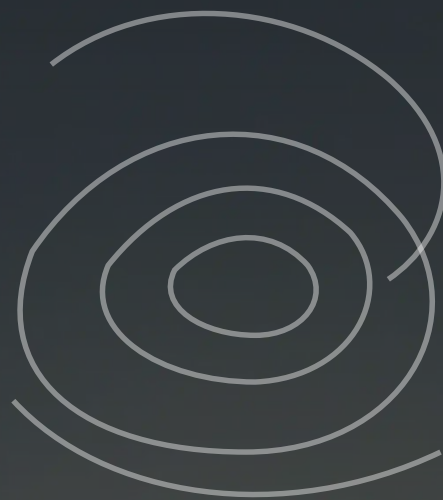


vietadvisor



THE VIETADVISOR FIELD GUIDE

VIETNAM, UNDERSTOOD.

*A practical, honest and beautifully edited guide for
international travelers.*

12 DESTINATIONS

REAL ROUTES

FIELD NOTES

2026 EDITION



A DIFFERENT KIND OF GUIDE

Not a brochure. Not a bucket list.

A field guide for understanding what a place feels like, how much time it deserves, where to base yourself and what usually goes wrong.

THE EDITORIAL PROMISE

First-hand logic. Clear choices. No need to pretend every attraction is essential.

Vietadvisor exists to sit between search results and street-level reality: local knowledge translated into practical decisions for international travelers.

WHAT YOU GET

- 01 Twelve destinations, each broken into a realistic verdict, where to stay, what to eat and one honest caveat, not a highlight reel.
- 02 Four ready-made routes (7, 10, 14, 21 days) built from real transfer times, not straight lines drawn on a map.
- 03 A live link on every destination, so the details can keep updating long after this PDF sits in your downloads folder.

How to use this guide

Read it in order for a complete trip, or jump directly to a destination and use the three-page field file.

PLAN THE COUNTRY

04 Vietnam at a glance

05 Match your travel style

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CENTRAL + SOUTH

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48 Phu Quoc

One country. Several different trips.



Ha Giang

Sapa

Hanoi

Ha Long

Ninh Binh

Hue

Phong Nha

Da Nang

Hoi An

Ho Chi Minh City

Mekong Delta

Phu Quoc

ROUTE LOGIC

Fly between regions; use trains and private transfers to connect the central coast; slow down in mountain, cave and delta areas.

Match the country to your travel style

Vietnam is long and varied. The strongest itinerary is not the one with the most stops - it is the one that repeats one that repeats the kind of day you actually enjoy.

FIRST-TIME CLASSIC

Hanoi - Ninh Binh - Ha Long - Hoi An - HCMC

BEST FOR • balanced first trip

MOUNTAIN + CULTURE

Hanoi - Sapa - Ha Giang - Ninh Binh

BEST FOR • big landscapes

FOOD + CITIES

Hanoi - Hue - Hoi An - HCMC - Mekong

BEST FOR • flavor and history

NATURE + ADVENTURE

Ha Giang - Ninh Binh - Phong Nha Phong Nha - Mekong

BEST FOR • active days

COAST + COMFORT

Ha Long - Da Nang - Hoi An - Phu Phu Quoc

BEST FOR • easy logistics

SLOW VIETNAM

Hanoi neighborhoods - Hue - Mekong - island finish

BEST FOR • fewer, deeper stops

THE RULE

For a trip under 14 days, choose two regions. Add a third only when flights line up and you are comfortable changing hotels often.

Weather without the one-line answer

Vietnam does not have one national “best time.” Read the country as three overlapping climate zones, then add mountain and typhoon risk.

NORTH

OCT-APR

Cooler, drier city weather; mountain nights can be cold and mist can hide Sapa or Ha Giang views.

CHECK: mountain visibility + Tet travel

CENTRAL

FEB-MAY

Most reliable mix of beach and sightseeing. Late-year rain can affect Hue, Hoi An, Da Nang and Phong Nha.

CHECK: flood / storm updates in autumn

SOUTH

DEC-APR

Warm all year. Dry season is easier for cities, delta and islands; wet-season showers are often intense but brief.

CHECK: island sea conditions + midday heat

BEST PRACTICE

Build one weather-flex day into mountain, cave and island sections. A good itinerary has a backup that is still worth doing.



7-DAY ROUTE

The focused first trip

A north-or-south route that feels complete rather than compressed.

THE ROUTE

01

DAYS 1-3

HANOI

City, history, food and one slower neighborhood.

02

DAYS 4-5

NINH BINH

Boat, bicycle, karst landscape and rural stay.

03

DAYS 6-7

HA LONG BAY

Overnight cruise and direct return / airport connection.

WHY THIS WORKS

Three strong northern experiences with short transfers and no domestic flight. Swap the whole route for HCMC + Mekong + Phu Quoc if your priority is heat and water.

The balanced classic

Two regions, one flight and enough time for the places that carry the trip.

THE ROUTE

01

DAYS 1-3

HANOI

Food, neighborhoods and history.

02

DAYS 4-5

NINH BINH

Rural landscapes and a slower overnight.

03

DAYS 6-7

HOI AN / DA NANG

Old town, coast and easy central access.

