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## GEEO ITINERARY

Vietnam Family

### **Day 1: Hanoi Arrive in Hanoi at any time. Meet your group for a welcome meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.**

Arrive in Hanoi at any time. Due to the potential for flight delays or cancellations, we recommend that you plan to arrive in Hanoi at least a day in advance. This will also give you time to adjust to the time difference and overcome any jetlag. We can book extra hotel nights for you in Hanoi before the trip. If you arrive early, you might consider walking through Hanoi's Old Quarter and its maze of streets, each one traditionally devoted to a different product or industry. Alternatively, you could visit Tran Quoc Pagoda, the Temple of Literature (Van Mieu), or Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum and Museum. The Mausoleum houses the remains of Ho Chi Minh, the founding father of the unified Vietnam. Please note that check-in at the hotel is usually around 2:00-3:00 p.m. There are no planned activities until an intro meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., usually in the hotel lobby. Check for a sign or ask at the reception desk about the exact time and location of the group meeting. Please make every effort to arrive in time for this meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up tomorrow. After the meeting, you might choose to get dinner at a nearby restaurant with your traveling companions and your tour leader to further get to know one another.

### **Day 2: Hanoi (B) Enjoy a guided cyclo tour of the Old Quarter before seeing a Water Puppet Theatre performance. Opt to visit a museum or do some shopping.**

Take a seat on a cyclo for a tour of Hanoi's lively Old Quarter. Let the driver navigate through the bustling streets and start taking some photos or just use the tour to help get familiar with the area. Later, watch a traditional Vietnamese water puppet show with beautiful live music and intricate puppets dancing in a water stage. You will have some free time this day to explore Hanoi on your own.

### **Day 3: Hanoi/Ha Long Bay (B,L,D) Enjoy a Ha Long Bay cruise on a junk boat with visits to a cave and an island lookout. Savor a seafood lunch and dinner.**

A 4-hour drive takes us to our entry point to Halong Bay. Thousands of islands rise dramatically from the serene waters of Halong Bay. The massive limestone karst formations contain intricate cave systems and make for spectacular scenery. We board a traditional junk boat at Ha Long Bay harbor and cruise out among the isles. Swim, kayak, or go cave exploring on one of the islands, if conditions are right. We will also indulge in fresh seafood meals with a variety of dishes to sample before drifting to sleep in a cozy cabin on board. On rare occasions, Halong Bay is closed to tourist vessels by the government authorities due to extreme weather conditions. Should this occur, an alternate activity will be provided. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by shared van

### **Day 4: Ha Long Bay/Huế (B,L) Continue on the cruise of Halong Bay to Man's Head Island and Tortoise Island. Visit Luon cave by small bamboo boat. Overnight train to Hue.**

Today, we will visit Man's Head Island and Tortoise Island. We'll also visit Luon Cave by small bamboo boat. After an early lunch on board, we head back to Hanoi by private transfer. You will have enough time for shopping or further sightseeing before we catch our overnight train to Huế. Train travel in Vietnam is very basic, and train cleanliness is often not a priority for train staff. Sleeper trains normally have 4 seats per compartment, which convert into sleeping bunks (two upper and two lower). A sheet, pillow, and blanket are provided, although many people prefer to bring their own sleeping sheet. At times, passengers of different genders may be required to share a sleeper train berth and/or share a compartment with people not traveling in your group. Simple food is available on the train, but many

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people like to stock up on freshly baked bread, cheese, and fruit prior to departure. Water should also be bought before the journey. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by private vehicle (Halong Bay to Hanoi); 13-14 hrs by overnight sleeper train (Hanoi to Huế)

### **Day 5: Huế Guided tour of the Imperial Citadel. Opt to visit to the Royal Tombs and Tien Mu Pagoda.**

We arrive in Huế, once the imperial capital of Vietnam, in the early morning. We start the day with a tour of the Imperial Citadel, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where we will see the walled fortress and former palace, which has many gateways, courtyards, and gardens to explore. Inside the citadel, the Forbidden Purple City, modeled on China's Forbidden City, was once home to the imperial family and was significantly damaged during the Vietnam War. If you want to see more of the sites Huế, there is an optional visit to the Tien Mu Pagoda, one of the most elegant and tallest pagodas in Vietnam at seven stories high. Built more than 400 years ago along the north shore of the Perfume River, the pagoda has been the site of many political protests. You can also visit the Royal Tombs along the Perfume River in Hue. Embracing the concept of Feng Shui, these tombs are extremely ornate and provide fantastic insight into the lives of the former rulers. While in the city, try some local Hue specialties such as banh khoai (Hue savoury pancakes), and banh bot loc boc tom thit (thin rice paper filled with meat and shrimp). You can opt to pre-book a "Hue Motorbike Tour" activity ahead of time, but please note that riders must be at least 12 years old.

