



The Ultimate Guide

# HANOI & HOI AN

Vietnam

Ruthie Betts



Trang An, Ninh Binh



St. Joseph's Cathedral,  
Hanoi



Ha Long Bay



Train Street, Hanoi



Ha Long Bay



Incense Village, Hanoi

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# Hanoi and Hoi An



We're so excited that you're about to explore two of the most enchanting destinations in Vietnam -and we're truly honoured to be your guides on this incredible adventure.

There's just something magical about Hanoi and Hoi An. Maybe it's the way the lanterns light up the ancient streets at night, or how the scent of sizzling street food dances through the air. Maybe it's the misty mornings around Hoan Kiem Lake, the rhythmic buzz of scooters zipping by, or the peaceful silence of a countryside bike ride past rice paddies and rivers.

After years of travelling full-time, Vietnam quickly became one of those places that stole our hearts -and these two cities are a huge part of why. We've wandered down quiet alleyways, hunted out hidden rooftop cafés, learned to cross the street with confidence (kind of ), and uncovered gems that don't always make the usual "must-visit" lists.

This guide is our love letter to Hanoi and Hoi An -packed with practical tips, local secrets, and our very best finds to help make your trip seamless, delicious, and completely unforgettable.

So grab a Vietnamese iced coffee (or a fresh coconut!), get comfy, and let's start planning your next big adventure through two of the most captivating places Vietnam has to offer.



Vietnam Guide

# Meet Your Guides: Josh and Ruthie Betts

Hi there! We're Josh and Ruthie Betts -or @life\_of\_betts if you hang out with us on Instagram -and we're so excited to be your guides as you explore the magic of Hanoi and Hoi An! Thanks for taking us along for the ride.

We've been travelling full-time for the past four years, and Vietnam quickly became one of those places that just sticks with you. From noisy, noodle-scented street corners in the capital to peaceful bike rides past rice paddies in the countryside, we completely fell in love with the contrast and charm of these two cities.

Our favourite thing in the world is helping people travel better -finding those dreamy cafés, walking the scenic routes, trying the street food that locals actually queue for, and building an itinerary that's exciting without being exhausting. This guide is packed with all of that and more.

We've done the legwork, tested the routes, eaten all the bánh mì (tough job ), and put together the kind of travel advice we wish we had when planning our first trip here. So let's get started -there's a whole lot of Vietnam waiting for you.





# The Right to Roam & Traceless Tourism

Let's talk travel values -because how we explore matters just as much as where we go. Vietnam is one of the most vibrant, welcoming countries we've ever visited. From the hustle and buzz of Hanoi to the lantern-lit charm of Hoi An, there's beauty around every corner -and we believe that with the right to roam comes the responsibility to tread lightly.

This guide is packed with tips to help you explore more consciously, whether that's supporting family-run eateries, learning a few respectful local phrases, or being mindful of waste and water use along the way.

Here's how we try to travel traceless in Vietnam:

- Slow down and stay longer – It's better for the planet and your soul. Skip the fly-by checklists and dive deeper into the places you visit.
- Eat local – That bowl of phở from a street-side plastic stool? Probably one of the best meals you'll ever have and directly supports the local economy.
- Say no to single-use – Bring a reusable bottle, bag, and straw (especially handy for all those iced Vietnamese coffees!).
- Respect nature & local customs – Whether you're cycling through rice fields or strolling ancient alleyways, leave things as you found them.
- Kindness goes a long way – A smile, a thank you in Vietnamese ("Cảm ơn"), and a respectful attitude open more doors than you can imagine.

We're not perfect -and we don't expect you to be either. But by travelling with awareness, we all play a part in preserving the magic that makes Vietnam so special.



Vietnam Guide

# Visas, Currency, Culture & More

Planning a trip to Vietnam? Here's everything we wish we knew before arriving — visas, cash tips, cultural quirks, and a few phrases to help you feel right at home.

## Visas Made Simple

Vietnam has a super easy e-visa system for most travellers, including South Africans.

- Cost: Approx US\$25 (R470–R500) for a single-entry 30-day visa.
- Where to apply: <https://evisa.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn/>
- Processing time: Around 3–5 working days, though we recommend applying at least 2 weeks in advance just in case.
- You'll need:
  - A scanned copy of your passport (valid for at least 6 months)
  - A passport-style photo (against a white background)

When applying, your entry and exit points must match your travel plans exactly — so double-check your airport names!

## Currency, ATMs & Cash Tips

Vietnam uses the Vietnamese Dong (VND). It's a cash-first country, so you'll want to keep notes on hand.

- 1 ZAR = approx 1,300–1,400 VND (always check the current rate before converting).
- ATMs are everywhere in cities and towns and accept most international cards.
  - Note: Some ATMs have withdrawal limits (~2–5 million VND) and charge a small fee.
- Cash is king in local markets, taxis, small cafés and shops.
- Most upscale restaurants, hotels and malls take card — but always ask first.

Insider tip: Withdraw large amounts when you can to avoid repeat fees, and keep smaller bills for street food and markets (vendors don't always have change!).

## Culture Tips & Quirks

Vietnam is warm, welcoming, and absolutely buzzing — but there are a few things to know that'll help you blend in (and avoid a few faux pas):

- Don't call someone over with your palm up — it's considered rude. Instead, motion with your palm facing down.
- Crossing the road? Deep breath! Walk slowly and confidently, don't dart or stop suddenly. The scooters will flow around you like magic — just watch the locals and follow their pace.

# Visas, Currency, Culture & More

- Using Grab? We love it. It's Southeast Asia's version of Uber, and in Vietnam it works for:
    - GrabBike (solo motorbike)
    - GrabBike Plus (bigger seat & more comfortable — great for first-timers or older travellers!)
    - GrabCar (private car)
    - GrabFood (for late-night snacks delivered to your hotel)
- Even my parents (in their 60s!) used GrabBike Plus and LOVED it!

## Common Vietnamese Phrases

Even a few words will earn you big smiles. Here are some basics:

| English   | Vietnamese | Pronunciation |
|-----------|------------|---------------|
| Hello     | Xin chào   | Sin chao      |
| Thank you | Cảm ơn     | Gahm un       |
| Please    | Làm ơn     | Lahm un       |
| Yes       | Vâng       | Vuhng         |
| No        | Không      | Khom          |
| Sorry     | Xin lỗi    | Sin loy       |
| How much? | Bao nhiêu? | Bao nyew?     |

Don't stress about perfect pronunciation — a smile and the effort go a long way!

## Other Useful Tips

- Water: Don't drink tap water. Use filtered water (most accommodations provide) or buy sealed bottles.
- Showers: Often "wet rooms" — so expect the whole bathroom to get wet!
- Power plugs: Type A, C & F (same as South Africa and Europe) — but a universal adaptor is handy just in case.
- Toilet paper: Not always a given in public toilets — keep tissues or wipes on hand.

Vietnam Guide

# Seasons / When to Travel, and Where?



Hanoi (Northern Vietnam)

- Best time to visit: October to April
- This is when Hanoi is at its most pleasant -cooler temps, blue skies, and dry weather. You'll get clear days for wandering the Old Quarter, lake strolls, and rooftop cocktails without breaking a sweat.
- Things to watch for: December–February can get surprisingly chilly, so bring a light jacket!

Hoi An (Central Vietnam)

- Best time to visit: February to July
- Expect hot, sunny beach days, perfect for lazy afternoons by the ocean or exploring the Ancient Town in your coolest linen outfit.
- Avoid: September to November tends to be rainy season here -typhoons and heavy showers can sneak in fast and hang around.

Vietnam Guide

# Digital Tools

Grab

Vietnam's answer to Uber -but better.

- Use it for: Hopping on the back of a motorbike (so cheap and thrilling!), booking a car, or ordering late-night phở to your hotel.
- It's super reliable, works in both Hanoi and Hoi An, and saves you the awkward haggle with taxi drivers.

Saily eSIM use code “LIFE OF BETTS” for 10% off your eSIM <3

No more landing and scrambling for a local SIM or free Wi-Fi.

- Buy a Saily eSIM before you fly. Activate it in seconds once you land and boom -you're online.
- It's affordable, fast, and means you can order a Grab from the airport, find your hotel, and text your mum -all without a hitch.

Bonus: It works across multiple countries if Vietnam is just one stop on your Southeast Asia adventure!

# Digital Tools

Google Translate App (Use the Camera!)

- Menus, signs, random notes in your homestay? Just point your phone camera and get an instant translation.

GetYourGuide, find our saved favourites here!

- Great for booking tours, transfers, and activities with peace of mind. You can often book last minute, and many come with free cancellation.
- We love it for finding cooking classes, day trips, and cool, off-the-beaten-track experiences -without falling into tourist trap pricing.

# Vietnam Guide

# Budget

| Activity / Experience                           | Price Range (per person in ZAR) |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Walking tours                                   | Free – R200                     |
| Day trips (e.g. Ninh Binh, Ba Na Hills, My Son) | R300 – R800                     |
| Ha Giang Loop / Ha Long Bay                     | R3,900 – R7,400                 |
| Cooking class                                   | R400 – R800                     |
| Spa or Massage                                  | R150 – R500                     |
| Tailored Clothing (Hoi An!)                     | R800 – R2500+                   |
| Scooter Rental                                  | R80 – R150 per day              |
| Grab Ride (5–15 mins)                           | R10 – R40                       |
| Overnight train (Hanoi to Da Nang)              | R300 – R900                     |

# Vietnam Guide

# Budget

| Travel Style     | Approx. Daily Spend (per person) |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| Backpacker       | R300 – R500                      |
| Mid-Range        | R600 – R1200                     |
| Luxe on a Budget | R1300 – R2500                    |

# Vietnam Guide

# Packing List



## Everyday Essentials

- Lightweight clothes (think breathable fabrics like linen & cotton)
- Comfy walking shoes (you'll be exploring on foot a lot)
- Slip-on sandals or flip-flops (perfect for the beach or quick dashes to cafés)
- A light rain jacket or poncho (especially in the rainy season!)
- A small daypack for city exploring or day trips
- Sunblock – it's humid, hot, and UV rays don't play
- Mosquito repellent (trust us on this one)
- Sunglasses & a sunhat
- A reusable water bottle (so many places have refill stations!)
- Travel adapter (Vietnam uses Type A, C or F plugs -220V)

## Health & Safety

- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes
- Basic first-aid kit (plasters, antihistamines, Imodium, painkillers)
- Any prescription meds you'll need
- Electrolyte sachets (great for hot days or... if you overdo the cocktails )
- Travel insurance info (just in case!)

