

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

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.

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

Day 4: Huế – Cửa 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 Cửa 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

Day 5: Cửa 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

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

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

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

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 how 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

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

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)

Day 12: Arrive UK

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

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](#)

CHALLENGE INFORMATION

DETAILED INFORMATION

Leaders & Trip Support

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. They are also trained in expedition first aid. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader. Usually leaders are based in the UK or other English-speaking countries and lead for us regularly throughout the year in many different countries. In some instances, trips are led by in-country guides with a wealth of knowledge about the region; they have been trained by us to provide the level of support expected on a Discover Adventure trip.

Local Support Crew

Our local support crew is made up of local guides, assisted by drivers, porters, cooks and other support staff, depending on the type of trip. Local guides know the area well, and are a great source of knowledge about local customs and

lifestyles. Not all support crew will speak English well, but are very friendly and approachable. The Discover Adventure crew work closely with the local crew to ensure your trip runs smoothly and safely.

Your leader will arrange a collection of tips for the local support crew at the end of your trek, and you will be provided with a guideline amount in advance. Tipping is not obligatory, but once you see how hard they work on your behalf you will be happy to donate something! All our local crew are paid wages, but bear in mind that the average wage in many countries may be less than you would spend on an average night out.

Trip Safety

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with communication devices (eg phones, radios and/or emergency satellite phones), medical kit and other safety apparatus appropriate to the destination. Our leaders always have access to our 24-hour emergency UK back-up. They are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary, should local conditions dictate. Pre-trip administration - such as medical questionnaires and travel insurance as appropriate - is all done with your safety in mind.

Flight Information

Group flights usually leave from London Heathrow or Gatwick on scheduled airlines and are booked through Discover Adventure Ltd under ATOL licence 5636. By travelling with Discover Adventure you are protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Your journey may involve a transit en route; details of route and flight times will be confirmed several months before departure. We do not always use the same airline for each destination; if you wish to know the probable carrier and flight times, please call for details. You will usually receive confirmed flight details several months before departure. Our itineraries are always based on current flight schedules and are therefore subject to change by the airline. If you prefer to book your own flights please ask us for a land-only cost.

Accommodation

We stay in a variety of hotels/lodges ranging from quite simple, friendly guesthouse-style to more international-style hotels in larger towns or cities. Standards are generally good, in great locations, but there may be a night or two where facilities are more basic, as you'd expect in very remote, untouristed or rural areas. On the final night we sleep on board a junk boat on Halong Bay; this is comfortable but not particularly roomy!

Roomshare Arrangements

Accommodation is usually on a twin-share basis. Occasionally we may use hostel-style accommodation. Please tell us if you know somebody else on the trip that you would like to share with and we will try our best to accommodate your request. If you don't know anyone else in the group don't worry, we always pair you up with someone of the same gender, and a similar age where possible. We do not charge a single supplement if you are a solo traveller in a shared room.

Group Size

Your booking is part of a group challenge, and the tour costs and fundraising targets listed on our website are based on a minimum number of participants which is shown on the challenge. Our typical groups run with approximately 15-25 participants; however you may find your group is smaller or larger than this.

We will confirm at least 12 weeks prior to departure that your challenge is guaranteed to run. Occasionally it may be possible to still run the challenge with less than the minimum numbers, subject to a small group supplement. If we think a small group supplement may be necessary, we will discuss this with you as soon as possible, usually 5 months before your departure date.

Minimum numbers and groups sizes may vary on Bespoke Charity challenges. If you are booked onto a bespoke challenge please contact your charity for full details.

Food & Dietary Requirements

The food provided is plentiful, often local in style and freshly-cooked, and will give you plenty of energy. Sometimes we enjoy a buffet-style lunch-stop, other times we might have packed lunches. On some trips we stop at small local restaurants. Dinners are generally eaten at our accommodation each evening. In some regions there may be less variety than you are used to, and in others fresh meat or produce can be harder to come by. Any meals not included are listed in the itinerary and are generally on travel / free days, giving you the opportunity to explore and try other culinary experiences! There is always something to suit different budgets.

Being vegetarian or having other dietary requirements is not usually a problem provided you let us know well in advance. Please do not expect as much variety as you would have access to at home – we may be in very rural or remote areas, or among people of a different culture who may not understand your requirements, however willing they are to help. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat we strongly recommend you bring extra snacks from home so you can top up your energy supply. Please feel free to ask us for advice.