### **Day 6: Huế/Hoi An (B) This morning take a scenic drive to Hoi An. After arriving enjoy free time to explore the city.**

This morning, we depart for Hoi An. We will cross through the Hai Van Pass, weather permitting, with fantastic views all around. We arrive in Hoi An in the afternoon where you will have free time to explore. We will have a 3-night stay in Hoi An. Once known as Faifo, Hoi An was an important trading town with strong south Chinese influence and connections. You can take a walking tour of this living museum, which includes the Museum of History and Culture, the Tan Ky house, the Japanese bridge, the Fujian Assembly Hall, and lunch at a riverside restaurant to sample some of the local delicacies. Hoi An is also a shopping mecca for tourists in the region. Tailors can produce virtually anything overnight. Clothing, silk lanterns, lacquerware, and many other crafts abound. For sun worshipers, Cua Dai Beach, 4 km from town, makes for a great, flat bike ride. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by private vehicle

### **Day 7: Hoi An (B, L) Enjoy a noodle making demonstration and lunch at Oodles of Noodles, a G Adventures-supported project. Afterwards enjoy some free time to explore Hoi An.**

Today is the first of two full days for you to explore all that Hoi An has to offer. You can choose to immerse yourself in the culture, bike to the beach for some quality sun time, or get custom-made clothes by one of the many tailor shops around town. We get together as a group for an included cooking class and lunch, when you can try some of the oodles of noodles (more than 26 types!) available in the city. Run by a Planeterra Foundation partner, STREETS International, the class was developed exclusively for G Adventures. Former street youth who are part of this hospitality training program will help you prepare and cook a number of different types of noodles. The program helps these youth practice their English, increasing their skill set and opportunities available to them in the tourism industry. You may want to continue your culinary education in the evening and take an optional cooking class to learn even more about Vietnamese food and its distinct flavors. Tour the local market to buy fresh ingredients before preparing some popular regional dishes. You get to enjoy your creations when you're done!

### **Day 8: Hoi An (B) Spend another free day exploring Hoi An. Optional activities include taking a cooking class, riverboat trip, bike riding, heading to the beach, visiting the tailors or the UNESCO World Heritage listed My Son ruins.**

Today, you spend a second free day exploring Hoi An. You might consider a day trip visit to Mỹ Sơn. Travel approximately one hour from Hoi An to arrive at Mỹ Sơn, with its Hindu temples built between the

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fourth and 14th centuries. The site is widely accepted as one of the most important Hindu temple complexes in Southeast Asia. Learn about the architectural style and history of a site that's often compared to Angkor Wat in Cambodia and Bagan in Burma. You can also opt for a boat trip on the Thu Bon River, which plays an important part in Hoi An's history and culture.

### **Day 9: Hoi An/Ho Chi Minh City (B) Morning flight from Hoi An to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). Cyclo city tour of Central Saigon.**

This morning, we drive to Danang for the flight to Ho Chi Minh City, the sprawling metropolis that was once the capital of South Vietnam and remains the country's commercial center. Take a two-hour city tour on a cyclo (cycle rickshaw) - a great way to absorb the sights, sounds, and smells of Ho Chi Minh City while keeping your hands free to take pictures. Approximate travel time: 45 mins by private vehicle (Hoi An to Danang); 1 hr by plane (Danang to Ho Chi Minh City)

### **Day 10: Mekong Delta (B, D) Take a boat trip along the Mekong Delta, later enjoy a homestay and traditional dinner with a local family.**

Today, we drive 2.5 hours south to where the mighty Mekong River approaches and empties into the South China Sea. We board a small boat and navigate through the narrow canals, witnessing local lifestyle, floating vendors, and small industrial boats. You will notice that many of the Vietnamese boats have eyes painted on the front to ward off evil spirits and to help guide the boat and crew safely back to land. We disembark our boat to visit some cottage industries for which the area is famous, such as delicious and chewy coconut candy, rice cakes, Vietnamese popcorn, and pottery. Don't miss the chance to try the unique regional "elephant fish" at a local restaurant during our lunch break. Afterward, take a short xe lam (tuk-tuk) ride to a nearby community for a homestay. Relax in a hammock, explore the area by bike, and get to know the local way of life. This evening savor a traditional southern Vietnamese dinner. Approximate travel time: 2.5 hrs by private vehicle

### **Day 11: Mekong Delta/Ho Chi Minh City (B) Return to Ho Chi Minh City; free afternoon. Option to visit War Remnants Museum, Reunification Palace, and Ben Thanh Market.**

This morning we drive back to Ho Chi Minh City where you will have a free afternoon. There are plenty of war-related spots to visit including the Reunification Palace (where the tank that ended the Vietnam War sits), the War Remnants Museum, Ho-Chi-Minh Museum and the Cu Chi Tunnels. For shopping, head to Dong Kphi Street and Pham Ngu Lao Street, or if you're tired of walking, take a river cruise. Approximate travel time: 2-3 hrs by private vehicle

### **Day 12: Ho Chi Minh City (B) Depart Ho Chi Minh City at any time.**

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart Ho Chi Minh City at any time. If you wish to extend your stay in Ho Chi Minh City, consider booking post-tour accommodation with us. Please note that check-out time from the hotel is usually mid-morning, but luggage storage services are available at the reception desk. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO programs in the same school year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs per year). If you would like to extend your time abroad but don't see another GEEO program that interests you, let us know. We can work with you to find a trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Their tours are open to the general public and not designed specifically for educators, but we can still offer you and your travel companions a discounted educator price on any additional tours that you book.