



# VIETNAM TRAILS

Go Beyond Tour | 17 Days | Physical Level 3

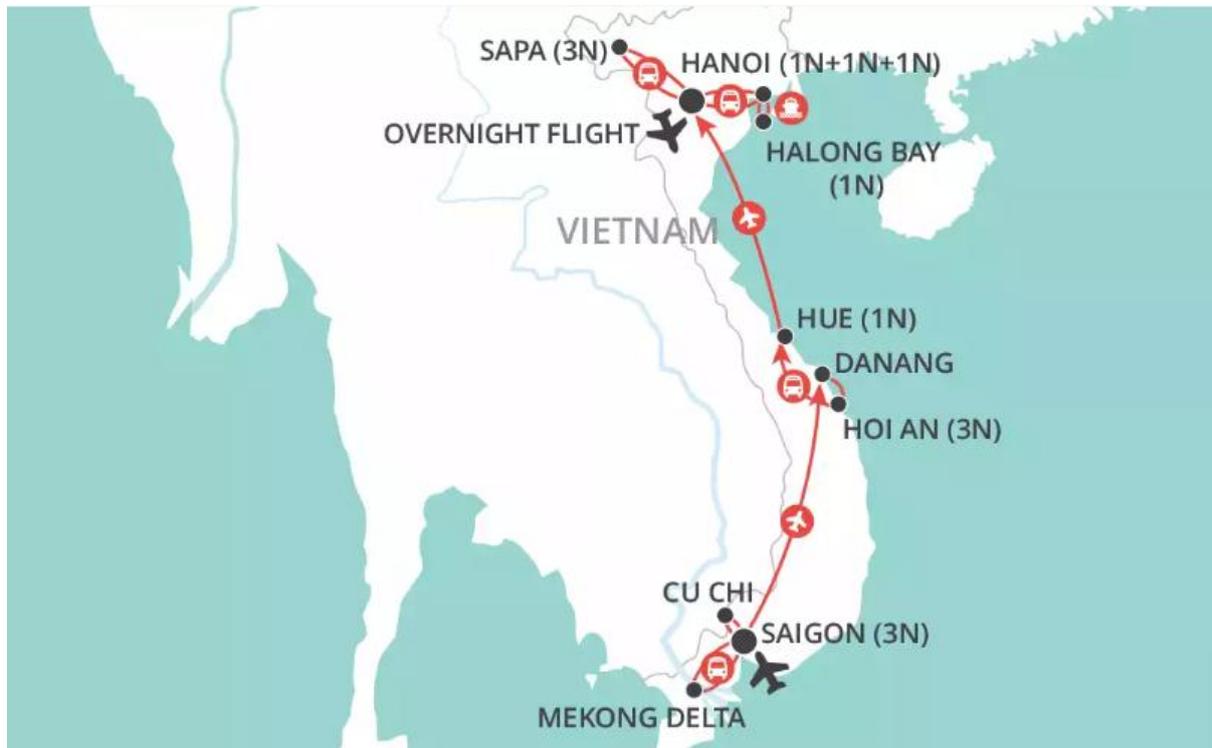
Saigon - Mekong Delta - Hoi An - Hue - Hanoi - Sapa - Halong Bay

The perfect length for a more in-depth exploration of Vietnam. Start in the very south in Saigon, venturing north through Hoi An, Hanoi and Halong Bay before heading up into the highlands to enjoy hikes and meet hill tribes amid Sapa's spectacular scenery.

