

18 DAYS VIETNAM REVEALED: THE ULTIMATE CULINARY PILGRIMAGE

18 DAYS | 17 NIGHTS

Hanoi – Duong Lam – Mai Chau – Ninh Binh – Ha Long Bay – Hue – Hoi An – Mekong – Saigon



TRAVEL STYLE: Culture, culinary, soft adventure

TOUR OVERVIEW:

Prepare to embark on a definitive journey across Vietnam, where the landscape is as diverse as the flavors it produces. This is more than a tour; it is a pilgrimage through four distinct culinary worlds:

The North: The Elegance of Purity – Discover the beauty of restraint. Northern cuisine is refined and neutral, honoring the natural essence of ingredients through delicate steaming and boiling.

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The Highlands: The Wild Spirit – Taste the "soul of the forest." Defined by ancient foraging traditions, you will encounter the numbing heat of Mắc Khén (jungle pepper) and the smoky aroma of Hạt Dổi seeds.

The Central: Royalty and Spice – An explosion of bold, spicy, and savory profiles. Here, the meticulous artistry of Hue's Imperial Legacy meets the ancient, sun-drenched flavors of the Chăm people.

The South: A Tropical Melting Pot – In the sun-drenched Mekong and electric Saigon, the food turns vibrant and sweet. Influenced by Chinese and Indian heritages, the South is a lush fusion of rich coconut milk and crispy, fried delights.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **The 10-Hour Heritage Feast (Red River Delta):** Step back in time in a 400-year-old village to witness the slow-burn art of Northern tradition. Experience the patience of heritage cooking with fish simmered for 10 hours in clay pots and pork roasted over sugarcane embers.
- **Highland Foraging & "Jungle Pepper":** Trade the city streets for mountain trails in Mai Chau. Join ethnic minority foragers to source Mắc Khén and Hạt Dổi—rare, wild spices that provide the aromatic, numbing soul of Northwest Vietnamese cuisine.
- **Imperial Masterclass with a Grandmaster:** Enter the private garden houses of Hue for an exclusive residency with a Royal Chef. Learn the meticulous "Phoenix carving" and the balanced medicinal philosophy that once served the Nguyen Emperors.
- **The Street Food Safari (Twilight Edition):** Ditch the white tablecloths for Hoi An's legendary plastic stools. Led by our culinary expert, navigate secret alleys to find the "World's Best Bánh Mì" and dumplings hidden from the tourist maps.
- **Sunrise Floating Breakfast:** Experience the magic of the Mekong Delta at dawn. There is no table more authentic than a wooden sampan, enjoying steaming Hủ Tiếu (noodle soup) passed boat-to-boat amidst the vibrant chaos of the floating market.
- **The "Brave Palate" Challenge:** Push your culinary boundaries at a sustainable organic farm in Cu Chi. Learn the clean, high-protein art of

preparing exotic delicacies like crickets and scorpions—a true badge of honor for any serious food traveler.

- **The Culinary Guide Market Missions:** Go beyond just buying ingredients. Join our culinary Guide to learn the "Secret Language" of Vietnamese wet markets—from identifying the freshest morning-glory to selecting the perfect fermented fish sauce (Nước Mắm).

BRIEF ITINERARY AND TRAVEL DATE

Day	Itinerary	Overnight
Day 1	Hanoi Arrival • The Quiet Before the Feast	Hanoi
Day 2	The Hanoian Ritual • Morning Phở & Cafe • Evening Street food Safari	Hanoi
Day 3	The Red River Delta • Local Market Visit • The 10-Hour Heritage Feast	Hanoi
Day 4	Into the Highlands • Leisure Village Walk	Mai Chau
Day 5	Pedal & Palate • Preparing Lunch with the White Thai	Mai Chau
Day 6	Karst Grottoes • The Secret of Ninh Binh's Mountain Goat	Ninh Binh
Day 7	Transfer to Ha Long Bay • Serenity Among the Karsts	Ha Long Bay Cruise
Day 8	Ha Long Bay – Airport • Flight to the Citadel	Hue
Day 9	The Emperor's Kitchen • The Art of Culinary Balance & Imperial Heritage	Hue

