

Junks on Ha Long Bay, Lanterns Over Hoi An — A 7-Day Vietnam Itinerary

A 7-Day Vietnam Itinerary · I-Journey

DURATION

7 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

February – April (or Aug – Oct in the south)

dry and mild in Hanoi/Ha Long; avoid Jun–Aug typhoon risk on the central coast around Hoi An

FROM

\$780 USD / person

for 2 people sharing hotels, a Ha Long cruise cabin, domestic flights & tours; excludes international flights to Vietnam

Day 1

Hanoi's Old Quarter

Land in Hanoi and settle into the tangle of the Old Quarter — a lake-side walk, egg coffee, and a water puppet show to close out the night.

Check-In: Hanoi La Siesta Hotel & Spa

From \$65 USD / night, for 2 people

A well-reviewed boutique hotel tucked into the Old Quarter's narrow lanes, with a small rooftop pool and a free afternoon tea service — walking distance to Hoan Kiem Lake and the night market streets.

Hanoi La Siesta Hotel & Spa · hanoilasiestahotel.com

Hoan Kiem Lake & Ngoc Son Temple

~1.5 hours · temple entry ~15,000 VND (~\$0.60 USD)

Circle the lake at the Old Quarter's heart and cross the red wooden Huc Bridge to the small island temple, then watch the elderly tai chi groups and the turtle-tower legend that gives the lake its name.

Old Quarter Street Food Walk

~2 hours · ~\$10–\$15 USD / person

Work through bun cha, egg coffee at Cafe Giang, and a plastic-stool bowl of pho on a street corner — the 36 streets of the Old Quarter are still named for the trades once sold on them.

Thang Long Water Puppet Theatre

~50 minutes · from \$8 USD / person

A centuries-old rural art form performed on a pool of water by puppeteers standing waist-deep behind a bamboo screen, with a live orchestra of traditional instruments narrating village folk tales.

Thang Long Water Puppet Theatre · thanglongwaterpuppet.org

Day 2

Ha Long Bay by Junk

Transfer out to the coast for a night aboard a cruise ship among Ha Long Bay's limestone karsts — kayaking, a cave visit, and sunset from the top deck.

Transfer: Hanoi to Ha Long Bay

~3.5 hours by shared shuttle, included with cruise booking

Most cruise operators run a direct shuttle from Hanoi's Old Quarter hotels to the pier at Tuan Chau or Ha Long International Cruise Port — book the transfer together with the cruise cabin.

Paradise Elegance Cruise, 2 Days / 1 Night

From \$199 USD / person, all meals included

A five-star wooden-hulled cruise through the bay's 1,600 limestone islets — kayaking through a lagoon, a stop at Sung Sot (Surprise) Cave, tai chi on the sundeck at sunrise, and an overnight cabin with a private balcony.

Paradise Elegance Cruise · paradisevietnam.com

Kayaking & Sung Sot Cave

~3 hours, included in cruise itinerary

Paddle a lagoon ringed by karst cliffs before climbing into the Surprise Cave, one of the bay's largest, its chambers lit to show off stalactites the size of tree trunks.

Day 3

Return to Hanoi, Fly to Hoi An

A late cruise breakfast, the drive back to Hanoi, a short flight south, and a first lantern-lit evening on the Thu Bon River.

Cruise Disembarkation & Transfer to Hanoi

~3.5 hours, included with cruise booking

A final brunch on board before the tender back to the pier and the shuttle back to central Hanoi, timed to connect with early-afternoon flights.

Flight: Hanoi (HAN) to Da Nang (DAD)

~1.5 hours · from \$45 USD / person

Vietnam Airlines, Vietjet and Bamboo Airways all fly this route several times a day — book an afternoon departure to leave the morning free after disembarking the cruise.

Check-In: Little Hoi An Central Boutique Hotel & Spa

From \$75 USD / night, for 2 people

A quiet boutique hotel a short walk from the Ancient Town's lantern-lit lanes, with a rooftop pool and bicycles free to borrow for the ride into town.

Little Hoi An Central Boutique Hotel & Spa · little-central-boutique-spa.hoi-an-hotels.com

Hoi An Ancient Town by Lantern Light

~2.5 hours · heritage ticket ~120,000 VND (~\$5 USD)

Walk the UNESCO-listed Ancient Town after dark, when its 16th-century shopfronts glow under silk lanterns, then float a small paper lantern down the Thu Bon River from a rented rowboat.

