

## **Day 1**      **Arrive Hue**

We arrive today in Hue, the former cultural and religious center of Imperial Vietnam, we will be met by our guide and transferred to the hotel.

## **Day 2**      **Hue City Tour**

This morning we will wake early and take a walking tour to the largest wholesale market in central Vietnam – Dong Ba. Everything here is so fresh and the market is an absolute hive of activity. After our market tour we will stop and enjoy a bowl of the Hue’s regional specialty Bun Bo Hue – your senses will ignite with this dish that is salty, sweet and spicy all at the same time! Once the last remnants of our soup has been slurped up we will head back to the hotel for showers and some of the hotels buffet breakfast for those who are still hungry.

We will then hop onboard our cyclo’s (one of the most relaxing ways to witness daily life is from a cyclo) right from the hotel and set off for the Ancient Imperial Citadel of Hue. Built as a walled fortress and palace, the citadel was in the old days closed to outsiders and posed many mysteries. In the innermost forbidden purple city lived the Ancient kings and queens of Vietnam. Visiting the Imperial Citadel, you will be astonished by the impressive architecture and luxurious lifestyle of its former residents.

Our lunch today will be at Dong Tien Pagoda and will be a local vegetarian specialty as prepared by the nuns. The pagoda is also an orphanage and the nuns do an amazing job caring for the children. As such we will also have the opportunity to interact and play with the children – bringing some light into their day.

After lunch we will enjoy a majestic boat trip down the perfume river followed by a visit to a local shop that specializes in making local candy and cookies and will be able to try our hand at this age old craft.

Tonight will see us dining on traditional royal cuisine while dressed in the clothing of the kings and queens of Hue’s royal past. Good food, good company and the most memorable time.

## **Day 3**      **Hue - Marble Mountain – Hoi An**

This morning we farewell Hue and transfer by bus to Hoi An, travelling along the high pass of Hai Van (enjoying spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean) and also visiting Marble Mountain and My Khe Beach (nicknamed China Beach by American GIs during the war) along the way. Upon arrival we check into our hotel to have a rest and freshen up. This evening we have the opportunity to explore the UNESCO World Heritage listed town of Hoi An. With its Japanese arched bridges, French wooden shutters and Chinese pagodas - Hoi An showcases all of its foreign trader past without having lost its unique Vietnamese identity. Simply breathtaking.

## **Day 4**      **Red Bridge Cooking Class – Cam Nam Village**

This morning we will enjoy a cooking class with Red Bridge Cooking School. Our class will also include a visit to Hoi An’s colourful market, a boat trip along the Thu Bon river and an introduction to Vietnamese food carving.

After lunch (which will be the fabulous fare we cooked up at Red Bridge) we will enjoy a cycling trip to Cam Nam Village witnessing local river life along the way. Whether it is the sweet smell of betel nut leaves, fishermen tending to their nets or drying the day’s catch in the sun or families making rice paper along the way, our cycling trip today is truly an experience to be remembered.

Tonight we will have some free time in Hoi An town after dinner to experience all that this amazing little town has to offer, we will also have time to browse Hoi An’s colourful night markets.

## **Day 5 Vietnamese Country Life Eco Experience**

We have an early start this morning as we head off to enjoy our eco tour. Starting at Tra Que Village, we will get a personal insight into the local farming communities. We set about joining the farmers in preparing their land for sowing, helping to fertilize the garden using seaweed from the local river and watering it in using huge tin cans strapped to our backs. Following this, we will begin our leisurely cycling tour through the countryside witnessing local Vietnamese rural life first hand. Late morning, we make our way to Mr Nhi's house where we will learn the basics in wet rice farming before having a break and sitting down to enjoy a well-deserved lunch.

After lunch we will board our boat for a river cruise. Here we will meet and witness local fishermen working their craft, before enjoying a hands-on experience of traditional net fishing. We then transfer to a Vietnamese bamboo basket boat for a quick race and ride down a coconut palm lined waterway before we sit down to listen to a former combatant from the war re-tell some of the most amazing stories.

