns, a stroll through this traditional town feels like stepping back in time.

Destination Information

Dalat Flower Park - This romantic park covers more than 7000 square metres, with a huge variety of flowers on display. Many species of roses, orchids, hydrangeas, bonsai and cacti are grown here.

Hoi An - Perhaps more than any other place in Vietnam, 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.

Day 7: Hoi An

Meals: B, L, D

Head out on a walking tour of the Old Town, with visits including Chua Ong Chinese Pagoda, a 200-year-old merchant house, and the Japanese Covered Bridge. Stop by a traditional house to hear about a local practice of healing through martial arts, created and taught by this family for generations. The method combines Qigong, Tai Chi, and a Vietnamese martial art called Vo. Practice some basic steps under the guidance of the master. Finally, stop by a small coffee shop before enjoying the rest of the afternoon free at leisure to explore Hoi An.



Destination Information

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 8: Tra Que Village & Train from Danang – Hue

Meals: B, L, D

Head out into Hoi An's peaceful countryside to visit an organic farming community. Here you can enjoy the lush green landscapes and stroll through the gardens to see the farmers at work. You'll even have an opportunity to try the techniques for yourself! End your visit with a light-hearted, hands-on cooking demonstration, using ingredients from the garden to make your own lunch.



Drive back to Danang and board the SE2 service to Hue (13:54-16:26). This 2.5-hour trip is considered one of the most beautiful rail journeys in the world, with the vivid blue sea on one side and lush, forest-cloaked mountain on the other. The train slows down as it crosses the Hai Van Pass – a perfect opportunity for photographs! On arrival, check in to the hotel in Hue and take some time to refresh before dinner.



Destination Information

Tra Que Vegetable Village – Located just outside Hoi An, this co-operative project is a first-choice supplier for most local restaurants, growing delicious herbs and vegetables using traditional techniques. Their secret is in the fertiliser: natural seaweed from a local lagoon.

Hue – The imperial capital from 1802 until 1945, after the last emperor abdicated, Hue wears its royal history on its sleeve. The city is dominated by the Imperial Citadel, 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.

Day 9: Forbidden Purple City – Enamel Workshop – Perfume River

Meals: B, L, D

Discover Hue's imperial history. Begin at the Imperial Citadel, home to the Forbidden Purple City – inspired by Beijing's Forbidden City in China.

Visit the tomb of the Emperor Tu Duc, one of Hue's impressive royal mausoleums. This emperor's life of luxury and carnal excess is evident in the tomb's design.



After lunch, visit a charming enamel workshop, and learn all about Pháp Lam enamelled bronze. This beautiful, vibrant art form reached its zenith during the mid-18th century, becoming a symbol of the city, but was almost lost until its more recent revival. Drive on to a local home, where you'll learn how local artisans create Pháp Lam cakes, inspired by this beloved craft.

Finally, enjoy a 45-minute cruise along the Perfume River to the Thien Mu Pagoda, Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda. Return to your hotel.

Destination Information

Pháp Lam Enamel – The Vietnamese name for enamelled bronze, a fine art technique involving many steps and resulting in colourful, high-quality motifs.

Forbidden Purple City - Constructed for the personal use of the 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 American war in Vietnam, but retains its historic atmosphere.

Thien Mu Pagoda – This seven-storey octagonal tower is built on a hillock overlooking the Perfume River. Dating back to 1601, it is Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda and is considered the unofficial symbol of the city. Wander the grounds, where bonsai, ponds and the smell of incense set a peaceful backdrop.

Day 10: Hue – Hanoi

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast, fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to Hanoi, Vietnam's charming capital city. Begin your day at the Ethnology Museum, with its mesmerising displays exploring the country's 54 ethnic minority groups. In its grounds are a range of full-size replica longhouses demonstrating traditional ways of life in rural Vietnam.



After lunch, take a cyclo tour of Hanoi's Old Quarter. Each cyclo (rickshaw) takes one passenger and is operated by a cycle driver behind the carriage. Wrap up your ride with an opportunity to taste some 'egg coffee' – a local speciality!

Please note that as you have multiple days in Hanoi, your National Escort may change the order of touring based on local flights and schedules. No touring will be missed.