# Packing List

## Digital Must-Haves

Phone charger and power bank

Grab app (for rides & food delivery)

Google Maps (download offline maps!)

Google Translate (camera mode = lifesaver)

GetYourGuide app for booking activities on the go

Saily Asim eSIM -grab it before you land so you're connected from the airport

## Extras for Hoi An

Swimwear for the beach or pool

A light scarf or cover-up (helpful at cultural sites or sunny days)

Something a little dressy for evening dinners by the river

Space in your bag -Hoi An is tailor-made for shopping (literally)

Pro Tip: Laundry services are cheap and everywhere -so you really don't need to overpack.

## Vietnam Guide

# Getting Around



## Airports & Arrivals

- Hanoi: You'll likely land at Noi Bai International Airport (HAN). It's about 40 minutes to the Old Quarter by car.
- Hoi An: There's no airport in Hoi An -you'll fly into Da Nang International Airport (DAD). From there, it's an easy 45-minute taxi or Grab ride to Hoi An.

Top Tip: Order a Grab or private transfer before you exit the airport so you're not overwhelmed by the taxi crowd at arrivals.

## Taxis vs Grab

- Grab App (Vietnam's version of Uber) is a total game-changer. Use it for:
  - Motorbike taxis (quick and cheap!)
  - Cars (perfect for airport runs and longer drives)
  - Even food delivery and grocery drops!
- Regular taxis are available, but prices can be inconsistent, especially in tourist hotspots. If you do hop in a local cab, look for Mai Linh or Vinasun - they're reputable.

# Getting Around



## Exploring the Old Quarter (Hanoi)

- Walking is 100% the best way to explore Hanoi's Old Quarter -just watch out for the scooters!
- Streets are narrow and buzzing, but that's the charm.
- You can also hop on:
  - Cyclo rides (3-wheel bicycle taxis, iconic and slow-paced)
  - Electric carts (great for groups or if your feet need a break!)

## Scooters, Bikes & Rentals

- Scooter rentals are super common, but not recommended unless you're really confident in hectic traffic.
- Bicycle rentals are a peaceful alternative, especially in Hoi An where the roads are flatter and calmer.
- Hoi An is the kind of place where you'll want to rent a scooter or bicycle for a few days to explore rice fields, beach cafés, and hidden spots off the tourist path.
- We rented our 50cc bike from [Hoi An Bike Rental](#) and they were fantastic! They even delivered the bike to our hotel, included two  $\frac{3}{4}$  helmets and sent us a super guide to driving around town.

Bonus Tip: In Hoi An, many accommodations offer free bicycles or super cheap rentals -ask when you book!





Now that we've covered all our bases  
let's get started

Incense Village, Hat & Lacquer Artisanal Tour – Hanoi

# Hanoi Stays

## Digital couples

21 P. Châu Long Airbnb, Hanoi

Link: [Book on Airbnb](#)

Average Price/Night: R350–R600 per night (Studio Apartment)

Sleeps: Up to 2 guests

Offerings:

- Stylish studio apartment with huge windows and views over the leafy streets of the Old Quarter
- 100-inch projector with Netflix (hello movie nights!)
- Fully equipped kitchen with everything you need to cook at home
- Private bathroom with hot water, separate toilet, and loads of natural light
- Free washer and dryer on-site, plus luggage storage and safe motorbike parking on the ground floor
- Fast Wi-Fi and strong aircon
- Quiet and secure neighbourhood but still close to great coffee shops and local eats
- Thoughtfully designed with loads of greenery and a super comfy sofa setup
- Pet-friendly!

This place has all the city charm you want with all the home comforts you need—perfect for couples or solo travellers wanting a chill Hanoi base.

## Ba ĐÌnh Airbnb, Hanoi

Link: [Book on Airbnb](#)

Average Price/Night: R400–R700 per night

Sleeps: 2 guests

Offerings:

- Cosy modern apartment with a fully equipped kitchen and spacious layout
- Bathtub to unwind in after a long day exploring the city
- A/C, fast Wi-Fi, smart TV and work desk—perfect for digital nomads or couples
- Walking distance to Thu Le Lake, Japanese restaurants, markets and Lotte shopping mall
- Super quiet despite being right in the middle of bustling Hanoi
- Great base for long stays or anyone wanting to cook and chill in their own space

Tucked in a peaceful pocket of Ba ĐÌnh district, this stay offers a relaxing home base with everything you need—plus quick access to all corners of the city.

# Hanoi Stays

## Tranquil family stays

124 P. Trần Vũ Airbnb, Hanoi



Link: [Book on Airbnb](#)

Average Price/Night: R300–R500 per night

Sleeps: Up to 6 guests

Offerings:

- Huge modern apartment overlooking the dreamy West Lake—floor-to-ceiling windows and all
- Two spacious king bedrooms and a big open-plan lounge with comfy seating
- Fully equipped kitchen with dining area, plus private laundry with washing machine and dryer
- Peaceful balcony for your morning coffee or sunset wine
- Located in one of the most secure and scenic lakeside streets in Hanoi
- Fast Wi-Fi, heating for cooler months, and all modern appliances
- Close to Hoan Kiem Lake, coffee shops, and top sightseeing spots—ideal for families or small groups

This place is an actual hidden gem in Hanoi. It's so peaceful, and yet everything is within reach. We stayed here with family and absolutely loved it!

**Amaya Retreat, Soc Son (just outside Hanoi)**



Link: [Book via website](#)

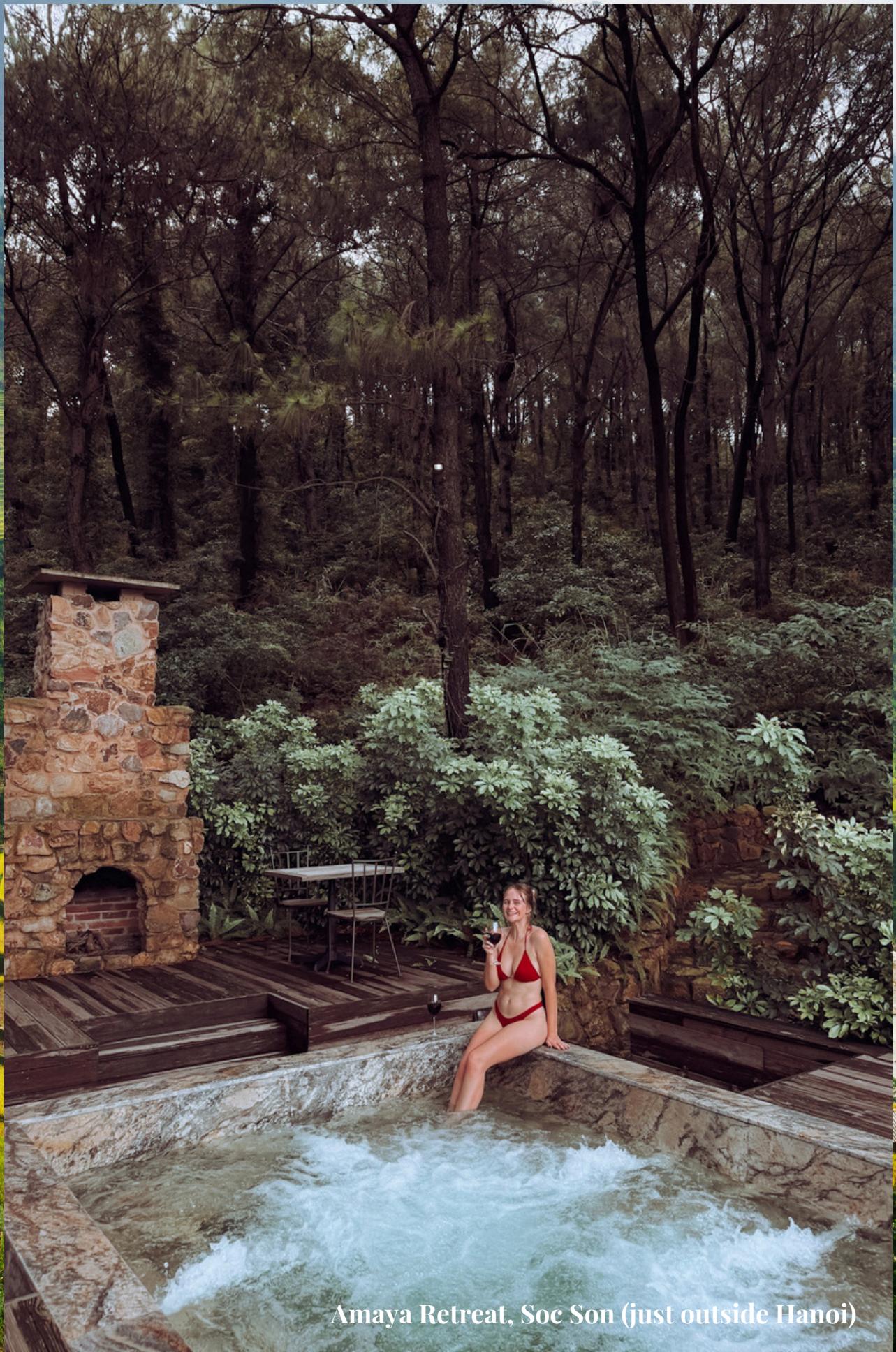
Average Price/Night: R700–R1 000 per night

Sleeps: from 2 guests per room (doubles or twins available)

Offerings:

- Set on a tranquil 10-hectare pine forest estate, just 40km from central Hanoi
- Beautiful wooden treehouse-style bungalows tucked under the trees
- Multiple swimming pools, a jacuzzi, waterslides, and a full spa for deep relaxation
- Outdoor restaurant, tea terrace, and wellness spaces
- Air-conditioned rooms with minibar, balcony, and safe
- Complimentary breakfast and Wi-Fi
- Ideal for nature lovers, families, or couples wanting a quiet reset away from the city buzz

This was such a refreshing break—waking up to the sound of birds, sipping tea under the trees, and floating in the pool while squirrels ran through the branches. A true fairytale forest escape!



