



walled courtyards and graceful gateways. The initial temple was dedicated to Confucius. In 1076 it was adjoined by the Quoc Tu Giam, School of the Elite of the Nation, and became Vietnam's first university. After passing exams at the local levels, scholars aspiring to become senior mandarins came here to study for rigorous triennial examinations. There is a pavilion housing 82 stone stele, survivors of the original 117, rest on the backs of stone tortoises. The stele are inscribed in the 82 examination sessions held between 142 and 1779. Afterwards we drive to the massive marble and granite [Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum](#) in Ba Dinh Square where Ho Chi Minh delivered Vietnam's declaration of



independence in 1945. From there we [walk past](#) the [Presidential palace](#), a sumptuous colonial mansion built in 1906 as the residence of the

French Governor-general of Indochina, to the modest two-room [Stilt House](#), where Ho Chi Minh spent the last decade of his life in spartan conditions. After lunch we continue to [Hoan Kiem Lake](#), or [Lake of the Restored Sword](#), with a tortoise pagoda standing on an islet. Drive around the city, we will take a [picture stop](#) at the magnificent 1911 [Opera House](#) and the [St Joseph Cathedral](#), a neo-Gothic piece finished in 1886 with square towers, an elaborate altar and stained glass windows. In the afternoon we visit the [History Museum \(Bao Tang Lich\)](#). Once the museum of the Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient, the 1930's elegant building now houses exhibits spanning the Vietnam's history including prehistory, proto-Vietnamese civilizations, the Dong Son culture, the Oc-Eo culture and the Khmer Kingdoms. Early evening we will enjoy *Orient Odyssey's* "[People to People Contact](#)" program and [discover the old quarter of Hanoi](#) by [cyclo \(a tricycle rickshaw\)](#).

The ride will go through busy streets and markets where we can have close-up views of local's daily about. The area is often referred to as "[the 36 streets](#)", where narrow lanes lies in a 600 year history as an artisans' district, with crafts and trades concentrated in a single area on 36 lanes. Tonight we will see a traditional [Water Puppet](#)



[Show](#) – a fascinating, delightful spectacle accompanied by traditional music. [B/L/D](#)

#### **Day04 Halong Bay Excursion**

Today we drive through the paddy fields and small towns of the [Red River Delta](#) to [Halong Bay](#), dotted with well over 3,000 limestone islands and islets. Bizarre rock sculptures jutting dramatically from the sea and numerous grottoes have created an enchanted, timeless world. The sails of the junks and sampans gliding on the bay



add further to the beauty of the scene. The bay was declared by the United Nation as a "World

Heritage Site of Outstanding Natural Beauty". Halong means, "where the dragon descends into the sea"; legend has it that a celestial dragon and her offspring were ordered by the Jade Emperor to halt an invasion from the sea. The creative dragons spewed out bits of jade that turned into wondrous islands and karst formations, thereby scuppering the enemy ships. According to other versions, the jewels were pearls and the bay was created when the dragon flung herself into the sea; on the way her swishing tail dug deep valleys and crevices in the mainland, which were subsequently filled by the sea. Regardless, the dragon was so pleased with her creations that she settled amongst them. She is said to live under the bay to this day. Board a [traditional wooden boat](#) and enjoy 4 hours' relaxing cruise. Countless limestone islets, many containing beautiful grottos, rise from the sea.



We cruise on the emerald clear waters, passing craggy limestone cliffs, stopping at an [island](#) to explore its [caves](#). We [sail past floating villages](#), [fisherman casting their nets](#) and [pearl fisheries](#). Observe rhythms of the peaceful daily life on the bay. After a sumptuous [seafood lunch](#) on board we continue with our exploration. Halong has been the setting of many historic battles against invasions from the north. It is believed that the sharp bamboo stakes that General Tran Hung Dao planted in the Song Bach Dang to destroy Kublai Khan's invasion fleet were stored in caves here. In the evening we return to Hanoi. [B/L/D](#)

