

HA GIANG AND CAO BANG: VIETNAM'S FRONTIER BY ROAD BIKE

Tour Code **VNM-HGC**

13 DAYS **12** NIGHTS

Destinations	Vietnam
Tour Meets	Hanoi
Tour Ends	Hanoi
Fly in to	Noi Bai International Airport (HAN)
Fly out of	Noi Bai International Airport (HAN)
Group Size	n/a
Minimum Age	18 (on scheduled departures)

ACTIVITY PROFILE

10 Cycling days	**891** km Total cycling distance
89 km Avg distance / day	**1791** m Avg climbing / day

PRICING

Price	On request
Bike Hire	N/A
Single Supplement	N/A

DEPARTURES

There are no scheduled departures for this trip at the moment. Please contact us to arrange a private departure.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ SpiceRoads jersey
- ✓ Water bottle
- ✓ Support vehicle
- ✓ Guide(s)
- ✓ Meals (as indicated)
- ✓ Accommodation
- ✓ Snacks and drinks

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Domestic flights
- ✗ Airport pick up
- ✗ Airport drop off
- ✗ Visa fees
- ✗ Alcohol
- ✗ Tips

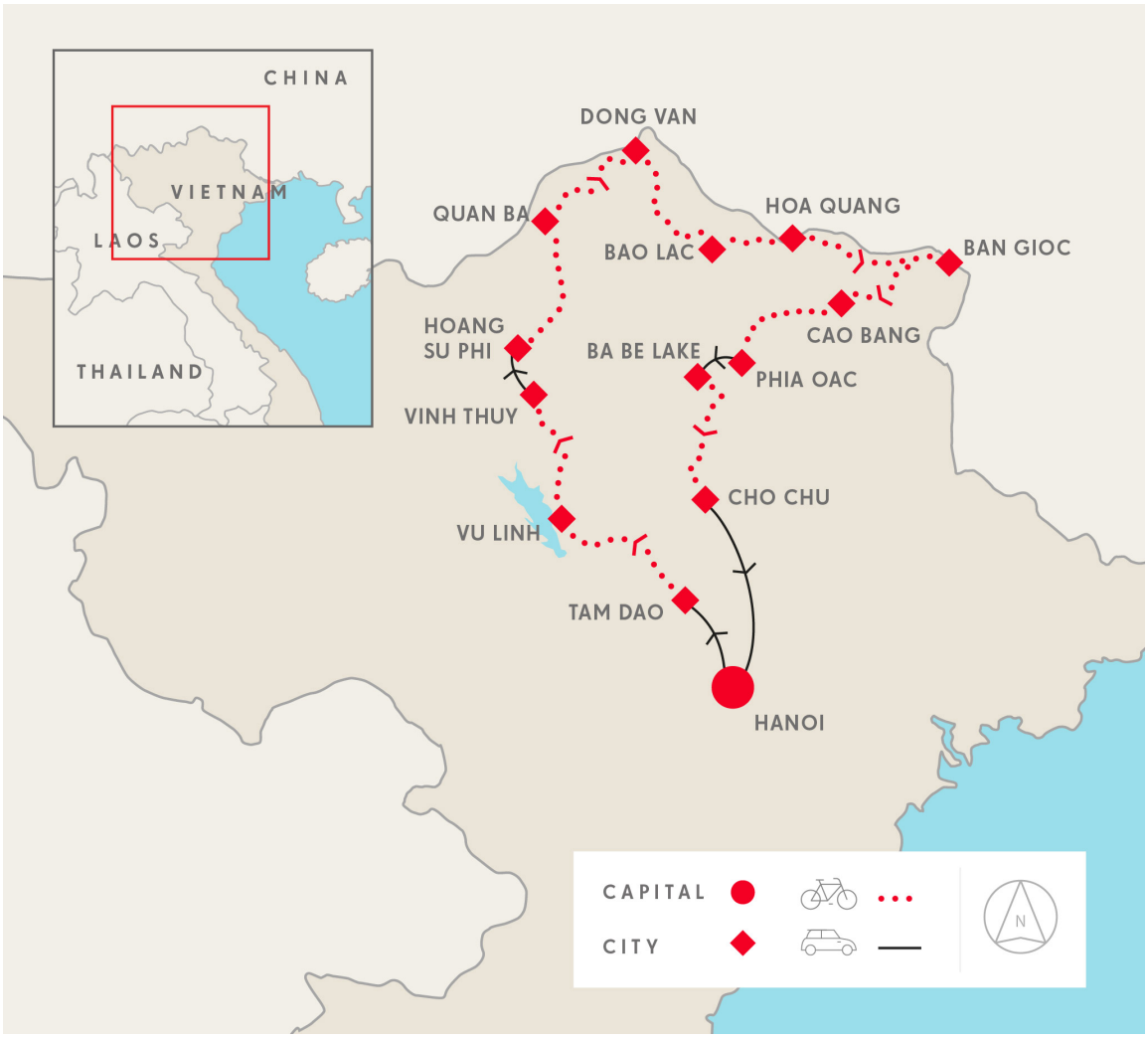
TRIP PROFILE

We cycle approximately 891 kilometres in 10 cycling days, making for vigorous cycling with the opportunity to experience local cultures along the way. To make the most of our trip, there are several transfers to connect the ideal riding segments, but these will not overwhelm the schedule in any way: cycling and sightseeing are at the forefront. After our initial meeting and dinner in Hanoi on Day 1, Days 2 and 3 are relatively easy warm-up rides with approx. 1000m of elevation gain each. Days 4 and 5 ramp up the difficulty with gains of over 1,500m followed by a rest day to make sure our legs are ready for the most challenging days during the second half of the tour.

This is undoubtedly a very challenging series of rides. However, your guide's expert knowledge of the area and terrain means that you always know what is coming up in terms of distance and difficulty. This makes a tremendous difference, as does the constant supply of water and refreshments along the way.

Suitability: This tour is for advanced, very fit road cyclists who are eager to push themselves with successive days of very challenging riding. While there are flatter sections and some nice downhills, every day involves significant climbing, and there is really no "easy" day on this tour. Good stamina is a must. To prepare, you should be riding several times a week and practicing sustained climbs at fairly steep grades. To safely enjoy the tour, cyclists should also have the bike handling skills to navigate steep downhills, some broken sections of pavement, and periodic obstructions due to vehicles, fallen rocks, etc. that may appear on the road. The support vehicle is always nearby to offer refuge to any weary cyclists.