Destination Information

Hanoi – The history of this fascinating Vietnamese capital is visible at every turn; a blend of French neoclassical architecture, imperial temples, and post-war apartment complexes, interspersed with green parks and leafy boulevards. At its heart is the picturesque Hoan Kiem Lake, where locals come to meet, play sports, or enjoy a stroll and an ice cream.

Hanoi Old Quarter - A maze of streets weaving through Hanoi and dating back to the 13th century. Each street specializes in merchants and artisans selling their wares of silk, silver, wood and more.

Day 11: Hanoi

Meals: B, L, D

Discover the sights of Hanoi. Visit the Ho Chi Minh Quarter for an insight into the Vietnam War. Visit the Humble House on Stilts, where Ho Chi Minh lived in the grounds of the Presidential Palace, and see his Mausoleum in Ba Dinh Square.



After lunch, visit the serene Temple of Literature, Hanoi's first university.

Destination Information

Ba Dinh Square – Ba Dinh Square was named after a Vietnamese uprising against colonial rule in the 1880s. It was here that President Ho Chi Minh read the Proclamation of Independence in 1945, when North Vietnam declared its independent status. Its dominant landmarks are Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum, where his embalmed body lies on display, and the National Assembly Building.

Presidential Palace – This distinctly European yellow building was built by the French as the Palace of the Governor-General of Indochina in the early 1900s. When Vietnam achieved independence, President Ho Chi Minh refused to live in the grand structure, instead building the Humble House on Stilts on its grounds. He used the Palace only to receive guests; it is still used for major political meetings.

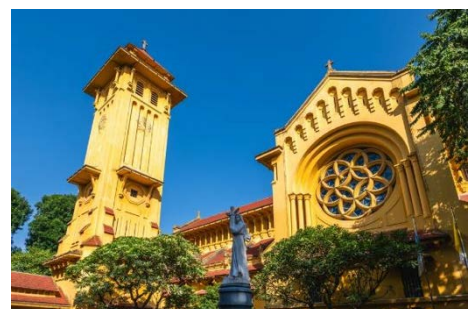
Humble House on Stilts - The two-storey wooden home of Ho Chi Minh, who ruled Vietnam from here until his death in 1969. A carp pond sits on one side, with a fruit garden on the other.

One Pillar Pagoda: Rebuilt in 1955 after damage during the French evacuation, the pagoda is made of wood and sits on a single pillar. Designed to reflect the shape of a lotus flower emerging from the water, it has become a popular spot for locals to enjoy the tranquil surroundings.

Day 12: Hanoi – Train to Ninh Binh

Meals: B, L, D

Beginning from the presidential palace on Hung Vuong Street, stroll down Phan Dinh Phung Street, admiring the giant Sau trees and beautiful French colonial architecture. Stop by Cua Bac Church and Bac Mon Gate before a coffee break.



Afterwards, stop to visit Hanoi's last remaining handmade papier-mâché mask family. Meet the family who own the workshop and hear about their struggle to keep the tradition alive. Later, take some time to stroll in the Old Quarter, stopping by the centuries-old Kim Ngan Temple before lunch.

This afternoon, board the SE5 service from Hanoi to Ninh Binh (15.30 – 17.51) – our third journey on the Reunification Express route.

Destination Information

Ninh Binh Province – This mountainous province is part of the Red River Delta, lying between the Red and Ma Rivers, and criss-crossed by other waterways such as the Ngo Dong River.

Day 13: Ninh Binh

Meals: B, L, D

Drive out of town to visit Hoa Lu, the ancient capital of the Dinh and Le dynasties dating back a thousand years. After lunch, continue to nearby Trang An, a UNESCO World Heritage site known for its outstanding natural beauty and scenic karst formations, nicknamed ‘Halong Bay on land’. Board a small boat and meander lazily down the peaceful river while passing through a series of caves and river paddies. Finally, return to the pier and transfer back to your hotel in Ninh Binh.



Destination Information

Hoa Lu - This ruined citadel was once the seat of power for the North Vietnam kingdom of Dai Viet.

Day 14: Ninh Binh – Halong Bay

Meals: B, L, D

Drive 3.5 hours from Ninh Binh to Halong Bay, where you will embark on an unforgettable two-night cruise through this famously beautiful seascape.

Enjoy lunch onboard as you cruise out into the bay, stopping to anchor for an afternoon of activities such as kayaking, swimming, or relaxing on an island beach. Sightseeing may include visiting underground caves on the islands, which require climbing up and down steps inside and outside of the caves.



