

Luther Alumni & Friends Travel

Vietnam Beyond the War: A Resilient People, A Rising Nation

Version

5.5

Dates

April 7-21,
2027

Destinations

Hanoi, Ha Long Bay, Ninh Binh (Tam Coc), Hue, Hoi An, Mekong Delta (An Binh Island), Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

4/7

WED

Travel Day

NOTE: *This tour itinerary is subject to change. Although we will provide a very detailed itinerary a month or so prior to departure, we hope you begin to travel along with us as we plan the journey. That's why we made the schedule live. We also hope you begin to anticipate and appreciate the way in which travel changes you. We encourage you to be open to new experiences, let go a bit, and come to treasure the inevitable detours that come with travel.*

*Participants will make their own flight arrangements arriving in Hanoi, Vietnam on **April 8**. Upon arrival at Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi (airport code HAN), transportation will be provided from the airport to the hotel where the tour will begin.*

For your information, Jon and John will (tentatively) be on the following flights from Minneapolis

7:45 AM Depart from Decorah for drive to Minneapolis

10:30 AM MSP airport arrival (3-hours in advance) for international flight

1:35 PM Depart Minneapolis on *Overnight flight; 14 hrs*
Delta Airlines 171

AirMeals

4/8

THU

Seoul / Hanoi

- 5:20 PM** Arrive Seoul-Incheon
- 6:55 PM** Depart Seoul on Delta Air 7807 (operated by Korean Air) *Flight; 5 hrs 10 min*
- 9:35 PM** Arrive Hanoi Noi Bai Int'l Airport (HAN); clear immigration and customs
(Airport transfer: we will make arrangements for transport from the airport to the hotel for each participant, based on arrival details)
- 11:00 PM** Check into hotel (approximate)

Hotel: Proverb Hotel Hanoi 21 P. Bát Sứ, Phố cổ Hà Nội, Hoàn Kiếm, Hà Nội

AirMeals

4/9

FRI

Hanoi

Hanoi, population 8.8 million, is the capital city of Vietnam with a 1,000-year history. It is located in the northern part of the country and is known for its charming and chaotic Old Quarter; beautiful Hoan Kiem Lake in the center of the city; the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, which serves as the resting place for the country's revolutionary leader and President; and a vibrant cultural, art, and street food scene.

Buffet Breakfast (6:30-10:00 AM)

- 8:30 AM** Getting to know your fellow travelers AND brief onsite orientation to Vietnam
Location TBD
Discussion on meeting basic needs: onsite orientation, money and ATMs, phones, navigating via Grab, health & safety, expectations, emergency contacts, schedule, ethical photography, etc.

- 10:00 AM** Depart by private coach for guided tour of Hanoi

Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, Ba Dinh Square, Ho Chi Minh Complex, Congress Building, Presidential Palace, Temple of Literature, Hoa Lo Prison (Hanoi Hilton), John McCain Memorial, and Tran Quoc Pagoda on West Lake

TBD Welcome lunch with Hanoi speciality

TBD Coffee break to sample egg coffee, a Vietnamese treat

TBD Return to the hotel

evening Free time to continue to explore the area around the hotel on your own or in small groups
The Old Quarter, where streets are organized by what they sell (Shoe Street, Silver Street, Silk Street, Lantern Street, Bamboo Street, etc.)
Hoan Kiem Lake, the scenic center of Hanoi and a major focal point for local life
Note: *From Friday afternoon until Monday morning, several streets near Hoan Kiem Lake are closed to traffic, making it the perfect time to wander and explore*

Hotel: Proverb Hotel Hanoi

21 P. Bát Sứ, Phố cổ Hà Nội,
Hoàn Kiếm, Hà Nội

B/L

4/10

SAT

Hanoi

Buffet Breakfast (6:30-10:00 AM)

TBD Lecture at the hotel

TBD Depart by Grab taxis for Coffee Talk English session

TBD Optional Volunteer Activity: Coffee Talk English (CTE)
For those who are interested, we will serve as practice English partners with Vietnamese students/adults who wish to improve their conversational English language skills

TBD Lunch on your own

afternoon Free time to wander the Old Quarter, shop, explore on your own, or relax. This is also a great time to watch a water puppet show at the famous Thang Long Water Puppet Theatre