- Paddle on the Mekong Delta
- Hike through verdant rice terraces
- Meet Sapa's hill tribes
- Enjoy a cooking class in Hoi An
- Explore Hanoi by cyclo
- Admire stunning Halong Bay
- Marvel at the Quintessence of Tonkin show

**TOUR MAP**

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**VIETNAM TRAILS TOUR INCLUSIONS:**

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- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- Meals as stated
- 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 fees for New Zealand passport holders (please 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.*

### GO BEYOND TOURS:

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Venture off the beaten track to explore fascinating destinations away from the tourist trail. You will discover the local culture in depth and see sights rarely witnessed by other travellers. These tours take you away from the comforts of home but will reward you with the experiences of a lifetime. These tours include:

- Walking through classic sites
- Unique cultural experiences and encounters
- Off the beaten track destinations
- More evenings at leisure for independent exploration

### PHYSICAL LEVEL 3:

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All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

‘Vietnam Trails’ is rated as a **physical level 3** tour. A good level of fitness is required, as you need to be comfortable walking for several hours and covering longer distances. Walking or other activities such as cycling will be at a gentle pace and will involve straightforward terrain but may be at an incline.

- On several days, there will be sightseeing on foot for extended periods of time, particularly when hiking in Sapa
- You will be required to get on and off varying sizes of boats throughout the tour, sometimes without assistance

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

### JOINING YOUR TOUR:

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The tour is 17 days in duration including international flights. Please note, due to flight schedules passengers may depart/arrive 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 so we can arrange your transfers accordingly.

Join the tour on Day 2 in Saigon and end the tour on Day 16 in Hanoi. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

## DETAILED ITINERARY

### Day 1-2: Saigon

Meals: D

Our representative will meet all today's arrivals in the Arrivals Hall at Ho Chi Minh City Airport ahead of their 45-minute transfer to the hotel. Check into your room, or store luggage if arriving earlier than the check-in time. This evening, meet your group for dinner and a welcome briefing with your Vietnamese Local Guide or National Escort.



Your guide will introduce themselves and the program at dinner. *Please note:* As per the Introduction, we operate a tipping kitty system at Wendy Wu Tours, which covers tips for all guides, drivers and meals, etc. The tipping kitty is paid directly to the National Escort (usually at the welcome briefing). They will distribute the kitty accordingly during your tour.

*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 future, but also enjoys a wealth of fascinating heritage. During the 1960s and early 1970s, there were many different subcurrents of emotion in response to the American occupation. Today, timeless alleys and French colonial landmarks sit side by side with hectic streets and modern skyscrapers.

### Day 3: Saigon

Meals: B, L, D

Confront the reality of guerrilla warfare at the Cu Chi Tunnels. These cramped tunnels were central to some of the Viet Cong's strategic operations, including the famous 1968 Tet Offensive. The tunnels were used as hiding spots in combat, as well supply routes, hospitals and living quarters. Sightseeing here involves two hours on foot on uneven mud paths, and, if you choose, crawling through a short section of the tunnels.



This afternoon, explore modern day Saigon (HCMC) with its heady mix of local culture and colonial French influences. We pass the Notre Dame Cathedral, visit the impressive Central Post Office, see the Reunification Palace and spend some time in reflection at the emotive War Remnants Museum. The latter displays military equipment, photographs and artefacts relating to the Vietnam War from 1961-1975. It 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 Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam, and are part of a much larger network of tunnels that underlie much of the country. 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** – The grand, French Colonial style Central Post Office building was constructed in the late 19th century. It blends Gothic, Renaissance and French influences.

**Reunification Palace** - The home and workplace of the President of South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. It was the site of the end of the Vietnam War during the Fall of Saigon on 30th April 1975, when a North Vietnamese Army tank crashed through its gates.

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### Day 4: Mekong Delta

Meals: B, L, D

Drive 2.5 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 motorised, wooden boats between the islands and changing to smaller, paddleboats in the canals. Sightseeing involves hopping on and off these boats, often on unsteady and slippery surfaces, sometimes without handrails or assistance. Return to Saigon this afternoon.

### Destination Information

**Mekong Delta 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 12th longest river in the world, and people live, trade, travel and go to school on the riverbanks.

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### Day 5: Saigon – Hoi An

Meals: B, L, D

Fly 1 hour and 15 minutes to Danang and transfer to the charming town of Hoi An. This afternoon, enjoy a walking tour of the narrow and ancient streets of this charming town. Visit one of Hoi An's oldest homes, built over 200 years ago and still occupied by the descendants of the merchant family that originally built it.