### Day05 Hanoi – Hue

Our guide will accompany us to the airport and assist our check-in for *Vietnam Airlines* flight VN245, departing at 10:10 a.m., arriving in Hue at 11:20 a.m.. Check-in at the 4 star, deluxe, *Saigon Morin Hotel*. The charm of this timeless old capital lies not only in its historical and architectural value, but also in the natural beauty of its location along the banks of the seductively named *Perfume River*. In the spring of 1601, the Nguyen lords established a kingdom here. An uninterrupted succession of 10 feudal lords ruled



over this area until 1802, when the 10<sup>th</sup> Nguyen lord proclaimed himself Emperor Gia Long and founded the Nguyen dynasty, which would last for 143 years. A quick succession of 13 emperors graced the throne until the abdication of Bao Dai, the last of the Nguyen emperors in 1945. Today the remaining French colonial garden houses and villas, the quiet streets, the riverbanks, the outlying tombs and pagodas that escaped war damage – all give Hue a unique atmosphere of tranquility. We begin our sightseeing with a visit to the *Imperial Citadel*. Modeled on Beijing's Forbidden City, *Hoang Thanh (Yellow Enclosure)* and *Tu Cam Thanh (Forbidden Purple City)* are enclosed within the all-encompassing *Kinh Thanh* (the *external enclosure*). Stone, bricks and earth were used for the 26 ft high and 65 ft thick wall, with 10 large and fortified gates, each topped with watch-tower. The citadel was initially built during the reign of Emperor Gia Long in 1804. Most of the buildings, palaces and halls were destroyed during the Tet Offensive of 1968 during the Vietnam

- American War, but the monuments that remain provide a fascinating glimpse into the court life of the Nguyen dynasty. First we will see the striking *Flag Tower*, where a giant Vietnamese flag waves proudly. Then we enter the imposing *Ngo Mon Gate*, the principal entrance of the Imperial Enclosure. The central passageway with its yellow doors was reserved for the Emperor's use, as was the bridge across the lotus pond. The next stop is the courtyards in front of the *Thai Hoa Palace*, the magnificently decorated reception hall, with an ornate roof of huge



timbers supported by 80 carved and lacquered columns. We also see the myriad *Hall of the Mandarins*, the *Nine Dynastic Urns* and the *ruins of the Purple Forbidden City*. Later, with *Orient Odyssey's* "People to People Contact" program, we will stroll through the bustling *Don Ba Market*, offering a great variety of local products and gastronomic delights. Check out the famous "poem hats" which, held up to a light source, reveal the shadow of a scene or a poem. Observe the interesting insight into local daily life. B/L/D



### Day06 Hue

This morning we enjoy a *boat trip* on the *Perfume River* to the *Thien Mu Pagoda*, "Celestial lady Pagoda". Situated on the hill overlooking the river, the pagoda was built in 1601. Each of the



seven tiers of its *octagonal tower*, guided by six statues of deities, represents a different reincarnation of Buddha. Many generations have heard the tolling of the pagoda's enormous 4,600 lb, 6 ft high bell since it was cast in 1701. It is such a fine bell that it can be heard nearly 10 miles away. We continue our river cruise to the *Imperial Tomb of Emperor Minh Mang*. It is a



majestic complex of courtyards, pavilions and temples in a beautiful natural setting, known for its architecture, military statues and elaborate decorations. In the afternoon we drive to the *tombs of Emperors Tu Duc and Khai Dinh*. The tomb of Tu Duc, who reigned from 1847 to 1883, the longest of any Nguyen emperors, is a royal palace in miniature and harmonizes beautifully with the natural surroundings. Tu Duc designed this elegant tomb by himself. The construction lasted through out his life time. He used it as a retreat for meditation, reading and theatre performances. We will take some time to soak up the tranquil atmosphere, wandering among the *gracefully proportioned pavilions* set among the *forested hills, courtyards and lotus ponds*. Tu Duc, spent his leisure hours in the two pavilions beside the lake, Luu Khiem. Here he wrote poetry, no doubt inspired by the beauty of his

surroundings, fished, and enjoyed the fragrance of the lotus. Our next stop, the [tomb of](#) the 20<sup>th</sup> century [Emperor Khai Dinh](#) incorporates distinct European elements into the traditional Vietnamese architecture. Completed in 1931, it sits magnificently on the verdant slopes of Chau



E mountain in Chau Chau village. A grandiose dragon staircase leads up to the first courtyard, from where further stairs lead to a courtyard lined

with stone [statues of elephants, horses, and civil and military mandarins](#). Once inside, the contrast is striking. Colored tiles pave the floor, a huge “dragon in the clouds” mural, painted by artists using their feet, adorns the ceiling of the middle chamber. Jade green antechambers lead off to the left and right. [Bright frescoes composed of many thousands of inlaid ceramic and glass fragments](#) depict various themes. Animals, trees, and flowers provide a visual feast. Each piece of the ornate glass and porcelain mosaics were carved carefully to fit the design. [B/L/D](#)

#### **Day07 Hue – Da Nang – Hoi An**

A beautiful day awaits! The [scenic coach ride](#) climbs the dramatic [Hai Van Pass](#), “[the Pass of Ocean Clouds](#)”, crossing over a spur of the [Truong Son Mountain Range](#) that juts into the [South China Sea](#). Enjoy the spectacular views over the coastline. On route we will stop at the [Lang Co Fishing Village](#) where a lovely stretch of beach curves outwards between a clear blue lagoon and the South China Sea. Approach Da Nang – Vietnam’s fourth largest city, which marks the northern limit of the country’s tropical zone, and boasts a pleasant year-round climate.