04

DAYS 8-10

HO CHI MINH CITY

Big-city energy, food and one excursion.

WHY THIS WORKS

The route gives each region a distinct role: north for texture, central for beauty and the south for scale. Keep Ha Long as an optional swap, not an automatic add-on.

The complete first journey

Vietnam from capital to delta without trying to visit every famous place.

THE ROUTE

01

DAYS 1-3

HANOI

Arrive slowly and eat well.

02

DAYS 4-5

NINH BINH

Karst countryside and boats.

03

DAYS 6-8

HUE + HOI AN

History, food, old town and coast.

04

DAYS 9-11

HO CHI MINH CITY

Culture, neighborhoods and nightlife.

05

DAYS 12-14

MEKONG DELTA

Sleep in the region, then fly onward.

WHY THIS WORKS

This is the most coherent north-central-south route. Add Ha Long only by removing a destination; add Phu Quoc only when the beach finish matters more than Hue or the Delta.



21-DAY ROUTE

The deeper journey

A trip with room for one major adventure and a genuinely slow ending.

THE ROUTE

01

DAYS 1-3

HANOI

Recover, orient and build context.

02

DAYS 4-7

HA GIANG OR SAPA

Choose one mountain experience.

03

DAYS 8-9

NINH BINH

Low-effort landscape and reset.

04

DAYS 10-14

PHONG NHA - HUE - HOI AN

Caves, heritage and coast.

05

DAYS 15-17

HO CHI MINH CITY

Urban contrast and food.

06

DAYS 18-21

MEKONG OR PHU QUOC

End with river life or island rest.

WHY THIS WORKS

At three weeks, do not automatically add more cities. Use the extra time to include a four-day mountain loop, a cave adventure or an unhurried island / delta ending.

Moving around Vietnam

A good route uses different transport for different distances. The cheapest option is not always the one that protects your time or energy.

DOMESTIC FLIGHT

Best for north-central-south jumps. Leave buffer around weather and peak holidays.

TRAIN

Best for scenery and central-coast connections. Overnight berths vary; book the class you can sleep in.

SLEEPER BUS

Useful for mountain and regional links. Choose reputable operators and check arrival time.

PRIVATE CAR

High value for families, short scenic routes and multi-stop central days.

RIDE-HAILING

Excellent in major cities; verify plate and use in-app payment when possible.

MOTORBIKE

A travel tool only when legally licensed, experienced and properly insured.

TRANSFER TEST

If a one-night stop requires more than half a day to reach and another half day to leave, it probably does not belong in your itinerary.

Money, data, visa and safety

The details below are intentionally simple. Rules, prices and entry procedures change; use the official portal and official portal and live Vietadvisor guides before departure.

MONEY

- Carry small VND notes for markets, food stalls and rural stops.
- Use bank ATMs and decline forced currency conversion when your own bank offers a better rate.
- Cards work widely in cities; cash still matters outside them.

DATA

- An eSIM is easiest for short trips; a local SIM can be better for long rural routes.
- Viettel generally offers strong coverage outside major cities.
- Download maps and hotel details before mountain or cave transfers.

ENTRY

- Many travelers use Vietnam's official e-visa system. Check eligibility, passport validity and the exact approved entry point.
- Save the approval PDF offline and print a copy.
- Avoid unofficial sites that imitate the government portal.

SAFETY

- Police 113 • Fire 114 • Ambulance 115.
- Use hotel safes carefully and keep a separate backup card.
- Travel insurance should cover your actual activities - especially motorbikes, caves and trekking.

Always verify live conditions before travel.

Weather, road access, visa rules, attraction hours and local restrictions can change after a PDF is downloaded.

Food is not a side activity.

Vietnam changes flavor by region. Learn the local meal rhythm, order what the place does well and use busy stalls as a first filter - not social-media fame.

NORTH

Broths, grilled pork, herbs, fermented depth.

Pho • bun cha • cha ca

CENTRAL

Sharper heat, small dishes, imperial detail.

Bun bo Hue • cao lau • mi Quang

SOUTH

Sweeter balance, tropical produce, abundance.

Com tam • hu tieu • banh xeo

DELTA & ISLANDS

River fish, coconut, shellfish, fruit.

Hotpot • grilled seafood • market snacks

FIELD RULE • Order one more local dish before ordering the familiar fallback.

Respect is part of the itinerary

The most memorable local encounters happen when travelers are curious without treating everyday life as a performance.

1

ASK BEFORE PHOTOS

People, homes, work and rituals are not open sets.

2

DRESS FOR CONTEXT

Cover shoulders and knees at active religious sites.

3

KEEP YOUR COOL

Public confrontation rarely improves an outcome.

4

PAY FAIRLY

Do not bargain aggressively over a small amount with local guides or vendors.

5

PROTECT WILDLIFE

Do not feed, touch or crowd animals for a photo.

6

LEAVE LESS

Refill water, reduce plastic and carry waste out of trails and boats.

THE COMMUNITY TEST

Would you still recommend this behavior if the place became ten times more popular?



01 • NORTH

HANOI

Lakes, layered history and street life that rewards slow mornings.