If you decided to attend a water puppet show, you should book the tickets in advance; we can provide details. Performances are 50-60 minutes in length and begin at the following times: 1:45 PM, 3:00 PM, 4:10 PM, 5:20 PM, 6:30 PM, 8:00 PM, 9:15 PM

afternoon 30-Minute Reflection Break

During your wandering, we'll ask you to find a spot to sit alone as you reflect on the following quote: "Tourists see what they have come to see, but travelers see what they see." (G. K. Chesterton, British author, philosopher, and journalist). We will ask you to jot down what you see . . . and hear, smell, taste, and touch

evening Free

6:45 PM Optional activity: Gather in the hotel lobby to walk to Hanoi's famous Train Street

7:00 PM No-host coffee/drinks at the Hanoi Train Street Cafe
We will stop for drink's on Hanoi's Train Street, a narrow, 1/4-mile residential street in the Old Quarter where regularly scheduled trains pass within inches of cafes and homes

Common evening train times: 7:00 PM, 7:45 PM, 8:30 PM, 9:20 PM, 10:00 PM

Hotel: Proverb Hotel Hanoi

21 P. Bát Sứ, Phố cổ Hà Nội,
Hoàn Kiếm, Hà Nội

B

4/11

SUN

Hanoi / Ha Long Bay

Ha Long Bay, approximately 100 miles from Hanoi, is a 600-square-mile body of emerald-green water, with nearly 2,000 limestone karsts and islets in the Gulf of Tonkin. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, many regard it as one of the world's top nature destinations. We will explore the area on an overnight cruise. For those who wish, there will be an opportunity for some easy kayaking and walking on beaches.

Buffet Breakfast (6:30-10:00 AM)

- 9:15 AM** By this time, make sure you are checked out of the room, key cards returned, any room charges have been settled, and you are ready to continue on our journey
- 9:30 AM** Depart by private coach for travel to Hai Phong City, the launching point for cruises on Ha Long Bay
- TBD** Reflection/conversation
While en route, we'll engage in a conversation about what you saw during your reflection break while sitting alone in Hanoi
- 11:30 AM** Arrive Hai Phong City, transfer to the Signature Cruise, a traditional wooden sailing ship that will serve as our home while exploring Ha Long Bay
- TBD** Lunch on board the cruise ship
- TBD** Afternoon activities: kayaking, swimming, and exploring Vung Vieng Floating Fishing Village
- evening** Cooking demonstration, Happy Hour, and Dinner on board the cruise ship
- evening** Lecture and reflection

Hotel: Signature Cruise

Ha Long Bay, Ha Long City

B/L/D

4/12

MON

Ha Long Bay / Ninh Binh (Tam Coc)

Ninh Binh is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Approximately 60 miles south of Hanoi, the area has scenic rice paddies and the same limestone karst peaks that characterize Ha Long Bay (some refer to it as Ha Long Bay on Land). Winding rivers, one of which we will traverse in rowboats, weave through the valleys between the peaks and occasionally run through caves. Those wanting to hike the 450+ steps to the Mua Cave will see a panoramic view of the entire area. The town of Hoa Lu, which is a short walk from our hotel, was a 10th-century capital.

Buffet Breakfast (7:00-10:00 AM)

morning Optional morning activities: Tai Chi session on the cruise ship; short hike to Thien Canh Son cave; walking along the beach

TBD Lunch on the cruise ship

TBD Check out and disembark from the ship

1:00 PM Depart by private coach to Ninh Binh; approx. 3-hour drive

4:00 PM Arrive Ninh Binh, check into hotel

Evening Free

Hotel: Ninh Binh Legend Hotel

77 Đ. Lê Thái Tổ, Hoa Lư, Ninh Bình

B/L

4/13

TUE

Ninh Binh (Tam Coc) / Hue

Buffet Breakfast (6:30-9:30 AM)

TBD By this time, make sure you are checked out of the room, key cards returned, any room charges have been settled, and you are ready to continue on our journey

morning Hike to Mua Cave for spectacular views over the local rice fields
(500 steps; 20-40 minute walk up; 15 minute walk down; for those who choose not to climb the steps, we'll meet up as a group upon return)

morning Tour of Hoa Lu Ancient Imperial City
Visit the ancient capitals of the Dinh and Le dynasties

TBD Group lunch

afternoon Boat tour through the Trang An Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

- 4:00 PM** Depart by private coach to Noi Bai Int'l Airport/Hanoi
approx. 2.5 hours
- 6:30 PM** Arrive at Hanoi Airport; check in for flight
Dinner on your own at the airport
- 8:15 PM** Depart Hanoi on Vietnam Airways 1549 *Flight; 1 hr 20 mins*
- 9:35 PM** Arrive Phu Bai Int'l Airport/Hue (HUI)
- 10:45 PM** Check into hotel

Hotel: Vedana Lagoon Resort & Spa 41/ 23 Đoàn Trọng Truyến, tt.
Phủ Lộc, Huế

B/L

4/14

WED

Hue

Hue, a city of approximately 500,000 people located on the Perfume River, is a good example of modernity and history existing simultaneously. The Citadel, built at the beginning of the 19th century, coincided with the beginning of the Nguyen dynasty and the movement of the capital from Hanoi to Hue. In 1968 the Citadel was the site of one of the most brutal battles of the war; during the Tet Offensive fighting between the two sides shifted from countryside battles to urban conflict.