We visit the famous [Cham Museum](#), home to some 300 magnificent Cham sculptures, dating to 4<sup>th</sup> century. The museum was founded in 1915 by the Ecole Francaise d’Extreme Orient. We will also stroll on the famous [China Beach](#). Stretching for 18 miles, with “pink” sands and roaring waves, it was the famous landing spot and resort for American soldiers during the Vietnam War. Also on the agenda is a visit to the [Marble Mountain](#), consisting of 5 stone

hillocks, rising sharply from the surrounding rice fields. Riddled with caves and shrines, they are said to each represent one of the five elements of the universe. The largest and the most famous hill, [Thuy Son](#), has a number of natural caves in which Buddhist sanctuaries have been built over the centuries. When the Champas ruled this area, these caves were also used as Hindu shrines. We will reach Hoi An in early evening. Check-in at the 4.5 star, luxurious, [Hoi An Riverside Resort and Spa](#). [B/L/D](#)

#### **Day08 Hoi An**

This charming old town was once an important and flourishing trading port and the meeting place of East and West, a center of cultural exchange. Hoi An appeared in western travelogues in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries as Faifo. Chinese, Japanese, French, English, Spanish, Portuguese and other traders all established their communities here, and the [old wooden houses, bridges](#) and [temples](#) that remain are reminiscent of the old days. Today it is a graceful, picturesque, back water town with [hump-backed bridges and shops](#) bursting with silks, paintings, embroidered goods and lacquer ware. During a walking tour we see the distinctive [low tiled roof houses](#) and the bustling [central market](#). Visit [old Chinese temples, pagodas, and assembly halls](#).

We walk along the [Tran Phu Street](#) to the [Japanese Covered Bridge](#), constructed in 1593 by Japanese community to link the town with Chinese quarters across the stream. The bridge was provided with a roof so it could be used as a shelter for rain and sun. We also visit [family chapels](#) and [private houses](#) that are occupied by the same family for up to eight generations. We have the opportunity to [interact with family members](#) while inspecting the beautiful engraved panel with exquisite figures. Enjoy [Orient Odyssey’s “People to People Contact”](#)



program and [board a traditional wood fishing boat](#) to [cruise down the Thu Bon River](#) to visit a [pottery village](#) and a [woodcarving village](#). [Interact with the locals](#) – peasants, boat builders

and craftsman. We then return to the small [Hoi An Harbor](#) where colorfully painted boats are moored. The remaining of the day is at leisure to rest, or to explore this historic town at our own pace. Hoi An is a shopper's paradise. One can bargain for paintings, silk fabric and clothing, ceramics, Chinese lanterns, chopsticks, lacquer ware, teapots and embroidered tablecloths and napkins. [B/L/D](#)

**Day09 Hoi An – Saigon (Ho Chih Minh City)**

We take a morning drive to Da Nang Airport. Check-in for [Vietnam Airlines](#) flight VN321 departing at 8:00 a.m., reaching Saigon at 9:10 a.m.. Welcome to [Saigon](#), also called [Ho Chi Minh City](#), Vietnam's most vibrant metropolis teeming with energy and activity. The meeting of traditional and modern life is visible everywhere. The emerging modern skyline stands next to colonial buildings and traditional temples. Young professionals zip by on motorcycles, chatting on cell phones. Inside quiet temple courtyards, worshippers pray amidst clouds of incense. Within this teeming metropolis are 300 years of timeless traditions and the beauty of an ancient culture. We start our visit with an [overview drive round the city](#); passing the [Opera House](#), and [Dong Khoi Street](#), formerly known as the [Rue Catinat](#) during the French Years, now the main shopping avenue in



the heart of the old colonial Saigon. Enjoy short picture stop at the red-brick [Catholic cathedral of Notre-Dame](#), the nearby 19<sup>th</sup> century Empire-style [Post](#)