Biking Conditions: This trip is mainly on good quality tarmac roads and some smaller roads with rougher pavement. There are occasional bumpy sections, and some steep technical downhills. We ride in and out of towns along the way, which can be somewhat busy with traffic. While we have sought out bike-friendly routes, we will be regularly sharing the roads with other vehicles, including cars, motorbikes, and buses. We will experience a range of temperatures on the tour, from quite chilly mornings to hot, humid, and sunny days. Appropriate clothing such as gloves, sleeves and jackets is advised for the colder periods. We generally ride rain or shine, but based on the guide's discretion or your level of comfort, modifications to the planned route and schedule can be made. It's all part of the adventure!



Day 1: Meet in Hanoi

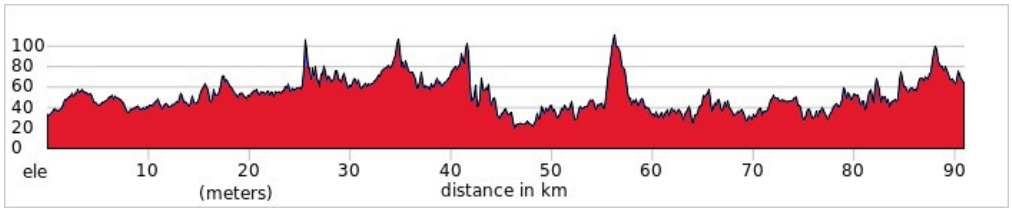
Welcome to Hanoi, Vietnam's capital and the cultural heart of the North! We suggest arriving at least a day or two before the tour begins to explore this vibrant city infused with ancient heritage, a French colonial legacy, a revolutionary spirit and modern cosmopolitanism. Be sure to visit the Temple of Literature, Hoan Kiem Lake, and the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and stroll through the lively Old Quarter. On arrival day, we meet at our tour hotel in the late afternoon and head out for a trip briefing and welcome dinner. Please let us know if you require assistance with airport transfers and pre-tour hotel bookings.

Le Jardin Hotel Haute Couture Dinner

Day 2: Hanoi → Vu Linh

After breakfast, we will transfer about 2 hours outside Hanoi and cycle along a range of hills in Tam Dao district. From there, we head north to Thac Ba Lake, the enormous reservoir of a hydroelectric dam built by North Vietnam with Soviet support in the 1960s. We then turn onto a smaller road to reach the day's destination: Vu Linh, a quiet and serene community, is a home of the Dzao ethnic minority group and a welcome contrast with the busy streetscapes of Hanoi. Views of the lake make a lovely backdrop to this memorable visit with our hospitable hosts.