3 days

Oct-Apr

WALK + EAT

THE QUICK VERDICT

Three days is the sweet spot for a first visit: enough time for the Old Quarter, history, food and one slower neighborhood without turning the city into a checklist.

NORTH

Hanoi

What makes the trip work

DO THESE FIRST

- 01

Walk the Old Quarter early, before tour groups and heat build.
- 02

Pair the Temple of Literature with the French Quarter and Hoan Kiem Lake.
- 03

Eat bun cha, pho, cha ca and egg coffee with a local-food mindset.
- 04

Choose one evening performance: water puppetry or contemporary bamboo circus.



WHO IT IS FOR

First-time visitors, food-led travelers, culture lovers and anyone who likes a city with friction and personality.

WHERE TO STAY

- [Old Quarter - best for a short, walkable stay; accept noise.](#)
- [French Quarter - calmer, polished and still central.](#)
- [Truc Bach - local, lake-side and food friendly.](#)
- [Tay Ho - best only for longer stays or a slower expat rhythm.](#)

WHAT TO EAT

Bun cha

Pho bo / pho ga

Cha ca

Banh cuon

Egg coffee



HONEST CAVEAT

Do not book a windowless Old Quarter room and assume it will be quiet. Check construction, lift access and distance from Beer Street before paying.

Hanoi: a realistic first route

Use this as a shape, not a timetable. Weather, transfers and energy should decide the final order.

1

DAY 1

Old Quarter lanes, Hoan Kiem, coffee, street-food dinner.

2

DAY 2

Temple of Literature, museums, French Quarter, performance.

3

DAY 3

Truc Bach or West Lake, a market, one slow lunch, sunset walk.

VIETADVISOR FIELD NOTE

Hanoi is not a city to “complete.” The good version appears between planned stops: a stool, a courtyard, a bowl, a conversation.



READ THE LIVE GUIDE

More Hanoi guides

SAVE BEFORE YOU GO

Opening hours, weather, route access and operator quality can change. Scan for the live version.



02 • FAR NORTH

HA GIANG LOOP

A mountain journey where the road is the destination.

4 days

Mar-May / Sep-Nov

RIDE SLOW

THE QUICK VERDICT

The four-day loop is the better first choice. Three days often means six to eight hours on the bike; four days creates weather buffer, longer stops and a safer, more human pace.

Ha Giang Loop

What makes the trip work

DO THESE FIRST

- 01 Ride with an experienced easy rider unless you are legally licensed and genuinely mountain-confident.
- 02 Pause at Quan Ba, Ma Pi Leng Pass and the Nho Que landscape rather than treating them as checkpoints.
- 03 Sleep in family-run stays and make time for village meals.
- 04 Pack for dust, wind, cold evenings, sudden rain and strong sun on the same trip.



WHO IT IS FOR

Adventure travelers, photographers and people comfortable with long mountain days and basic accommodation.

WHERE TO STAY

- [Ha Giang City - arrival and briefing night.](#)
- [Yen Minh - practical first-stage base on many routes.](#)
- [Dong Van - strongest evening atmosphere and market access.](#)
- [Du Gia - slower final-stage village stop with water and rice landscapes.](#)

WHAT TO EAT

Thang co - local specialty specialty

Buckwheat cakes

Corn wine - lightly

Hotpot in Dong Van

Family-style homestay dinner



HONEST CAVEAT

Do not self-ride on a normal car license or assume an app-based international permit is accepted. Police checks, fatigue and mountain weather are real parts of the trip.

Ha Giang Loop: a realistic first route route

Use this as a shape, not a timetable. Weather, transfers and energy should decide the final order.

1

DAY 1

Ha Giang to Yen Minh via Quan Ba and mountain viewpoints.

2

DAY 2

Yen Minh to Dong Van via villages, palace and highland roads.

3

DAY 3

Ma Pi Leng, Nho Que area, Meo Vac to Du Gia.

4

DAY 4

Waterfalls, valleys and the return to Ha Giang City.

VIETADVISOR FIELD NOTE

The loop is spectacular, but it is not a theme-park ride. Choose safety, smaller groups and enough time over the cheapest or fastest package.



READ THE LIVE GUIDE

More Ha Giang Loop guides

SAVE BEFORE YOU GO

Opening hours, weather, route access and operator quality can change. Scan for the live version.



03 • NORTHWEST

SAPA

Clouds, rice terraces and highland life - best experienced beyond town.

3 days

Mar-May / Sep-Oct

TREK + STAY

THE QUICK VERDICT

Sapa becomes worthwhile when you leave the commercial center. Three days gives you a weather buffer, one proper village trek and a slower homestay night.

Sapa

What makes the trip work

DO THESE FIRST

- 01

Trek through Muong Hoa Valley with an independent local guide.
- 02

Stay in Ta Van or Lao Chai instead of commuting from town for every activity.
- 03

Ride the Fansipan cable car only when visibility is reasonable.
- 04

Visit in rice season for color, but accept crowds and changeable mountain weather.



WHO IT IS FOR

Hikers, landscape photographers and travelers curious about highland communities.

