



MEMORABLE CHALLENGES

Vietnam by Bike

The adventure in brief

Riding a mountain bike along the byways of Vietnam is without doubt the most rewarding way to experience this rich and varied destination. Travelling by the same mode as the local people enables one to interact and gain a mutual respect that one would not normally encounter by alternate means. Travelling at a slower pace than most coach tours, we are able to better absorb the long and complex history of the country as well as enjoy the beautiful scenery of the coast, plains and highlands that have drawn so many travellers. Most of all is the warmth and hospitality of the many, many Vietnamese people we meet in our travels. Along our route you will be in contact with the real Vietnam - an experience you will find hard to forget.



Itinerary at a glance

Day 1	Depart Melbourne 1135 and arrive in Hanoi at 2000. Arrival transfer
Day 2	In Hanoi. Sightseeing
Day 3	In Hanoi. Charity Project visit. Board evening train to Hue
Day 4	In Hue
Day 5	Morning cycle, drive to Hoi An
Day 6	Cycle to Quang Ngai
Day 7	Cycle Kon Tum
Day 8	Cycle Buon Me Thuot
Day 9	Cycle to Nha Trang
Day 10	In Nha Trang, Overnight train to Ho Chi Minh
Day 11	Arrive in Ho Chi Minh sightseeing
Day 12	Free day in Ho Chi Minh. Transfer to airport
Day 13	Arrive Melbourne 0925

MONEY MATTERS

Your tour cost includes

- English Speaking tour leader and group medical kit
- International Airfare with VIETNAM AIRLINES ex Melbourne
- All hotel accommodation in Vietnam on a twin-share, bed and breakfast basis
- Meals detailed in the itinerary
- Airport transfers if arriving on the first day and departing on the last day of a trip

- All group transport including train sector from Hanoi to Hue and Nha Trang to Ho Chi Minh
- Use of mountain bicycle
- Sightseeing excursions as outlined in itinerary

Your tour cost does not include

- Travel insurance and bike helmet (compulsory)
- Alcoholic beverages and soft drinks
- Mineral water beyond that supplied
- Optional excursions
- Additional transport required due to any emergency situation
- Personal expenses such as telephone and laundry bills
- Visa fees
- **Departure taxes and fuel surcharges**

MEMORABLE CHALLENGES

The team at Memorable Challenges are here to assist you with the fundraising aspect of your chosen Cycle Vietnam Challenge in March 2009.

There is no need to fear fundraising. We will help you all the way. Many people want to “make a difference” but don’t know how to begin. They are often time poor and are fearful that fundraising will be very time consuming. This is not the case. Let Memorable Challenges show you how. There is no charge for this service.

Simply ring Chris 0423 780 716 or email her on charrison@memorablechallenges.com to have information sent to you.



ITINERARY IN DETAIL

DAY 1 ARRIVE IN HANOI

DEPART: MELBOURNE
ARRIVE: HANOI

On arrival we will be met and transferred to the group hotel for overnight accommodation.

DAY 2 IN HANOI. SIGHTSEEING

After breakfast your tour leader will meet you for a group briefing before our half day sightseeing tour of Hanoi. We will visit the Mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh, the father of modern Vietnam. We walk through the grounds of the magnificent Presidential Palace, visiting the humble wooden cottage of Ho Chi Minh and a museum dedicated to the life of Vietnam's first President plus the One Pillar Pagoda. This is followed by a visit to the impressive Temple of Literature. The remainder of the afternoon is free to explore the many interesting streets of the Old Quarter, an area that is little changed over the centuries. Each is named (in Vietnamese of course!) after the goods that they trade in eg Silk St, Iron St, Biscuit St, Shoe St etc. and it is interesting to make your own discoveries.

In the evening we have tickets for a performance of Hanoi's famous water puppet theatre, a series of 17 stories presented by 11 puppeteers whom traditionally performed during the monsoonal period when rice farming in the Red River Delta was not possible. The stories reflect their way of life and dreams as well as providing respite from their demanding work schedule.