La Vie Vu Linh Ecolodge Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

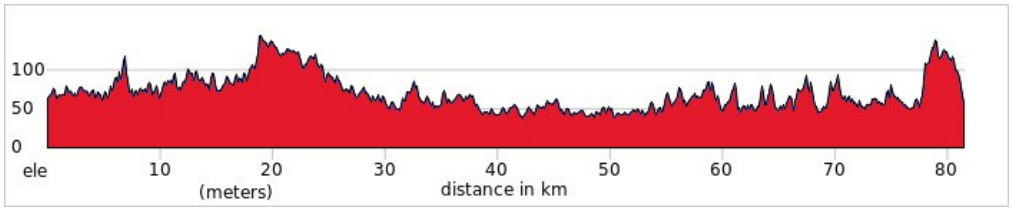


Ride 91km +982m -951m

Day 3: Vu Linh → Hoang Su Phi

This morning, we leave the lakeside village and continue up a small road flanked by huge mountains on the two sides to approach Hoang Su Phi. Rice terraces and rushing mountain streams combine for a beautiful panorama in this pristine district, where a rich mosaic of ethnic minority groups retain their distinct cultures in daily life. Today's ride again offers good climbs and steep sections interspersed with more sedate sections where we can enjoy the surroundings at our own pace. We transfer 1.5 hours to our mountain lodging for dinner and spend the night in comfortable bungalows with exhilarating views in all directions.

Hoang Su Phi Bungalow Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



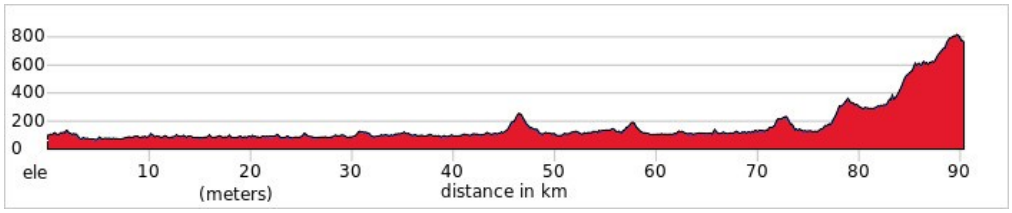
Ride 82km +1119m -1124m

Day 4: Hoang Su Phi → Quan Ba

We begin with a 1-hour transfer to Tan Quang, then begin riding along the Lo River. Climb the Quan Ba mountain pass with some interesting stops along the way in villages of the Tay and Hmong people, where we receive friendly greetings. Pause to refresh and take in the stunning vistas, including the famous Tam Son valley with the Twin Hills. Descending the pass, ride to the

home of the Dzao Ao Da ("Dzao with long dresses"), whose traditional lifestyle carries on in a beautiful village at the foot of Quan Ba mountain range. We'll call it a day after around 90 km and transfer 30-minutes to a local guesthouse.

Dao Lodge Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

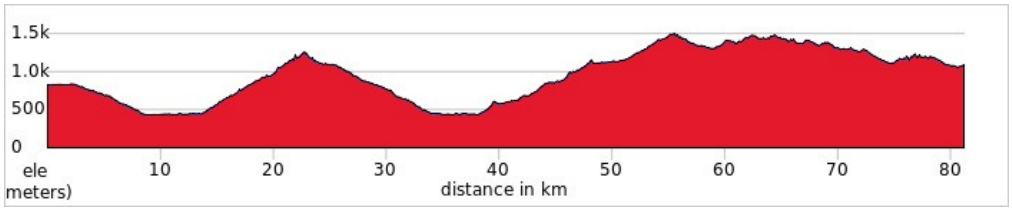


Ride 90km +1773m -1105m

Day 5: Quan Ba → Dong Van

Today is a challenging but rewarding day of riding into the UNESCO-designated Dong Van Karst Plateau Geopark, beginning with a 10 km descent through Hmong villages, followed by a pretty riverside ride to our first climb of the day. Pass through village markets where locals buy, sell, and socialize amid an array of goods, fresh from the farm. There is another long descent in store for us to Yen Minh before the second climb of similar height, taking us to an altitude of 1.025. M, where we continue across the rolling top of the plateau with many dramatic winding sections. Along the way, you will see the centuries-old clay-walled townlet of Pho Bang and historic relics of the Vuong Palace, named for the family that ruled over the region and controlled opium production and trading. And finally we roll into the traditional market town of Dong Van where we spend two nights.

