
GEO ITINERARY

Vietnam w/ C-GEO

Day 1: Hanoi Arrive in Hanoi at any time. A complimentary arrival transfer is included. 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. You will be met at the airport and transferred to the hotel to start your adventure. After picking up any checked luggage, exit the baggage hall and look for your driver. This area can be busy, so keep an eye out for a driver holding a G Adventures sign with your name on it. 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/Mai Châu Valley (B) Travel to the Mai Châu Valley and opt to spend the day paddling on a kayak or cycling through the lush rice fields.

Depart Hanoi for the verdant Mai Châu Valley, a patchwork of rice paddies, emerald hills, and charming traditional villages. Opt to take a kayak out on the scenic Hoa Binh reservoir (the largest reservoir in Vietnam) or pedal through the countryside on a bike, enjoying the lush scenery and getting a glimpse of local life. Approximate travel time: 3-4 hrs by private vehicle

Day 3: Mai Châu Valley (B) Set out on a walk through the peaceful countryside, and spend the day exploring the picturesque valley.

Enjoy an easy 3- to 3.5-hour guided walking tour through rice paddies, terraces, and scenic green hills. Visit Na Phon village and the local traditional brickworks, and then taste some local fruit at the Mai Châu market. Continue to Lac Village, home to the Tai Dón ethnic minority group who live in traditional wood and bamboo stilt houses. The Tai Dón refer to themselves as the White Tai (dón in the Thai language means "white"), probably because of the white blouses traditionally worn by the women. Choose to enjoy a truly authentic dinner at a local home and get to know the White Tai culture first-hand.

Day 4: Mai Châu Valley/Hanoi (B) Return to Hanoi and discover the bustling Vietnamese capital on a guided tour.

Return to Hanoi and visit the mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh, one of Vietnam's most influential political leaders. Ho Chi Minh's embalmed body is housed in a glass case. (Note: The Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum is open until 11:00 a.m., and entry is dependent on what time the group arrives in Hanoi.) Learn more about Ho Chi Minh's life at the Presidential Palace Historical site, and opt to visit the palace gardens. When Vietnam achieved independence in 1954, Ho Chi Minh refused to live in the Presidential Palace, a grand French colonial-style building, although he still received state guests there. He eventually had a traditional Vietnamese stilt house and carp pond built on the palace grounds. Next, gain insights into the Vietnam War at the Hỏa Lò Prison, known by American POWs as the Hanoi Hilton. The prison was originally used by the French colonists for political prisoners, and later by North Vietnam for U.S. prisoners of war during the Vietnam War. The prison was torn down in the 1990s, but its gatehouse is still standing today and houses a museum. Finally, take a seat on a cyclo (a three-wheel bicycle taxi), for a fun tour of Hanoi's lively Old Quarter. Your driver will navigate the bustling streets while you shoot some photos or just take in the scenes. Approximate travel time: 3-4 hrs by private vehicle

Day 5: Hanoi/Hạ Long Bay (B, L, D) Begin the day with breakfast at Hoa Sua, a non-profit training restaurant for underprivileged Hanoi youth. Afterward, transfer to Hạ Long Bay, where thousands of sculpted limestone islands rise from serene, turquoise waters.

Begin the day with breakfast at Hoa Sua, a non-profit training restaurant for underprivileged Hanoi youth. Start the day with a breakfast of Western (mainly French) and Vietnamese cuisine at Hoa Sua, a non-profit restaurant used as a training program to prepare local disadvantaged youth for careers in the culinary arts. Over the past two decades, the Hoa Sua School has trained thousands of young people, giving them the skills to escape poverty. Meet with one of the restaurant's directors to learn more about this successful organization. Afterward, transfer to Ha Long Bay, where thousands of islands rise from the serene, turquoise waters. The massive limestone karst formations contain intricate cave systems and make for spectacular scenery. At Ha Long Bay harbor, board a traditional-style wooden junk boat, where we'll spend the night, and embark on cruise out among the isles. Visit Bai Tu Long Bay, a more secluded section of this UNESCO World Heritage Site, and explore the fascinating Me Cung cave with your local guide. The traditional wooden sailing boat offers a unique way of navigating the bay with all the comforts of a motorized, floating hotel. The boat crew will prepare an included seafood lunch and dinner. All cabins are twin-share and have an en-suite bathroom. The boat has an enclosed dining and sitting area and plenty of outside deck space to enjoy the beautiful surroundings. Spend a peaceful night anchored in the bay under the stars. 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 private vehicle