Amaya Retreat, Soc Son (just outside Hanoi)

# Hanoi Stays

## Old Quarter

### Homestay CHẬT Airbnb, Hanoi

Link: [Book on Airbnb](#)

Average Price/Night: R250–R1,387 per night

Sleeps: Up to 6 guests

#### Offerings:

- Spacious 2-bedroom apartment with 3 queen-size beds—great for families or groups
- Smart TV with Netflix, reading chair, wide desk and strong A/C in each room
- Fully equipped kitchen with microwave, stove, fridge, and everything you need to cook
- Modern bathroom plus a wooden soaking tub in the master bedroom for some R&R
- In-unit laundry with washer, dryer, and detergent provided
- Located in the heart of Hanoi's Old Quarter, just a short walk to cafés, markets, and sightseeing

A budget-friendly gem that's ideal for longer stays or travellers looking for more space. Do note: while clean and convenient, it's simpler in real life than the pictures suggest—so keep expectations balanced and enjoy the value for money!

### Crescendo Boutique Studio, Hanoi

Link: [Book on Booking.com](#)

Average Price/Night: R500–R800 per night

Sleeps: From 2 guests; family rooms available

#### Offerings:

- Stylish city-view studio in the vibrant Old Quarter
- Chic, minimalist design with smart storage and high-end finishes
- Compact kitchenette with kettle, fridge, and basic cookware
- Balcony and soundproof windows for comfort and peace
- Free Wi-Fi, A/C, work desk and a comfy lounge area with city views
- Close to live music venues, parks, and cafés—plus easy transport access

A great pick if you're into sleek spaces and being close to the city buzz. It's got that clean modern feel, while still offering comfort and practicality.

Vietnam Guide

# Hanoi Stays

Concon House, Hanoi

Old Quarter

Link: [Book on Booking.com](#)

Average Price/Night: R500–R850 per night

Sleeps: 2 guests per room

Offerings:

- Unique stay in a house made up of 20 small, sloped-roof rooms—each its own cosy retreat
- Located in a quiet alley just off a bustling pedestrian street in the Old Quarter
- Each floor has a shared balcony, and there's a reading nook for guests to relax or work
- Fast Wi-Fi, A/C, minimalist décor and thoughtful design touches
- A small communal vibe with shared spaces and plenty of character
- “Morning gifts” breakfast culture is celebrated here—enjoy authentic Hanoian street food just outside the door

Our favourite detail? The peaceful reading room with a breeze flowing through the sliding glass doors—perfect for writing, relaxing, or just watching the world go by.

Vietnam Guide

# Hanoi Airport stays

Paragon Noi Bai Hotel & Pool, Hanoi

Link: [Book on Agoda](#)

Average Price/Night: R500–R800 per night

Sleeps: 2 guests per room

Offerings:

- Comfortable, modern hotel just 6km from Noi Bai International Airport
- Free airport shuttle, 24-hour front desk, and rooftop swimming pool with loungers
- Air-conditioned rooms with balconies, private bathrooms, and views over the city or mountains
- Restaurant and bar on-site with Vietnamese, Asian, and Western dishes (including pizza!)
- Buffet breakfast with vegetarian options served daily
- Free parking and fast Wi-Fi throughout

The perfect stopover option when you're flying in or out of Hanoi—clean, reliable, and with just the right touch of comfort to recharge.

## New Airport Hotel, Noi Bai

Link: [Book on Agoda](#)

Average Price/Night: R400 per night

Sleeps: 2 guests per room

Offerings:

- Affordable, convenient hotel just 9km from Thanh Chuong Palace and minutes from Noi Bai International Airport
- Private rooms with en-suite bathrooms, bath tubs, flat-screen TVs, and balconies or terraces
- Free Wi-Fi throughout, plus complimentary private parking
- On-site restaurant and bar with cosy atmosphere
- Free bicycle use and bike hire available—perfect for a quick explore nearby
- Staff are incredibly warm and helpful, going above and beyond for every guest

An easy, comfy overnight option with a personal touch—great for budget-conscious travellers flying in or out of Hanoi.

## Vietnam Guide Hoi An Hotel stays

### Alsahar Hoi An Boutique Villa, Hoi An

Link: [Book via website](#)

Average Price/Night: R400–R850 per night (depending on room type and season)

Sleeps: 2 guests per room

Offerings:

- Beautiful garden villa with a saltwater swimming pool, hot tub, and sun terrace
- Each room includes A/C, a balcony, a kitchenette, and comfy beds with modern décor
- Free Wi-Fi throughout, bike hire available, and a shared kitchen and games room
- Daily breakfast included -choose from Vietnamese, American, or continental options
- On-site bar, small gym, yoga sessions, and lush garden chill zones
- Located just outside Hoi An Old Town -1.9 km from the Assembly Hall and 3.3 km from the Japanese Covered Bridge

Why we love it: This peaceful spot blends comfort and charm with a laid-back, boho vibe. The staff are welcoming, the setting is serene, and it's the kind of place you'll wish you'd booked for longer.

## The Mansion Hoi An

Link: [Book via website](#)

Average Price/Night: R900–R1 500 per night

Sleeps: 2 guests per room

Offerings:

- Elegant boutique hotel with a calm courtyard and salt-water pool
- Stylish, spacious rooms with A/C, flat-screen TV, and private balcony or terrace
- On-site spa, yoga deck, and daily breakfast included
- Small library lounge and complimentary bikes for exploring
- Prime location: 1 km from Japanese Covered Bridge and Old Town

Sophisticated yet laid-back, this stay is perfect for couples or those craving a touch of luxury without going overboard.

## Vietnam Guide Hoi An Apartments

### Quang Vinh Apartment & Hotel, Hoi An

Link: [Book via Airbnb](#)

Average Price/Night: R800 per night (2-bedroom apartment for up to 4 guests)

Sleeps: 4 guests (2 queen beds in separate bedrooms)

Offerings:

- Spacious family-run apartment located on the 3rd and 4th floor of a modern building with a lift
- 2 queen bedrooms, 2 private bathrooms, a living room, balcony, and full kitchen
- Free rooftop swimming pool and filtered water station for guests
- Air-conditioning, washing machine & dryer, sofa and TV (YouTube + SCTV channels)
- Kitchen with fridge, microwave, kettle, and cookware (bring your own oil/spices)
- Friendly, on-site support from the owners—plus 24hr reception
- Free bicycle hire, motorbike rentals, tour bookings and airport shuttle available
- Location: Just 1 km from Hoi An Old Town, 3.5 km to An Bang Beach, and close to Coconut Village, Thanh Ha Pottery, and Tra Que

A true home-away-from-home, this locally-owned apartment offers incredible value, heartfelt hospitality, and the perfect base for families or friends exploring Hoi An.

## The Present Home, Hoi An

Link: [Book via Airbnb](#)

Average Price/Night: From R400–R600 per night (discounts for long stays)

Sleeps: 4 guests per apartment

Offerings:

- Peaceful, fully serviced studio apartments with modern finishes and large windows overlooking the rice fields
- Located in a tranquil area, just a 10 min scooter ride from Hoi An Old Town and 6 min to An Bang Beach
- Comfortable queen bed, A/C, fast Wi-Fi, and private bathroom
- Kitchenette with fridge, stovetop, kettle, and cookware
- Weekly housekeeping included; laundry service available
- Friendly on-site staff and scooter rental available
- Ideal for digital nomads or long-stay travellers wanting calm and quiet surroundings

We spent a month here and absolutely loved the slow mornings, the quiet neighbourhood, and those dreamy views over the rice paddies. If you're looking for a peaceful base with easy access to both town and beach—this one's a gem.



**Dragon Legend Cruise – Ha Long Bay & Bai Tu Long Bay**

# Restaurants We Love

## Hanoi

### Banh Mi 25

This spot is a Hanoi icon for a reason -quick, fresh, and full of flavour. We came back multiple times for the crispy baguettes stuffed with BBQ pork, tofu, egg, or pâté. Super affordable, friendly service, and perfect to grab before heading off to explore the Old Quarter.

### Pho 10 Ly Quoc Su

This place takes pho very seriously. It's all about the broth -rich, clear, and simmered to perfection. You'll spot locals and tourists alike slurping away at all hours. It's not the cheapest pho in town, but absolutely worth it and its a Michelin Guide spot!

### Phở Cuốn 31

A slightly different take on traditional pho -this is “dry pho” or pho cuộn (rice noodle rolls). It's fun, fresh, and light, served with dipping sauces and often alongside crispy fried treats. Loved sitting outside here, very local and laid-back.

### Phở Gia Truyền Bát Đàn

Heads up: this one's only open for a few hours a day and it gets packed. It's known as one of the most authentic spots for pho in Hanoi -no frills, just good broth and tender beef. Expect to share tables and queue, but it's worth the hustle.