WHERE TO STAY

- [Sapa town - transport, restaurants and easy access; more commercial.](#)
- [Ta Van - best all-round village base for homestays and walks.](#)
- [Lao Chai - quieter and close to terraced landscapes.](#)
- [Ban Ho - farther, warmer and better for a slower rural stay.](#)

WHAT TO EAT

Salmon hotpot

Black chicken

Grilled skewers

Five-color sticky rice

Local herbal tea



HONEST CAVEAT

Avoid “ethnic photo parks” presented as culture. Ask before photographing people, pay guides fairly and do not treat village homes as open sets.

Sapa: a realistic first route

Use this as a shape, not a timetable. Weather, transfers and energy should decide the final order.

1

DAY 1

Arrive, slow town walk, viewpoint only if the weather opens.

2

DAY 2

Guided Muong Hoa trek, village lunch, homestay evening.

3

DAY 3

Morning village life, Fansipan or another short trail, depart.

VIETADVISOR FIELD NOTE

Sapa town can feel staged; the valleys do not. The quality of the trip depends more on your guide, route and overnight base than on the number of attractions.



READ THE LIVE GUIDE

More Sapa guides

SAVE BEFORE YOU GO

Opening hours, weather, route access and operator quality can change. Scan for the live version.



04 • NORTHEAST

HA LONG BAY

A seascape of limestone towers - magical when timing and cruise choice align.

2D / 1N

Oct-Nov / Mar-Apr

CRUISE

THE QUICK VERDICT

For most travelers, an overnight cruise is the right format. A day trip is possible but rushed; a second night makes sense only if you value quiet time more than variety.

Ha Long Bay

What makes the trip work

DO THESE FIRST

- 01
- Choose the route before the cabin: classic Ha Long, quieter Lan Ha or farther Bai Tu Long.
- 02
- Read the exact activity schedule, transfer time and cabin location.
- 03
- Kayak when conditions allow, but keep expectations realistic in peak season.
- 04
- Consider Cat Ba for a more independent land-and-water version.



WHO IT IS FOR

First-time visitors, couples, families and travelers who want scenery with low physical effort.

WHERE TO STAY

- [Overnight boat - the experience itself; compare route and operator carefully.](#)
- [Bai Chay - convenient and tourist-oriented.](#)
- [Hon Gai - more local city atmosphere and seafood.](#)
- [Cat Ba - best for independent travelers and mixed hiking / boat days.](#)

WHAT TO EAT

Fresh seafood

Squid cakes

Ngan shellfish

Simple cruise meals

Cat Ba seafood hotpot



HONEST CAVEAT

The lowest cruise price often hides a weak cabin, crowded route, extra transfer fees or a schedule built around sales stops. Compare inclusions, not star labels.

Ha Long Bay: a realistic first route

Use this as a shape, not a timetable. Weather, transfers and energy should decide the final order.

1

DAY 1

Hanoi transfer, embark, lunch, cave or kayak, sunset, overnight.

2

DAY 2

Early deck time, light activity, brunch and return transfer.

3

OPTION

Add Cat Ba if you want hiking, town life and more control.

VIETADVISOR FIELD NOTE

Ha Long is famous for a reason. The question is not whether the karsts are worth seeing; it is whether the format you book protects enough time to actually feel the place.



READ THE LIVE GUIDE

More Ha Long Bay guides

SAVE BEFORE YOU GO

Opening hours, weather, route access and operator quality can change. Scan for the live version.



05 • RED RIVER DELTA

NINH BINH

Karst valleys, temples and rice fields close enough to reach - rich enough to stay.

2-3 days

Feb-May / Sep-Nov

BOAT + BIKE

THE QUICK VERDICT

Ninh Binh deserves more than a rushed Hanoi day trip. Stay around Tam Coc or Trang An, ride a bicycle between limestone walls and let the boat journeys happen early or late.

RED RIVER DELTA

Ninh Binh

What makes the trip work

DO THESE FIRST

- 01
- Take a Trang An or Tam Coc boat ride early, with patience for queues.
- 02
- Climb Hang Mua when heat and visibility are manageable.
- 03
- Cycle the back roads around Tam Coc, Bich Dong and rice fields.
- 04
- Add Hoa Lu or Bai Dinh only if history or large religious sites matter to you.



WHO IT IS FOR

Couples, photographers, slow travelers and first-time visitors building a northern route.

WHERE TO STAY

- [Tam Coc - most convenient traveler base, restaurants and bicycles.](#)
- [Trang An - quieter, scenic and better for retreat-style stays.](#)
- [Ninh Binh City - practical for trains, less atmospheric.](#)
- [Rural homestay - best for sunrise, silence and local meals.](#)

WHAT TO EAT

Goat meat

Com chay crispy rice

Mountain snails

Eel vermicelli

Local rice wine



HONEST CAVEAT

Do not plan Hang Mua at midday in hot weather or expect an empty viewpoint. Carry water and shoes with grip; the steps are steep and exposed.

Ninh Binh: a realistic first route

Use this as a shape, not a timetable. Weather, transfers and energy should decide the final order.

1

DAY 1

Arrive, cycle Tam Coc, Bich Dong, slow local dinner.

2

DAY 2

Early boat route, Hang Mua later, rural sunset.