Day 4

Ba Na Hills & the Golden Bridge

A day trip into the Central Highlands for the record-breaking cable car and the hand-shaped Golden Bridge, back for a Hoi An dinner.

Sun World Ba Na Hills & Golden Bridge

~5 hours · from \$30 USD / person, cable car included

One of the world's longest non-stop cable car rides climbs to a French colonial-style hill station, where two giant stone hands appear to cradle a gold-painted footbridge over the forest canopy.

Sun World Ba Na Hills · banahills.sunworld.vn

Farewell Dinner: Morning Glory Restaurant

~1.5 hours · dinner ~\$15–\$25 USD / person

Chef Trinh Diem Vy's flagship restaurant in a restored Ancient Town shophouse, known for banh xeo pancakes, white rose dumplings and a cooking-class menu that reads like a tour of central Vietnamese street food.

Morning Glory Restaurant · msvy-tastevietnam.com

Day 5

Marble Mountains, Then South to Ho Chi Minh City

A last central-coast stop at the Marble Mountains before an afternoon flight south into the noise and energy of Ho Chi Minh City.

Marble Mountains (Ngu Hanh Son)

~1.5 hours · entry ~40,000 VND (~\$1.60 USD), elevator extra

Five marble-and-limestone outcrops between Hoi An and Da Nang, riddled with cave shrines and Buddhist sanctuaries carved into the rock — climb (or take the elevator) to Thuy Son for a view over An Bang Beach.

Flight: Da Nang (DAD) to Ho Chi Minh City (SGN)

~1.5 hours · from \$35 USD / person

A short hop south on Vietnam Airlines, Vietjet or Bamboo Airways — an early-afternoon flight lands with time for a first walk through District 1 before dinner.

Check-In: Liberty Central Saigon Citypoint

From \$75 USD / night, for 2 people

A modern high-rise hotel in District 1 with a rooftop pool and bar looking over the Saigon skyline, an easy walk to Ben Thanh Market and the Notre-Dame Cathedral quarter.

Liberty Central Saigon Citypoint · libertycentralcitypointhotel.com

Day 6

Cu Chi Tunnels & Wartime History

A morning underground in the Cu Chi tunnel network, an afternoon at the War Remnants Museum, and an evening loop through District 1's landmarks.

Cu Chi Tunnels Half-Day Tour

~4.5 hours incl. transport · from \$16 USD / person

Crawl a widened stretch of the guerrilla tunnel network used against French and American forces, and see the trapdoor entrances, underground kitchens and homemade booby traps that made the network famous — book through Klook or a licensed Ho Chi Minh City operator.

Klook — Cu Chi Tunnels tours · klook.com

War Remnants Museum

~2 hours · admission ~40,000 VND (~\$1.50 USD)

A sobering, unflinching museum of the Vietnam War told from the Vietnamese side, with captured US military hardware in the courtyard and photojournalism galleries that draw a quiet, steady crowd.

War Remnants Museum · baotangchungtichchientranh.vn

Notre-Dame Cathedral & Central Post Office

~1 hour · free (cathedral currently under restoration, exterior viewing)

Two French colonial landmarks a block apart in the heart of District 1 — the red-brick cathedral and Gustave Eiffel-associated post office, still in daily use, with an old-fashioned letter-writing booth inside.

A full day south into the Mekong Delta's canals and coconut candy workshops by rowboat, back to Ho Chi Minh City in time for an evening flight home.

Mekong Delta Day Tour: My Tho & Ben Tre

~8 hours incl. transport · from \$25 USD / person, lunch included

A motorboat down the Mekong's brown channels to Ben Tre's coconut groves, a narrow sampan rowed through a mangrove canal, and a stop at a family-run workshop pressing coconut candy by hand — book through Klook or Viator.

Klook — Mekong Delta day tours · [klook.com](https://www.klook.com)

Transfer to Tan Son Nhat Airport (SGN)

~30 minutes from District 1

Return to Ho Chi Minh City by early evening, with time to shower and repack at the hotel before the drive to the airport for an international departure.