Amira Premium Lodge Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Ride 81km +2643m -2381m

Day 6: Dong Van Rest Day

Having reached the halfway point of the tour, and with some big days of riding still ahead, it is time for a rest day. Dong Van is the perfect place for it. Set against a backdrop of dramatic karst peaks, this historic town offers a relaxed atmosphere to unwind. You can spend the day enjoying local cafés in the Old Quarter, exploring the surrounding mountain scenery, and strolling through the lantern-lit streets as night falls. Lunch and dinner are not included today, but your guide will be happy to share recommendations for good eats in town.

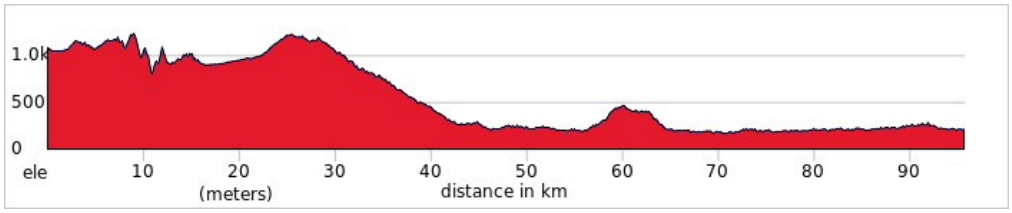
Amira Premium Lodge Breakfast

Day 7: Dong Van → Bao Lac

This morning begins with a series of jagged climbs that take us to the top of Ma Pi Leng Pass, an iconic route whose name means "Horse's Nose" in old Vietnamese due to the steep vertical shape of the summit. After this grueling section, there is a slower arc upward around the side of Meo Vac Mountain, taking us to 1230m, our highest elevation for the day. Finally, a 14 km downhill with some serious hairpins awaits, taking us to the banks of a small river. We follow the valley downstream and continue as it joins the Nho Que River and then the Gam River. The demanding cycling and thrills of the morning's ride give way to the dreamy scenery of bamboo forests, stilt houses, and vibrant green of the hillsides as we cruise riverside into the small town of

Bao Lac at the confluence of the Neo and Gam Rivers. Tonight, we will have a delicious dinner of northern Vietnamese cuisine after our big day of riding.

Duc Tai Guest House Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

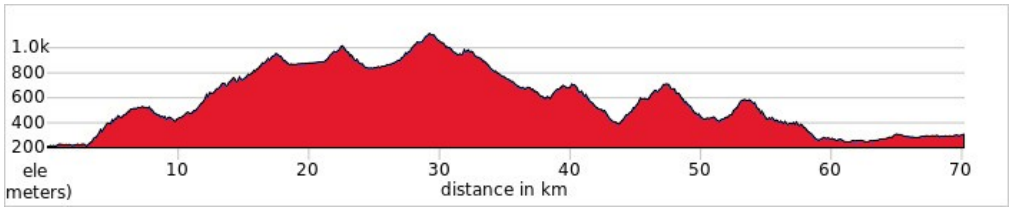


Ride 96km +2200m -3071m

Day 8: Bao Lac → Ha Quang

Departing from your hotel, pedal along scenic backroads, passing through remote villages tucked into the mountain landscape. Continue along the Gam River before entering a section of rolling hills with fruit orchards. Along the way, conquer the challenging Me Pja and Khau Coc Cha passes, two of Vietnam's most scenic routes. Later, descend through the stunning Xuan Truong valley, taking in the panoramic views of the mountainous landscape and colorful rice terraces. Challenge yourself further with the Ta Nenh Pass, winding through tribal villages and stilt houses before enjoying a downhill ride through the picturesque Ha Quang district to a beautifully-constructed farmstay that showcases the rural traditions of the area. We will spend the night in this pastoral setting overlooked by rugged peaks.

