



The Vietnam War: The War without Front Lines

March 3 – 17, 2018

\$3980.00 Dbl. Occ. (+\$500.00 Solo Traveler)

Includes Land Tour and International Air from Houston – Optional R/T Air from Pittsburgh to Houston \$448.74)

Day 1 Saturday, Mar. 3 – Depart Houston. Out bound Cross international dateline.

EVA Air Depart Houston IAH 11:40 PM

Day 2 - Monday, March 5 (L, D) Welcome and “Good Morning, Vietnam”

Arrive Taipei TPE 6:10 AM

Depart TPE 9:15 AM Arrive Hanoi HAN 11:35 AM 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**. Short break at the hotel – nap, catch up to social media back home, or wander through the area around the hotel.

Group dinner. Overnight Hanoi. Lan Vie Hotel.

Day 3 Tuesday, Mar. 6 – (B) 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. Lan Vie Hotel.

Day 4 Wednesday, Mar. 7 – (B, L, D) 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**. Group Dinner. Overnight Halong Bay. Royal Lotus Hotel.

Day 5 Thursday, Mar. 8 – (B, L) 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. Huong Giang Hotel.



Day 6 Friday, Mar. 9 – (B, L, D) 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. Huong Giang Hotel.

Day 7 Saturday, Mar. 10 – (B, L, D) 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. Dong Ha Saigon Hotel.

Day 8 Sunday, Mar. 11 – (B, L) 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. Dong Ha Saigon Hotel.



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Day 9 Monday, Mar. 12 – (B, D)

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. Royal Lotus Hotel.



Day 10 Tuesday, Mar. 13 – (B, L, D)

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. Paragon Saigon Hotel.

Day 11 – Wednesday, Mar. 14 – (B, L)

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. Paragon Saigon Hotel.

Day 12 - Thursday, Mar. 15 - (B, L)

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. Paragon Saigon Hotel.

Day 13 Friday, Mar. 16 – (B, D)

FREE day to Explore Ho Chi Minh City – Farewell Dinner

Take in a cultural experience, shop, visit other Vietnam-era locations or relax and reflect. Join the group for a Final Farewell dinner.

Day 14 –Saturday, Mar. 17

(B)

Goodbye, Vietnam

Morning – Transfer to Airport.

EVA Air - Depart Ho Chi Minh City SGN 3:55 PM Arrive Taipei TPE 8:10 PM

Depart TPE 10:10 PM Arrive Houston IAH 10:40 PM

Cross the international dateline.

Arrive Houston late on Saturday, March 17. Overnight hotel near Houston Airport.

Day 15 – Sunday, Mar 18 (B)

Return to Pittsburgh or your point of origin.

===== Travel Details =====

Lodging – 4 Star Business & Leisure Hotels have been selected for amenities and location to restaurants and attractions. Stated on itinerary.

Breakfast (B) – Lunch (L) – Dinner (D) as indicated. Guide suggestions for lunch and dinners “on own.”

Gratuities: Included for restaurant wait staff for meals listed. Included for hotel porters.

Not included for local guides, drivers, tour manager and historian. Guidelines provided.

Vietnam VISA FEE (\$125.00) Not included. Apply through vietnamembassy-usa.org.

Air Travel: Independent air travel arrangements are discouraged at the beginning of the tour due to our coach pick-up in Hanoi. However, you may meet us at our arrival night hotel. Extensions beyond the tour departure date will required independent air travel arrangements.

Travel Protection—Highly suggested. Details provided at time of deposit or check our website.