

## Hoi An To Halong Bay Cycle



Duration: 12 days

Vietnam is incredibly diverse, with ancient cultural sites, amazing natural landscapes and friendly, hospitable people.

Our challenge starts at the charming ancient trading port of Hoi An, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and heads north. Our route takes us over Hai Van Pass, which has been a vital military strategic foothold for centuries, and then on through rich farmland and dazzling green rice paddies, along scenic coastline, and through bustling towns and villages which provide a wonderful insight into traditional life. A boat trip into the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Phong Nha Caves is a unique highlight of the itinerary! However, despite all this beauty, it's impossible to be oblivious to the scars of the relatively-recent Vietnam War, and the sites we pass bring yet another dimension to this diverse route.

We finish at yet another UNESCO World Heritage Site, the breathtakingly beautiful Halong Bay, where we celebrate our achievement with a boat trip among the scenic islands and karst limestone outcrops.

### DETAILED ITINERARY

#### Day 1: Depart London for Vietnam

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#### Day 2: Danang Airport – Hoi An

We connect from our international flight to a shorter hop to Danang; on arrival at the airport we transfer to Hoi An, the start of our exciting cycle challenge. After lunch and a chance to freshen up, we meet our bikes and go for a warm-up ride to get used to the bikes and to explore the sights of Hoi An. Back at the hotel, we have a trip briefing before getting a good night's sleep, ready for our first full day of cycling! Night hotel.

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### Day 3: Hoi An – Hai Van Pass – Huế

Our first morning of cycling brings a mixture of coastal riding and mountain passes. After a hearty breakfast, we cycle back towards Danang and head further north. We visit Red Beach, where American Marines first landed in 1965, then ride over Nam O Bridge en route to the steep Hai Van Pass. This is our biggest climb on the whole trip and, on a humid day, will be hard work! Hai Van Pass has been a vital military strategic foothold for centuries, and was used by French and American armies in the Indochina War and Vietnam War; bunkers and fortifications dot the hillsides. The descent from here takes us back to the coast and into the beautiful fishing town of Ga Lăng Cô. We stop for lunch next to Đầm Cầu Hai, an enormous salt water lagoon famous for its oysters. A short transfer takes us back to the coast, where we continue on our cycle, passing many beautifully embellished Buddhist cemeteries and fishing communities, until we reach today's end point in the town of Vinh Thanh. From here we take a short transfer into Hue, to avoid a very busy stretch of road. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx. 60-80km, drive approx. 1hr**

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### Day 4: Huế – Cúa Tung

After a short transfer out of Huế, we will notice a marked difference in terrain on our cycling route today, as it remains pan flat throughout. We leave the fishing communities and ride on an elevated road, through the middle of vivid green rice paddies as far as the eye can see. Contrasting, and brightly coloured Buddhist pagodas stand out in the scenery. The prevailing wind through the rice paddies gently encourages us as we cycle, soon re-joining the coast for the afternoon and passing shrimp farms as we go. Upon reaching Cúa Tung, our accommodation for the night is positioned alongside a lighthouse on the beach, where we can enjoy a swim before dinner. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx. 90km**

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### Day 5: Cúa Tung – Dong Hoi

The 5km strip of land on either side of the Ben Hai River, which from 1954 to 1975 acted as a buffer between the North and the South, is still known as the DMZ (Demilitarised Zone), and today's route takes us north through it, crossing the 17th Parallel. Ironically, the DMZ became one of the most militarised areas in the world. We follow this fascinating and thought-provoking route, making time in the morning to visit the Vinh Moc Tunnels. An incredible complex of tunnels that were dug by local people to evade the constant US bombing of the area, it includes kitchens, wells and a 'hospital', as well as living quarters for roughly 60 families, all at a depth of roughly 30m. The tunnels saved the lives of the local villagers and are still in very good condition. We continue our cycling on undulating roads, through lush scenery, with trees lining the road and providing welcome shade from the sun. As we reach the end point of our cycling today, we board the awaiting transport to transfer in to the seaside town of Dong Hoi. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx. 80km**

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### Day 6: Dong Hoi – Phong Nha Caves

Today's ride is shorter, to make time to visit the Phong Nha caves – an indisputable highlight of our trip. We begin our day with a ride through the bustling town of Dong Hoi, where we join what may seem like hundreds of motorcyclists on their morning commute. We ride past Tam Toa church, which is scarred with broken walls and

bullet holes from the war and kept as a reminder of the troubled past. We leave the coastline and head inland towards the ancient limestone mountains of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park piercing out of the rice fields. We cycle into the park to our hotel and freshen up before lunch. After lunch we climb into the awaiting boats which take us into the heart of the water caves (for approx. 40 minutes), where we disembark to explore Tien Son cave by foot before returning to the hotel by boat down the Son River. A truly magical experience. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx. 50km**

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### Day 7: Phong Nha Caves – Phố Châu