Me Farmstay Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

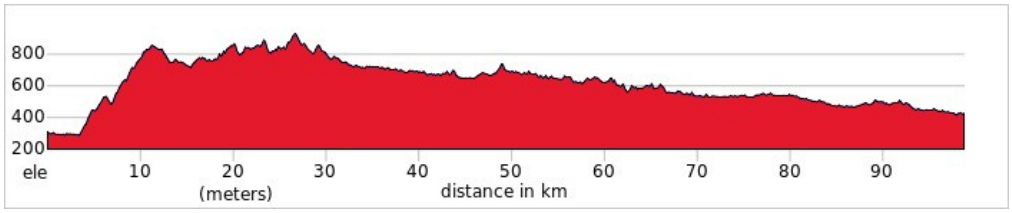


Ride 70km +2193m -2096m

Day 9: Ha Quang → Ban Gioc

This morning, we will ride up to Pac Bo, a historic village located just 3 kilometers from the Chinese border. Here, we visit the rugged groves and caverns that were the hideout of Ho Chi Minh, where he lived and worked for four years, planning the 1954 independence from the French colonial forces. Continue your journey to Tra Linh, traveling roughly parallel to the Chinese border and passing through charming towns, bustling markets, and peaceful valleys. Venture deeper into remote villages, where the scenery becomes even more picturesque. Here, you will meet farmers using water buffalo to plow the fields and tending to a wide variety of crops. Cross the Quay River and pass through small hamlets along the hillside and riverbanks on this broad, open plateau. Conclude your day in beautiful Ban Gioc.

Lan Rung Homestay Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

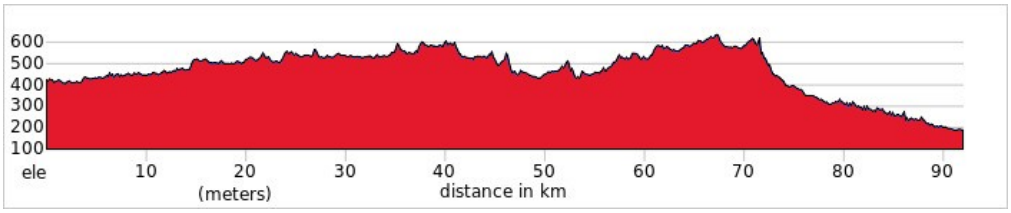


Ride 99km +1843m -1726m

Day 10: Ban Gioc → Cao Bang

This is an easier day on the bike, as we will end with an overall drop in elevation. Rise early to witness the breathtaking cascades of Ban Gioc Waterfall, one of Vietnam's most magnificent natural landmarks, which straddles the border between Vietnam and China. Then embark by bike to Quang Uyen, a hub of the local Tay and Nuong population in this mountain region. Enjoy a local lunch in town before cycling to Phia Thap, a traditional Vietnamese village renowned for its handmade incense production. Later, conquer the storied Ma Phuc Pass and arrive in Cao Bang, the largest town in the province, at the confluence of the Hien and Bang rivers. Tonight, explore the many small businesses and unique cultural sites in this lively town. There is always something to see and do in Cao Bang!

Indigen Riverside Hotel Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

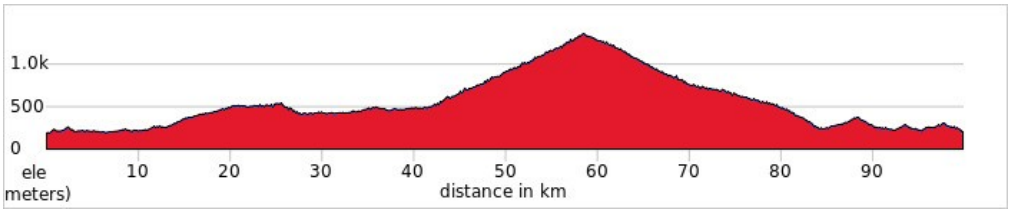


Ride 92km +1286m -1519m

Day 11: Cao Bang → Ba Be

Depart from your hotel and embark on a cycling adventure along the tarmac road towards Ba Be National Park. This winding road is like a highlight reel: every bend yields sweeping views of scenic tea plantations, cornfields, and rolling hills with the pointed ridges known as the "Dragon's Back" in the background. Arrive in Tinh Tuc for a well-deserved lunch before continuing your journey through Phja Oac National Park to Na Ma. At the end of the ride, board your support vehicle for a 1-hour transfer to Ba Be National Park, one of Vietnam's oldest and most stunning parks, with mountain scenery covered by semi tropical monsoon rainforest and the largest natural fresh water lake in the country. The area is home to a variety of minorities including the Tay, Red Dao, Coin Dao and White Hmong. Enjoy an outing on the lake by kayak or canoe, or simply kick back and take it all in from a comfortable terrace.