End the day on deck with a drink in hand to watch the sunset, followed by a freshly prepared dinner, before retiring to your cabin for the night.

Please note: Weather conditions may delay the departure time of your cruise, or in some cases, your cruise may be cancelled. Notifications of any delays or cancellations may not be known until your group arrives in Halong Bay. If your cruise is cancelled after you arrive in Halong Bay, you will have lunch in Halong City and return to Hanoi. If notification of the cruise cancellation is given before you depart for Halong Bay, an alternative activity will be arranged.

Day 15: Halong Bay

Meals: B, L, D

Rise early to enjoy the sunrise over Halong Bay, and enjoy the changing seascapes as you set sail into deeper waters visited by fewer ships. Today, choose from activities such as kayaking on peaceful lakes within the bay. Alternatively, join a boat tour of a colourful floating village inhabited by multiple generations of fishermen and their families.



Exact excursions will be determined on board based on current weather and sailing conditions.

Day 16: Halong Bay – Haiphong – LP8 Train to Hanoi

Meals: B, L, D

After a night anchored out on the bay, rise early to enjoy a Tai Chi lesson on deck as the sun rises. Cruise back to port, stopping en route to visit one of the bay's impressive caves.



Disembark and head to Haiphong, a port city known for its leafy boulevards and French colonial-era architecture. Take a short walking tour of the city and admire its landmarks before boarding the 2.5-hour LP8 train service back to Hanoi ahead of this evening's farewell dinner.

Days 17-18: Departure

Meals: B

Transfer to the airport for your onward flight. Late checkout is bookable in advance for those who have chosen a later flight option.

If you wish to extend your stay in Southeast Asia, please talk to our team about our various private extension packages before your departure. We have options for hiking in Sapa, beach breaks in Mui Ne, Phuket or Hua Hin, city stays in Bangkok or Singapore, and more.

VIETNAM TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

Vietnam visa for New Zealand passport holders is required to enter Vietnam for a stay of up to 30 days. 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 New Zealand.

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.

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 VIETNAM:

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 most local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region actually has its own distinct characteristics.

Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from dinner on the day of your groups' arrival until breakfast on your day of departure. 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 and some countries in Southeast Asia, fork and spoons are used for most dishes and chopsticks are typically provided to

eat noodles. 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 casual with not too many rules. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Those with dietary requirements will be well catered for - just make sure to inform your booking agent of any specific requirements well in advance of your trip. We recommend that when it comes to Asia food, you stay open minded and try to be adventurous!

DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM:

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 New Zealand. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in New Zealand; 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.

TIPPING POLICY:

Local tipping is customary in Asia. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in US Dollars and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

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.

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 five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable.

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 New Zealand and Southeast Asia.

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.

EXCHANGING CASH:

It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling outside major cities in Vietnam. US Dollars are easily exchanged throughout Vietnam however other currencies such as New Zealand Dollars can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are undamaged. We suggest for your convenience that you ensure your US Dollars are from the new series to avoid any difficulties exchanging money during your trip. Old series notes can be difficult to exchange.

We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

PERSONAL EXPENSES AND OPTIONAL TOURINGS:

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you.

Optional Tours - May be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available.

Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

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 defence 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.

APPROPRIATE DRESS:

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques.

Religious sites and homes throughout Southeast Asia – for Hindus, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory, so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove your shoes, you will have to remain outside.

We recommend shoes that easily slip on and off and carry a pair of thick socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces. The following itinerary will indicate when you need to consider this.

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, minibuses may be used for smaller groups (under 10 passengers).

Roads in Southeast Asia 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.

Seatbelts: Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in Southeast Asia and therefore the local people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason, some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts, or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving. If you have any concerns, please notify your National Escort/Local Guides.

Air: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Pre-flight seat allocation is not available on internal flight sectors.

Trains: Please refer to pages 3-4 of this dossier.

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

We recommend that you contact either your doctor or local Health Centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Safe Travel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.safetravel.govt.nz

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.safetravel.govt.nz as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.

Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements.

You can also access the New Zealand 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 along with a link to our website where you can find your visa information (if applicable) and other important information. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

It is our intention 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 local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

Updated: Mar 2024