Day 6: Hạ Long Bay/Huế (B, L) Return to shore and head back to Hanoi to catch a short flight to Huế.

Enjoy an early lunch aboard the boat before returning to shore. Travel back to Hanoi to catch a short flight to Huế, a former imperial capital of Vietnam. This World Heritage-listed city boasts many architectural treasures and was also the site of one of the Vietnam War's most dramatic battles. Huế is the gateway to Vietnam's royal past and remains one of the country's major tourist attractions. The quiet city is widely known for the magnificent architecture of its citadel, royal tombs, pagodas, and temples built under the Nguyen dynasty on the lush banks of the Perfume River. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by private vehicle, 1 hr by plane

Day 7: Huế (B, L) Enjoy a guided tour of Huế's imposing walled citadel and visit the Forbidden Purple City, then venture into the countryside to the magnificent tombs of Vietnam's emperors along the banks of the Perfume River. Visit a Buddhist nunnery and enjoy a vegetarian lunch.

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. Next, visit the tombs of Vietnam's great emperors. Just outside of Huế, along the Perfume River, are several impressive tombs ranging in size and states of ruin. Dating back to the 1800s, the ornate tombs make the site a great place to learn more about the history of Huế. For lunch, visit a nunnery and enjoy a lunch following the traditions of Buddhist cuisine, which features fresh, local produce and fermented or preserved ingredients. Sample a set menu of several dishes, such as pumpkin soup with mushroom, tofu with green beans, crispy noodles with rice crackers, fresh spring rolls with soy sauce, steamed rice with eggplant, fried rolls with potato curry, and bread with potatoes, carrots, and onion. The menu is seasonal and may vary from the aforementioned dishes.

Day 8: Huế/Hoi An (B) Drive to Hoi An, a remarkably well-preserved river port and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Try your hand at crafting a lantern—a symbol of luck, wealth, and happiness—and then opt to visit a local tailor and be fitted

for a custom-made shirt.

Drive to Hoi An and cross through the Hai Van Pass, an incredibly scenic and mountainous stretch of highway with spectacular views of Lang Co Beach, weather permitting. Hoi An is a remarkably well-preserved river port and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Once known as Faifo, Hoi An was an important trading town with strong South Chinese influence and connections. Stroll through the narrow winding streets of the old town, lined with quaint merchants' homes and decorated with colorful silk lanterns. See the Chinese Fujian Assembly Hall, ancestral homes, the Japanese covered bridge, the Tan Ky house, and well-preserved pagodas. Opt to stop for lunch at a riverside restaurant and sample delicious local delicacies and fusion food for which Hoi An is becoming famous. In Hoi An, hanging a lantern in front of your home is believed to bring luck, happiness, and wealth to your family. Try crafting a lantern of your own and leave with a beautiful souvenir. First appearing in the 16th century when the Chinese arrived in Vietnam, lanterns are still used for decoration and in traditional celebrations in Vietnam, like the regular Hoi An Lantern Festival that marks the full moon. Hoi An is also a shopping mecca for tourists in the region. Tailors can produce virtually anything overnight. Opt to visit a local tailor and be fitted for a custom-made shirt. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by private vehicle

Day 9: Hoi An (B, L) Delve into a local market this morning with guides from Oodles of Noodles, a G Adventures-supported program that trains local youth in the culinary arts. Learn to prepare mouthwatering noodle dishes and enjoy your creations for lunch. Spend your free time this afternoon visiting a tailor, wandering through the temples and tombs at a UNESCO World Heritage Site, or taking a bike ride to a nearby beach.

