

Vietnam Road Cycling – 14 Days

Historical Ho Chi Minh Trail: Hanoi to Saigon



Cycling in Vietnam holds special appeal to many and it is not hard to understand why. The ancient alleyways, shady colonial avenues and cluttered highways provide a perfect window on the lives and landscapes of this dynamic country. With so many of Vietnam's daily rituals carried out along the country's roadsides – from market shopping to rice harvesting, coffee drinking to colourful funeral processions – cycling the country's roads gets you right amongst the fascinating charming people of Vietnam.

This tour is designed with the enthusiastic road cyclist in mind, consisting of many challenging rides and allowing you the perfect opportunity to escape winter to the tropics. You will not only get a head start on next season's fitness, but also meet the real people of Vietnam, away from the cities while riding the coffee trail of the central highlands. You will dine on healthy cuisine and indulge in a massage that is a real treat for both the body and the soul (optional). We attempt to provide an atmosphere of camaraderie and fun away from our usual western riding conditions.

Our tour starts from Hanoi and roughly follows the historic Ho Chi Minh Trail (today the Ho Chi Minh Highway) until we get to our 'half-way point' at the coastal resort of Hoi An. From here we follow the coast to experience first hand the beaches and fishing villages that have made Vietnam famous. At the end of the trip we make an interesting detour into the mountains around Dalat. This excursion is a cultural as well as an athletic delight. We climb up to 1500m and see ancient tribal villages and coffee plantations.

Participants should have good levels of fitness and a keen sense of adventure. The tour caters for anyone who enjoys road cycling and travelling. While each day offers large cycling distances, we recognize that many people will not wish to take part in all of the riding, so the opportunity to relax in the air-conditioned support vehicle is always available! Our supported bike tours are ideal for groups of riders with different abilities who want to travel and bike together. The strong riders can go hard all day; while the more recreational cyclists draft along for part(s) of the day and enjoy the road trip for the rest of the time. We will provide food, accommodation and ground transport. All you need to do is turn up with your bag and bike!

Tour Itinerary

Please Note: The following itinerary describes the longest possible cycling option per day. Our support team is there for all riders to tailor the distances to their needs. Whilst this tour requires a very good level of fitness, only very participants will ride all of the sections described below. Along the way are many points of interest that can be visited!

Day 1: Arrival in Hanoi

Please arrive at Hanoi Airport before 12 noon. After we transfer you to the city (45min) and check you in to the tour hotel, we take you on a City Tour. Among the various places of interest, we show you the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum (closed on Mondays) and visit his home on stilts and One Pillar Pagoda nearby as well as the Temple of Literature before heading to NgocSon temple at Hoan Kiem lake. We have the opportunity to enjoy a traditional water puppet show and in the evening we have our first Group dinner together.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Dinner

No cycling

Day 2: City Tour Hanoi & Cycling to Cuc Phuong National Park

This morning we depart Hanoi for an hours drive to Luong Son, before cycling 25km on a country road to Bai Chao. This is a quiet tarmac road, through scenic rice fields. We warm up our legs with some good hills, up and down with the opportunity for a photo on the way at the big bamboo waterwheels along the streams, which pump water to rice fields. We continue 13km to Kim Boi where we slow down a bit through this town of mineral water springs, then speed up again for another 33km of country road to Lac Son. Our van will take us a further 1 hour (~ 50km) to Cuc Phuong National Park for the evening.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Cycling: approx. 80km / 50mi, 4hrs riding

Day 3: Cuc Phuong National Park to Ben Sung

Wake up early for a walk around the park, or just listen to birds and the Gibbon at the Primate rescue centre nearby. After breakfast, we ride on a small broken tarmac road, which winds around the limestone mountain ~ 10km through the buffer zone of Cuc Phuong National Park. Make sure you have mounted sturdy tyres for these roads (we will encounter a few more on the trip), slowdown and avoid the potholes. It is downhill to Kim Tan town, cycling a small route that connects to Camthuy. From here, we have a fast stage on smooth tarmac along the HCM highway to Ngoc Lac and other touring stages to Lamson and Yen Cat. Today offers some gentle hills, but not much climbing. At Yen Cat, we turn 20km off the highway to Ben Sung town for the night.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Cycling: 80-160km / 50-100mi, 4-8hrs riding



Day 4: Ben Sung to Vu Quang

Today offers up to 200km of riding over four stages. We will see the sunrise from our saddles with a 5.00am start. We transfer by van to Yen Cat, before starting the first stage to Nghia Dan before breakfast and a coffee break. We slow down for the 'touring stage' to Tan Ky, the start point of the historical Ho Chi Minh trail in the war time. It used to be the main junction of the supply line during the war. American aircraft heavily bombarded the area in repeated efforts to destroy the junction. We continue on to Tri Le and start the longest stage to Huong Son. We break the distance into manageable segments with restful recovery stops. We encourage you to pick only certain stages of the day, but wanted to provide an opportunity for very fit riders to test their endurance skills. Please talk to your guide the day before about the best suitable sections for you personally. The hotel this evening invites you to indulge in a sauna and massage (optional).