### Bánh Mỳ 38 Đinh Liệt – Bánh Mỳ Phố Cô

If you're wandering around the Old Quarter and need a snack, this bánh mì stand is a must. It's no-frills street food, but the bread is toasted perfectly and the fillings are super flavourful. Loved the egg + pate combo!

### Mộc Nhiên Restaurant

Hotpot fans, this one's for you. It's cosy, warm, and bustling with locals. You pick your broth, then your meats, seafood, veggies, and noodles -and cook it all at your table. A really fun, interactive dinner experience if you're in a group or want something different!

### Daan Chefs Pizza

Random, yes -but some of the best pizza we had in Vietnam! The upstairs seating is quiet and comfy, and the menu has a mix of creative and classic toppings. Great for a break from noodle soup when you're craving cheesy goodness.

### MET Vietnamese Restaurant & Vegetarian (Met 2)

There are a few Met restaurants around Hanoi and honestly, they're all great. It's casual dining with consistent, flavourful Vietnamese favourites -especially good for vegetarians! Try the tofu in tomato sauce and the DIY rice paper rolls.

# Restaurants We Love

### Lake View 1983 – Traditional Vietnamese & Vegan Restaurant

Such a lovely little find! It's calm, the view over the lake is beautiful, and the food is light, fresh and super wholesome. Great for lunch or a quieter dinner if you're over the chaos of the Old Quarter.

### Railway Alley, Train Street

Not technically a restaurant, but you can order food and drinks while watching the train whizz past just centimetres from your seat. The snow coconut coffee is next-level creamy and cold, and they serve things like noodles and snacks too. Best enjoyed in the late afternoon or evening –so atmospheric!

### Puku Cafe & Bar

Bit of a backpacker hangout with big servings, a solid Western menu, and TVs for sports. It's Kiwi-owned and great if you're missing home-style comfort food. The burgers are big, the vibe is social, and it's open late!

## Hoi An

### Vy's Market Restaurant

An absolute must. It's designed like an indoor street food market where you can taste just about everything –crispy pancakes, dumplings, local curries, and even make-your-own spring rolls. It's a little touristy, but the food is incredible and the setup is super fun.

### Hon Restaurant

This was our go-to for easy beachfront dinners. Great fried rice, grilled seafood, cold coconuts, and laid-back vibes. Best part? Free sun loungers if you grab a meal or drink. It's unpretentious, tasty, and perfect after a swim or sunset stroll.

### Nữ Eatery

Hidden down a small lane and hands-down one of the best meals we had in Hoi An. Think soft bao buns, crunchy slaws, delicious tacos, and house-made desserts you'll dream about. It's tiny, always full, so go early or book! A total gem.

### Sun Beach Restaurant

A relaxed beachside spot for when you want to chill with your toes in the sand. Casual food, friendly service, and free loungers if you eat or drink here. We came for lunch and stayed till sunset –it's that kind of place.

### Garden Sea

Another beachfront winner! This one's slightly more mellow, with a lush garden vibe that spills right onto the sand. Drinks are cold, food is fresh, and you can spend hours here reading, swimming, and soaking it all in. Free loungers if you order something – yes please!

# Cafés and Cute Coffee spots



## Hanoi

### The Note Coffee

Possibly the most wholesome spot in the city. Covered wall-to-wall (and ceiling!) in handwritten sticky notes from travellers all over the world, this place oozes charm. The drinks are great too -try the coconut coffee or anything with matcha. A proper “only in Hanoi” kind of café.

### Hidden Gem Cafe

Tucked down a tiny alley, this one truly lives up to the name. It's made entirely from recycled materials -think bottle-cap mosaics and old motorbike seats turned into chairs. Super vibey rooftop, great coffee, and one of the most photogenic spots in the city.

### Little Forest Coffee, Train Street

We LOVED this one. It's light and leafy, with calm corners and the softest natural light. They've nailed the aesthetic -and it looks out over train street! It's on the south side so much quieter but still very cool!

### Coffee 222 Train Street (Ms Thoa's Café)

An absolute must for the train street experience -without the chaos of the main strip. This spot is on the quieter side (south of the Old Quarter), and honestly, we preferred it that way. You can sit just a few steps from the tracks, sip your coffee, and wait for the train to roar past. Ms Thoa is a total gem -so warm and welcoming. Grab a coconut coffee, get your camera ready, and enjoy one of Hanoi's most iconic moments, crowd-free.

### Hanoi Shouten – Coffee & Souvenirs

Café-meets-souvenir-shop but make it cute. Sip your iced latte while browsing adorable ceramics and trinkets that make way better gifts than the usual airport fridge magnet. Great little combo if you're short on time and still need to grab something unique.

### Í Chà Coffee – Đội Cân

Hidden, peaceful, and packed with character. There's no aircon, but it's shaded and breezy with cats wandering around and soft music playing. A good one for slow mornings, journalling, or a quiet bit of co-working. Bring your own fan if you melt easily.



The Note Coffee, Hanoi

# Cafés and Cute Coffee spots



## OK Coffee – 126 Phó Đức Chính

No frills, no fuss, just good coffee and calm vibes. We stopped here a few times for a break from the heat and chaos, and it was always spot-on. Friendly staff and consistently good cold brews.

## Highlands Coffee – Du Thuyền Hồ Trúc Bạch



A chain, yes, but this one is special – it's literally on the lake. Great iced Vietnamese coffee, shady spots to sit, and the best little break from a busy day. Plus the view is beautiful, especially around golden hour.

## Hoi An

### Rosie's Café / Coffee & Brunch

One of our favourite cafés in all of Vietnam. Think: Pinterest-worthy interiors, superb coffee, and brunch dishes that actually slap. Tucked away in a little alley near the Old Town, it's peaceful, charming, and the food is honestly better than most places triple the price. Try the banana pancakes and the avocado toast – you'll be back, trust us.

### Boulevard Gelato & Coffee

Technically more of a dessert stop, but it had to be included. This gelato is next-level. The white chocolate & passionfruit combo? Life-changing. It's a great little air-conditioned stop to cool off while wandering the lantern-lit streets of the Old Town.

### Phin Coffee

Super chill spot with beautiful natural light and seriously good Vietnamese coffee. The vibes here are mellow – think wooden interiors, leafy courtyard, and the kind of place you can easily spend a couple of hours reading or journaling. Great cold brew and coconut coffee.



# Cafés and Cute Coffee spots



## Moments Hoi An

This one's iconic. It gets busy for a reason -the decor is aesthetic heaven and the menu delivers. Great smoothies, strong coffee, and a full brunch-style offering if you're hungry. It's Insta-famous but still worth the hype. If you want it a little quieter, go earlier in the day before the crowds roll in.

## Roving Chillhouse

Out of the Old Town and surrounded by rice paddies, this café is an actual breath of fresh air. It's massive and super relaxed -ideal if you want to escape the heat and find some calm. Loads of seating, good drinks, and just an overall peaceful setting. Definitely worth the short drive.

## Kaymai Concept Store & Café

Part café, part boutique -and completely gorgeous. The outdoor garden area is dreamy (shaded, calm, and full of pretty little corners). It's the kind of spot where you pop in for a coffee and end up browsing handmade ceramics and curated clothing. A hidden gem if you love a slow coffee moment in a beautiful setting.



### DIY History Exploration

Exploring Hanoi's rich history independently is totally doable—and deeply rewarding. Here are the top spots you can easily visit on your own:

#### Vietnamese Women's Museum

- Opening hours: Daily, 08:00–17:00
- Entrance Fee: ₫40,000 (~R25) adult / ₫10,000 (~R6) child (€0.30)
- Why Go: A beautifully curated look at the roles of women in Vietnam's society, culture & wartime—highlighting ethnic diversity and inspiring stories.

#### B52 Victory Museum & Huu Tiep Lake

- Opening hours: Tue–Thu & Sat–Sun, 08:00–11:30 & 13:30–16:30; closed Mon & Fr
- Entrance Fee: Free
- Why Go: Outdoor military artefacts and the haunting wreckage of a B52 bomber in Huu Tiep Lake—real history you can walk among.

#### Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum Complex

- Opening hours: Tue–Thu & Sat–Sun; 7:30–10:30 (summer) / 8:00–11:00 (winter). Closed Mon & Fri
- Entrance Fee: Foreign visitors ₫25,000 (~R15)
- Why Go: A powerful site to reflect on Vietnam's independence and pay respects at President Ho Chi Minh's resting place—plus surrounding heritage buildings.

#### Cua Bac Parish Church

- Opening hours: Around 06:00–22:00 daily; Mass at 10:30 ENG on Sundays
- Entrance Fee: Free
- Why Go: A peaceful break from city bustle—admire pastel yellow walls, stunning architecture, and attend an atmospheric Sunday service.

#### Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long

- Opening hours: Daily, 08:00–17:00 Entrance Fee: ₫100,000 (~R60) adult; children under 16 free ₫50,000 (~R30) concessions
- Why Go: A UNESCO site chronicling over 1,000 years of Vietnamese history—from dynasties to colonialism.

#### Hoa Lò Prison ("Hanoi Hilton")

- Opening hours: Daily, 08:00–17:00 (lunch 11:30–13:30)
- Entrance Fee: ₫30,000–50,000 (~R15–30); children under 16 free; audio guide ₫50,000 optional
- Why Go: A sobering museum of resistance—from French colonials to Cold War POWs—housed in the original prison grounds.