Prior to this we will have dinner in a local restaurant and an opportunity to sample specialty dishes of the north. (BD)

DAY 3 IN HANOI, TIME AT LEISURE. TRAIN TO HUE

After a late check out from our hotel and an early dinner, we transfer to the train station for our overnight train journey on the Reunification Express southwards to Hue. The overnight accommodation aboard the train is four person cabins where we sleep in comfortable berths swaying to the timeless rhythm of the railroad.

(BD)

DAY 4 IN HUE

We will arrive early morning into Hue and transfer to our centrally located hotel. After a shower and some breakfast we will gear up for our first day of riding. We will meet our additional crew who will be driving the support vehicles. One vehicle is our bus, which will act as a support vehicle and carry our luggage the other is a truck for carrying the bikes. We are also introduced to our bicycles, each designated bike being then adjusted and fitted with our own equipment as required. We will receive a briefing on how to ride the bikes and how to handle the traffic in Vietnam.



We will then set out for our first ride in Vietnam through the ancient capital of Hue. Hue is known for the magnificent architecture of its Royal Tombs, pagodas and temples built by the Nguyen Dynasty along the picturesque setting of the Perfume River. The royal relics of the Nguyen Emperors on the outskirts of the city are an easy ride from our hotel. In the morning we will visit the old Imperial Citadel, the Forbidden Purple City, and the Imperial Museum before lunch.

In the afternoon we will visit some ancient tombs of emperors past. We cycle approximately 12 km to the eccentric Tu Ducs tomb located in a serene setting on the outskirts of town. Time permitting we will then cycle to Thien Mu Pagoda, which is considered the unofficial symbol of Hue, before returning to the hotel for overnight accommodation. (BL)

DAY 5 RIDE TO HOI AN

We will set out early from our hotel and drive about 30 km out of town before getting on the bikes. Today will be our first experience of cycling on a highway outside of the towns. Traffic can be heavy in some parts but it is a fantastic way to see the surrounding countryside, past endless rice paddy fields and children screaming out 'hello'. The support vehicles will travel at the back of the group and we will stop every 15 km to regroup and share experiences. This morning we will cycle approximately 30 km before lunch through gently undulating countryside.



After lunch we then bus through Da Nang, stopping briefly at see the marble statues near the mountain of the same name before cycling on to the World Heritage town of Hoi An. In the evening we will take a short walking tour through the old streets of Hoi An. The streets are charming at night with lanterns hanging from shop fronts and café patrons spilling onto the streets. Amongst other things, Hoi An is famous for a particular noodle dish (Kau Lau) which we endeavour to sample during our time here.(BLD)

Day 6 CYCLE TO QUANG NGAI (DISTANCE CYCLED 80KM)

We join the main link between Vietnam's north and south, Highway 1 cycling to the town of Tam Ly where we will stop for a picnic lunch. We continue on to the district of Song My, to the better known hamlet of My Lai. Here is found an evocative memorial for those villagers who died in the horrific massacre during the American War. The My Lai site is in a small rural settlement, surrounded by simple thatched huts, quilted rice paddies and farmers with conical hats going about their day to day routines. The mood set by these surroundings is one of peace and tranquility despite the deep scars of the past. After visiting the simple memorial and museum we continue riding to Quang Ngai where we stay overnight. (B,L,D)

Day 7 CYCLE TO KON TUM (DISTANCE CYCLED 85KM)

Today is a more challenging day as we leave the main traffic route of Highway 1 and head inland towards Quang Nam Province. We will cycle only part of today, along quiet but scenic undulating roads with stunning photo opportunities of remote villages, tropical forests and friendly locals. (B,L,D)



Day 8 CYCLE TO BUON ME THUOT (DISTANCE CYCLED 80KM)

Today's cycling journey is on an excellent section road, Highway 14, through scenic uplands. We pass by coffee plantations and national parks on our way to the largest town in the western highlands, Buon Me Thuot which is also the capital of Dac Lac Province. The fresh coffee of this province is famous so it is a perfect opportunity to taste and sample the many varieties that are produced here, including the oddly but appropriately named "Weasel Coffee" (B,L,D)

DAY 9 CYCLE TO NHA TRANG BEACH (DISTANCE CYCLED 80KM)