Ba Be Lakeside Hotel Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

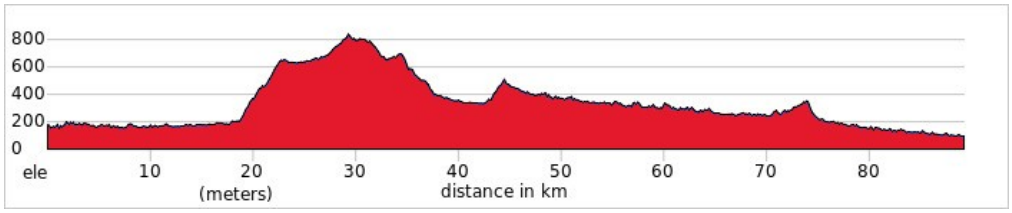


Ride 100km +2189m -2177m

Day 12: Ba Be → Cho Chu → Hanoi

This morning, appreciate the views over Ba Be Lake, with its clear waters reflecting the soaring, cloud-shrouded mountain peaks that surround it. Get back on your bike to cycle toward Hanoi, The last cycling day on our trip takes us back southward, as we leave the highest mountains behind and pass through tea, palm, and gum tree plantations. Reaching Cho Chu at around lunch time, we will board our vehicles for a 2.5-hour transfer to Hanoi. Tonight, we will celebrate in style, reminiscing over this journey over a feast of Vietnamese specialties here in the capital.

Le Jardin Hotel Haute Couture Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Ride 90km +1685m -1763m

Day 13: Hanoi Departure

Our cycling tour has ended but feel free to extend your stay in Hanoi or travel elsewhere in Vietnam. A relaxing overnight cruise through Halong Bay or some R&R near the beaches of Da Nang are a great way to recover after our challenging road bike tour in the north. Please let us know If you require assistance with airport transfers and post-tour hotel bookings.

Disclaimer: The adventure cycling tours we operate often go beyond the beaten track, and the countries where we ride are not always predictable. Due to these reasons, it is occasionally necessary to reroute or update itineraries. Our guarantee is that we will not change a trip unless for safety or to improve it. Our listed hotels are always accurate at the time of writing, but should we have to change any hotel, it will always be for a similar or better one.

NUTS & BOLTS

Bikes

Because some people can't imagine going on a trip without their own beloved bicycle, we do not provide them as part of this tour. However, you can hire bikes locally for the price listed in the tour pricing section.

If you bring your own bike, a road bike with 28-32mm tires and a suitable gear ratio for prolonged climbing is recommended.

Bike Repairs

Basic spares and tools are carried by the guide and on the support vehicle, though we cannot guarantee having spares for every conceivable problem. Carrying a basic tool kit, a spare tube and a pump while riding is recommended.

Safety

Wearing a helmet is required on all our biking adventures and is non negotiable. If you do not wear a helmet you will not be allowed to cycle. 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.

Guides

You will be led by a local English-speaking guide and if the group is 9 people or more we will add another guide to the tour. All our guides are well informed in the history, culture and religions of the area where you are biking and are skilled at passing that knowledge on to you. Your guide is also medically trained and an experienced cyclist, able to handle most minor repairs en route.

THE NITTY GRITTY

Passports and Visas

The visa requirements for Vietnam can be divided into three sections, dependent on your nationality and the point of entry/exit. Please review the details below to determine which applies to you. Visa policies are subject to change, and it is the traveler's responsibility to confirm their visa requirements for Vietnam before departure.

E-Visa

The Vietnam e-visa is now available to almost all nationalities. You can apply for a single or multiple-entry visa valid for up to 90 days. Application is through the Vietnam **visa portal**. Please note that e-visas cannot be used if you are joining Road Biking from Saigon to Angkor (more information in the **Visa on Arrival** section below).

Please carefully fill out the form and check the information you have entered. Even minor spelling errors will render the visa invalid and your entry to Vietnam will be denied.

For peace of mind, we suggest applying for your e-visa as early as possible, and no later than 2 weeks before your expected arrival in Vietnam. While processing time is generally no more than 1-3 working days (not including weekends and Vietnamese holidays), it is wise to give yourself some buffer time in case there are any issues.

If you are joining a multi-country trip beginning in Vietnam, please be sure to select the correct exit point from the list below:

- Saigon to Bangkok by Bicycle and Biking Saigon to Angkor Wat: Vinh Xuong Landport
- Remote Vietnam and Laos by Bike: Na Meo Landport
- Biking Hanoi to Luang Prabang: Tay Trang Landport
- Cultural Road from Hoi An to Angkor Wat: Le Thanh International Border Gate

If your SpiceRoads trip will end in Vietnam, please choose your point of exit as the airport, port or land border through which you have arranged to leave Vietnam.

