



# VBC Vietnam Tour Itinerary

## February 5-19, 2020



**Day 1 Wednesday, Feb. 5: Depart USA. Cross International Date Line.**

**Day 2 Friday, Feb. 7 Welcome and “Good Morning, Vietnam”**

Arrive Hanoi. Meet local guide. Refuel with lunch. Keep moving until hotel check in is available. Hop on for an afternoon “cyclo” tour of the Old Quarter of Hanoi. Lunch at local restaurant. Short break at the hotel - nap, catch up to social media back home, or wander through the area around the hotel. Evening Group dinner at hotel. **Overnight: Hanoi. Meals: Lunch, Dinner**

**Day 3 Saturday, Feb. 8 Fifty-four ethnicities - Two thousand years of history - Five decades of civil war**

Morning visit to the Museum of Ethnology reveals a culture shaped by centuries of kingdoms and conquerors, including the one hundred years of French Colonial rule beginning in the 1800’s and early 20th century emergence of Communism and conflict under revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh. Visit to the Museum of Ho Chi Minh Trail. Its imperative to understand the vital link provided by this rugged web of rail, roads, footpaths and waterways, over 9,000 miles, utilized by the North Vietnamese military, through Cambodia and Laos, to transport supplies, troops and equipment from North Vietnam to South Vietnam in support of the Vietcong. Attend the Water Puppet Show.

Dinner on own. **Overnight: Hanoi. Meals: Breakfast**

**Day 4 Sunday, Feb. 9 The Imperial City and the “Hanoi Hilton”**

Touring begins at the Ho Chi Minh House and the Imperial Citadel, dating back to the ruins of a Chinese fortress from the 7th century, designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2010. Visit the Hoa Lo Prison, which translates to “fiery furnace” or “Hell’s hole.” US servicemen imprisoned there sarcastically nicknamed it “the Hanoi Hilton.” Drive to Halong Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Evening Group Dinner at hotel. **Overnight: Halong Bay. Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

**Day 5 Monday, Feb. 10 Cruising Halong Bay**

Board a traditional Vietnamese “junk boat” to sail across the emerald waters of the Gulf of Tonkin among rock islands and pillars and caves where an abundance of marine life thrives. Lunch aboard the cruise offers time to fully enjoy the views, hear the legends of mountain dragons and sea serpents, and learn of the geographical history of the “Karst” landscape. Return to Hanoi for evening flight Hanoi to Hue, duration is one hour.

Dinner on own. **Overnight: Hue. Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Day 6 Tuesday, Feb. 11 The Tet Offensive - 1968**

From January to March 1968, the longest and deadliest battle of the Vietnam War waged in and around Hue. Although communist-backed forces were eventually repelled by American and South Vietnamese troops, the Siege of Hue became a turning point in the war on several levels. Explore the locations of combat, where ancient temples and pagodas were reduced to rubble, and Medals of Honor were earned. Tour Hue Imperial City, a UNESCO World Heritage site, a massive complex known as much for its rich architectural heritage as for its impressive landscaping. Marvel at the Forbidden Purple City and Thien Mu Pagoda, the tallest religious structure in Vietnam. Group dinner. **Overnight: Hue. Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

**Day 7 Wednesday, Feb. 12 Toil and Tenacity in the Tunnels to Survive**

Heading North to Quang Tri Province, stop at battle sites to see La Vang Church, Quang Tri Citadel, Ben Hai River, Hien Luong Bridge and the Seventeenth Parallel, the former borderline between North and South Vietnam. After lunch, continue along the coast, to Vinh Moc. As armies fought, and bombs fell, villagers across the beleaguered nation sought shelter underground, constructing intricate tunnel systems where young people fell in love, married, started families... children were educated, wounded were treated, and gods were worshiped. The remnants of the Vinh Moc tunnels gives a glimpse of how Vietnamese villagers lived for up to six years during the height of the US involvement. Other tunnel systems were used by the Vietcong, to shelter guerrilla fighters; we'll visit the Cu Chi tunnels near Saigon, later in the tour. Group dinner. **Overnight: Dong Ha. Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