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Day 10	The Coastal Drive to Hoi An	Hoi An
Day 11	Herbs of Tra Que • Lunch at Mai Fish	Hoi An
Day 12	The Street Food Safari in the Evening	Hoi An
Day 13	Flight to the River Kingdom • Arrival in Can Tho	Can Tho
Day 14	Orchard Foraging • The Delta Table	Can Tho
Day 15	Cai Rang Floating Market: A Symphony of Senses • Transfer to Saigon	Saigon (HCMC)
Day 16	Saigon by Day & Night: From Tranquil Leisure to Urban Pulse	Saigon (HCMC)
Day 17	The Farm-to-Table Challenge: A Charismatic Culinary Finale	Saigon (HCMC)
Day 18	Departure	

DETAILED ITINERARY

DAY 1: HANOI ARRIVAL • THE QUIET BEFORE THE FEAST



Touch down in the thousand-year-old capital. Your private driver will whisk you to a charming 4-star boutique hotel in the heart of the Old Quarter. Tonight, the journey begins with a welcome glass of chilled sparkling wine followed by an elegant introductory dinner. We sample Hanoi's "comfort food"—delicate spring rolls and grilled fish—within the walls of a beautifully restored French colonial villa.

DAY 2: THE HANOIAN RITUAL – MORNING PHỞ & CAFE - EVENING STREETFOOD SAFARI (B/L/-)



Wake up like a local to the sounds of the city. Join our culinary guide for the "Holy Trinity" of Hanoian mornings: a steaming bowl of heirloom Phở Bò at a family-run stall, followed by velvety, hand-whisked Egg Coffee. As you linger over a velvety cup of coffee, your guide will share the captivating origin story of Phở—from its

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humble roots on the street corners of Old Hanoi to its status as a global icon. You will learn about the "secret geometry" of a perfect bowl: the patient simmer of marrow bones for a clear, soulful broth, the aromatic charring of ginger and shallots, and the precise texture of hand-cut rice noodles. This conversation reveals the true heart of Hanoian cuisine, teaching you that a "good bowl of Phở" is not just about the ingredients, but a delicate balance of fragrance, clarity, and tradition that has been refined over a century.

This evening, we will take a stroll through these historic streets. We aren't here to eat everything in sight, but rather to observe the fascinating dining habits that define the Old Quarter. Along the way, you will have the chance to taste some of the most iconic specialties that have shaped Hanoi's world-class street food reputation.

DAY 3: THE RED RIVER DELTA • LOCAL MARKET VISIT - THE 10-HOUR HERITAGE FEAST (B/L/-)



Your exploration begins at the vibrant local market of Duong Lam, the perfect place to observe the distinctive culinary habits of rural Vietnam. Unlike Western cultures where families often do a weekly grocery run at large supermarkets, Vietnamese dining is built on the philosophy of absolute freshness. Here, it is common for women to visit the market twice a day—once in the early morning for the catch of the day and again in the afternoon for fresh herbs and vegetables—ensuring every family meal is prepared with the finest ingredients.

This dedication to freshness and labor-intensive preparation is best witnessed beneath the laterite eaves of a hundred-year-old home. Here, you will discover the

art of heritage cooking: the 10-hour slow-simmering of fish with ginger and soy in traditional clay pots, and the famous Crispy Roasted Pork, meticulously hand-turned over bamboo pole. This is more than just a meal; it is rustic, soulful Vietnamese history served on a plate, offering a profound glimpse into a culture that treasures the time and craft behind every bite.

DAY 4: INTO THE HIGHLANDS • LEISURE VILLAGE WALK (B/D/-)



Leave the lowlands behind as we wind into the emerald Mai Chau Valley. As the altitude rises, the spice rack changes. Check in and rest at your ecolodge

Afternoon is a relaxing walk around the villages, get to know the community of The White Thai there

DAY 5: CYCLING THE PADDIES • PREPARING LUNCH WITH THE WHITE THAI (B/L/-)

Spend a refreshing morning cycling along winding village paths, where you will be greeted by panoramic views of lush forests, emerald rice paddies, and buffalo grazing peacefully in the valley. The journey leads you to a traditional stilt house, where a local White Thai family welcomes you into their home.