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Cycling: 100-200km / 62-125mi, 5-9hrs riding

Day 5: Vu Quang to Dong Hoi

We travel in the van, uphill for approximately one hour to Kheve junction. This is the famous intersection of the HCM trail and road No. 12 where east and west connect with the Truong Son mountain range. Khe Ve, CaTang, Khe Nung were fiercely bombed by the US Air Force from 1965 to 1973. The Front Command of Truong Son Troop Headquarters was located at Hoa Tien commune in 1965, 3km south of Khe Ve. This is a starting point of the petroleum pipeline, communication line and liaison line during the wartime. We take a fast stage 25km to Pheo, followed by 20km to Da Deo mountain pass, finally crossing over the Truong Son mountain range we have a wicked descent into Khe Gat (former airbase) where we have a picnic lunch break. During the afternoon we cycle to Xuan Son bridge (Xuan Son ferry was heavily bombed from 1965 to 1973) and keep on riding to Dong Hoi town.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Cycling: 60-120km / 38-75mi. 3-6hrs riding

Day 6: Dong Hoi to Hue

We have a flat to undulating day ahead of us. We start on a quiet inland country road for 24km through a scenic pine forest and eucalyptus plantation established after the war. After lunch it is a 'fast blast' along a smooth 11km to Ben Tat bridge, the modern version of the old Ben Tat suspension bridge over Ben Hai River. The Ben Hai River was the natural border between North and South Vietnam. After 17km we pass by the Truong Son National Cemetery, the cemetery for over 10,300 martyrs of the Vietnam War - mostly soldiers of Corp. 559. After a brief stop and/or visit the day ends with a flat stage of 20km to Cam where we turn onto highway 9. We follow the 9 for 15km to Dong Ha, where we will be picked up by our vans for the transfer (1.5h) to Hue.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Cycling: 90-180km / 56-112mi, 5-8hrs riding

Day 7: Hue to Hoi An

We leave our hotel in Hue by bike and navigate our way out of town. We are following a quiet country road outside Hue for about 30km. The morning stages are not too strenuous with short climbs over Phuoc Tuong Pass (4km +60m) and Phu Gia Pass (3km, +70m). We take a lunch break at Lang Co beach before kicking the afternoon off with a 10km ride up the beautiful Haivan pass. We climb to the summit at 496m, followed by a fun and furious 10km descent to Nam O beach. This is followed by a 50km 'sightseeing' stage to Hoi An via Da Nang City. After dinner, we enjoy a walk around the coastal resort town.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Cycling: 50-145km / 31-90mi, 4-6hrs riding

Day 8: Free Day in Hoi An

Today we have a free day to relax at the beach, enjoy a sightseeing walk around Hoi An. If you feel like cycling today, we suggest an afternoon ride to Marble Mountain and back to Hoi An via Cua Dai Beach.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast

Optional Unsupported Cycling: 50km / 31mi round trip, 4hrs riding

Day 9: Hoi An to Qui Nhon

We start this morning very relaxed with a transfer in our vans from Hoi An to Quang Ngai. The drive takes us down the coastal highway 1A, which links the North to the South. We stop for lunch on the golden sands of Sa Huynh Beach. In the afternoon we get on our bikes again for a scenic cruise. We will be touring through rural rice fields and fishing villages, with great sea views and along beautiful beaches. At the end of our ride, we cross the very long bridge over Thi Nai Lagoon before we tackle the last view kilometres to Qui Nhon city, where we stay for the night.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Cycling: 80km / 50mi, 4hrs riding



Day 10: Qui Nhon to Nha Trang

Our ride from Qui Nhon to Van Ninh covers some of Vietnam's most scenic coastline, featuring blue lagoons with stone promontories overlooking the sea. Fishing villages under rows of palm trees dot the coast here and the bays are filled with brightly coloured boats. We have lunch at scenic Dai Lanh Beach and later arrive on the waterfront in picturesque Nha Trang. Tonight enjoy a dinner of local seafood. This is a great day to complete a 'century ride' 100mi (160km), including many hills and one mountain pass. The climb just after Tuy Hoa Township will reward you with a stunning seaview. At Van Ninh, we join our van for a short transfer of approx. 50km on busy highway 1A to Nha Trang. We recommend you set some time aside for a foot massage this evening in Nha Trang (optional).

