



Culinary Arts in Vietnam January 2008

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Day One

Departure on a trans-Pacific flight.

Day Two

Late evening arrival in Ho Chi Minh City where you are met by your CSA On-site Coordinator. Transfer to your hotel for a welcome drink. Check in and overnight.

Day Three

Still affectionately known as Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City is an intoxicating blend of old and new. Begin your exploration of this exciting city with a visit to the Reunification Hall, formerly known as the Presidential Palace. It was towards this modern building that Communist tanks rolled on the morning of April 30, 1975, as Saigon fell. This fascinating building is filled with history still fresh in the minds of many. Your tour continues with the War Museum, which depicts the American War from the viewpoint of the Vietnamese people. The tour also includes the Old Post Office, Notre Dame Cathedral, the Jade Emperor Pagoda, Chinatown and Binh Tay Market — the central market for the city and one of the liveliest areas where you will discover an amazing array of produce, meat and seafood. Dinner at Com Ngon Vietnamese Restaurant.

Day Four

Vietnam's 'rice-bowl', the Mekong Delta, is a rich fertile region of flat farmland interlaced with thousands of waterways and tributaries of the mighty Mekong River. This morning depart for the Delta and the town of Cai Be. At Cai Be board the Cai Be Princess for a private excursion; you will pass stilted villages and rich green rice paddies. Focusing on the culinary heritage of the Delta the tour will begin with a visit of some local home factories such as rice paste making, rice pop corn, coco candies, and the drying and processing of longans. We will proceed by cruising through Cai Be colorful floating market among local barges full of fruits and vegetables.

Back on board the Cai Be Princess, proceed to Dong Hoa Hiep Island, a peaceful escape where you will be able to discover the rural life style and daily activities of the Delta inhabitants such as roof making with palm tree leaves, or net fishing. Lunch will await you at an ancient mandarin house, Anh Kiet Restaurant.

After lunch, you will return on board Cai Be Princess for a one and half hour cruise to discover beautiful landscapes along the river and canals. The evergreen islands of the Mekong River are created by networks of meandering rivers, and are criss-crossed with countless arroyos. Stops on the way can be made at An Binh ancient Church or Tam Ho bonsais garden. On board you can sample the local exotic fruits and green tea. Return to Ho Chi Minh City.

Day Five

Drive north to the coast and the impressive sand dunes of Mui Ne, called the Vietnamese Sahara. Later continue to the neighboring town of Phan Thiet. Nestled along the banks of the Phan Thiet River where it enters the sea, Phan Thiet has a picturesque harbor, but is best known for the quality of the Nuoc Mam, fish sauce, made here. Overnight in Phan Thiet.

Day Six

Nuoc Mam is one of the staples of Vietnamese cuisine and lends a distinctive character to the nation's cooking, additionally it takes the place of salt as the primary condiment on the Vietnamese table. It is made by fermenting salted fish in huge ceramic vats for up to 12 months. This morning visit a local Nuoc Mam manufactory with a lecture on the history and process of making this ubiquitous sauce, as well as a tour of the facility. The remainder of the day is free. Dinner tonight at Fort Vietnamese Restaurant.

Day Seven

Morning transfer to Nha Trang airport for a brief flight to Danang. A short drive brings you to Hoi An, simply a jewel of a town. In a country so ravaged by war, this UNESCO World Heritage Site has miraculously remained unscathed. The historic district is a rich architectural fusion of Chinese, Japanese, European, and Vietnamese influences reflecting the international status of this important port. Hoi An was the gateway through which many new ideas entered Vietnam, including both Buddhism and Christianity, as well as the diverse influences, spices, and culinary currents which together have resulted in the country's amazing cuisine. Your hotel is located on the stunning palm lined Hoi An Beach and the remainder of the day is free to enjoy this tropical paradise.



Hoi An Beach

Day Eight

Meet this morning at the local Hoi An Café with the Chef from the Red Bridge Restaurant. After coffee or tea head off to the market to buy ingredients for this morning's cooking class. Then it is a quick boat trip up the river to the school where you will be treated to demonstrations of Hoi An specialties such as squid and pineapple salad, grilled eggplant and *banh xeo* (Hoi An crepes), before being let loose in the kitchen. Enjoy lunch of the dishes you have created. Return to Hoi An where the remainder of the day is free to explore this charming town, or relax on the beach.

Day Nine

This morning take a bicycle ride to Thanh Ha pottery village, where you will visit a ceramics workshop where artisans use age-old techniques. Visitors have a chance to "get their hands dirty" making their own ceramic creations. Continue to Tra Que, an herb growing village, stopping en route to visit the tombs of Japanese traders from centuries past. The country road to Tra Que winds through rice paddies and timeless rural landscapes. At Tra Que see traditional gardening of herbs and vegetables and learn about their importance in Vietnamese cuisine. After lunch at local house return to hotel. The remainder of the day is at leisure.

