

# Hanoi to Hue on the Ho Chi Minh Highway

Trip Code: HVMB

Version:



CYCLE



GUIDED GROUP



CHALLENGING



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Cycle the quiet Ho Chi Minh Highway through the rural heart of Vietnam
- Meet people of different ethnic groups - Hmong, Dao and Thai
- Spectacular 'karst' landscapes of the Truong Son Mountains

- The city of Hue and Vietnam's UNESCO-listed Imperial City

## AT A GLANCE

- 9 days biking
- 922 kilometres
- 100% road - 100% vehicle supported
- Join at Hanoi, depart Hue

## ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

# Introduction

Follow the northern section of the Ho Chi Minh Highway from Hanoi in the north down to Hue, the former 'Imperial Capital', on this road cycling holiday in Vietnam. The Ho Chi Minh Highway runs north to south through the mountainous spine of Vietnam. Constructed since the year 2000 as an alternative to Vietnam's coastal Highway 1, this is a generally well-made 2-lane road that sees very little traffic. Although this new road has no direct relation to the well-known Ho Chi Minh Trail (which was a tenuous and interlinking set of tracks and trails used as a supply line during the Vietnam War) the routes naturally coincide in places.

The section of the road that we ride in north and central Vietnam will take us through pretty farmland, jungle-clad valleys and jagged limestone peaks. We'll cycle alongside shining rivers and visit a fascinating mix of traditional towns and villages which are home to people of several different ethnic groups, including Hmong, Dao and Thai. Running parallel to the border with Laos and through the Truong Son Mountains, the Ho Chi Minh Highway will take us into some pretty remote and often spectacular regions of Vietnam. Of course, some of the sites that we see will date from the recent war, but the essence of this cycling holiday is much more about experiencing Vietnam at its most authentic. From rice fields and stilt houses to the cave system at Phong Nha and from the site of the Khe Sanh Combat Base, close to the border with Laos, to Vietnam's Imperial City in Hue, this is a road cycling holiday with a great deal to offer.

## Is this holiday for you?

**ROAD CYCLING.** Starting out after a short transfer from central Hanoi, the total distance of this tour is 922 kilometres (7500 metres of ascent) which we complete in 9 days of cycling. There are some quite long days, but the roads are smooth and the terrain is undulating rather than very hilly. Traffic is generally light on this route. There is full vehicle support and the local guide's expert knowledge of the area means that you will always know what is coming up in terms of distance and difficulty. This is a holiday for regular club, sportive and randonnee riders. **BIKE HIRE AVAILABLE LOCALLY.**

# Itinerary

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Version:

## Holiday Information

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### What's Included

- An experienced local English-speaking cycling guide
- All land transport as described
- One or more support vehicles and drivers
- All accommodation as described
- All meals

### What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Visas (if applicable)
- Hanoi and Hue airport transfers
- Tips for the local crew and drivers
- Miscellaneous expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc
- Bike Carriage on the flights - please check with your carrier for charges
- Bike Hire

### Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the hotel in Hanoi. Airport transfers on arrival and departure are not provided - there are reliable taxi services both in Hanoi and in Hue which provide the most cost-effective way of getting from the airport to the group hotel and vice versa.

Clients booking a Land Only Package MUST provide the KE office with full details of their flights.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

### Meal Plan

All meals are included, from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 11.

## Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. You should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) to treat your water. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

Start practising your chopstick technique now, as there are places we visit on this trip where there are no knives and forks! Vietnamese cuisine is fresh and flavoursome. Typically a selection of many dishes of varying flavours are served together, and everyone takes a little of each. A typical meal will include Pho (noodle soup), spring rolls, spiced beef and pork dishes, fish in chilli, tomato served with tofu, stir-fried vegetables and rice, with fresh fruit for dessert. As per the custom for most of the region, food is rarely served in courses and is often served all at once for all to share. Vietnamese cuisine is wholesome and filling for our days in the saddle!

## Accommodation

During this trip the group will spend 10 nights in various tourist-class hotels and guesthouses of a good standard, each with twin-share rooms and generally en-suite facilities. All accommodation is allocated on a twin-sharing basis and if you are travelling by yourself you will be paired up with another single client of the same sex. Single room occupancy can be arranged for all nights on payment of the single supplement charge.

## Group Leader & Support Staff

The trip will be led by an experienced local English-speaking cycling guide, with a second cycling guide for groups of 8 or more riders. There will also be one or more support vehicles and drivers.

## Spending Money

Approximately \$200 should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses, including tips to local staff (expect to pay \$100 in tips). If you are intending to buy expensive souvenirs, you should budget accordingly (credit cards can be useful in this respect). It is not necessary to obtain local currency (Vietnamese Dong) prior to travelling. Money can be changed most easily at Hanoi Airport on arrival. The group hotel in Hanoi will be able to make small exchanges only. There are ATMs in Hanoi and in one or two other places only. We recommend that you carry your travel money in the form of US dollars cash. US dollars are easily exchanged and can even be used to pay directly for goods and services in Vietnam.