Today cycle, whilst undulating is mostly downhill towards the coast and Nha Trang. We pass through more minority hamlets on our way to the kilometres of untouched beaches, great climate and islands to explore which have made Nha Trang a popular Vietnamese resort. The accommodation for the night is ideally situated right near the main beach in the centre of town. Overnight at group hotel. (BL)

DAY 10 REST DAY IN NHA TRANG BEACH/OVERNIGHT TRAIN TO HO CHI MINH

Today is a cycle-free day to enjoy the clear blue waters and relaxed ambience of Nha Trang. Nha Trang offers a number of sights of historical or spiritual significance, which can be explored at your leisure during the day or you may simply want to lie on the beach or get a relaxing massage. This afternoon we transfer to the train station for our overnight train to Ho Chi Minh. (B)

DAY 11 ARRIVE HO CHI MINH

On arrival in Ho Chi Minh we will be met at the station and transferred to our hotel. Today we have a half day sightseeing day of Ho Chi Minh. Tonight we join our Vietnamese guides for a farewell dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at the group hotel. (BD)

DAY 12 DEPART HO CHI MINH

Today is at leisure to catch up on last minute shopping and exploring before transferring to the airport late afternoon for your onward flight back to Australia.

If you are departing Vietnam today you will receive a transfer to the airport. (B)

DEPART: HO CHI MINH on VN781 at 2125

DAY 13 ARRIVE MELBOURNE

ARRIVE: MELBOURNE on VN781 at 0935

(Meals included in tour price: Breakfast = B, Lunch = L, Dinner = D)

Please note:

Average daily cycling distances are approximately 60 -100 kms. These distances may vary according to weather, road conditions and group fitness and preferences. This is a sightseeing cycle tour, not a marathon or time trial.

ADVENTURE TRAVEL

By its very nature adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected. In remote and developing countries do not expect standards you are used to at home. Remote areas are sometimes unpredictable and itineraries may be altered. To get the most out of your adventure it is important that you are flexible, positive and eager to take on all the challenges that arise. If you are uncertain about your suitability for this trip we recommend that you speak with your reservation consultant.

TRIP GRADING

The activity on this trip is considered strenuous and therefore requires a good level of fitness and all participants to be in good health. You can expect to be cycling up to seven hours a day at a slow but steady pace in hot and very humid conditions. Some days more involve longer cycle times, depending upon the conditions and the speed of the group. The roads are not always sealed and can be uneven and rocky. Occasionally, you will encounter busy roads which will require all participants to take great care and attention. This trip should never be misinterpreted as an easy trip... this is a challenge! In preparation for your trip you should be doing at least one hour of good cardiovascular exercise, 3-5 times per week for approximately 3 months prior to your trip. Cycling should be your main form of training, road cycling twice a week also for three months prior to departure is recommended. We consider your training apart of the Challenge. Remember the fitter you and are the more enjoyable your experience will be!

MENTAL PREPARATION

In addition to your physical preparation (which includes both fitness and gear preparations), mental preparation or anticipation of what lies ahead of you is equally important. For some, you will be taking yourself into a completely different world that will have unfamiliar aspects. At times you will need to change and adapt, draw from your mental and physical strength as well as be a team player. This is normal, and part of the very essence of an Inspired Adventure.

Life on an Inspired Adventure will undoubtedly be different to your routine at home, however we anticipate that this trip will be one of the most enriching and exhilarating experiences of your life.

Generally speaking, having an open mind and being reasonable and courteous allows you to always receive a reasonable response or solution to a situation. It is no different to home in many ways. Treat people as you would like to be treated.

By addressing both mental and physical preparations, you will be relaxed, capable and ready to embrace all that comes before you; the easy and more challenging...and have a wonderful experience!

THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE

Vietnam stretches over 1600 km along the eastern coast of the Indo-Chinese peninsula from 8' 34" N to 23' 22" N. The land mass is 329,566 square kilometres, making it larger than Italy and slightly smaller than Japan. Vietnam is a country of immense beauty and geographical diversity. The country is roughly divided into three main areas – Bac Bo (north), Trung Bo (centre) and Nam Bo (south). The main feature of the north of Vietnam is mountains and forests along with the vast Red River Delta. The north is also home to the Gulf of Tonkin and a maze of islands in the bay. Central Vietnam is made up of agricultural plains wedged

between the Truong Son Mountains and the South China Sea making some dramatic mountain passes overlooking ocean vistas. The Mekong Delta dominates the south of the country.

