



# Vietnam Central Coast

## internationale groepsreis

### INTRODUCTION

As Vietnam opens its doors to welcome the world at large, many people have no idea of the stunning visual beauty and traditional culture that lie beyond the threshold. To many, the name Vietnam brings to mind only haunting images of a war in Southeast Asia, an image that continues to be exploited on the big screen and in print. Beyond such images lies the real Vietnam, a unique and fascinating land of great physical and rich cultural diversity whose history spans over 4,000 years.

Picture a land of idyllic tree-lined beaches, tranquil bays dotted with the sails of junks and sampans, offshore coral islands, mountains, valleys, primal forests, plains crossed by countless rivers and emerald rice fields enriched with the varied scenes of everyday life. The traditional rural life, embodied in the villagers tilling the land with rudimentary tools under their conical hats in the patchwork paddy fields, and children riding their water buffaloes home from the fields at the end of the day, contrasts dramatically with the sights, sounds and pace of the cities whose busy streets overflow with humanity borne along on a rising tide of bicycles and motor scooters. Such are the images of present-day Vietnam.

The country's long history is an ever present companion; the land is imbued with it - sites of ancient battles, ancient civilizations and kingdoms which flourished in this enigmatic land long before the French colonialists, communism and the tragic war of the more recent past.

The changing tides of fortune that have swept over this country and its people have left their mark, greatly emphasizing the contrast between past and present. Much of Vietnam's ancient past is shrouded in myths and legends of dragons and kings, heroes and heroines, gods and deities, brought to life in the present

in the many colorful time-honored traditional festivals and rituals commemorating revered ancestors, who are worshipped alongside Buddhist, Taoist and Hindu deities in the thousands of temples and pagodas throughout the country.

#### 2009 TRIP DATES:

- 15 – 24 February
- 19 – 28 July
- 11 – 29 October
- 20 – 29 December

*If these dates don't suit your travel schedule, please contact us to talk about operating a private tour for you or your group.*

### TRIP PROFILE

Our biking adventure takes us from Hue to Nha Trang by bus, boat and bike. We cycle over 450 kilometres in 7 -8 cycling days. Lots of time on this tour is spent sight seeing and exploring Vietnam. The cycling is on a mixture of well-surfaced roads and good quality wide dirt tracks. An air-conditioned support bus that travels behind the group supports us. On the occasions when it is impossible for the bus to follow, our guide follows behind on a motorcycle.

Participants can cycle as much or as little as they like and still enjoy the same views as the rest of the group. There is one long day with a 10 kms climb at the end, and fit and experienced riders usually find it sufficiently challenging. Fast cyclists can ride at their own pace. Detailed directions are available from the leader.

Our route is designed to take us off the main roads as much as possible, and we explore scenic back roads. We spend very little time on Highway One, cycling on the quiet and particularly scenic sections instead. Highway one has become much busier over the last few years and, as much of the population has become motorized, it can be quite dangerous.

We have worked hard to produce an itinerary that avoids the highway. Away from the main roads, cycling in Vietnam is often a wonderful experience; the bicycle is still the most common form of transport and you will share the road with beautiful girls in flowing Ao Dais, school children and farmers.

The rest days are at the end of this tour where we have time to relax at Whale Island before heading to Nha Trang for onward connections. At the end of the tour, we hope you will really get to feel you have come to know and perhaps even understand Vietnam and the Vietnamese.

**Suitability:** This trip is suitable for anyone with a reasonable level of fitness. This trip is not too arduous, and so riders with less experience are more than welcome although the fitter you are the more you will enjoy it.

**Biking Conditions** This trip is mainly on good quality tarmac roads and some vehicle width dirt roads. Day 4 has an off road trail (can be rocky) but an easier alternative can substituted is required. A support truck is always available to help when required.

### STAFF

The tour will be lead by one of our experienced tour leaders along with a local cycling guide. We have been leading tours all over Southeast Asia for many years and will do our best to ensure you enjoy this tour as much as we do. All our tours are an educational experience; we are well informed of local culture, history and geography and will see you are constantly informed and entertained. Our leaders are assisted by an English speaking local cycling guide, driver and assistants.

## ITINERARY

FROM HUE TO NHA TRANG 10 DAYS,  
9 NIGHTS.

*The entry in bold at the end of each day indicates the accommodation normally used. B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner.*

**Day 1** We start this tour by meeting in Hue (you can fly to Hue from Saigon or Hanoi – Spiceroads can arrange these internal flights). Hue is the old capital of the Ngu Yen Dynasty. It is worth arriving in the morning so you have time to explore this wonderfully historic city. If arriving in time we offer a city tour by bike. Alternatively you can fly into Danang and transfer up to Hue. (transfer can be arranged at an additional cost).

**Festival Hotel D.**

**Day 2** We ride out the back of the city and follow the coast as we pass roads shaded by coconut palms, and dunes scattered with mini mausoleums, pagodas and war memorials. We ride to Phuoc Tuong Hill and then transfer the final 40kms to Lang Co Beach. We have lunch and the rest of the day is free to enjoy the resort and beach.