You will also visit the traditional Hoi An Market, the Quan Cong Chinese Temple and the Japanese Covered Bridge. Later visit the Reaching Out arts and crafts workshop.

If you wish to have anything custom-made by Hoi An's many tailors, sandal-makers or glasses-makers, it is recommended to visit these locations today or early on Day 6.

*Please note: The local flight schedule is variable and subject to change. If your flight departs in the afternoon, the walking tour will be moved to the following day.*

### Destination Information

**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.

**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.

**Reaching Out** – Provides opportunities for people with disabilities to learn skills and gain meaningful employment. The arts and crafts workshop provides a platform for local people to showcase their talents.

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#### Day 6: Hoi An

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, head to the colourful market to experience the amazing sights, sounds and aromas. There will be an opportunity to interact with the local sellers and purchase some of the ingredients to be used in our cooking class today.



Next, head to a restaurant, where you will be given demonstrations of how to make some of the regions specialties, have a go at cooking yourself before enjoying the dishes you have prepared for lunch. The remainder of the afternoon is free at your leisure to explore the ancient town, or perhaps go to the beach.

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#### Day 7: Hoi An

Meals: B, L, D

Enjoy a free day at leisure to explore Hoi An.



**Day 8: Hoi An - Hue**

Meals: B, L, D

Drive approximately 4 hours to Hue – a journey that will take you over the scenic Hai Van Pass. The scholarly city of Hue is the embodiment of Vietnam’s dynamic past, wearing its history on its sleeve.

Upon arrival, head to Emperor Minh Mang's Tomb to explore this opulent and exotic resting place, laid out in formal Chinese style. Emperor Minh Mang reigned in the Nguyen Dynasty, from 1820-1840. This beautiful mortuary complex comprises of almost 40 monuments and is surrounded by gardens and pools.



Then visit the Imperial Citadel and the Forbidden Purple City which is still being restored many years after the destruction caused by street fighting and bombing during the American War in Vietnam. Continue by road to Thien Mu Pagoda and take a cruise on the Perfume River.

**Destination Information**

**Hue** – The imperial capital from 1802 until 1945, after the last emperor abdicated, Hue is still regarded as a centre of Vietnamese culture. 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.

**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.

**Day 9: Hue - Hanoi**

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, fly 1 hour and 20 minutes to Vietnam’s capital city, Hanoi.

Begin at the Confucian Temple of Literature before an exhilarating cyclo ride through Hanoi’s Old Quarter and French Quarter. Each cyclo takes one passenger and is operated by a cycle driver behind the carriage. Wrap up your day’s touring with the opportunity to try a traditional Vietnamese egg coffee.

**Destination Information**

**Hanoi** - With a population of approximately four million, Hanoi is a charming and richly historic city of lakes, shaded boulevards and leafy open parks.

**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.

**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.

**Humble House on Stilts** - In the grounds of the Presidential Palace sits the two-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.

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

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**Day 10: Hanoi - Sapa**

Meals: B, L, D

Take a road trip into Vietnam's northern Highlands, arriving in Sapa in the late afternoon. The vast panoramas of ribboning rice terraces that snake their way across these highlands are a testament to the extraordinary farming skills of the many communities in the region. Your hotel here will be your base for the next three nights.



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**Day 11: Sapa**

Meals: B, L, D

Transfer to the small Giay village of Ta Van, in the breathtaking Muong Hoa Valley. Enjoy a scenic 1 and a half hour walk through the tranquil rice terraces towards the Black H'mong village of Lao Chai.

Marvel at the cascading paddy fields that cling to the mountainside and take in one of Vietnam's most breathtaking views before heading over to nearby Lao Chai village where you will learn the art of Batik painting.



Join a hands-on master class led by a local expert and take your creation home. The day concludes with a stroll to the main road before transferring back to Sapa town.