Luggage

Your luggage, food, water and equipment is transported for you from one night-stop to the next. If there is easy road access this is done by vehicle; if not porters, mules or even camels might carry your bags, depending on the terrain.

Space is limited and hard-sided luggage is not suitable, so it is essential that your kit is packed in a soft bag, rucksack or expedition kitbag. Ask us about our specially-designed low-cost kitbags if you don't have one already. You should also bring a small daypack to carry for items needed during the day as you will not have access to your main luggage until the evening.

PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGE

Fitness Levels

This is designed to be a challenge, and it is vital that you train sufficiently for it. We will supply you with a thorough training guide once you have registered. We expect all participants to train hard in advance, but we respect everyone's

limits and do not expect everyone to maintain the same pace. Inadequate training is likely to have an impact not just on your chances of completing the challenge, but enjoying it too - and we want you to have the time of your life!

Our challenges attract people of all levels of experience, fitness and ability as well as all ages and backgrounds. We design our challenges so that everyone can go at their own pace: this is not a race. If you have concerns about your fitness or if you have reduced mobility please do contact us for a confidential chat about whether this challenge is appropriate for you.

For logistical and safety reasons we sometimes need to re-group, so the front-runners may find themselves waiting for the slower ones. Please relax, and remember that this is a team effort that enables people to achieve their personal goals and earn sponsorship.

Passport & Visa / Vaccinations

Entry requirements vary depending on your destination and nationality. It is your responsibility to ensure your passport is valid, and any visas are obtained in good time. Check the [FCO's advice](#) on entry requirements for your destination to be sure. Please ensure you allow plenty of time to apply for your visa; we will provide you with all necessary information 6 weeks prior to departure to assist with your application.

Your routine UK schedule of vaccinations should be up-to-date (especially tetanus). We recommend you check [Fit For Travel](#) for further details. You should always check with a GP or travel clinic for up-to-date travel health advice as it does change.

Clothing & Kit

We plan our trips around the optimal weather conditions, but could still be exposed to bad weather at any time. It is vital you are prepared for all conditions. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, with plenty of information, and we are always available if you need advice.

Travel Insurance

Travel Insurance is compulsory on all of our challenges outside of the UK; we strongly suggest that you arrange insurance cover as soon as your booking with us is confirmed, or as soon as you're able to purchase some, and at least 8 months prior to travel. Should you need to cancel prior to departure, you will need insurance to cover the costs involved (registration fee and any trip costs depending on cancellation date).

We all hope never to need it, and thankfully most of the time we don't, but on those rare occasions when you do, you want it to cover you as best it can. Whilst it's a fairly boring admin task relating to your trip of a lifetime, it is really important you ensure that you have adequate cover for the type of challenge you are taking part in as well as medical emergencies, evacuation and repatriation, so make sure you're happy with the level of cover. There are lots of suppliers out there, with a wide range in levels of cover; generally speaking, you get what you pay for! Get and pay for the right level of cover and then you can go on your adventure not having to worry about the what-if's. For more details click [here](#).

Once your travel insurance is arranged, just remember to let us know the policy number and 24-hr medical emergency phone number provided by your insurers.

Cultural Differences

For most people, the main attraction of travelling to a different country is to see new sights and enjoy new experiences. Sometimes those new experiences can make life harder or more inconvenient than you may like, such as toilet hygiene or different food, or simply a different attitude to solving problems. This is all part of the challenge you are signing up for! We are very privileged to live in a country with a high standard of living, and travelling exposes us to different challenges – all of which help broaden our horizons. We can guarantee that coming face-to-face with experiences outside your normal 'comfort zone' will help you bond with your fellow participants and provide you with plenty of things to laugh about! A sense of humour and sense of adventure are two of the most important things to bring with you!

Cancelling your booking

In the unfortunate circumstance that you need to cancel your booking, we would ask that you notify us in writing either by post or email. Your cancellation will be considered effective from the date the notice is received. Registration fees and amendment fees are non refundable and, depending on your payment option and how close it is to your challenge departure date, you may be liable for a cancellation charge.

Full details of all cancellation charges may be found in the Terms and Conditions of booking.

BUY YOUR KITBAG

Only £45 (inc p&p) - designed to deal with the rigours of your challenge.

Easier for accessing gear than a rucksack (especially when camping) this is probably the most cost-effective way to take your luggage on a Discover Adventure challenge!



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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 19 Apr 2024, and the challenge is subject to change.