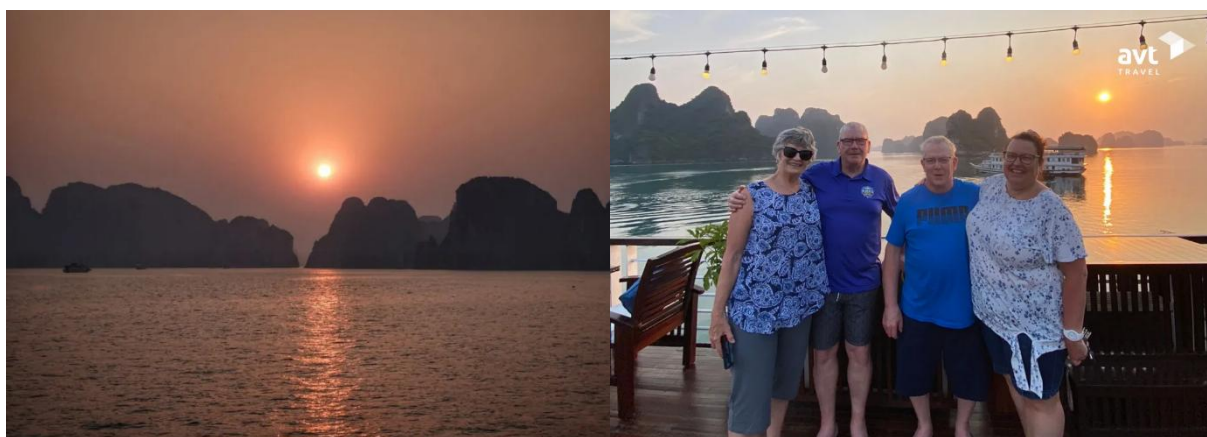
This is more than just a meal; it is a hands-on cultural immersion. You will join your hosts in the kitchen to prepare lunch, from hand-picking fresh herbs to learning the secrets of high-land seasonings. Discover how to marinate grilled dishes with the signature "Mac Khen" (forest pepper) and "Hat Doi" (wild seeds) to create the distinctive, aromatic flavors of the mountains. After the preparation, gather together to enjoy the authentic feast you helped create, sharing stories and laughter over a table of regional specialties.

DAY 6: KARST GROTTOES • THE SECRET OF NINH BINH'S MOUNTAIN GOAT (B/L/-)



A scenic drive takes us to the dramatic limestone peaks of Ninh Binh. After a traditional sampan boat trip through the "Ha Long Bay on Land," we sit down to the region's culinary icon: Com Cháy & Dê Núi. This dish features crispy, sun-dried rice crusts served with a savory gravy of lean, fragrant goat meat—prized for its flavor because the goats roam free on the mountain cliffs.

DAY 7: TRANSFER TO HA LONG BAY • SERENITY AMONG THE KARSTS (B/L/D)



Step aboard a luxury wooden junk boat as we set sail into the heart of Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage site of ethereal beauty. This day is dedicated to pure relaxation and personal reflection. As the ship glides through the emerald waters,

you can spend your hours on the sundeck, mesmerized by the labyrinth of towering limestone pillars and hidden lagoons that stretch toward the horizon.

There is no rush—only the gentle rhythm of the sea. Whether you choose to find a quiet corner to read, practice Tai Chi as the sun dips below the karst peaks or simply lose yourself in the breathtaking views from your private cabin, the day provides a profound sense of peace. Surrounded by the timeless grandeur of the Gulf of Tonkin, this is your time to disconnect from the world and soak in one of nature's most iconic masterpieces.

DAY 8: HA LONG BAY – AIRPORT - FLIGHT TO THE CITADEL (B/-/-)



Leaving your cruise by noon, you will be transferred from the tranquil emerald waters of the bay to the airport for your flight south to Hue, the former imperial capital of the Nguyen Dynasty. Upon arrival, your private driver will escort you to your hotel for check-in. The remainder of the day is yours to enjoy at your own pace; you might choose to wander along the banks of the Perfume River as the sun sets, explore the local markets for a first glimpse of the city's unique crafts, or simply relax at your hotel to recharge for the cultural journey ahead.

DAY 9: THE EMPEROR'S KITCHEN • THE ART OF CULINARY BALANCE & IMPERIAL HERITAGE (B/L/-)



Morning: The Yin-Yang Masterclass Step into the serene atmosphere of a private garden house to meet a Chef whose lineage traces back to the royal kitchens of the Nguyen Dynasty. Today, you will explore the profound Philosophy of Yin and Yang that defines Hue's gastronomy.

Afternoon: The Soul of the Citadel The journey continues to the Imperial Citadel, where you will walk through the hallowed grounds of the grand royal kitchens. Standing where these ancient traditions were born, you will gain a deeper appreciation for how the emperors' meals were crafted as a form of art and an elixir for long life.

DAY 10: THE COASTAL DRIVE TO HOI AN (B/L/-)



We journey south over the spectacular Hai Van Pass, the "Pass of Ocean Clouds." This geographic divide marks the transition of flavor from the salty Central to the sweeter South. We arrive in the lantern-lit, UNESCO town of Hoi An by sunset—a trading port that has been a culinary crossroads for over 500 years.