Vietnam has been the site of battles and invasions for over 2000 years. Influences of invaders or modern day 'liberators' have left the country with a unique cultural identity and a complex and fascinating history. This history has given Vietnam a diverse population made up of different ethnic groups, particularly from China. The predominant ethnic group is known as 'kinh' and make up about 90% of the population. There are dozens of other ethnic groups including Cham and Khmer particularly in the south of the country.

Since the early 1990's, Vietnam has been opening its doors to tourism. Although the relatively long periods of isolation and a history of war has not produced a laid-back tourism paradise like Thailand facilities and infrastructure in the country are changing rapidly. Vietnam is still a communist country although the Government is at times very pragmatic and forward thinking. You still need to carry with you an abundance of patience and a good sense of humour to overcome the overt bureaucracy and the inevitable delays, however, the fascinating history and culture; the resilient and proud people; and the beauty of the varied landscape help to overcome any possible frustrations.

CLIMATE

Vietnam's climate can vary markedly from region to region due to its length stretching 1650 km from north to south. Generally two distinct seasons prevail in Vietnam. From November to April, the temperatures are usually fairly cool, especially in the north of the country. In the mountain areas temperatures can be as low as 0 degrees Celsius (32 degrees Fahrenheit) and there can be a constant light drizzle. Hotter temperatures and heavy monsoon rains characterize the months from May to October although you can experience rain at any time. The hottest months of the year are June, July and August.

Southern Vietnam's weather patterns are more constant with a rainy season from May to October and a relative dry season from November to February. The temperatures in the south can rise as high as 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) from March to May.

THE BICYCLES

The bicycles used on this program are 21 speed, aluminium frame, mountain bikes, equipped with hand brakes. The bikes are supplied with a bike water bottle rack – maximum capacity 1 litre.

These bicycles are used on all of the trips and therefore are used by many different people throughout a season. It is possible that your bicycle might need certain slight adjustments before you commence riding. However, additional adjustments or repairs may have to be made along the way and at least one additional bicycle is supplied for each group in case a replacement becomes necessary. Sets of basic tools are aboard the follow-up truck and your trip leader will assist with any difficulties. We regret that there are only a few smaller women's bicycles and these can be reserved for shorter group members, so long as we are advised of your height well in advance of your tour departure.

***For safety reasons, we also insist that cycle helmets be included as a compulsory item on your equipment list.**

CAN I TAKE MY OWN BIKE?

We do not recommend that you bring your own bike. Our Vietnamese agents advise us that Vietnamese Customs make it difficult for foreigners to bring their own bicycles into Vietnam. You may be subject to additional duties, which could make it a costly decision. There can also be difficulties carrying the bike on the train journey from Hanoi to Hue.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Vietnam's environment is extremely fragile. The rapidly increasing population puts immeasurable pressure on the country's environment and resources and it is our responsibility as visitors to minimise the impact of our presence.

It has always been our motto that "we take only photographs and leave only footprints"; and we ask that you thoughtfully dispose of batteries, wrappers and toilet paper by placing in the proper receptacle.

In September 2001, we were the proud recipients of the Australian National Travel Industry's Environmental Achievement award for our *Responsible Travel Guidebook*. This detailed guide to responsible & sustainable travel is provided to all World Expeditions clients before they travel. Please ask your consultant if you have not received your copy of our award-winning book. Alternatively, you may like to download a copy from our website.

HOW TO BOOK

Simply ring **Chris 0423 780 716** or email her on charrison@memorablechallenges.com to have information sent to you.

Insurance

Current comprehensive travel insurance is a condition of the acceptance of your booking. The cost of travel insurance does not form part of the advised price and must be paid additionally. We have a company that we deal with as our preferred insurer and will make available the policy document with your pre departure information. Alternatively you may have your own insurance company that you deal with frequently.

Suggested Extensions

World Expeditions offers many trips in surrounding region. Ask our office for further details on these great trips

- Angkor Wat Extension
- Halong Bay Extension