Day Ten

Breakfast at hotel. You will depart Hoi An for Hué via the stunning Hai Van Pass (one of the highest passes in Vietnam). Arrive Hué and check-in to your hotel.

This afternoon visit the imposing Imperial Citadel from where the Nguyen Dynasty ruled between 1802 and 1945. Also visit the Museum of Royal Relics. The city tour is followed by a drive to visit some of the 13 lavish imperial tombs of the Nguyen kings, including Tu Duc tomb. End the day with visit of the Dong Ba market. Dong Ba market is the largest market in Hué and, more importantly, is a symbol of the city's culture and refined cuisine.

Vietnamese Cuisine in Hué



Day Eleven

Today enjoy a cruise on the romantically named Perfume River visiting Hué's best known religious site, Thien Mu Pagoda, and the mausoleum of the former emperor Minh Mang in a tranquil setting of gardens and lakes. After lunch at An Dinh Cung the balance of the day is free to continue exploring this imperial city.

Day Twelve

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Hanoi. After a short rest, set out to take a one hour Cyclo ride around Hanoi's old streets. Relax as you weave through the narrow alleys of Hanoi's ancient Old Quarter, glimpsing everyday life. We will take

you past Hoan Kiem Lake stopping at Ngoc Son Temple. This evening attend a traditional water puppet show, a uniquely northern Vietnamese art form especially designed for depicting scenes from rural life and many episodes of national history. Dinner at Au Lac Restaurant.

Day Thirteen

This morning enjoy a city tour of Vietnam's capital. Hanoi is a unique city with tree-lined boulevards, French colonial architecture, peaceful lakes and oriental temples. The city tour includes such sights as Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum. Enjoy the architectural and historical aspects of "Uncle Ho's" final resting-place. Continue your visit to see Ho Chi Minh's 'house on stilts', his home from 1954 until 1969. The wooden ethnic minority style house is surrounded by quiet and peaceful gardens. Sitting to one side of the Mausoleum is the One Pillar Pagoda, founded by King Ly Thai To in 1049 the structure has become an important symbol for the people of Hanoi. Journey to the National Fine Arts Museum, located in colonial France's former Ministry of Information has an eclectic mix of contemporary Vietnamese art, religious pieces, lacquer-ware and sculptures. Continue to the Temple Of Literature. Vietnam's first university constructed in 1070, its gardens and well-preserved architecture offers a relaxing glimpse into Vietnam's past.

After lunch at Wild Rice Restaurant, considered one of the finest restaurants in the country, continue to the Hoa Lo prison (known as the "Hanoi Hilton" during the American war). Continue to visit the Buddhist Tran Quoc Pagoda on West Lake (one of the oldest in Vietnam) and Quan Thanh Temple (Taoist, dating from the Ly Dynasty). Then, the Museum of Ethnology to enhance your understanding of Vietnam's diverse culture through its unique presentation of objects & dress from daily life.

Wild Rice Restaurant, Hanoi



Day Fourteen

Leave Hanoi by road for Halong Bay. Enjoy the journey through the rich farmlands of the Red River Delta and the scenery of rice fields, water buffalo and everyday Vietnamese village life. Arrive in Halong and board the Huong Hai or Bai Tho traditional sailing junk. While cruising the exquisite waters sample the regions fresh seafood. Visit the recently discovered Surprise Grotto with its great views, and on the next island see the yawning mouth of Bo Nau Cave. Alternatively journey to Dau Go Cave and nearby see the famous stalagmites and stalactites of Thien Cung Cave. Enjoy a swim in the emerald waters of Halong Bay at any spot that you wish to visit. Watch the sun set over the bay while enjoying a delicious dinner. Overnight on board the junk.

Day Fifteen

Wake up to fresh coffee and a wholesome breakfast before cruising back to Halong City. En route the junk weaves through strange-shaped rock formations that invite comparisons from fighting cocks to dragons and even General de Gaulle's nose! After another wonderful fresh seafood lunch on board, disembark at the dock at Halong City. Transfer back to Hanoi by road and transfer to hotel on arrival. In the late afternoon, visit the Hoa Sua Cooking School for disadvantaged students which is a goodwill project to prepare under-privileged children for a culinary career. A representative from the school will give a presentation on the history and mission of this organization. Afterwards, enjoy a Farewell Dinner at the school restaurant.

Day Sixteen

Transfer to the airport for your return flight to the USA.