## Guidance on Tipping

Tips are the accepted way of saying 'thank you' to your local guides and to your support crews and drivers. They do not form part of their wages. We recommend that you pay tips to your local crew if you feel they have done a good job. It is best to tip as a group and it is useful to have a group pool for this. As a rough guide we suggest you allow a total of \$100 for tips.

## Your Bike

Your bike should be fitted with a compact or triple chainset and we suggest that 25mm tyres will provide a bit more comfort on the variable road surfaces typically found on our **Road Cycling** holidays.

Since you are depending on your bike to transport you throughout your holiday, it's important to ensure it is in good working order. If you are not mechanically minded, get your local bicycle dealer to service it for you.

Please contact us if you are unsure about the suitability of your bike.

## Bike Hire

Bike hire is available locally for this holiday, and with baggage charges on long-haul flights becoming increasingly prohibitive, it can make a lot of sense to hire a bike locally. Our local agent has Giant Anyroad 2 bikes for hire in a full range of sizes. They are good quality and well maintained alloy bikes with Shimano components, triple chainsets, 9-speed cassettes and Sram mechanical disk brakes. Spare parts (tubes, tyre, chains etc.) are included in the price of the bike rental and will be available in the support vehicle along with a tool kit and track pump. Each bike comes with a single bottle cage and a Spice Roads water bottle that is yours to keep. The bikes are equipped with flat pedals and strap-style toe cages can be supplied if requested. If you prefer to use spd or clip-in pedals, you will need to bring these with you, along with your regular cycling shoes and cleats. Another item which you might choose to take with you on the holiday is your saddle. The hire bikes have standard saddles and anyone requiring more comfort, or a women-specific saddle, should consider taking their own. You should take your own EN1078 compliant cycling helmet, as the locally available helmets do not necessarily meet this standard - which we require. A hire bike can be reserved, subject to availability at a cost of US\$315 (October 2023 - subject to change) for the duration of the trip. If you want to hire a bike, please contact the KE office and we will pass on your request to the local agent. Payment must be made before travel and should be made directly with the local agent via the following payment link [www.spiceroads.com/pay](http://www.spiceroads.com/pay). You must first notify KE of your preferred bike option along with your height and we will make the reservation on your behalf. Once the reservation is confirmed, we will email to you a unique reference code which you need to use when making your payment. Your payment for bike hire does not cover you if you lose the bike or damage it beyond 'fair wear and tear'. We must stress that your hire contract will be with the local hire company and that KE cannot be held responsible for any issues arising from bike hire.

## Travelling With Your Bike

Airlines require that you pack your bike properly for travel and for this holiday we recommend that you use a purpose-made soft bike bag. These can be relatively inexpensive. They are also light in weight, easy to handle and, most importantly, can be packed into a small space to allow easy transportation in the support vehicle. You will need to partially dismantle your bike to pack it in your bag.

PLEASE DO NOT USE a purpose-made rigid bike box for this holiday. We do not have the space in the support vehicle to transport these bulky items.

Please contact us if you have any questions regarding travelling with your bike.

## Vehicle Support

Throughout this trip we have the back up of one or more air-conditioned support vehicles. Each morning our main baggage will be loaded onto the support vehicle which will follow the group on the day's ride. The local biking leader and the support vehicle driver will watch over the group and will carry mobile phones, allowing you to contact them in the case of a breakdown or other incident. We want everyone to enjoy their cycling experience on this trip and we recognise the importance of group members being allowed to cycle at their own pace. On most of our road biking trips it is usual that there can be a fair distance between the front and rear cyclists in the group and there may be times when other group members, vehicle support and biking leader are out of sight. However, our regular stops mean that it's never long before we regroup. The support vehicle will pick up any group members who wish to take a break from cycling at any time.

## Baggage Allowance

Apart from your bike in its bag (if you are taking your own bike), you should travel with one main item of luggage, such as a KE Trek Bag or similar holdall, and a small day pack. The day pack can be used to carry valuable items such as cameras and GPS devices whilst travelling, but will also be useful to separate out items you might want to pick up from the support vehicle during the rides, like additional clothing.

Your baggage allowance on the flights will depend on your airline. When choosing your flights, whether booking them directly or through KE, you will need to consider the cost of carrying your bike. These costs are your responsibility.

## Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

# General Information

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## Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

**It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

## Visa Vietnam

British Citizen passport holders do not need a visa for durations of stay up to and including 45 days for tourism and transit.

For information about multiple entry visas, longer stays or different nationalities please contact the relevant embassy. The Vietnamese Embassy in the UK is in London.



## Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

Dengue fever is a known risk in places visited. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you [take precautions to avoid mosquito bites](#).

Zika virus has been confirmed as active in this country. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites. The mosquitoes that transmit ZIKV are unlikely to be found above 2,000m altitude. For more information, visit the website of the National Travel Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) at <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk>

## VACCINATIONS

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you specific require any vaccinations or other preventive measures. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters as recommended in the UK e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella), along with hepatitis A and typhoid. Malarial prophylaxis are required. A certificate of yellow fever vaccination is required if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever transmission and for travellers having transited for more than 12 hrs through an airport of a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dentist check up. A good online resource is [Travel Health Pro](#).