Please keep a printed copy of your e-visa with you at all times, as it may be requested at some exit points.

Visa Exemption

Citizens of certain countries (including many European and Asian nations) can enter Vietnam visa-free for up to 45 days. Please check if your nationality is exempt here before applying for an e-visa. If you are on the exemption list, you still need to make sure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your date of entry and has at least two blank pages. You do not need to apply for anything in advance; you will simply receive an entry stamp at immigration upon arrival.

Visa on Arrival

If you are joining "Road Biking from Saigon to Angkor", **e-visas are not permitted for the exit through the land borders we cross during the tour.** Before the tour, our sales team will collect your passport and flight information from you, and we will provide you with the Visa on Arrival letter within 10 business days.

When you arrive in Vietnam, you will need to present the following at the Visa on Arrival counter:

- a printed copy of the Visa on Arrival letter, which we will have sent to you by email. You will also likely need this printed letter to check in and board your flight to Vietnam.
- the visa stamping fee (USD $25 for a single-entry visa). Please prepare the visa fee amount in cash, using USD or the equivalent in Vietnam dong to avoid unfavourable airport exchange rates.
- two printed passport photos.

Your Visa on Arrival will be processed quickly, and you may then proceed to immigration to enter Vietnam.

Please ensure that you update our sales team if your passport or flight details change before the tour, as mismatched information will result in entry to Vietnam being denied. Changes to this information when a Visa on Arrival letter has already been issued will result in a charge for a new letter to be processed.

Important Update: Effective immediately, all non-Vietnamese nationals entering the country in Hanoi (Noi Bai International Airport - HAN), Danang (Danang International Airport - DAD), Ho Chi Minh City (Tan Son Nhat International Airport - SGN) and Phu Quoc (Phu Quoc International Airport - PQC), must complete the **Digital Pre-Arrival Declaration** form before arrival. Please fill out the details on the official website here **within three (3) days before your arrival in Vietnam**. This is a free process - beware of fake websites that charge a fee. If you are already travelling within the three days before your planned arrival in Vietnam, then we suggest

completing the form while you are at a hotel with reliable Wi-Fi. It only takes a few minutes. After submission, you will receive a QR Code. Please save a screenshot of this code on your phone to present at immigration.

Health

See here for recommendations and detailed information.

Weather

Weather in Vietnam is divided into 4 main regions - the far north, north, central and south.

The far north can get very cold in December and January while the dry season runs from October to late March and the wet season between April to September.

In Hanoi & the north, it is hot, wet and humid from May to October while November to April is cooler and dry.

Central Vietnam experiences hot, dry weather between January & August with temperatures ranging in the mid 30°C. High levels of rainfall are during September - November.

Southern Vietnam is dry and hot from November to April, and warm and wet between May & October, with the highest rainfall in June, July & August.

Food

Meals are included as per the itinerary where B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner. Most meals are Vietnamese food and features noodles, rice curries and soups. Vietnamese cuisine is 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.

Drink

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 while riding. Soft drinks and other beverages during meals are not included. Beer is freely available everywhere in Vietnam but is NOT included in the price.

Solo Travelers

SpiceRoads does not require you to pay a surcharge for traveling alone. We will arrange for you to share accommodation with another traveler of the same gender and if we can not match you up we will provide a single room at no extra charge. If you prefer not to share a single supplement is payable to guarantee your own room. The cost of the single supplement is listed above.

Extra Expenses

We recommend that you tuck away a few extra dollars, perhaps US$10, for incidentals. It is customary to tip local tour guides and drivers, however, the amount you give should be dependent on the level of service you receive. We will send you a tipping guideline before the tour begins.

Money

The official national currency is the Vietnam dong (d), but the US dollar is widely accepted in tourist centers. However, in smaller towns and villages the dong is preferred. ATMs are available in all major tourist destinations and big cities. Vietcombank has the best network with a single withdrawal limit of 2,000,000d (about US$125). Most major currencies can be exchanged at leading banks in Vietnam, but the US dollar is preferred away from the tourist centers. Changing US$100 will make you an instant millionaire! You cannot legally take the dong out of Vietnam but you can reconvert reasonable amounts of it into US dollars on departure.