3

DAY 3

Hoa Lu, nature reserve or a quiet countryside morning.

VIETADVISOR FIELD NOTE

The landscape looks cinematic, but the best version is ordinary and quiet: bicycles, goats, flooded fields and limestone appearing around a bend.



READ THE LIVE GUIDE

More Ninh Binh guides

SAVE BEFORE YOU GO

Opening hours, weather, route access and operator quality can change. Scan for the live version.



06 • CENTRAL

PHONG NHA

Caves, jungle and rivers for travelers who want the landscape to feel larger than them.

3-4 days

Feb-Aug

CAVE + JUNGLE

THE QUICK VERDICT

Phong Nha deserves several days because its cave experiences sit on very different levels - easy show caves, active day adventures and premium expeditions. Pick the level before the operator.

Phong Nha

What makes the trip work

DO THESE FIRST

- 01 Visit Paradise Cave for scale without technical adventure.
- 02 Pair Phong Nha Cave with a river approach and village time.
- 03 Choose an active cave tour only after checking swimming, trekking and fitness requirements.
- 04 Rent a bicycle or scooter for the Bong Lai countryside loop when weather is stable.



WHO IT IS FOR

Adventure travelers, families who like nature and anyone building a deeper central Vietnam route.

WHERE TO STAY

- [Phong Nha town - easiest for tours, cafes and transfers.](#)
- [Son Trach countryside - quieter views and homestays.](#)
- [Farmstay zone - good for slow mornings and river / field access.](#)
- [Dong Hoi - transport hub, but less convenient for multi-day cave time.](#)

WHAT TO EAT

Local grilled chicken

Peanut sticky rice

River fish

Simple homestay meals

Vietnamese coffee

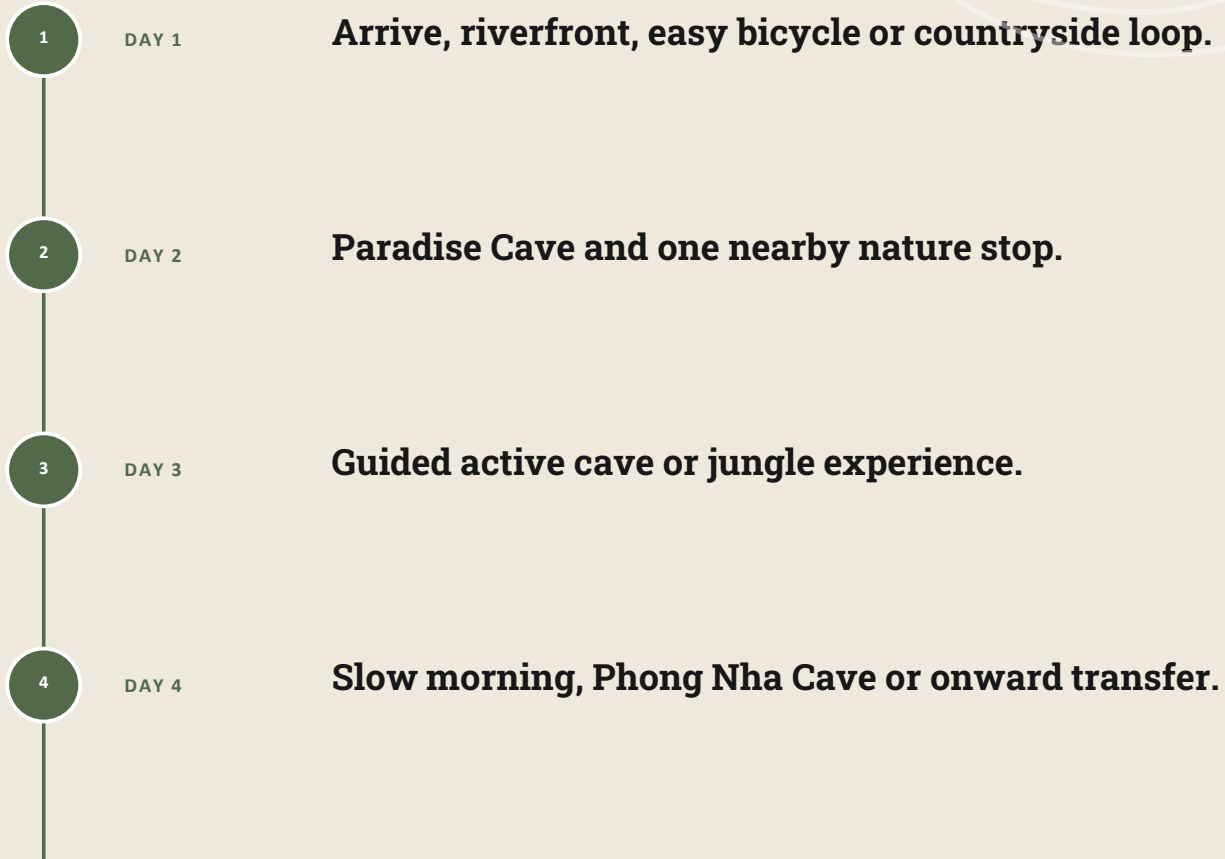


HONEST CAVEAT

Do not compare cave tours by price alone. Equipment, guide ratio, rescue systems, transport and route permits matter more than the marketing photos.