Dinner today, is on board our boat which is prepared using vegetables picked earlier at Tra Que Village

## **Day 6 Street Food Tour – Afternoon at leisure**

Today we are in for a very special treat as we will join Neville Dean, a good friend of Tram's and her brother's Anh Do, on his best-selling food tour through Hoi An. Rising to prominence after being featured in Anh's television special 'Anh Does Vietnam' Neville now runs a daily tour that was recently named one of the world's 15 fabulous Food Tours by National Geographic's traveler magazine – and as guests of Tram's and VST you will be in for a really, really special time!

After lunch today we will have an afternoon at leisure. Some might choose to enjoy a pastry and cafe sua da at one of Hoi An's many bakeries, others may finalise clothing items they had tailored earlier in the week or we may all choose to kick back and relax by the edge of the hotel's pool.

## **Day 7 Danang – Fly to Nha Trang – Cooking Class – Service Work**

Today we have an early start, driving to the airport for our flight to Nha Trang. After stopping by our hotel we will undertake a cooking class that specializes in regional specialty dishes unique to Nha Trang.

This afternoon we spend time with the orphanage that we support as a school (school to provide more details here).

## **Day 8 Vinh Truong Fish Market – Fly to Saigon – Walking Tour**

Today we have an early start and will spend time at Vinh Truong Fish Market watching the frenetic pace as fishermen sell their catch that they netted overnight. Afterwards we will visit the local fruit and vegetable market before returning to the hotel for a later breakfast and a rest before heading off for our afternoon flight to Saigon. This evening before dinner we will embark on a leisurely orientation tour of Vietnam's most populous city. Stopping by Notre Dame Cathedral and the Old Post Office our group will be amazed at the mass of motorcycles and scooters buzzing around. After dinner we will take a stroll along Saigon's first pedestrian only street and absolute hive of activity Nguyen Hue Boulevard.

## **Day 9 Saigon City Tour – Cu Chi Tunnels**

This morning we spend time at the Reunification Palace (the former Presidential Palace of the President of South of Vietnam), the War Remnants Museum (where we will see countless artifacts, photographs and pictures documenting the tragic Vietnam War) and Cholon, Vietnam's largest Chinatown, with roots dating back to 1778.

In the afternoon we will spend time at the Cu Chi tunnel system; a complex maze once home to Communist guerrillas in their wars against the Japanese, French, Americans (and Australians). Our time at Cu Chi provides the foundation on which to understand the origins and consequences of war on Vietnamese society. Also on display are



various mantraps, the remains of an American tank as well as numerous bomb craters created by 500lb bombs dropped by B52 bombers

Dinner tonight will be at K.O.T.O restaurant. K.O.T.O, founded by Vietnamese Australian Jimmy Pham, is a non-profit organisation which is run by local children who Jimmy recruited from the streets.

### **Day 10**            **Saigon – Mekong**

This morning we have an early start as we head to the Mekong Delta. Often dubbed the "rice bowl" of Vietnam, this 39,000-square-kilometre labyrinth of waterways remains one of the most densely populated parts of the country. Our group will stop at workshops to watch century old techniques as the locals produce rice paper, coconut candy and fish sauce.

After lunch we continue to explore the Mekong on the back of a bicycle. As we cycle along village paths we will be able to chat to the local farmers and witness them at work. Later this afternoon we will meet up with our home-stay family where we will be guided and will help prepare the evening dinner before settling down for a night of festivities with our hosts.

### **Day 11**            **Cai Be Markets – Saigon – River Cruise**

We will have a very early start this morning as we prepare to visit the famous Cai Be Floating Market. We are certainly in for an amazing experience as we watch the local farmers selling their produce from their boats at this amazingly colourful market right on the waters of the Mekong. Later this afternoon we transfer back to Saigon.

Early afternoon we transfer back to Saigon and will enjoy some time shopping for a bargain at Ben Thanh Markets.

Tonight we will enjoy a Saigon River Dinner Cruise. We will spend two hours cruising, reflecting and watching some great live entertainment as we sail down the Saigon River.

### **Day 12**            **Depart for home**

We will have a later start today before we enjoy some last minute bargain hunting at some of Saigon's best spots. After lunch we will transfer to the airport for our flight home.

### **Day 13**            **Arrive home**

We arrive home today.