### Destination Information

**Sapa** - Located 1,600m above sea level and close to the Chinese border. This mountainous area with its spectacular landscapes and temperate climate is sure to make a lasting impression on its visitors. The H'mong and Dao people, the largest and most colourful ethnic groups in the region, are a cultural highlight.

**Batik Painting** - The beautiful textiles of the Black H'mong are famous around the world and Batik is a traditional part of H'mong culture. Under threat from modernization, Batik is now only practiced by a

handful of villagers. By taking part will be supporting a sustainable tourism project that supports local women and ensures this amazing art form is handed down to the next generation.

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**Day 12: Sapa**

Meals: B, L, D

Start this half-day walking tour by visiting the rustic village of Suoi Ho. Take a stroll through its sleepy streets and get a glimpse of village life.

Later, enjoy views of the stunning countryside as you walk along the Suoi Ho River, en-route to the second village of Ma Tra. Soak up its vibrant culture and visit its quaint Christian church, before being picked up by car and returning to Sapa Town. Walking today will be approximately 3 and half hours.



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**Day 13: Mt Fansipan, Sapa Museum & Drive to Hanoi**

Meals: B, L, D

This morning you will have a chance to reach to the summit of Vietnam's highest peak, Mount Fansipan by cable car to admire stunning views of Muong Hoa valley and Hoang Lien National Forest from above.

The cable car transports you from the base of the 3,143-metre mountain to its highest point within 15-20 minutes. It stops near the top of Fansipan mountain for fantastic photo opportunities.



Time permitting, you may wish to take the 600 steps to reach the summit (not recommended in wet weather). Visit Sapa Museum before your afternoon drive back to Hanoi.

**Destination Information**

**Mount Fansipan** - Known as the 'Roof of Indochina,' the 3,143m high Mount Fansipan is located in Vietnam's Lao Cai province very near to the town of Sapa.

**Day 14: Hanoi – Halong Bay**

Meals: B, L, D

Drive around 2 and a half hours today from Hanoi to Halong, where you will take an overnight cruise to the far-most corners of the bay. Boarding your boat could involve navigating your way over and through other boats, moored between it and the dock, sometimes without handrails, ladders or assistance from staff.



Enjoy lunch on board as you cruise out into the bay, stopping to anchor for an afternoon of activities. Activities are subject to change due to cruise selection and weather conditions. Sightseeing usually includes visiting underground caves on the islands which involves climbing up and down lots of steps.

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

*Please note:* Weather conditions such as mist, fog, wind, rain and storms 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 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. Our guides will make every effort to inform you at the earliest possible moment should there be any itinerary changes.

**Day 15: Halong Bay - Hanoi**

Meals: B, D

Spend the morning sailing through Halong Bay. After an early lunch (or brunch meal) disembark your cruise and return to Hanoi. This evening, attend The Quintessence of Tonkin show, an artistic open-air performance celebrating the rich history of northern Vietnam.

**Day 16-17: Depart Hanoi**

Meals: B

Any time before your flight is at leisure. You will be met at your Hotel for your transfer to the Airport for your onward flight.

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

## VIETNAM TRAVEL INFORMATION

### VISAS:

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Vietnam: Visas are required for New Zealand passport holders 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:

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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.

### ACCOMMODATION:

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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.

### EATING IN VIETNAM:

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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. 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 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.

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!

**Please inform us of any allergies and/or special dietary requirements at time of booking**

#### **DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM:**

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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.

#### **TRANSPORT:**

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**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.

### **SOUVENIRS:**

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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.

### **PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:**

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If you are travelling within the below Vietnamese Public Holidays, please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Tourist attractions will be open but may be crowded. In Vietnam, Tet Holiday is 29th January 2025 & 17th February 2026; International Labour Day is on 1st May every year; Reunification Day is on 30th April every year and National Independence Day is on 2nd September every year.

### **TIPPING POLICY:**

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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 recognise 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:

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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.

### GROUP SIZE:

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Our groups will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will be no more than 18 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu our groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 10 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, instead of a National Escort.

### VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

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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](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)

### BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

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We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://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:

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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.

Updated: March 2026