[Office](#), the next door "[Hotel de Ville](#)" or [City Hall](#) with its distinctive gingerbread facade and the [Opera House](#). Built around the turn of the century to house the lower division of the National Assembly, the Opera House is now a municipal theatre and Saigon Concert Hall. We visit the landmark [Reunification Palace](#), formerly the [South Vietnamese Presidential Palace](#). On April 30, 1975, a Vietcong tank stormed the modern compound, signifying the fall of South Vietnam. We visit various halls, presidential living quarters, and the underground communication bunkers. We can also see the North Vietnamese tank on display near the entrance gate. Next stop is the harrowing [War Remnants Museum](#), depicting the bloody fights by the Vietnamese against the French and Americans. Next, we head to the west of the city

to District 5, the sprawling, densely packed Chinese neighborhood called "[Cholon](#)". Cholon means "big market", but the area is commonly referred to as [Chinatown](#). Visit two of the oldest and most interesting pagodas in the city, the [Jade Emperor Pagoda](#) and [Giac Lam Pagoda](#). We also take a short stroll in the fascinating [Binh Tay Market](#), the vast wholesale market selling every kind of good from dried foods to T shirts to electronics. Then proceed to [Thien Hau Pagoda](#), built by the Cantonese congregation and dedicated to the heavenly goddess. Today's program ends at [Ben Thanh Market](#), where vendors display a vast array of goods and handicrafts, appealing to every taste. Tonight we stay at the 4 star, luxurious, [Duxton Hotel Saigon](#). [B/L/D](#)

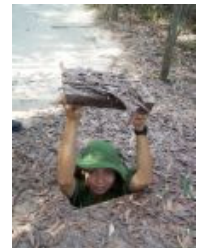


**Day10 Saigon**

Today is designed as a [free day](#) for us to rest, shop or explore the bustling city at our own pace. The guide can also arrange any of the following excursions (with extra cost) upon request. Note each of the following excursion involves two to three hours drive (one way) from Saigon.

[Cuchi Tunnels](#):

The 150 miles of tunnels is an incredible underground network, dug by hand out of hard laterite, connected command posts, hospitals, shelters and weapon factories. From here the North Vietnamese waged their guerrilla warfare against Americans. See cleverly disguised entrances and elaborate booby-traps, underground kitchens, living areas and meeting rooms. Those who are more adventurous may explore the deeper second, and even third level tunnels.



[Tay Ninh](#)

The birth place of Vietnam's own unique Cao Dai religion, a fusion of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity, Islam and native Vietnamese spiritual beliefs. We observe



the noon time ceremony at the Great Temple from the upper balconies, see worshippers garbed in colorful robes flocking to participate in the prayer sessions.

**Mekong Delta and Mytho Village**

My Tho is a bustling town in the rich agricultural region of Mekong Delta. Enjoy cruises on a river boat and a wooden sampan to Mekong River islands with lush palm fringed shores lined with fishing boats. Take a rest at a local village and enjoy fruit, tea, and folk music performances.



**Day11 Saigon – USA**

Savor the memory of the *Essence of Vietnam*. We board our homebound flight, arriving in USA on the same day. **B/F**

**\*Optional Extension**

Our programs are flexible! You can extend your stay in Bangkok, or enjoy an excursion to the “golden triangle” in Northern Thailand to explore ethnic tribes. You can also go to Phuket or island of Samui to relax on the white sandy beach, or, connect this package with an expedition to Laos, Burma, or even the mountain kingdom of Bhutan..... Please contact us for more information.

**\*International Flights**

Orient Odyssey features *Asiana Airlines, Korean Airlines, Eva Air, Japan Airlines, China Airlines, or Northwest Airlines* as the international carrier for this package. Based on your departure cities and tour logistics, Orient Odyssey reserves the right to secure other major international carrier for your journey. Flight arrangements will be finalized at least 60 days before departure.

Sample international flight schedules are as follows. Schedules are subject to change.

From Los Angeles (LAX):		
OZ201	Los Angeles – Seoul	1310 / 1810
OZ733	Seoul – Hanoi	1920 / 2210
OZ732	Saigon– Seoul	2350 / 0650
OZ202	Seoul – Los Angeles	1630 / 1130

From New York (JFK):		
KE082	JFK – Seoul	1400 / 1735
KE679	Seoul – Hanoi	1930 / 2205
KE682	Saigon – Seoul	2350 / 0650
KE085	Seoul – JFK	1930 / 2010

**\*Note**

Fuel surcharges and taxes are subject to change. Updated and accurate amount will be advised before the ticketing deadline. Tour cost is quoted based on current foreign exchange rate as of November 1, 2009. Price is guaranteed once full payment is received.

*Kindly refer to General Terms & Conditions*

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