Phong Nha: a realistic first route

Use this as a shape, not a timetable. Weather, transfers and energy should decide the final order.



VIETADVISOR FIELD NOTE

The caves are the headline, but the valley around them is what makes four days worth it. Choose an active tour only if you actually want the effort, Paradise Cave already gives you the scale without it.



READ THE LIVE GUIDE

More Phong Nha guides

SAVE BEFORE YOU GO

Opening hours, weather, route access and operator quality can change. Scan for the live version.

HUE

Imperial history, quiet gardens and one of Vietnam's most distinctive food cultures.

2-3 days

Feb-Apr

HISTORY + FOOD

THE QUICK VERDICT

Hue is best with two unhurried days and a third if you enjoy history. The Citadel is only the beginning; royal tombs, garden houses and food give the city its depth.

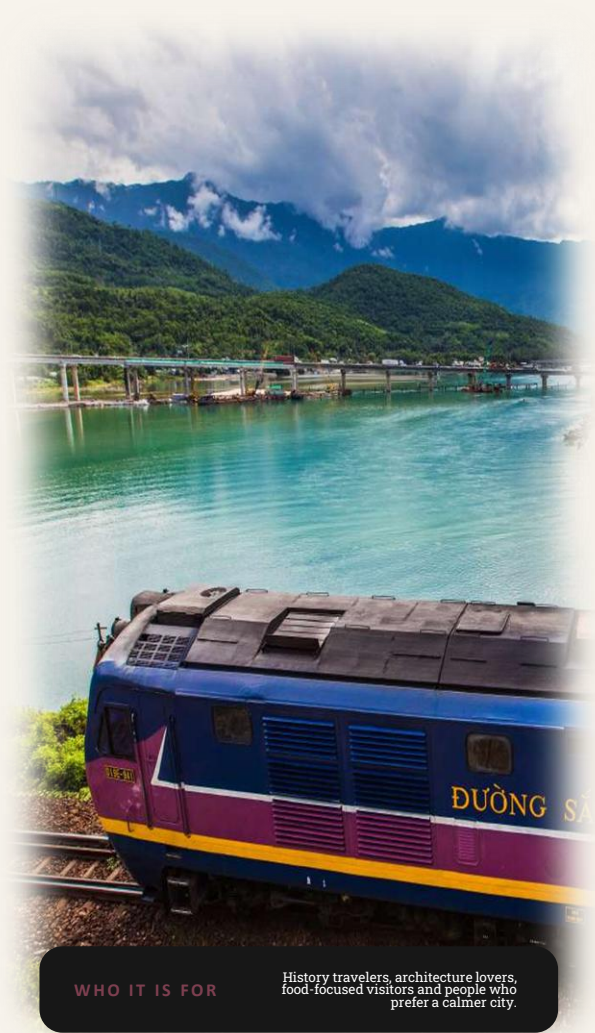
CENTRAL

Hue

What makes the trip work

DO THESE FIRST

- 01 Give the Imperial City a full morning rather than rushing through.
- 02 Choose two royal tombs with different styles instead of trying to tick off all of them.
- 03 Explore the Perfume River corridor by bicycle, boat or private driver.
- 04 Eat beyond bun bo Hue: try small royal-style dishes and market snacks.



WHO IT IS FOR

History travelers, architecture lovers, food-focused visitors and people who prefer a calmer city.

WHERE TO STAY

- [South bank / city center - easiest restaurants and transport.](#)
- [Near the Citadel - atmospheric mornings, quieter evenings.](#)
- [Kim Long - garden houses and local neighborhood feel.](#)
- [Riverside resort zone - calm, but check access to evening food.](#)