Buffet Breakfast (6:30-10:00 AM)

- 9:00 AM** Depart by private coach for guided tour of Hue City
Tour the Forbidden City; boat ride on the Perfume River to Thien Mu Pagoda
- TBD** Group lunch
- TBD** Depart by private coach for guided tour of the Royal Tombs of Hue
- TBD** Check into hotel
- evening** Free

Hotel: Vedana Lagoon Resort & Spa 41/ 23 Đoàn Trọng Truyến, tt.
Phủ Lộc, Huế

B/L

4/15

THU

Hue / Hoi An

Hoi An is consistently ranked as a top global travel destination. In 2025, *Travel + Leisure* ranked Hoi An as the 6th Best City in the World for its blend of culture, cuisine, and architecture. It is a beautiful city and despite its popularity it doesn't have the noise and chaotic crowdedness of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. It is no sleepy town, though; it's cosmopolitan, architecturally charming, and overflowing with fabulous food. Whether walking by the Thu Bon River in the evening; shopping at the craft, clothing, and specialty shops; visiting cultural and historical museums; or taking a cooking class, Hoi An is both relaxing and energizing.

Buffet Breakfast (6:30-10:00 AM)

TBD By this time, make sure you are checked out of the room, key cards returned, any room charges have been settled, and you are ready to continue on our journey

9:00 AM Depart by private coach from Hue to Hoi An
approx. 2 hours

11:00 AM Check into hotel
Rooms may not be ready, but we will be able to store our luggage while we tour Hoi An

11:30 AM Depart for walking tour of Hoi An

afternoon Lunch on your own; afternoon free
Note: Hoi An is world-renowned for quality, custom-tailored suits, dresses, coats, and other clothing; place the order today and have the clothing ready when we depart!

evening Free

Hotel: La Siesta Hoi An Resort & Spa

132 Hùng Vương, Phường Cẩm Phổ, Hội An Tây

B

4/16

FRI

Hoi An

Buffet Breakfast (6:30-10:00 AM)

April 16 is **Hung King's Commemoration Day**, a public holiday in Vietnam. The day honors the founders of the nation.

You have one "assignment" during this special holiday. As we wander and explore, **use your camera or phone to capture two contrasting images**. These two images can really be anything that grabs your attention. Perhaps it's two contrasting images of wealth vs. poverty; healthy vs. unhealthy; ancient vs. modern; sacred vs. secular; etc. Once you have captured the two images, upload them to the group's WhatsApp account and include a brief title/description. We will talk about the images the next day.

morning

We will bike to Cam Thanh Fishing Village (Coconut Village) for a boat tour, cooking class, and foot massage

For those who prefer not to travel by bike, we will make taxi arrangements

afternoon Free

evening Free time to enjoy Hoi An's charming nightlife

Hotel: La Siesta Hoi An Resort & Spa

132 Hùng Vương, Phường Cẩm Phổ, Hội An Tây

B/L

4/17

SAT

Hoi An / Mekong Delta (An Binh Island)

The Mekong Delta, located more than 1,000 miles south of Hanoi, is home to 19 million people but seems both remote and rural because it spans 16,000 square miles, much of which is a vast network of waterways. Its climate is tropical, it is the nation's agricultural heartland, its population is ethnically diverse, and perhaps nowhere else in Vietnam is climate change posing so many environmental problems. Perhaps it should not surprise that because it is the southernmost part of Vietnam and runs into the South China Sea, this is where many of the boat people escaping Vietnam after the war began their journey.