DAY 11: HERBS OF TRA QUE • LUNCH AT MAI FISH (B/L/-)



Your journey into the heart of Hoi An's flavors begins at the Tra Que Organic Village, a fertile sanctuary where centuries-old farming traditions remain untouched. What makes the herbs here world-renowned is the unique soil, enriched exclusively by seaweed harvested from the nearby Co Co River lagoon. This natural fertilizer imbues basil, spicy mint, and coriander with an intense aroma and distinctive flavor that cannot be replicated elsewhere. These herbs are truly the "soul" of Hoi An's gastronomy; without the subtle fragrance of Tra Que greens, iconic dishes like Cao Lau or Hoi An Chicken Rice would lose their authentic character.

Roll up your sleeves and join the local farmers in the fields, getting your hands dirty as you learn to harvest these delicate greens. Afterward, we headed to the iconic Mai Fish to see those very same herbs transformed. Here, you will savor a meal where the freshness of the garden meets the artistry of traditional Hoi An cuisine, providing a complete "farm-to-table" experience that defines the region's culinary identity.

DAY 12: THE STREET FOOD SAFARI IN THE EVENING (B/D/-)

After a slow, sun-drenched morning by the turquoise waters of the beach, your "Culinary Safari" begins just as golden hour settles over the town. As the lanterns begin to glow, you'll meet our expert culinary guide to weave through a labyrinth of hidden back alleys, away from the usual tourist paths.

The mission is simple: to uncover the authentic soul of Hoi An through its flavors. We'll make a pilgrimage to the humble stall serving the "World's Best Bánh Mì"—a title famously bestowed by the legendary Anthony Bourdain—where the warm, crusty baguette meets a symphony of home-made pâté and fresh herbs. The journey continues into secret courtyards to taste the delicate "White Rose" dumplings, translucent pockets of shrimp and pork that look like blooming flowers.

DAY 13: FLIGHT TO THE RIVER KINGDOM (B/D/-)



Fly to Can Tho, the pulsing heart of the Mekong Delta. The air here is thick with the scent of fruit and river water. We enjoy a sunset dinner by the Hau River, sampling the famous "Elephant Ear Fish"—crispy, upright-standing fish wrapped in rice paper with fresh herbs—a true Delta masterpiece.

DAY 14: ORCHARD FORAGING • THE DELTA TABLE (B/L/-)

Spend your morning cycling through shaded countryside trails, where the air is thick with the scent of fruit ripening. We'll stop to pluck vibrant rambutan, sweet longan, and "queenly" mangosteen straight from the heavy-laden branches.

The highlight of the day is a hosted lunch at a local family home, featuring the quintessential flavors of the Mekong Delta. You will savor a "Table of Abundance" centered around the iconic Elephant Ear Fish, fried to a perfect golden crisp and served standing upright. Experience the soulful depth of Caramelized Pork with Eggs (Thit Kho Trung) and Clay-pot Catfish (Ca Kho To), where the slow-simmered sauces create a rich, savory glaze. To complete this gourmet journey, indulge in Giant Freshwater Prawns (Tom Cang Xanh), freshly caught and steamed inside a young coconut to infuse the meat with a delicate, creamy sweetness. This is a true celebration of the delta's natural bounty, enjoyed in the warm embrace of local hospitality.

DAY 15: CAI RANG FLOATING MARKET: A SYMPHONY OF SENSES • TRANSFER TO SAIGON (B/L/-)



At dawn, witness the vibrant chaos of Cai Rang, the largest floating market in the Mekong Delta. This legendary spot has drawn world-famous chefs who come to experience the authentic magic of a "floating breakfast." It's not just about the bowl of Hu Tieu (noodle soup) passed boat-to-boat; it's about the unique atmosphere that you won't find anywhere else.

As you sit on your boat, gently bobbing on the water, you are surrounded by an endless sea of colorful produce—from towers of pineapples to mounds of fresh watermelons—and the rhythmic, joyful hum of trade. The charm lies in simplicity: the steam rising from the soup, the laughter of local vendors, and the high-energy spirit of life on the river.

Afternoon, you get transfer to Saigon

DAY 16: SAIGON BY DAY & NIGHT: FROM TRANQUIL LEISURE TO URBAN PULSE (B/-/-)



The morning and afternoon are yours to enjoy at your own pace. Whether you choose to recharge at your hotel, explore the city's French colonial landmarks, or wander through hidden art galleries, the day is designed for personal discovery.