Coffee 222 Train Street (Ms Thoa's Café)

# Hanoi

## Best Day Trips & Activities

### History Tour of Hanoi

Booked through: [GetYourGuide](#)

Price: From R535 per person

Family Friendly: Yes (older kids and teens)

Wander through Vietnam's complex past on this insightful tour. You'll visit Hoa Lo Prison (aka the infamous "Hanoi Hilton"), explore the powerful Ho Chi Minh Museum, and dive into the aviation history at the B52 Victory Museum. The tour ends at Huu Tiep Lake, where you can view a real B52 bomber wreckage still lodged in the water -a truly surreal moment.

Note: Some museums are closed on Mondays and Fridays. Your guide will adjust the itinerary accordingly.

### Hanoi Hop-On Hop-Off City Tour

Booked through: [GetYourGuide](#)

Price: R233 per person

Family Friendly: Yes

Jump aboard the iconic red bus and explore Hanoi with ease. With over 13 stop points, you'll hit highlights like:

Hoan Kiem Lake

Hanoi Flag Tower

Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum

Temple of Literature

Hanoi Opera House

### Incense Village, Hat & Lacquer Artisanal Tour – Hanoi

Booked through: [GetYourGuide](#)

Price: From R650 per person

Family Friendly: Yes (great for creatives and teens)

This full-day tour takes you beyond the city to experience Vietnam's craft heritage firsthand. Visit Quang Phu Cau Incense Village to walk through vivid fields of red incense sticks -a dream for photographers. Head to Chuong Conical Hat Village, where you'll paint and keep your very own traditional nón lá. Finally, explore the beauty of Vietnamese lacquer art at a local Lacquer Village, known for its intricate handmade designs. The day ends with an optional drop-off at Hanoi's Train Street for a final photo opp.

Note: Wear comfortable shoes and bring a hat for sun protection -it's a full-day adventure outside the city.

# Vietnam Guide

# Hanoi

## Best Day Trips & Activities

### Ho Tay Water Park

Location: West Lake, Hanoi

Price: Adults R170, Kids under 1.2m R85

Family Friendly: 100% Yes

This one is a must for families or travellers looking to cool off! Slides, a lazy river, wave pool, and splash zones make it a great escape from the city heat.

### Gisy Lake House

Access: Private vehicle needed

Price: Restaurant prices vary, no entry fee if dining

Family Friendly: Yes

Set on a quiet lake just outside Hanoi, this is a peaceful day trip if you want to kayak, swim, or enjoy a meal with stunning water views. Great for couples or families with older kids.

### Ninh Binh Day Trip

Booked through: [GetYourGuide](#)

Price: R850–R1,000 depending on date & package

Family Friendly: Yes (kids 6+ recommended)

Includes hotel pick-up, lunch, and visits to:

Hoa Lu Ancient Capital

Bike ride through scenic villages

Trang An boat tour (think limestone cliffs and hidden temples!)

Hike up Mua Cave (500 steps to epic views over Tam Coc)

This is one of the most popular day trips from Hanoi for a reason -it's absolutely stunning.

### Sky Lotte Observation Deck

Location: Lotte Tower, Hanoi

Price: Approx. R180 per person

Best time to go: Sunset

Stand on the glass-bottom floor and look down at the city below! It's a little nerve-wracking but a lot of fun. Super for photographers or travellers wanting to see Hanoi from a different perspective.



**Ho Tay Water Park, Hanoi**

# Vietnam Guide

# Hanoi

## Best Day Trips & Activities

### Nhà Spa - Gội đầu dưỡng sinh & Chăm sóc da

Location: Nha Spa, Hong Towers (and other branches)

Price: R150–R300+ depending on treatment

Trust us –you've got to try a Relaxing head spa treatment. It's like a shampoo and massage rolled into one and leaves you completely relaxed.

Our fave is the Hong Towers branch –quieter, super clean, and always feels like a treat.

### Shopping Gems

#### Weekend Night Market

Location: Hanoi Old Quarter

Open: Friday–Sunday nights

Prepare for chaos (in the best way). Bargain for souvenirs, grab street food, and soak up the atmosphere. Josh recommends grabbing a pork sausage on a stick (you'll smell them before you see them!).

Tips:

Bring cash, wear good walking shoes, and a portable fan is a lifesaver.

#### Sans Rêve Vintage

This TikTok-famous tiny treasure trove delivers vintage clothing with serious curb appeal—and steals, too! Think flouncy skirts, retro jackets, and quirky accessories, all starting from just ₫35,000 (around R23).

#### HIEN Art Gallery

Gorgeous local art.

#### KHÁC STORE

Hidden gem alert: duck into a barbershop first, then rise up two flights of stairs—and there it is! A concealed, jazzy world of vintage eyewear and clothing.

#### LOTTEMart & Lotte Center Mall

Need groceries, a stationery refresh, or a dose of international shopping? This one-stop hub delivers. LOTTEmart covers food, household goods, and local snacks; upstairs, a full-scale mall stocked with global brands, cafés, and movie theatres—perfect for a rainy-day wander.

#### Super Nasty Vintage / The Twenty Seven Klub / CSCB\_Vintage

Three spots that redefine retro. Whether you're chasing British army jackets, vintage rock tees, or quirky denim, these edgy thrift stores offer bold fashion at thrifty prices.



Ninh Binh Day Trip

# Vietnam Guide

# Hanoi

## Best Day Trips & Activities

### Dragon Legend Cruise – Ha Long Bay & Bai Tu Long Bay

Location: Departs from Hon Gai Harbour (transfer from Hanoi included)

Price: ~R7,400 per person (3 days, 2 nights – all-inclusive, excl. drinks)

Best For: Couples, families, photographers, and anyone needing a real switch-off

Booking: [Indochina Junk – Dragon Legend](#)

#### Itinerary Highlights:

- Kayaking through hidden lagoons and sea caves
- Swimming off remote beaches
- A visit to a floating fishing village + pearl farm
- Sunrise Tai Chi on deck (worth getting up for!)
- A fun little spring roll cooking class
- And – the ultimate highlight – a private beach BBQ on a private beach
- (Indochina Junk is the only company with permission to do this. Picture fairy lights, fresh seafood, your feet in the sand, and not a single other soul around.)

The pace is relaxed but full – you can skip activities and chill on deck if you'd rather, but we genuinely enjoyed every moment.

#### Food:

Delicious and plentiful! Every meal was served restaurant-style – usually five courses – with a strong focus on local Vietnamese flavours and fresh seafood. They catered beautifully for veggies too, and drinks were available to order throughout (not included, so budget a little extra if you like a glass of wine with dinner).

#### Rooms:

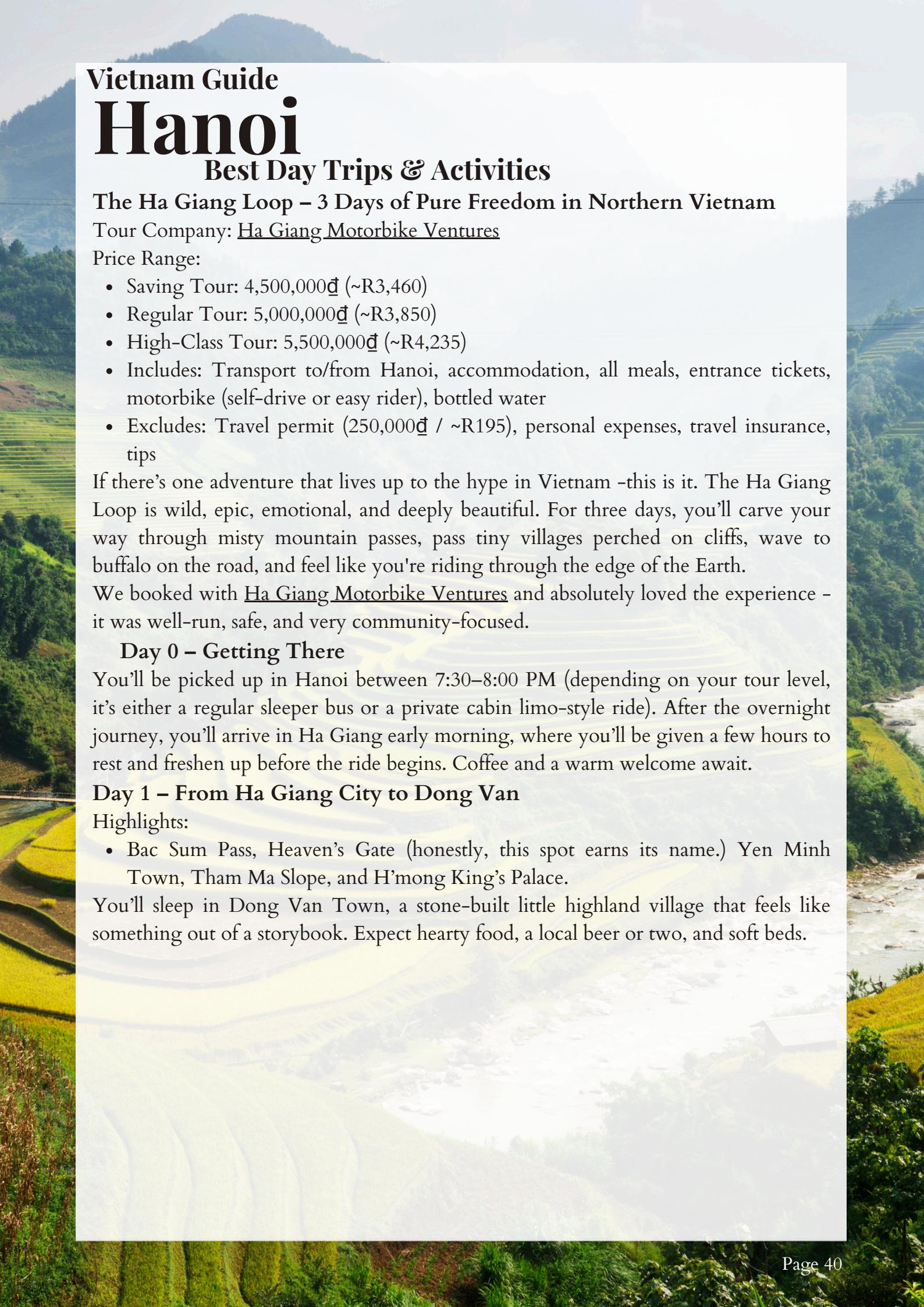
- Huge, quiet, and beautifully styled
- Giant windows overlooking the water
- Proper beds, private bathrooms, soaking tubs with views
- Daily housekeeping and turn-down service

#### Why we loved it:

- Everything's handled for you, so it feels effortless
- The smaller group size meant the cruise felt intimate and friendly
- The crew were absolutely lovely – warm, professional, and genuinely passionate
- It's very family-friendly (we saw a few kids loving it!) but still felt serene and grown-up
- Eco-certified and sustainably run – they care about protecting the bay
- It was honestly one of our favourite travel experiences ever!