Buffet Breakfast (6:30-10:00 AM)

- 6:45 AM** By this time, make sure you are checked out of the room, key cards returned, any room charges have been settled, and you are ready to continue on our journey
- 7:00 AM** Depart by private coach for travel to the Danang Airport
- 8:00 AM** Arrive at Danang Airport; check in for flight
- 9:45 AM** Depart Danang on Vietnam Air 164 *Flight; 1 hrs 25 mins*
- 11:10 AM** Arrive Hanoi
- 12:35 PM** Depart Hanoi on Vietnam Air 6345 *Flight; 2 hrs 15 mins*
Lunch en route
- 2:50 PM** Arrive Can Tho International Airport (VCA)
- 3:00 PM** Depart by private coach for travel to Vinh Long Pier; transfer to a motorboat for ride to An Binh Island
- TBD** Arrive Vinh Long; check into farm stay accommodations
- TBD** Biking tour around An Binh Island with stops at local family businesses
- evening** Vietnamese cooking class and dinner

Hotel: Ut Trinh Homestay-An Binh Island

Tô 12, Hoà Ninh, An Bình

4/18

SUN

Mekong Delta (Vinh Long) / Ho Chi Minh City

Ho Chi Minh City (aka Saigon), with a population of 10 million, is both the most populous city in the country and the financial center. Motorbikes and street food remain a characteristic of the city, but it also has the feel of a modern, cosmopolitan city (the *Michelin Guide* recommends 55 restaurants). For Americans of a certain age it is hard to think about Saigon without thinking about the end of the Vietnam War, and the War Remnants Museum (which we will visit) is a powerful reminder of that war.

Buffet Breakfast (6:30-10:00 AM)

- TBD** By this time, make sure you are checked out of the room, key cards returned, any room charges have been settled, and you are ready to continue on our journey
- morning** Boat trip to Cai Thia to visit a family-run, artisanal rice paper factory; biking and riding in small, bamboo boats along narrow canals and fruit orchards; visit local family-run orchards with local fruit tasting
- TBD** Board boat from An Binh Island to Vinh Long Pier; lunch en route; transfer to private coach for 3-hour ride to Ho Chi Minh City
- 2:30 PM** Check into hotel
- 4:30 PM** Luther Alumni, Parents, & Friends Gathering in Vietnam
TBD
- evening** Free

Hotel: Le Meridien Saigon

3C Tôn Đức Thắng, Sài Gòn, Hồ
Chí Minh

B/L/Alumni Gathering Hors d'oeuvres

4/19

Ho Chi Minh City

MON

Buffet Breakfast (6:00-10:00 AM)

- morning** Depart by private coach for guided Ho Chi Minh City Tour
Visit Independence Palace, Notre Dame Cathedral, and the historic Saigon Central Post Office
- TBD** Group lunch
- afternoon** Ho Chi Minh City tour continues with a visit to the War Remnants Museum
- TBD** Return to the hotel
- evening** Free

Hotel: Le Meridien Saigon

3C Tôn Đức Thắng, Sài Gòn, Hồ Chí Minh

B/L

4/20

TUE

Ho Chi Minh City

Buffet Breakfast (6:00-10:00 AM)

- 8:00 AM** Gather in hotel lobby for short walk to the Bach Dang Pier, departure location for express boat tours on the Saigon River
- 8:30 AM** Depart by chartered express boat for a journey down the Saigon River to the Cu Chi Tunnels
Boat journey of approximately 90 minutes followed by a tour of the Cu Chi Tunnels, a 155-mile network of interconnected tunnels used as a strategic base for the Viet Cong during the Vietnamese War
Note: You may want to bring a snack along
- 1:00 PM** Return to Bach Dang Pier; short return walk to the hotel
- TBD** Lunch on your own

afternoon Our last afternoon in Vietnam is purposefully unstructured. This is your day to shop, visit museums, do some more sightseeing, wander, and explore

TBD Depart hotel for brief transfer to the river pier from which our dinner cruise will depart

TBD Farewell Indochina Junk Dinner Cruise

Hotel: Le Meridien Saigon 3C Tôn Đức Thắng, Sài Gòn, Hồ Chí Minh

B/D

4/21

WED

Return to the U.S.

Buffet Breakfast (6:00-10:00 AM)

For your information, Jon and John will be on the following flights to Minneapolis

5:45 AM By this time, make sure you are checked out of the room, key cards returned, any room charges have been settled, and you are ready to continue on our journey

6:00 AM Depart hotel for transfer to the airport

6:30 AM Arrive Tan Son Nhat International Airport (SGN)

9:05 AM Depart Ho Chi Minh City *Flight; 5 hrs 20 mins*
on Vietnam Air 402

4:25 PM Arrive Seoul-Incheon

7:40 PM Depart Seoul on Delta *Flight; 12 hrs 30 mins*
Airlines 170

6:21 PM Arrive Minneapolis
Clear immigration and customs

7:00 PM Depart Minneapolis for drive to Decorah

9:45 PM Arrive Decorah (approximate)

B/AirMeals