WHAT TO EAT

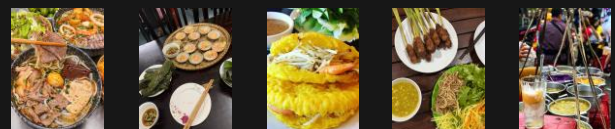
Bun bo Hue

Banh beo

Banh khoai

Nem lui

Che Hue

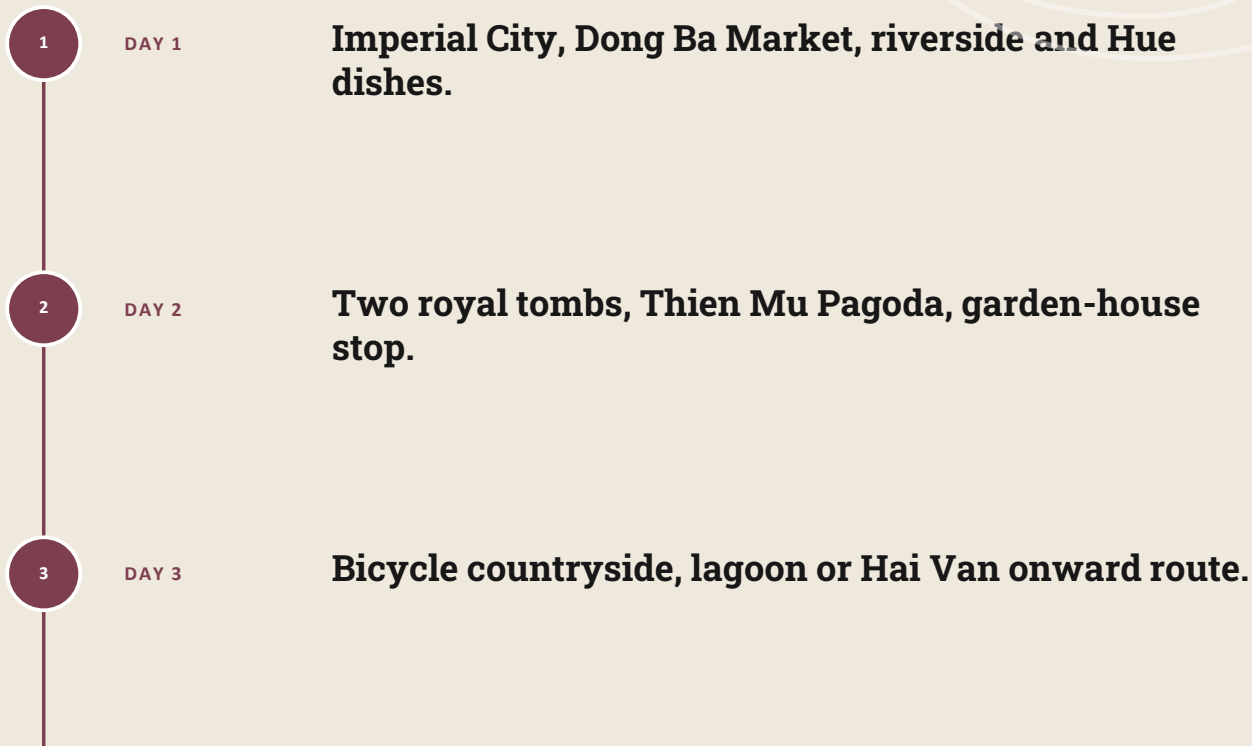


HONEST CAVEAT

Hue's heritage sites are spread out. A cheap "all tombs" tour can become a bus timetable. Pick fewer places and spend enough time to see how each landscape is designed.

Hue: a realistic first route

Use this as a shape, not a timetable. Weather, transfers and energy should decide the final order.



VIETADVISOR FIELD NOTE

Hue is quiet without being empty. Its strongest moments are often architectural: a framed garden, a weathered gate, rain on tile and food served in many small plates.



READ THE LIVE GUIDE

More Hue guides

SAVE BEFORE YOU GO

Opening hours, weather, route access and operator quality can change. Scan for the live version.



08 • CENTRAL COAST

DA NANG

A convenient coastal city that works best as both destination and base.

3-4 days

Feb-May

BEACH + CITY

THE QUICK VERDICT

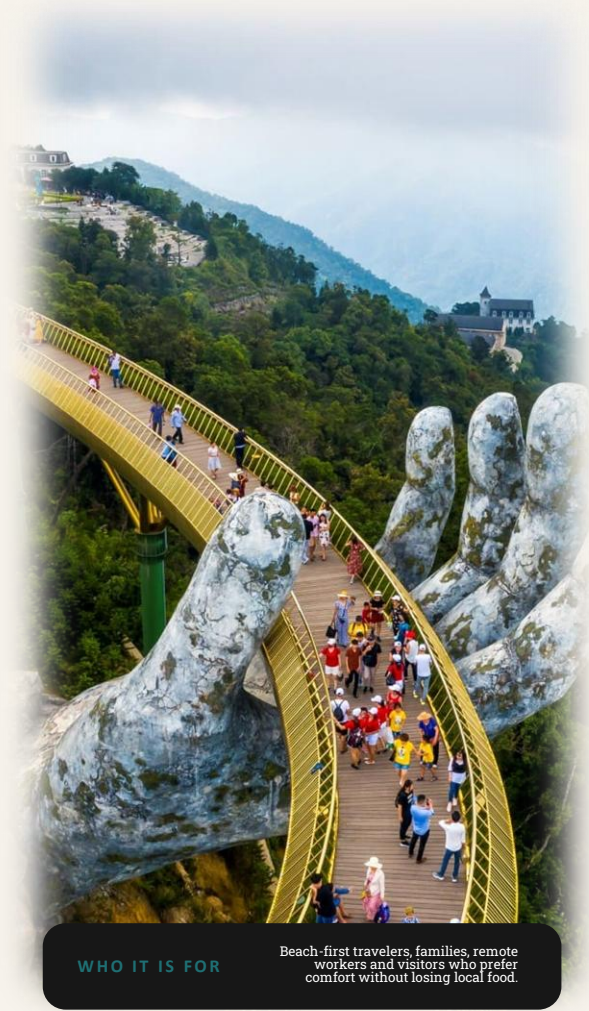
Da Nang is easy to underestimate. It combines a real city, a long beach, Son Tra nature and quick access to Hoi An, Hue and the Hai Van Pass.