Dragon Legend Cruise – Ha Long Bay & Bai Tu Long Bay



# Vietnam Guide

# Hanoi

## Best Day Trips & Activities

### The Ha Giang Loop – 3 Days of Pure Freedom in Northern Vietnam

Tour Company: [Ha Giang Motorbike Ventures](#)

Price Range:

- Saving Tour: 4,500,000đ (~R3,460)
- Regular Tour: 5,000,000đ (~R3,850)
- High-Class Tour: 5,500,000đ (~R4,235)
- Includes: Transport to/from Hanoi, accommodation, all meals, entrance tickets, motorbike (self-drive or easy rider), bottled water
- Excludes: Travel permit (250,000đ / ~R195), personal expenses, travel insurance, tips

If there's one adventure that lives up to the hype in Vietnam -this is it. The Ha Giang Loop is wild, epic, emotional, and deeply beautiful. For three days, you'll carve your way through misty mountain passes, pass tiny villages perched on cliffs, wave to buffalo on the road, and feel like you're riding through the edge of the Earth.

We booked with [Ha Giang Motorbike Ventures](#) and absolutely loved the experience - it was well-run, safe, and very community-focused.

#### Day 0 – Getting There

You'll be picked up in Hanoi between 7:30–8:00 PM (depending on your tour level, it's either a regular sleeper bus or a private cabin limo-style ride). After the overnight journey, you'll arrive in Ha Giang early morning, where you'll be given a few hours to rest and freshen up before the ride begins. Coffee and a warm welcome await.

#### Day 1 – From Ha Giang City to Dong Van

Highlights:

- Bac Sum Pass, Heaven's Gate (honestly, this spot earns its name.) Yen Minh Town, Tham Ma Slope, and H'mong King's Palace.

You'll sleep in Dong Van Town, a stone-built little highland village that feels like something out of a storybook. Expect hearty food, a local beer or two, and soft beds.

# Vietnam Guide

# Hanoi

## Best Day Trips & Activities

### Day 2 – From Dong Van to Du Gia

#### Highlights:

- Ma Pi Leng Pass (THE most iconic part of the loop. Towering cliffs, deep valleys, and sweeping hairpins over the Nho Que River. It's absolutely unreal.), Nho Que River Boat Trip, and Du Gia Waterfall.

This night is all about chilling. Maybe some card games with your crew, maybe just lying under the stars and soaking up the mountain quiet.

### Day 3 – Return to Ha Giang

After breakfast, it's a slow and scenic ride back to Ha Giang City. You'll hand over your helmets, say a teary goodbye to your guide, and either stay the night in Ha Giang or catch a return sleeper bus back to Hanoi.

#### What You Should Know

- Riding yourself? You'll be given a 110cc semi-automatic motorbike (included). If you've never ridden before, opt for an easy rider (a guide drives you!) -it's way safer and still epic.
- Permit Needed: Ha Giang is near the border with China, so a travel permit (250,000đ / ~R195) is required and organised by the tour company.
- Not for the faint-hearted: Some parts of the road are very steep, narrow, and foggy -don't take this lightly.
- Pack smart: Warm layers, raincoat, sunscreen, small daypack, and closed shoes. It gets chilly in the mountains, even in summer.

#### Final Thoughts

If you want to get off the tourist trail and experience something raw and real, this is it. The Ha Giang Loop isn't polished -it's thrilling, deeply scenic, and full of heart. It's easily one of the most unforgettable things we did in Vietnam.

Book it, brave it, and thank us later.

# Vietnam Guide

# Hoi an

## Best Day Trips & Activities

### Ba Na Hills & Golden Bridge (via Da Nang)

Price: R2,170 per person (includes buffet lunch & hotel pickup from Hoi An)

Booking: [GetYourGuide](#)

Best For: Families, couples, photographers, thrill-seekers

This was one of the most surreal day trips we've done – it's a little kitsch, a little chaotic, but also completely epic. If you've seen photos of the famous Golden Bridge held up by giant stone hands, this is where it lives. Perched high in the mountains just outside Da Nang, Ba Na Hills is part theme park, part French alpine village, part fantasy world.

Your day kicks off early with a hotel pickup (around 7:10 AM if you're in Hoi An), and a transfer to Da Nang where you join the group. Then it's straight to the cable car – the longest non-stop cable car in the world, no less – gliding above lush forest to reach the hilltop. The views are jaw-dropping.

What you'll see & do:

- Wander the Golden Bridge and take all the photos
- Stroll the beautiful Flower Gardens and Linh Ung Pagoda
- Explore a hidden wine cellar tucked into the mountain
- Take another cable car even higher to the French Village – complete with a cathedral, cobblestone lanes and live music
- Tuck into an 80+ dish buffet lunch (included in the price – lots of veggie options too!)
- Burn it all off at Fantasy Park, which is packed with games, VR rides, 4D/5D cinema, and lots of family-friendly activities.

You'll be back at your hotel around 5PM, with a camera roll full of memories and probably a nap on the drive home.

Tip: Bring a light jacket – the top can be chilly, especially on cloudy days. And if you're not a fan of crowds, try to avoid weekends and Vietnamese public holidays.



# Hoi an

## Best Day Trips & Activities

### Explore the Ancient Town (Old Town Pass)

Entry Fee: 120,000 VND (~R95) per person

What it includes: Entry to 5 of 25 listed sites + traditional performance

Where to buy: Any of the ticket counters at the Old Town gates

Wandering Hoi An's lantern-filled streets is magical enough, but if you want to go inside the ancient assembly halls, pagodas, houses, and museums, you'll need the Old Town Ticket. It's a great way to support the preservation of the heritage area too.

Included in your pass are:

- Traditional art show (Folk music & dance)
- Your pick of 5 sites from a curated list of 25 -so choose wisely!

Some of our favourites:

- Fujian Assembly Hall – The most famous hall, with dragon statues and incense coils (can be busy!)
- Cantonese Assembly Hall – A quieter but equally stunning option
- Duc An Ancient House – Beautifully preserved with original furnishings
- Hoi An Traditional Art Performance Theatre – A nice break from walking, and surprisingly moving

Hot tip: Head out early or late for fewer crowds. And go slow -part of the charm is just soaking in the history between tailor shops and street eats.

### Tra Que Vegetable Village & Slow Café

Location: Just outside the Old Town (bike-friendly)

Best For: A slow morning, families, foodies, photographers

This peaceful farming village gives you a glimpse of rural life just minutes from the city buzz. Locals tend to organic veggie plots, water using bamboo tools, and harvest herbs the old-fashioned way. You can take a cooking class here, or just explore the lush gardens.

Don't miss Slow Café for a coffee in the middle of the village – it's calm, green, and full of charm.

# Hoi an

## Best Day Trips & Activities

### Dũng Thúy Coconut Boat Ride – Cam Thanh

Price: ~200,000 VND (~R160) per person

Best For: Families, Instagram-lovers, fun seekers

These round basket boats are unique to Vietnam and make for such a fun morning or afternoon adventure. You'll be taken through the palm-lined waterways of Cam Thanh, and if you get lucky (or ask!), your guide might give you a spin – literally. The scenery is gorgeous and the people are so welcoming.

You don't need to pre-book, but it can help to avoid tourist traps. Dũng Thúy is a friendly family-run option we loved.

### Cam Kim, Cam Chau & Cam Thanh Villages

Best For: Biking, slow travel, seeing local life

Outside the main tourist areas, these villages are a cyclist's dream. Think: winding country paths, endless rice paddies, water buffalo, and curious kids waving hello. You'll get a glimpse into the real rhythm of daily life – farmers tending fields, locals fishing, and food stalls with the best fresh juice and bánh mì.

Bike rental is cheap (or free if your accommodation includes it). Go early morning or just before golden hour for the best light and cooler temps.

### Hoi An Memories Show & Impression Theme Park

Tickets: Varies depending on package (~R400–R800 pp)

Booking: [Hoi An Memories Show](#)

It's hard to describe this show without sounding over the top – but genuinely, it's one of the most spectacular live performances in the world. With hundreds of dancers, huge sets, water effects, music, lighting, and Vietnamese history woven through it all – this open-air performance is a proper spectacle.

The park around it is themed like a historical village and makes a nice pre-show wander. Definitely worth seeing at least once!

### White Rose Spa – Head Spa, Hair Wash & Massages

Location: Central Hoi An

This place is such a treat! Whether you're in the mood for a full-body massage, a pedicure, or one of Vietnam's iconic head spa hair washes (trust us – it's heaven), White Rose Spa is a great pick. It's clean, professional, and very affordable. You'll walk out feeling like a new human.

Tip: Call or message to book ahead, especially in the evening – they do get busy!