GENERAL BOOKING INFO

If this is the tour for you here's what you need to do to confirm your place:

FLEXIBLE BOOKING CONDITIONS

Booking a SpiceRoads cycling adventure is easy and we try to do everything possible to make sure you have full flexibility and peace of mind. We do not require a deposit to hold your place on a tour and once full payment has been made your money is protected in our client account and you have the flexibility to cancel or change your booking if needed.

CONFIRMING YOUR BOOKING

Just complete our online booking form or send your booking details offline (email or post), and we will confirm your participation. No deposit is needed to confirm your place on a SpiceRoads tour.

You are advised to read our Booking Conditions in full before you make your payment and should you require further clarifications of any of the conditions below, please email us or call our office.

TRIP STATUS

There is a minimum number of participants (usually 2) required to enable the trip to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to Depart'. Once a trip is guaranteed to depart you are free to book your flights and make other travel arrangements. If the trip status is 'Limited' will mean we have only a small number of spaces available for booking. If you are unsure about the trip status, please email us or call our office.

BOOKING ONLINE

From the tour page, click the 'Book Now' link. All departures for this tour will appear, just select the date you'd like to travel. For the next steps, you'll need to know the names of the people travelling. If you wish you can also provide extra details such as passport numbers, height (for bike hire), or you can add that later by logging into Manage My Trip (we'll set up an account for you automatically if you don't already have one). Our system will contact you from time to time to fill in the missing information, as it will be required before departure. However, if the trip that you are booking offers a child discount, you will have to fill out the date of birth of each rider (so we can calculate the appropriate discount).

If you are having any problems please send us an email, or give us a call (+66 026 3295) and one of our travel specialists will assist you with your booking.

BOOKING OFFLINE

Just call us or send an email indicating which trip you want to join and we will happily send you a list of questions and process your booking for you.

DEPOSITS AND PAYMENTS

We do not require a deposit or full payment to book a place for you on a tour.

The balance of the tour's cost (final invoice) will need to be paid 60 days before the departure date with fees for any bicycle rental(s), single supplement(s) and extra hotel nights.

In the case where a booking is made when there are less than 60 days until the tour departure date, the tour's cost should be paid in full within 72 hours of receiving an invoice from SpiceRoads. Payment can be made by credit card using our online payment gateway or by bank transfer. When making payment online you will need to confirm that you have read these booking conditions during the "checkout" process, which equates to agreeing to the terms of services and stipulations as indicated in this document.

In all cases, tour fees need to be paid "in full" before participation in a tour. No person(s) will be allowed to join a tour without fully settling their invoice and receiving a confirmation number from SpiceRoads.

The exception can be made for last-minute miscellaneous fees that can be paid locally (visas, additional local hotel bookings, etc.) can be settled on the day of arrival.

FULL FLEXIBILITY FOR TOUR CANCELATIONS

If the tour is cancelled or postponed by SpiceRoads because we didn't make the trip numbers and the tour can't run, we will make a full cash refund (by bank transfer or on your credit card).

If the tour is cancelled for any other reason, including due to Covid related travel restrictions, we will give you a full credit (with no deductions for admin or any other small-print item) to use on any SpiceRoads tour with no time limit. (Exceptions being flights, special permits and other non-refundable items and these will be advised when booking the trip).

Before paying for your tour, you can cancel your booking with no charge and up until 40 days before departure, you can change your booking to another travel date or move your booking onto another SpiceRoads tour with no charges.

If you need to cancel after you have made full payment, please see our cancellation policy.

Loyalty Riders Club

For those who have been on several long tours with us, we reward customer loyalty by offering repeat customers a special discount off the tour price (excludes single supplement and bike rental). If this is your fourth scheduled tour or more you will receive a 5% discount. If this is your eighth scheduled tour or more we will extend a 10% discount. The discount will be reflected in your online booking, but please contact us if any questions. Loyalty discounts cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Note: Only tours of 7 days or more will be applicable for a loyalty discount.

International Flights

International flights, to and from the start and finish points are not included in the tour price. Once your tour is Guaranteed to Depart you can book your flight. Please contact us for advice before arranging flights for the best arrival and departure times. We would only cancel a trip for an extreme circumstance, but in that case, where we cancel your trip, we cannot be liable for losses incurred relating to any flight booking you have made. Please claim any losses from your travel insurance that you acquired when you booked your holiday.

Newsletter

Our adventure travel e-newsletter is full of travel news, trip information, interesting stories and contests. To avoid missing out on special offers and updates from SpiceRoads, be sure to subscribe.

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