**Ride 65 km. Lang Co Beach Resort. B L D.**

**Day 3** Today is a tough start as we have Hai Van Pass to climb today, which is a 10km climb and ascends 550m, and is not steep but there are many switchbacks so be careful. Once at the top you get superb views on both sides and well worth the ride to the top. The reward is a down hill to Danang, our destination for lunch. After lunch we have a flat and very scenic ride to Hoi An. It is just a short distance to the Marble Mountains, which are an outcrop of 5 rocks said to represent the 5 elements, (Wood, Water, Metal, Fire and Earth). We then visit China beach which was made famous by an American TV series of the same name. After a brief stop at the beach we continue down this country road to Hoi An. The town was known as Faifo to early western traders and was one of Southeast Asia's major trading ports during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

It was an important point of call for Chinese, Japanese and Portuguese traders and the architecture reflects its cosmopolitan past. More than anywhere in Vietnam, Hoi An retains the feel of the past. There are over 844 structures of historical significance and most people spend the day wandering around and enjoying the sights and atmosphere.

**Ride 55 km. Vinh Hung 2. B L D.**

**Day 4** Staying another night in Hoi An, we ride to out of Hoi An on small village roads on our way to visit My Son, the ancient centre of Cham civilization. The ride is worth the effort in itself and is arguably one of the best of the trip. We cycle along scenic country back roads past paddy fields passing many pretty villages. Eventually we arrive at My Son, which was once Champa's greatest city. Although many of the temples were destroyed by American bombs, there is still enough of the archaeological site to impress most visitors. We take lunch before spending the afternoon visiting the site. In the afternoon we transfer by bus back to Hoi An or we can ride. Dinner is your choice.

**Ride 60-80 km. Vinh Hung 2 Hotel. B L.**

**Day 5** In the morning we transfer from Hoi An to Quang Ngai (approx 2.5 hours). After we check in we ride to My Lai, the site of one of the worst massacres of the American/Vietnam War. En-route we will have small climb up to an old temple before we will visit the memorial and have a guided tour of the site and museum. We then continue cycling out into the Vietnamese countryside. Passing through quiet, rural villages before eventually arriving back at H1 where we transfer back to hotel.

**Ride 46 km. Central Hotel B L D.**

**Day 6** Today we leave early for the 157km journey to Qui Nhon (approx 3 hours), the capital city of Binh Dinh Province, an American port and supply centre during the Vietnam war, and refuge for thousands of Vietnamese fleeing the vicious bombing of the countryside. We transfer 30km out of town past the busy and dusty section of Highway 1.

We turn off the main road and cycle a loop to Ba To Town, heading south west. The road is extremely quiet and people unaccustomed to the sight and sounds of cyclists. Looping back to H1 at Duc Pho, we then transfer the rest of the way in the afternoon to Qui Nhon. Upon arrival there may be time to visit the Leper hospital where visitors are welcome to make a small donation.

**Ride 70 km. Hoang Anh. B L D.**

**Day 7** We transfer out of town to avoid the main highway. We start riding at Dieu Tri along a remote but well surfaced road running alongside the railway. The terrain is gently rolling, with beautiful views of the foothills of the highlands. We pass a mix of tribal and Viet villages. Ubiquitous potbellied pigs and bare foot children trot across your trail. Eventually we loop back to the main highway with a small climb and descent to finish the ride. We then transfer approx 1 hour to Tuy Hoa, one of the poorest regions in Vietnam. **Ride 80 km. Hung Vuong Hotel. B L D.**

**Day 8** Today is the last cycling day and is perhaps the most memorable. We ride from the Hotel and after 20km the riding is very beautiful, with encroaching mountains on both sides and a network of lush rice fields in the valley. We ride 4 km up over a pass and down to the stunning Dai Lanh Beach where we stop for refreshments and a swim for those who don't mind getting their bike shorts wet! We continue riding for 3km before turning off on the Hon Gom peninsular road that extends outwards for 20km. The scenery here is like a moonscape and unlike anything else seen on the tour. Here, we swap bikes for boats and head to Whale Island for some well deserved 'RnR'. The boat journey will take about 10 minutes. We stay at the secluded Whale Island resort for 2 nights.

**Ride 58 km. Whale Island Resort. B L D.**

**Day 9** Today is free on Whale Island, where you can take the opportunity to relax by the beach, perhaps some snorkeling or Scuba diving.