# Vietnam Guide

# Hoi an

## Best Day Trips & Activities

### Hoi An Central Market

What you'll find: Fresh produce, souvenirs, tailors, silk, food, and more

Tip: Go early morning for less heat & crowds

This is the heart of local trade – loud, colourful, and full of energy. Bring cash, haggle gently, and wear comfy shoes – the narrow aisles get busy!

### Kim Only Tailor Fashion – Custom Tailoring Magic

Location: Inside Hoi An's Cloth Market

Best For: Bringing your Pinterest board to life

This sweet mother-daughter duo are absolute gems. Ruthie's mum brought her favourite dress, chose a fabric she loved, and they whipped up multiple custom replicas that fit perfectly. They're fast, talented, and very fairly priced – just go in with a clear vision and some reference photos to make the most of it.

Tip: Pop in early in your trip so there's time for fittings or tweaks. And bring screenshots or saved Pinterest pins – they love those!

### Hội An Night Market

When: Every evening from around 5PM

Best For: Lantern shots, street eats, souvenirs

This is Hoi An at its most vibrant – twinkling lanterns, sizzling street food, local artists, and colourful stalls everywhere you look. Grab a coconut ice cream, pick up a few gifts, and definitely take a stroll along the riverfront. It's touristy, yes, but also totally charming.

The best photo spot: the lantern boats near the bridge. You can even hop on for a quick row along the river if you fancy it!

### Japanese Covered Bridge

Entry: Free to walk past, or use your Old Town ticket to go inside

Best For: History buffs & photographers

This 18th-century covered bridge is probably Hoi An's most iconic landmark – and it's beautifully lit up at night.

### Xanh Xanh Market – Fresh Food & Local Produce

Location: Slightly outside the main Old Town

Best For: Fresh fruit, veg, herbs

If you're staying somewhere self-catering this is a great tourist-friendly grocery store.

# Vietnam Guide

# Hoi an

## Best Day Trips & Activities

### Nui Than Tai Hot Springs Park – Da Nang

Best For: Relaxation, families, and a very unique spa day

Entry Price: Approx. R185 per adult (Combo packages for mud baths or hot springs cost more)

Location: 30 km west of Da Nang city centre

This isn't just a hot spring -it's a full-on thermal amusement park. There's a waterpark, hot mineral springs, mud baths, natural sauna caves, Japanese-style onsens, and even a foot massage stream where little fish nibble your feet (you either love it or hate it ). It's an amazing way to relax if you've been on the road for a while.

Getting there: It's about an hour's drive from Da Nang, so either hire a Grab, drive yourself or book through a local agency that includes transfers.

### My Khe Beach – Da Nang

Best For: Beach walks, salty swims, seafood, and sunsets

Entry: Free

Regularly listed as one of Asia's most beautiful beaches, My Khe is a long, golden stretch of soft sand and blue water right in Da Nang city. It's clean, safe, and a great spot for swimming, sunbathing, or grabbing a beachfront drink. The waves are mellow enough for a splash, and you'll find loungers and umbrellas available for rent.

Food tip: Follow your nose to one of the beachfront seafood BBQ joints -it's fresh, cheap, and grilled right in front of you.



# Vietnam Guide

# Hoi an

## Best Day Trips & Activities

### Hai Van Pass

Best For: Adventure lovers, bucket list road trippers

Distance: Approx. 21 km from Da Nang to Lang Co (via the pass)

Tip: Only attempt on a clear day if you're confident on a scooter

This winding mountain road between Da Nang and Hue is world famous for good reason. It snakes around cliffs, cuts through jungle, and gives you panoramic views over the coastline. Expect misty peaks, steep drops, and some hair-raising corners -but also the kind of scenery that makes your jaw drop.

Safety note: Ride slowly and carefully -the road has lots of blind corners, occasional fog, and free-roaming cows and goats. If you're not 100% confident, book a Jeep or join a motorbike tour instead!

### Lap An Lagoon

Best For: Dreamy photos, fresh seafood, and chill time

Entry: Free

Tip: Visit during sunset or early morning for the best light

This is one of those places that catches you by surprise. It's calm, beautiful, and full of local life -think fisherman paddling small boats, water buffalo grazing nearby, and seafood huts on stilts. You can stop here on your way through the Hai Van Pass or make it a lunch destination.

Food tip: Grab a table at one of the floating restaurants for grilled oysters, fresh clams, and a cold coconut. Simple and perfect.

### Lang Co Beach, Hue

Best For: Peaceful vibes, seafood lunches, and sunbathing

Entry: Free

Lang Co Beach is like My Khe's quieter cousin -wide, pristine, and surrounded by green hills and palm trees. It's the perfect place to stop for a swim or just lie back and listen to the waves. There are a few seafood restaurants right on the sand, where you can eat with your toes in the sand and watch the fishing boats bob in the bay.

Stay for sunset! It lights up the lagoon and mountains with golden colours -truly breathtaking.



An Bang Beach, Hoi An

# Northern Vietnam

## 14 Days in North Vietnam: Culture, Cruises &

### Budget

|                               |                        |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| Accommodation (13 nights)     | R7,500–R9,500          |
| Food & Drink                  | R2,800 – R3,500        |
| Activities/Tours              | R11,500–R13,000        |
| Transport (local + intercity) | R1,200                 |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>R23,000–R27,200</b> |

pp

### Motorbike Loops

## Day 1: Arrival in Hanoi

Stay: Hanoi Le Jardin Hotel & Spa – R850/night

Activity: Chill! Check into your hotel and explore your local area.

Dinner: Pho 10 Ly Quoc Su – R65 for a bowl of pho

Evening Treat: The Note Coffee for a lakeside nightcap, if it's weekend enjoy the Old Quarter Market.

Approx. Daily Cost: R1,000 (incl. meals + hotel)

## Day 2: Explore Hanoi Old Quarter + History Tour

Tour: War Site & Museums Tour – R535

Includes Hoa Lo Prison, Ho Chi Minh Museum, and the B52 Museum

Lunch: Phở Gia Truyền Bát Đàn – R65

Dinner: Mộc Nhiên (hot pot) – R150 pp sharing

Approx. Daily Cost: R1,550

## Day 3: Hop-on Hop-off City Tour

Tour: Red Bus Hop-On Hop-Off Hanoi – R233 (great way to see the city!)

DIY Sites:

- Women's Museum (R35, closed Mon)
- Imperial Citadel (R60)
- Cua Bac Church (Free)
- Dinner: Met Vietnamese Restaurant – R160
- Dessert: Train Street for a snow coconut coffee at Railway Alley, Train Street

Approx. Daily Cost: R1,000

# Northern Vietnam

14 Days in North Vietnam: Culture, Cruises &

Motorbike Loops

## Day 4–6: Ha Long Bay Cruise (3D2N)

Tour: Indochina Junk: Dragon Legend Cruise – R7,400 pp

All-Inclusive: Hotel pick-up, meals, kayaking, beach BBQ, pearl farm visit, and spring roll cooking class (drinks for own account)

Day 6 Afternoon: Return to Hanoi + overnight at Hanoi Le Jardin – R850

Approx. Cost: R8,250 (R7,400 cruise + R850 hotel)

## Day 7: Chill Day in Hanoi

Stay: Concon House – R450/night

Activity: Relaxing day, perhaps a swan boat ride at West Lake or just enjoy free time.

Coffee: Highlands Coffee on the lake (Truc Bach Lake)

Dinner: Phở Cuốn 31, also near West Lake

Approx. Daily Cost: R750

## Day 8: Off to Ha Giang (Night Bus)

Day: Chill + pack

Dinner: Puku Cafe (great if there's sport on!)

Night Bus to Ha Giang via Ha Giang Motor Ventures departs 8pm

- Tour Price (Ha Giang Loop):
  - Budget: R3,240
  - Regular: R3,600
  - High Class: R4,000

Approx. Daily Cost: R3,600 (incl. bus, overnight & meals Day 0 of Loop)

## Day 9–11: Ha Giang Loop Tour (3D2N)

Day 9: Ha Giang → Dong Van

Day 10: Dong Van → Du Gia via Ma Pi Leng & Nho Que River

Day 11: Du Gia → Ha Giang City

All meals, bike hire, transport, and accommodation included.

Included in previous price

## Day 12: Return to Hanoi

Stay: Crescendo Boutique Studio – R450

Dinner: Í Chà Coffee – chilled vibe with cats

Approx. Daily Cost: R650

# Northern Vietnam

14 Days in North Vietnam: Culture, Cruises &  
Motorbike Loops

## Day 13: Shopping & Spa Day

Shopping Stops:

- Sans Rêve Vintage (R23 items!)
- KHÁC Store (hidden behind barber shop)
- Lotte Mart (food + fashion mall)
- Spa: Nhà Spa – Gội đầu dưỡng sinh (R200+)
- Coffee: Highlands Coffee on the lake (Truc Bach Lake)
- Dinner: Daan Chefs Pizza – R150

Approx. Daily Cost: R750

## Day 14: Depart Hanoi

Last Morning Coffee: Coffee 222 Train Street (Ms Thoa is a gem)

Head to Noi Bai Airport -taxi approx. R160

# Central Vietnam

8 days in Central Vietnam: Noodles, Night Markets

## Budget

|                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Accommodation (8 nights)      | R3,200-R4,500             |
| Food & Drink                  | R2,200 - R3,500           |
| Activities/Tours              | R4,500-R5,200             |
| Transport (local + intercity) | R1,200 - R1,400           |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>R11,100-R14,600 pp</b> |

## & Nature

### Day 1: Arrive in Da Nang → Transfer to Hội An

Transfer: Private car from Da Nang Airport to Hội An – R200–R250 per car (Grab)

Stay: Quang Vinh Apartment Hotel – R800 per night for 4 people / R400 pp

(2-bedroom apartment, central location, family-run, free bicycles, rooftop pool!)

Activity: Grab bike into the Old Town for dinner & golden hour stroll through the bustling market.

