



The TEAM PARKINSON'S 2009 CHALLENGE – CYCLE VIETNAM

ITINERARY IN DETAIL

DEPART: MELBOURNE onVN780 at 1135

ARRIVE: HANOI on VN780 at 2000

On arrival, we are met by our local agents transferred to the group hotel for overnight accommodation.

DAY 2 IN HANOI. SIGHTSEEING

After breakfast, the tour leader gives a group briefing before our half day sightseeing-tour of Hanoi. We'll visit the Mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh, the father of modern Vietnam and walk through the grounds of the magnificent Presidential Palace, visiting the humble wooden cottage of Ho Chi Minh and a museum dedicated to the life of Vietnam's first President, plus the One Pillar Pagoda.

This is followed by a visit to the impressive Temple of Literature. The remainder of the afternoon is free time, when you can explore the many interesting streets of the Old Quarter, an area that has changed little over the centuries.

Each street is named (in Vietnamese of course!) after the goods that they trade in, so expect to see names such as Silk Street, Iron Street, Biscuit Street and Show Street. Of course, making your own discoveries will be an adventure and eye-opener too!

In the evening, we dine at a local restaurant and have the opportunity to sample specialty dishes of the north.

Then we'll take in a performance of Hanoi's famous water puppet theatre; a series of 17 stories presented by 11 puppeteers who traditionally performed during the monsoonal period when rice farming in the Red River Delta was not possible. The stories reflect their way of life and dreams, as well as providing respite from their demanding work schedule.

DAY 3 - IN HANOI. TIME AT LEISURE. TRAIN TO HUE

After a late check out from our hotel and an early dinner, we transfer to the train station for our overnight train journey on the Reunification Express, heading southwards to Hue. The overnight accommodation aboard the train is four-person cabins and you'll sleep in comfortable berths swaying to the timeless rhythm of the railroad.





DAY 4 - IN HUE

We arrive early morning at Hue and transfer to our centrally located hotel. After a shower and some breakfast, get geared up for our first day of cycling. We'll meet our additional crew who will be driving the support vehicles. (One vehicle is our bus, which will act as a support vehicle and carry our luggage; the other is a truck for carrying the bikes.) This is the time to "meet" our bicycles; each designated bike is adjusted and fitted with the rider's own equipment as required. At this time, we'll also be briefed on how to ride the bikes and how to handle Vietnamese traffic.

Then we're off on the first leg of our Vietnamese adventure: cycling through the ancient capital of Hue. Hue is known for the magnificent architecture of its Royal Tombs, pagodas and temples, built during the Nguyen Dynasty along the picturesque setting of the Perfume River. The royal relics of the Nguyen Emperors on the outskirts of the city are an easy ride from our hotel. We'll have time to visit the old Imperial Citadel, the Forbidden Purple City, and the Imperial Museum before lunch.

In the afternoon, we'll visit some ancient tombs of emperors past. We cycle approximately 12km to the eccentric Tu Ducs tomb located in a serene setting on the outskirts of town. Time permitting, we'll then cycle to Thien Mu Pagoda, considered the unofficial symbol of Hue, before returning to the hotel for the night.

DAY 5 - RIDE TO HOI AN

It's an early start to the day - driving about 30km out of town before climbing onto our bikes. Today is our first experience of cycling on a highway outside of the towns. While traffic can be heavy in some parts, this is the best way to experience the surrounding countryside, cycling past endless rice paddy fields and children shouting "hello" in heavy accents.

The support vehicles will travel at the back of the group and we will stop every 15 km to regroup, share experiences and take photos. This morning, we'll cycle approximately 30km before lunch through gently undulating countryside. After lunch, we bus through Da Nang, stopping briefly to see the marble statues near the mountain of the same name, before cycling on to the World Heritage town of Hoi An.

In the evening, enjoy a short walking tour through the old streets of Hoi An. The lanterns hanging from shop fronts while café patrons spilling onto the streets makes the night walk a charming experience. Amongst other things, Hoi An is famous for a particular noodle dish (Kau Lau), which we endeavor to sample during our stay in the town.





Day 6 - CYCLE TO QUANG NGAI (DISTANCE CYCLED 100KM)

We join the main link between Vietnam's north and south, Highway 1, cycling to the town of Tam Ly where we stop for a picnic lunch.

We continue on to the district of Song My, to the better known hamlet of My Lai, home to an evocative memorial for the villagers that died in the horrific massacre which took place during the Vietnam War.

The My Lai site is in a small rural settlement, surrounded by simple thatched huts, quilted rice paddies and farmers with conical hats going about their day-to-day routines. The mood set by these surroundings is one of peace and tranquility, despite the deep scars of the past.

After visiting the simple memorial and museum, we continue riding to Quang Ngai where we stay overnight.

Day 7 - CYCLE TO KON TUM (DISTANCE CYCLED 85KM)

Today is a more challenging day as we leave the main traffic route of Highway 1 and head inland towards Quang Nam Province. We will cycle only part of today, along quiet but scenic, undulating roads. This leg of the adventure provides the perfect opportunity to take photos of the amazing sites; remote villages, tropical forests and of course, the friendly locals.

Day 8 - CYCLE TO BUON ME THUOT (DISTANCE CYCLED 100KM)

Today's cycling journey is on an excellent section road, Highway 14, through scenic uplands. We pass by coffee plantations and national parks on our way to the largest town in the western highlands, Buon Me Thuot, which is also the capital of Dac Lac Province.

The fresh coffee of this province is famous so naturally we'll be taking the opportunity to sample the many varieties that are produced here, including the oddly but appropriately named "Weasel Coffee".

DAY 9 - CYCLE TO NHA TRANG BEACH (DISTANCE CYCLED 80KM)

More cycling today on undulating, but mostly downhill roads, towards the coast and Nha Trang. We pass through more minority hamlets on our way to the kilometres of untouched beaches, ambient climate and islands begging to be explored, all of which have made Nha Trang a popular Vietnamese resort.

The accommodation for the next 2 nights is ideally situated right near the main beach in the centre of town. Here we spend the night at a group hotel.





DAY 10 - REST DAY IN NHA TRANG BEACH/OVERNIGHT TRAIN TO HO CHI MINH

Today is a cycle-free day allowing you ample time to enjoy the clear blue waters and relaxed ambience of Nha Trang.

Nha Trang offers a number of sights of historical or spiritual significance, which can be explored at your leisure during the day or you may simply want to lie on the beach or enjoy a relaxing massage. This afternoon we transfer to the train station for our overnight train to Ho Chi Minh.

DAY 11 - ARRIVE HO CHI MINH

After breakfast we are met and transferred to the airport to board our flight to Ho Chi Minh. On arrival in Ho Chi Minh, we are again met at the station and transferred to our hotel. Today, we have a half day of sightseeing of Ho Chi Minh and in the evening, we join our Vietnamese guides for a farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

DAY 12 - HO CHI MINH Today is at leisure to catch up on that inevitable last minute shopping and final exploring before transferring to the airport late afternoon for your onward flight back to Australia.

DEPART HO CHI MINH on VN781 at 2125

NOTE: If you are departing Vietnam on DAY 12, you will receive a transfer to the airport.

DAY 13 ARRIVE MELBOURNE

ARRIVE: MELBOURNE on VN781 at 0935