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Cycling: 160km / 100mi, 7hrs riding

Day 11: Nhatrang to Dalat

This morning we take on the challenging climb into the mountains around Dalat. We head inland (West) from Nha Trang for approx. 30km of flat riding on a brand new (2008) stretch of road to Khanh Vinh to reach the foot of the mountains. This is a beautiful narrow piece of tarmac through the tropical forest. Once we start to climb into the highlands we ride past coffee plantations, forests, tribal villages, mountain lakes all inviting us to take several R&R breaks. You will need to have plenty of energy left when you tackle the gradual 50km climb up to Hon Giao and the following 50km over several smaller passes to Dalat (1500m above sea level). We stay overnight in this beautiful mountain resort.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Cycling: 30-80-130km / 18-50-80mi, 2-6hrs riding



Day 12: Dalat to Mui Ne

We begin today with a twisting 10km / 6mi descent from Dalat through pine forests via the rolling and gradually falling road to Di Linh. We will pass by numerous coffee, tea, banana and rubber plantations planted in the rich, red earth that marks the Central Highlands. It is here, where Vietnam's finest tea and coffee is grown. Eventually, we turn off High Way 20 into a small road that undulates through tropical forests to Gia Bac. The final downhill takes us back to sea level at Phan Thiet and we continue East along the bay to Mui Ne Beach where we spend the night.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Cycling: up to ~ 180km / 112mi, 9hrs riding

Day 13: Mui Ne to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City).

This morning you can relax at the beach until lunchtime while our staff clean and pack your bike in the van. We have to check out of the hotel in the afternoon and transfer by van to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City, approx. 3.5-4h). This evening we will have our 'Good Bye Dinner' and after so many kilometres on the tarmac, you might be happy to box your bike for the flight home tomorrow.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

No cycling

Day 14: Departure Day

You have time for a city tour of Saigon or you spend some free at your leisure until check out and your transfer to the airport for your international departure.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast

No cycling

Tour Information

Included in 14 day tour:

- 13 nights in 2-4 star hotels (based on twin share)
- All meals as indicated in itinerary (except lunch and dinner on rest day). The support van carries snacks, cold drinking water and towels
- All transportation and gear transport in air-conditioned bus/minivan
- Airport transfer in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City
- Support vehicle and luggage transport
- Experienced cycling tour guide
- City tours of Hanoi and Saigon
- Entrance fees as per itinerary for Cuc Phuong National Park
- Vietnam Tour Riding Jersey

Not Included:

- Bike Rental not available for this tour
- Drinks & Favourite snack bars (e.g. Power Bar, etc.)
- Travel Insurance
- Personal Expenses
- Passport or Travel Visa Requirements

Tour Grade:

This tour is graded **3-4 challenging to hard** (on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being extreme) – there are options for participants with a range of fitness levels & technical ability.

Grade Description

* **Challenging tours** are designed for the more experienced participant wishing to push themselves and experience new highs of achievement. Routes will include longer climbs and more technical skills.

* **Fitness Required:** An average to good level of fitness is required, exercising at least two to four times a week prior to the tour.

* **Hard Tours** are for those looking to have some of the hardest days possible. Terrain will be steep and the adrenalin factor will be extreme. The strenuous effort will be well and truly rewarded when you reach the top but there will be some sweat lost and kilojoules burnt getting there

* **Fitness Required:** You will be very fit prior to the trip and even fitter when you get back!

Grade 1 = easy, few inclines, short distances (20-40km), no technical difficulty

Grade 2 = moderate some inclines, moderate distances (40-60km), no technical difficulty

Grade 3 = challenging, several inclines, longer distances (100km RB / 50km MTB), some technical difficulty (e.g. single trail or hair pin turns)

Grade 4 = hard, long inclines, long distances (100km+), technical difficulty

Grade 5 = HIGH ALTITUDE (4000M +)

Recreational Riders & Sightseeing Passengers:

Whilst this tour is graded hard to challenging, we are happy to cater to a small number of recreational riders who may wish to take part with shorter daily rides. We also welcome limited numbers of non-riders on our tours. If you are keen to experience Vietnam, but prefer to do this on four wheels rather than two, please do not hesitate to check our availability on your departure of choice.

Tour Dates and Prices

COUNTRY:	Vietnam	
DAYS	14	
CODE	VIECY	
FROM	Hanoi	
TO	Saigon	
TOUR GRADE:	3-4	
PRICE		
SINGLE SUPPLEMENT		
BIKE HIRE	not available	
DEPARTURES:	2009: 02 NOV	2010: 16 AUG, 02 NOV