Dinner: Any of the restaurants in the Old Town along the river

Evening: Chill on the beach loungers (free with a drink purchase)

Approx. Daily Cost: R650–R850

### Day 2: Explore Hội An Old Town

Ticket: Hoi An Old Town Entry Pass – R90 (120,000 VND), valid for 5 sites

Visit:

- Fujian Assembly Hall (famous but busy)
- Cantonese Assembly Hall (quieter alternative)
- Duc An Ancient House
- Traditional Art Performance Theatre
- Central Market (souvenirs, fabrics, spices, tailors!)

Lunch: Vy's Market Restaurant – indoor “street food” experience

Activity: Get clothes tailored at Kim Only Tailor Fashion – bring inspo pics!

Dinner: Nữ Eatery – tiny but incredible (book ahead!)

Approx. Daily Cost: R1,000 (including tailoring deposits if any)

### Day 3: Spa & Chill Beach Day

Morning: Head spa or massage at White Rose Spa (R200–R400)

Lunch: Garden Sea (on An Bang beach, free sun loungers)

Activity: Swim, read, chill, nap

Dinner: Sun Beach Restaurant – sunset seafood

Approx. Daily Cost: R850

Vietnam Guide

# Central Vietnam

8 days in Central Vietnam: Noodles, Night Markets

## Day 4: Day Trip Ba Na Hills & Golden Bridge

& Nature

Tour: Booked via GetYourGuide – R2,170 pp

Inclusions:

- Hotel pickup + transfers from Hoi An
  - 2x cable car rides
  - Buffet lunch (80+ dishes!)
  - Entry to Fantasy Park (games, 4D movies)
  - Visit to Golden Bridge, Flower Garden, French Village
  - Dinner: Order something small from Grab Delivery, you'll be full from that buffet!
- Approx. Daily Cost: R2,250

## Day 5: Country Life Day!

Activity: Rent a scooter (R100 per day) or grab free bikes from your stay

- Cam Thanh Coconut Village: R120 (200K VND pp) for basket boat ride
- Tra Que Vegetable Village: Walk, take photos, coffee at Slow Cafe
- Lunch: Small local cafe in the village – R50
- Afternoon: Explore rice paddies in Cam Chau or visit a tailor for fittings
- Dinner: Takeaway from Greek Souvlaki Restaurant – SO good! Or head into the Old Town to one of the restaurants

Approx. Daily Cost: R300–R400

## Day 6: Chill Day / Café Hop

Morning: Breakfast at Rosie's Café – avo toast and strong coffee

Café Hop Stops:

- Boulevard Gelato – try the white choc & passionfruit
- Kaymai Concept Store – pretty garden, stylish spot
- Moments – super busy but iconic
- Roving Chill House – peaceful & open-air vibes

Dinner: Local street food, Bahn Mi Queen or similar – R50

Approx. Daily Cost: R300–R400

# Central Vietnam

## 8 days in Central Vietnam: Noodles, Night Markets

### Day 7: Day Trip to Hué via Hai Van Pass

### & Nature

Tour Option: Private car (R1,200 round trip for 2–4 pax), or join a group tour for approx. R650 pp, or renting a motorbike (R100 per day, must be confident driver for this route as you need a powerful bike)

Stops:

- Hai Van Pass (world-class scenic road!)
- Lap An Lagoon – fresh seafood lunch on the water (R150–R200 pp)
- Lang Co Beach
- Optional: Visit the ancient capital's tombs, pagodas or Royal Palace

Dinner (back in Hội An): Sundowners and dinner at Hon's on the beach, bring your bathing suit and have a dip.

Approx. Daily Cost: R800–R1,200

### Day 8: Last Shopping, Spa or Beach

Activities:

- Final clothing pickups & fittings from tailors
- Shopping at Xanh Xanh Fresh Food Market for any snacks you want to take home
- Spa touch-up or gội đầu at White Rose
- Lunch: Phin Coffee (found in the coffee category – great lunch too!)
- Dinner: Met Vietnamese Restaurant (franchise, great quality)

Approx. Daily Cost: R400–R500

### Day 9: Departure

Transfer back to Da Nang Airport – R250 (ask your hotel to organise the taxi)

Breakfast: Cafe near accommodation or grab something from the airport

Vietnam Guide

# Best of Both Worlds

14 Days in Hanoi & Hoi An: Golden Bridges to

## Budget

|                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Accommodation (8 nights) | R6,000-R8,000             |
| Food & Drink             | R3,000 - R4,000           |
| Activities & Day Trips   | R8,000-R9,000             |
| Ha Long Bay Cruise       | R7,400                    |
| Ha Giang Loop Tour       | 3,200-R3,900              |
| Flights & Transport      | R1,800-R2,500             |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>R29,400-R35,300 pp</b> |

## Green Bays

### Travel Options Between Hanoi & Hoi an

|             |                      |             |
|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Flight      | 1hr 15m              | R650-R900   |
| Train       | 16-17hrs (overnight) | R450 - R900 |
| Sleeper Bus | 18-20hrs             | R300-R400   |

### Day 1: Arrive in Hanoi

Stay: Hanoi Le Jardin Hotel & Spa – R900 per night (elegant, comfy, close to everything)

Activity: Stroll Hoàn Kiếm Lake, check out St Joseph's Cathedral, grab pho nearby.

Dinner: Pho 10 Ly Quoc Su

Daily cost: R1,000–R1,200 pp

### Day 2: Overnight Sleeper Bus to Hà Giang

Day: Explore Old Quarter by foot, visit Vietnamese Women's Museum (R45), try Bahn Mi 25

Evening: Depart for Ha Giang (pick-up 7:30–8pm)

Bus Option: Ha Giang Motor Ventures (included in your tour package)

Daily cost: R400 (excluding tour price)

Vietnam Guide

# Best of Both Worlds

14 Days in Hanoi & Hoi An: Golden Bridges to

Days 3–5: Hà Giang Loop (3 Days, 2 Nights)

Tour Company: Ha Giang Motor Ventures

Price:

- Saving Tour: R3,170 (đ4,500,000)
- Regular: R3,525 (đ5,000,000)
- High Class: R3,875 (đ5,500,000)

Inclusions: Accommodation, all meals, bike rental, entrance fees, boat trip on Nho Que, guide

Route Highlights:

- Ma Pi Leng Pass
- Hmong King Palace
- Du Gia Waterfall
- Dong Van Market
- Boat trip on Nho Que River

Total for 3 days: R3,200–R3,900

## Day 6: Return to Hanoi (mid-morning)

Check-in: Crescendo Boutique Studio – R700 per night (stylish, quiet, well-located)

Activity: Visit HIEN Art Gallery, get a foot massage or relaxing hair wash at Nhà Spa – R200

Dinner: Daan Chefs Pizza then head to Train Street for a snow coconut coffee at Railway Alley, Train Street

Daily cost: R1,100

## Days 7–9: Ha Long Bay Cruise (2 nights)

Cruise: Indochina Junk – Dragon Legend 3D/2N

Price: R7,400 pp

Inclusions:

- Hanoi hotel pickup
- All meals
- Kayaking, swimming, village visit
- Beach BBQ, sunrise tai chi
- Bai Tu Long Bay (quieter alternative to Ha Long)

Total for 3 days: R7,400

Vietnam Guide

# Best of Both Worlds

14 Days in Hanoi & Hoi An: Golden Bridges to

## Day 10: Fly Hanoi → Da Nang → Hội An

## Green Bays

Recommended Airline: VietJet or Bamboo Airways (factor in time as these local flights often have delays)

Flight Duration: 1 hr 15 min

Price: R650–R900 pp

Transfer: R250 (Da Nang Airport → Hội An by private car)

Stay: The Present Home Hoi An – R600 per night (rice field views, quiet, kitchen, laundry, weekly cleaning, scooter rental nearby)

Dinner: Nữ Eatery – trust us, book early

Total cost: R1,500 (flight + transfer + dinner + stay)

## Day 11: Chill in Hội An Old Town

Ticket: Old Town Pass – R90

Visit:

- Assembly Halls
- Duc An House
- Traditional Music Show
- Central Market for tailoring!
- Lunch: Vy's Market Restaurant
- Café Hop: Rosie's Café + Kaymai Concept Store
- Dinner: Hon Restaurant (sunset, seafood, feet in sand)

Daily cost: R500–R700

## Day 12: Day Trip to Ba Na Hills & Golden Bridge

Tour (GetYourGuide): Ba Na Hills with Buffet & Cable Car

Price: R2,170 pp

Inclusions: Pick-up, transfers, 2 cable cars, buffet lunch, Fantasy Park access

Dinner: Takeaway at home or simple local meal

Daily cost: R2,300

Vietnam Guide

# Best of Both Worlds

14 Days in Hanoi & Hoi An: Golden Bridges to

## Day 13: Free Day – Beach or Hué

## Green Bays

Option A: Relax at An Bang or visit Tra Que Vegetable Village (free bike rental from stay)

Option B: Day Trip to Hué via Hai Van Pass

Private car for 2–4 pax: R1,200 total

Shared tour: R650 pp

Highlights: Hai Van Pass, Lang Co Beach, Lap An Lagoon, tombs and temples in Hué

Lunch stop: Floating restaurant on Lap An Lagoon (R150–R200 pp)

Dinner back in Hoi An: Met Vegetarian Restaurant

Daily cost: R500–R900

## Day 14: Departure from Da Nang

Transfer: R250 from Hội An

Breakfast: Café 222 or The Note Coffee (Hội An or Da Nang branch if time allows)

Thanks so much for traveling with us & for  
choosing us to be your guides to  
Hanoi, and Hoi An!  
until next time, wishing you many happy adventures

**All our love,  
Josh & Ruthie Betts**