We will all meet in the evening for a farewell dinner. **Whale Island Resort. B D.**

**Day 10** We transfer back to the mainland and then onto Nha Trang for any onward connections. Anyone who would like to stay longer on Whale Island or if you would like more time on the beach by having a few days in Nha Trang you should contact us for hotel rates (we offer all our clients the best agent rates). Alternatively for those who want to bike more in Vietnam we have a 4 day mountain bike trip in Dalat or a 5 day trip to the Mekong Delta. Please ask for fact sheets. **B**

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

**Weather** The south has a tropical climate, with hot, dry and wet seasons similar to the rest of Southeast Asia. January is one of the driest months and the average temperature in Saigon is around 25°. Even though it can be wet in the South, March is the best time to visit the Central area of Vietnam and is the driest time from Dalat to Hue.

**Passports and Visas** All nationalities require a visa for Vietnam. Visas can be obtained from any Vietnamese embassy worldwide, but please allow up to three weeks for visa processing.

**Vaccinations** Recommended vaccinations are typhoid, polio, tetanus and hepatitis A. A certificate for Yellow Fever is required when arriving from an infected area within six days. Vietnam is a malarial area and you will need to take anti-malarial tablets. Please speak to your doctor for the most up to date information.

**Accommodation** The accommodation on this trip is in good quality tourist classes hotels (mostly 2-3 star standard). All the hotels have either fan (Whale Island) or a/c and private facilities and are clean and quite comfortable. All accommodation as described in the itinerary is included in the tour cost.

**Food:** Meals are included as per the itinerary where **B** = breakfast, **L** = lunch, **D** = dinner.

Most meals are Vietnamese food world famous and we make sure you sample as much variety as possible. Any special dietary requirements can also be catered for as well. Please let us know at the time of booking.

Keeping you completely hydrated is a job we take very seriously. Cold water, some energy-restoring local fruit and soft drinks are included in the tour price. Beer is freely available everywhere in Vietnam, but is NOT included in the price.

**Extra Expenses:** In addition to the meals listed above, some entrance fees to museums, monuments etc., are not included. Entrances to sites listed and national parks that are part of the itinerary are included. Other sites are not. All meals are included from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 10, except for two lunches and one dinners. Please allow \$20 - 30 for extra meals.

**Tipping:** Tipping is entirely voluntary and although it is customary to tip the local tour leader and staff. The amount you give should be dependent on the level of service you receive. As a guide we would say USD 3-4 per person per day would be appropriate.

**Group, Staff & Support:** Group size will vary between 2 and 16 persons and are accompanied by a tour leader and local drivers/assistants. All our guides are fully trained. They are informed in the history, culture and religions of the area and are skilled at passing that knowledge on to you. Your leader is also medically trained and an experienced cyclist, able to handle most repairs en route.

We will be supported by air-conditioned minivans that have been specially modified for cycle tours. The vehicles follow us the whole time and are always available for tired cyclists. It is very easy to get bikes on and off the buses, so you can rest when you are tired and cycle whenever you feel like it, and you will be well looked after.

**Essential Equipment:** Cycle helmet (if not hiring a bike), gloves and padded cycling shorts (at least three pairs), stiff-soled cycling shoes, good quality sunglasses, a hat or baseball cap, water bottles/camelback are a necessity.

You should bring enough tools and spares for a day ride e.g. spare inner tubes, brake blocks, and some tools: alum key set; chain splitter; tyre lever; puncture repair kit; pedal wrench. If you are a group of two to four, bring a spare tyre and/or chain between you. Also important is high sun-factor sunscreen, insect repellent and basic first aid (your guide will have a full first-aid kit.) A torch and writing materials will also be useful. Keep clothing as minimal as possible – this is a cycle tour to a remote country, not a fashion parade, so its best to keep it effective rather than affected: shorts, t-shirts, cycling tops, lots of socks, jeans or sweatpants, plenty of underwear, and at least one set of smart clothes (we're talking slacks and linen shirt.). We send you a complete list upon booking.

**Bike Hire:** included, the bikes are Hybrid or Mountain bikes with lightweight alloy frames, 27-speed gearing, V-brakes and Shimano components and front suspension.

**Safety:** Wearing a helmet is compulsory on all our Biking Adventures. Your tour leader is trained in first aid and emergency rescue, but to a large degree you must be responsible for your own safety while riding. It is therefore **compulsory that you take out travel insurance that will cover you for a mountain biking tour.**

**Booking** Places on this trip are limited so it is essential that you secure your place as early as possible.

**Flights** International flights, to and from the start and finish points are not included in the tour price. If you need help or advice arranging flights please contact us.

**Cost** The cost of this trip is **EUR 1200**, if you wish to have your own room the single supplement is **EUR 250**. The price includes professional leadership and full vehicle support + rental bike. There are no hidden costs, taxes or surcharges.

*The information in this Fact Sheet is given in good faith, and covers the average range of conditions likely to be found on this trip. Where differences exist in the information between this Fact Sheet and previous information, the Fact Sheet is the correct version and supersedes the brochure or web site. In remote destinations abnormal conditions can prevail at any time, and all adventurous holidays can therefore be subject to unexpected change and we will do our best to adhere to the original itinerary and cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes; in order to enjoy them you should be prepared to be flexible when necessary.*