This morning, take a walking tour of a Hoi An local market led by two students and a teacher from Oodles of Noodles, a G Adventures-supported program that trains local youth in the culinary arts. Learn about the ingredients at the market and taste dozens of varieties of noodles while supporting local small women-led enterprises. Pick out fresh ingredients and return with the guides to the training kitchen, where you'll learn to prepare mouthwatering noodle dishes and enjoy your creations for lunch. Run by our G for Good partners, STREETS International, this class was developed exclusively for G Adventures. Former street youth that are part of this hospitality training program, will help you prepare and cook a number of different types of noodles. This program helps these youth practice their English, increasing their skill-set and opportunities available to them in the tourism industry. Enjoy your yummy creations while learning more about the local cuisine and this initiative which empowers street youth through skills and employment training. Run by STREETS International, the class was developed exclusively for G Adventures. The program helps the youth practice their English, increasing their skill set and opportunities in the tourism industry. During your free time this afternoon, you might consider a bike ride to Cua Dai Beach. Prepare a picnic of local food and rest under one of the palm trees lining the shore. 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 10: Hoi An (B) Enjoy a free day in Hoi An and the surrounding area, or just relax at your hotel by the pool.

The day is yours to explore enchanting Hoi An and its environs. You might choose to take a day trip visit to Mỹ Sơn, approximately one hour from Hoi An. Mỹ Sơn's moss-covered Hindu temples were built between the 4th and 13th centuries, and the site is widely accepted as one of Southeast Asia's most important Hindu temple complexes. Learn about the architectural style and history of the site that is often compared to Angkor Wat in Cambodia and Bagan in Burma.

Day 11: Hoi An/Ho Chi Minh City (B) Fly from Hoi An to Ho Chi Minh City. Enjoy free time in this hectic city.

Drive to Da Nang for the flight to Ho Chi Minh City, the sprawling metropolis formerly known as Saigon. The city that was once the capital of South Vietnam and remains the country's commercial center. Opt to discover the city on a cyclo tour, taking in iconic sites like the Notre-Dame Cathedral Basilica of Saigon

and the ornate Central Post Office and City Hall. Or visit the War Remnants Museum, a powerful reminder of the atrocities committed during the Vietnam War. You might also choose to tour the Reunification Palace, the site that marked the end of the war. Approximate travel time: 45 mins by private vehicle (Hoi An to Da Nang), 45 mins by plane (Da Nang to Ho Chi Minh City), and 1 hr by private vehicle (Ho Chi Minh City airport to hotel)

Day 12: Ho Chi Minh City (B, D) Take a guided tour of Cu Chi Tunnels in the morning. Enjoy more free time in the afternoon.

In the morning, drive to the Cu Chi Tunnels for a guided tour of the complex network of underground passageways that provided a base for Viet Cong soldiers during the Vietnam War. Try crawling through some of the tunnels, if you're not claustrophobic. These tunnels stored ammunition, contained underground hospitals, and served as a hidden base for attacking allied forces. Learn about the vital role that the tunnels played in the eventual victory of the North. Afterward, we drive back to Ho Chi Minh City. Enjoy free time in the afternoon. Opt to visit the Thien Hau and Giac Vien pagodas or stroll through the immense Ben Than Market. You can take in the busy rhythm of daily life in Cholon ("big market"), the Chinese quarter full of teahouses and pagodas. There is also the Reunification Palace, the residence of the presidents of South Vietnam before 1975 and the War Remnants Museum, a gut-wrenching but worthwhile experience that contains exhibits about the devastation that occurred in Saigon during the Vietnam War. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by private vehicle

Day 13: Ho Chi Minh City (B) Depart Ho Chi Minh City at any time.

Your tour ends this morning in Ho Chi Minh City and there are no planned activities. Please note that check-out time from the hotel is usually mid-morning, but luggage storage services are available at the reception desk.