## Currency

The unit of currency in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Dong.

## Preparing for your Holiday

The better conditioned you are the more you will enjoy your trip. We suggest that you adopt a sensible weekly exercise regime and fit in a number of long cycle rides in hilly country to ensure you are physically capable of taking part in this trip - this will also provide you with an opportunity to make sure all your riding kit is tried and tested before you travel. Cycling is obviously the best activity to prepare for this trip, however, running, squash and swimming are also good for developing aerobic fitness and stamina.



## Climate

The north of Vietnam experiences relatively cool and quite dry winters between November and April with daytime temperatures in Hanoi falling to between 15 and 20°C. From May to October it is hotter, at 25 to 30°C and wetter. Spring (March-April) and autumn (October-December) are particularly good for cycling. Further south, in Hue, the picture is similar with dry winter months and wetter summer months, but the daytime temperatures remain between 25 to 30°C pretty much throughout the year. From September to January coastal areas can be affected by typhoons in the South China Sea bringing short-lived tropical storms.

## Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that prior to travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at [travelaware.campaign.gov.uk](http://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk) and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

## Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

## Books

- Lonely Planet. Vietnam
- Rough Guide. Vietnam
- Vietnam Pocket Guide. Insight Guides
- Vietnam Handbook. Footprint Handbooks
- Vietnamese Phrasebook. Rough Guides
- Hill Tribes Phrasebook. Lonely Planet
- Vietnam: A History. Stanley Karnow

## Maps

### Vietnam North and South. Reise Know-How

Reise Know-How Verlag produce a 1:600.000 scale map over two double-sided sheets, Vietnam North and Vietnam South. The maps show road networks and driving distances and symbols highlight places of interest, archaeological remains, temples and museums, viewpoints etc.

## Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Please note that a paper copy of your travel insurance is required if you are travelling to Huaraz and the Huayhuash region.

## Explore International

This holiday is part of our Explore International range. Participants on these trips can book through KE or through one of our international partners. This helps us to gather together sufficient numbers of like-minded adventurers to get your holiday up and running quickly. Led by an English-speaking guide, the cosmopolitan nature of these groups can be an important part of the experience!

# Equipment Information

## Equipment List

For this holiday you will need your usual cycling clothing, including shoes, cycling gloves and helmet (which must be worn at all times when cycling).

Whether you are hiring a bike or taking your own, we recommend that you take the usual day-ride essentials of: mobile phone, multi-tool, mini-pump, tyre levers, spare tubes and puncture repair kit.

## Bike Wear

- Cycling helmet (the EN1078 safety standard is a requirement)
- Cycling shoes
- Waterproof overshoes
- Padded cycling shorts
- Long leg cycling trousers or leg warmers
- Lycra arm warmers
- Base-layer - short sleeve cycling tops
- Long sleeved cycling top
- Lightweight windproof gilet
- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- Regular biking gloves
- Long fingered biking gloves
- Buff
- Sunglasses
- Sun cream (inc. total bloc for lips/nose)

- Camera

## Other Stuff

- Travel and off-the-bike clothing and footwear
- Loose-fitting trousers and shirt to cover up when visiting villages or temples en route
- Wash bag, towel, toiletries
- Swimwear
- Basic First Aid kit and personal medication
- Chamois Cream (e.g. Assos or Ozone)
- Water purification tablets
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

## Spares

If you are hiring a bike you do not need to bring any spares. The hire bikes are provided in good condition and a supply of spares is carried. You may be asked to pay directly for any spares used, especially in the case of crash damage or damage by mis-use.

If you are taking your own bike, you should consider taking a minimum of spares, including a couple of spare spokes (for each wheel if they are different), spare brake blocks (or brake disc pads), chain links/ chain connector, rear derailleur hanger and any non-standard parts specific to your bike.

## Repairs

Whilst not essential, it is a good idea that you familiarise yourself with how to carry out at least some basic repairs to your bike e.g. changing an inner tube and fixing a puncture. Your bike guide will be happy to help with repairs and general maintenance, but being able to carry out a simple repair yourself could save the inconvenience of having to wait for assistance.

## Hydration and Energy Snacks

You should take 2 standard water bottles (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic) and also consider taking a small supply of the gels, power bars or sports drink mix that you would normally use on a ride at home.

Please contact us if you have any questions about your equipment.

## Cotswold Outdoor



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers.  
[-> Find out more](#)

## Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary starting at the hotel in Hanoi and ending in Hue. Airport transfers both on arrival and departure are not provided. Taxis are readily available and low cost.

## Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Hanoi and returning from Hue.. Outbound flights usually depart from the UK in the morning, arriving in the morning of the following day (Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary). Return flights depart in the evening of the final day of the Land Only itinerary, arriving in the UK early the following morning.

# Why Choose KE

## Why KE

The Most Interesting Holidays We are the only company offering this classic cycling journey on the northern part of the newly established Ho Chi Minh Highway. Set up with our Vietnamese cycling partners, this is the best road cycling holiday in Vietnam!

**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 03/07/2024 and the trip is subject to change