**Day 8 Thursday, Feb. 13 The Multiple Enemies along the DMZ**

Moving west from Dong Ha, visit a place where the Ho Chi Minh Trail can be viewed from a bridge. Then "conduct a recon" in the shadow of "the Rockpile," a 700' monolith protruding up from the floor of a narrow valley pass. The surrounding mountains, with jagged ridges and thick vegetation, proved advantageous to "Charlie," using guerrilla like tactics, while the Marines' ground movement was impeded, and helicopter landings so perilous that the valley, littered with choppers that had crashed, was nicknamed "Helicopter Valley." While Hue was deadly, the Battle at Khe Sanh was savage, a horrid mix of Napalm, rice paddies, artillery, and hand-to-hand combat. Dinner on own. **Overnight: Dong Ha. Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Day 9 Friday, Feb. 14 Da Nang - Airbase and American Combat Troops**

Enjoy the lovely coastal countryside, views of the East Vietnam Sea and the Bach Ma National Park on our southbound drive to Da Nang. After lunch, notice the sagging shapes of decaying Quonset huts (access is prohibited) near the former site of the Da Nang US Airbase, visible from the road during the drive to Marble Mountains. In Da Nang, the Fifth Military Zone Museum offers a collection of vehicles, and artifacts left behind by the US divisions based in Da Nang during the war. After check in, wander the few blocks from the hotel to My Khe Beach, the 30 KM stretch of white sugary sand, called "China Beach" by the G.I.'s and used for "R&R" during the war. Group dinner. **Overnight: Danang. Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

**Day 10 Saturday, Feb. 15 Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) - Seat of South Vietnam's Government**

Morning flight to Ho Chi Minh City. After lunch, visit the Unification Palace, where the beauty of architecture and gardens shine while the wartime communication center and basement "bunker" are often overlooked. Nearby, the War Remnants Museum tells the history of the Vietnam War from the perspective of the Vietnamese, who endured nearly five decades of civil war. Group dinner. **Overnight: Ho Chi Minh City. Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

**Day 11 - Sunday, Feb. 16 The Mekong Delta - River Patrols and Amphibious Operations**

A river cruise on the Mekong River provides a view of the tangled underbrush, dense aquatic grasses and rice paddies that challenged the patrolling US "Brown Water Navy." Today's Mekong region is a densely populated area (17 million) where house-boats, jet boats and small cruise ships share the waterways with local fisherman and floating markets. Enjoy the local flavor of Coconut Island, with its intriguing history as home to a monastery. The guide will spare you from the tourist "traps." Dinner on own. **Overnight: Ho Chi Minh City. Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Day 12 - Monday, Feb. 17 Guerrilla Warfare in the Tunnels - Cu Chi Tunnels**

During the war, soldiers with smaller frames were asked to be "tunnel rats" and a pay raise came with the "position." Many declined. For those willing, a ruthless adversary awaited. Crawling through the narrow passages of the Cu Chi Tunnels, imagine their fear, wary of booby traps and trip wires, blindly hunting an enemy that knew the twists and turns of the elaborate tunnels. After lunch, stop at the Lacquerware Museum to admire a cultural tradition and craft; consult the guide before purchasing. Dinner on own. **Overnight: Ho Chi Minh City. Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Day 13 Tuesday, Feb. 18 - (B, D) FREE day to Explore Ho Chi Minh City**

Take in a cultural experience, shop, visit other Vietnam-era locations or relax and reflect. Join the group for a Final Farewell dinner. **Overnight: Ho Chi Minh City. Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

**Day 14 -Wednesday, Feb. 19 Goodbye, Vietnam**

Morning - Transfer to Airport. **Meals: Breakfast**

**Cross the international dateline, bound for USA.**