However, as the sun sets, the city undergoes a breathtaking transformation. Your "Saigon By Night" journey begins, immersing you in the electric energy of Vietnam's most dynamic metropolis. We'll dive into the heart of the local "eating and drinking" culture, where street-side stalls and lively taverns buzz with laughter and the clinking of glasses. The night then takes a sophisticated turn as we uncover "speakeasy" bars tucked away in secret, historic buildings, before ending the evening at a glittering Sky Bar. From these heights, you'll enjoy a cocktail with a panoramic view of the neon-lit skyline, the perfect way to witness the relentless pulse of this city that never sleeps.

DAY 17: THE FARM-TO-TABLE CHALLENGE: A CHARISMATIC CULINARY FINALE (B/L/-)

Head to a lush organic farm in Cu Chi for our final and perhaps most intriguing culinary encounter. The soul of this farm is its owner and head chef, a charismatic character who spent a decade honing his craft in Australia before returning to Vietnam to establish this restaurant right in the heart of his family's farmland.

A natural storyteller as much as a cook, he famously claims to have mastered over 300 different dishes—a bold statement that adds a layer of mystery and humor to the experience, as no one has ever dared to verify them all! Under his lively guidance, this isn't your average cooking class. You will learn to prepare "bravery dishes" using exotic local ingredients like crickets and scorpions, perfectly balanced with fresh, farm-grown vegetables. It's a thrilling, flavorful, and unforgettable way to conclude your culinary pilgrimage with a touch of local wit and passion.

DAY 18: DEPARTURE (B/-/-)

Savor one last cup of thick, condensed-milk Vietnamese coffee as you watch the city wake up. Transfer to the airport with a full heart and a deeper understanding of the soul of Vietnam.

INCLUDED SERVICES:

- **Expert Guidance:** Culinary Guides
- **Accommodation:** 17 nights in hand-picked 4-star boutique hotels, eco-lodges, and heritage resorts.
- **The Full Feast:** All breakfasts and featured specialty lunches/dinners as specified (B/L/D).
- **Exclusive Experiences:** Private Royal Cooking Masterclass, Duong Lam Heritage Feast, Street Food Safari, and Cu Chi Exotic Class.
- **Internal Logistics:** Domestic flights (HAN-HUI, DAD-VCA), private AC transport, and all boat/cruise fees.

EXCLUDED SERVICES:

- International flights into and out of Vietnam
- Visa fees (we can help you arrange a visa approval letter on request)
- Airport taxes
- Meals other than those mentioned in the itinerary.
- Early check-in and late check-out at the hotel.
- Personal expenses (such as laundry, telephone, drinks, etc.).
- Tips for tour guides and drivers.
- Travel insurance.

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SERVICE TERMS & CONDITIONS

Remarks:

- Guests should be healthy and in good physical condition
- Weather conditions may impose changes in the program or the cancellation of certain activities
- Guests need to bring a copy of their passport, visa page with a stamp
- AVT Travel reserves the right to adjust our prices if any changes in tax & gasoline increase in All Destinations.
- No reservations are made yet.

PAYMENT POLICY:

- Pre-payment 100% (after services confirmed before guests' arrival 30 days in advance).
- Deposit 30% (after services are reserved to guarantee the booking).
- Payment can be made by Bank Draft or SWIFT transfer payable to our Bank A/C.
- All Bank services charges will be borne by the payee.
- If payment is by credit card, an additional 3 or 4% will be added to our tariff rates.
- American Express / Visa and Mastercard are accepted.
- Bank draft or cashier's cheque to be mailed to
- Company cheques or personal cheques are NOT acceptable.

REFUNDS OR CANCELLATION:

- Tour and transfer deposits are fully refundable if the amendment/cancellation is received more than 20 days in advance. Hotel deposits will be refunded according to individual hotel cancellation policy.
- No refund for all flight fares after tour confirmation
- Cancellation fees will be levied according to the time cancellation is made.
- No refund or reduction will be made to any member of GROUP/F.I.T. who breaks the journey from the scheduled itinerary.

DISCLAIMER:

AVT acts as an intermediary between transportation and airline companies, hotels, tourist offices, and all other contractors providing services for tourists. Additional expenses incurred due to delays, accidents, natural disasters, political action, and unrest must be borne by the clients. Programs and tour prices are based on the situation at the time of printing this proposal and could be subject to change due to local conditions. Participation in our tour programs implies the client's agreement to the above. We reserve the right to amend or alter any of the conditions herein without notice from time to time and at its sole discretion.