Today will make for some memorable riding, as we skirt the eastern edge of the national park. The remoteness of this area was utilised by the Vietnamese army during the Vietnam War. We cycle along the old Khe Giat runway, which is now a very wide road. From here, we enter a steep sided gorge of large limestone cliffs lined with wild banana trees and dense rainforest, which makes for some incredibly scenic riding. The terrain today is tough, with some long hills but the much longer descents offer an exhilarating ride. The welcoming local villagers are not so familiar with foreign tourists and will be full of smiles as we ride by. After lunch, we have a short transfer before jumping back on our bikes at the top of a pass to enjoy a great descent, leaving the hills behind and continuing on a flatter section to Huang Khe. Once more we have a transfer of approximately 50km, which takes us in to Phố Châu. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx. 80km, drive approx. 1.5hrs**

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### Day 8: Phố Châu – Dong Hien – Thanh Hoa

Today we cycle through countryside and rural villages, in a region that rarely sees tourists - we are certainly off the beaten path here. For the first part of the day, we cycle through tea plantations on gently undulating roads, dotted with small climbs. Continuing onwards, we follow the River Lam, a very wide and meandering river dotted with fishing boats. The towns we pass through will be fascinated at the sight of foreigners on bikes, as smiling ladies wearing Nom La's (the traditional cone straw hats) wave from the rice fields. We finish in Dong Hien and have a long scenic transfer to Thanh Hoa. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx. 80km, drive approx. 2.5hrs**

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### Day 9: Thanh Hoa – Nam Dinh – Hai Phong

A 30 minute transfer takes us out of the town centre. This morning will feel like a world away from the peaceful and tranquil roads of yesterday, as we ride through suburbs busy with people buying and selling everything, from house fans and mirrors to Buddhist shrines and coffins. You'll be amazed at home much can be carried on one motorbike! Many of the locals in this area are craftsmen who produce much of the grand, mahogany furniture that adorns hotel lobbies and homes. We soon find ourselves following a quiet canal that weaves its way along the base of the Nga Son Mountains, rising steeply out of the rice paddies. Just before lunch, we cross the Thai Binh River by ferry and stop for a picnic on the river bank. Back on our bikes, we follow the east bank of the river all the way into Nam Dinh on traffic free routes shared with other cyclists and motorbikes. Once in Nam Dinh, we load up the vehicles and transfer to Hai Phong. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx. 90km, transfer approx. 3hrs**

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## Day 10: Hai Phong – Halong Bay

After a vehicle transfer to the ferry point, we have a short crossing to Cát Bà Island to embark on the final leg of our adventure through Northern Vietnam. The excitement will have been growing to finally reach world-renowned Halong Bay, which makes for an incredible finish! Once on the island, it is flat at first before a steep uphill of approximately 2kms takes us to an awe-inspiring and incredible vista of Halong Bay – our first glimpse is well worth the effort! Cát Bà Island regularly appears in the backdrop of photographs of Halong Bay, so it is a unique experience to be part of the iconic scenery.

After a refreshing descent to the ferry port on the other side of the island, we board another ferry to take us across to the port of Halong Bay. We can relax and enjoy the views – we made it! With our bikes loaded up for the last time, we board our awaiting junk boat – our home for the next 24 hours. Lunch is served on board as we tour around the Bay's islands, dotted with wind and wave-eroded grottoes. We visit several islands, as well as Sung Sot cave, and enjoy a swim at Ti Top beach, known for its white sand beaches and clear water. This is a fantastic way to celebrate our cycling achievements. Night junk boat.

**Cycle approx. 22km**

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## Day 11: Halong Bay – Hanoi; flight departs

Today we awake surrounded by the tranquil beauty of Halong Bay. We have breakfast sitting on the upper deck taking in the beauty of the rocky islands rising from the crystal-clear waters of the Bay. With the accompanying soundtrack of birds singing, cicadas chirping ashore and the gentle lapping of the waves against our boat, we continue to explore this UNESCO World Heritage-listed bay. This morning we visit more islands, and take to small bamboo boats to appreciate more caves. After lunch we return to Halong Wharf and transfer to the airport at Hanoi for our departing flight.

*(Dinner not included)*

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## Day 12: Arrive UK

Our flight connects en-route and we return to the UK.

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## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All return transport from London to Danang / Hanoi to London
- All meals except where specified, and accommodation
- Discover Adventure leaders; local guides/mechanics and cooks
- Vehicle support and backup equipment on the trip
- 21-speed Mountain bike (Trek/Giant or equivalent)
- Overnight cruise on Halong Bay and any other sites visited as part of the itinerary

## WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Any meals specified 'not included' in the itinerary
- Travel insurance
- Cycle helmet (compulsory) and water bottle
- Personal spending money, souvenirs and drinks
- Tips for the local guides and support crew
- Inbound airport departure tax (no tax applied at the time of writing)
- Fees for any optional sites, attractions or activities
- Airline taxes: we cap these so £250.00 is the maximum you will pay
- Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions

## GRADE | YELLOW

Trips are graded Yellow, Orange or Red, in increasing level of challenge. This trip lies within the **YELLOW** range.



The grade is determined by factors such as terrain, distance, climate, altitude, etc. Each colour grade has a **spectrum** which reflects the difficulty of these factors; trip duration, accommodation and living conditions (see icon) are also taken into account.

[Trip grading explained](#)

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Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 20 Jan 2021, and the challenge is subject to change.