Da Nang

What makes the trip work

DO THESE FIRST

- 01 Walk or swim at My Khe early, before heat and traffic.
- 02 Explore Son Tra Peninsula responsibly and keep distance from wildlife.
- 03 Spend an evening around the Han River and bridges.
- 04 Use one day for Hai Van Pass, Ba Na Hills or Hoi An - based on your actual interests.



WHO IT IS FOR

Beach-first travelers, families, remote workers and visitors who prefer comfort without losing local food.

WHERE TO STAY

- [An Thuong / My Khe - beach access, cafes and traveler services.](#)
- [Hai Chau - local city life, markets and food.](#)
- [Son Tra - quieter, with peninsula access.](#)
- [Southern resort strip - calm and self-contained, far from city spontaneity.](#)

WHAT TO EAT

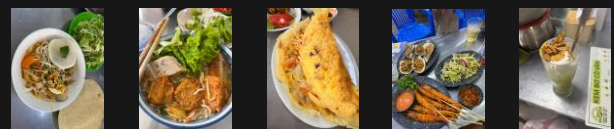
Mi Quang

Bun cha ca

Banh xeo

Seafood

Avocado ice cream



HONEST CAVEAT

Do not book a remote resort and expect easy walking to city restaurants. Da Nang is spread out; choose your side of the river and your transport plan deliberately.

Da Nang: a realistic first route

Use this as a shape, not a timetable. Weather, transfers and energy should decide the final order.

1

DAY 1

City core, Cham Museum, Han River and local dinner.

2

DAY 2

My Khe sunrise, Son Tra, seafood evening.

3

DAY 3

Hai Van Pass or Ba Na Hills.

4

DAY 4

Hoi An day / evening or a slower beach day.

VIETADVISOR FIELD NOTE

Da Nang is not only a transfer point. It is one of Vietnam's easiest places to balance local life, clean infrastructure and a genuinely restful pace.

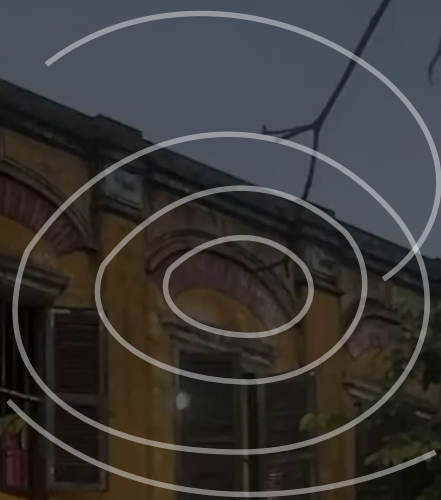


READ THE LIVE GUIDE

More Da Nang guides

SAVE BEFORE YOU GO

Opening hours, weather, route access and operator quality can change. Scan for the live version.



09 • CENTRAL

HOI AN

A beautiful old trading town - most rewarding outside its busiest hours.

2-3 days

Feb-May

OLD TOWN + COUNTRYSIDE

THE QUICK VERDICT

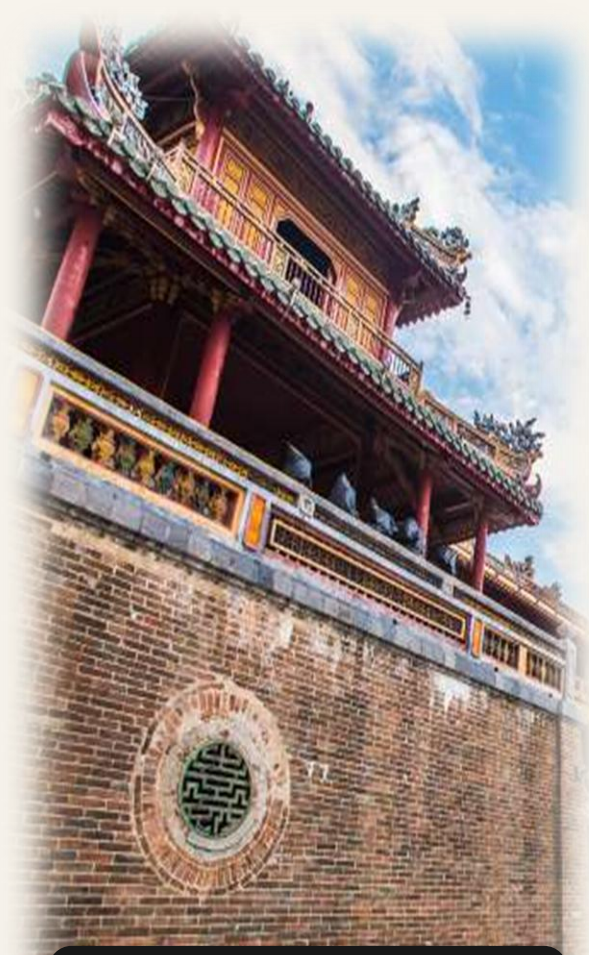
Hoi An is worth the popularity, but not if you stay only in the lantern crowd. Use early mornings for the old town and afternoons for craft, food, bicycles or the coast.

Hoi An

What makes the trip work

DO THESE FIRST

- 01 Walk the old town before 8am and again after dinner crowds thin.
- 02 Join a serious cooking class or craft workshop, not a souvenir conveyor belt.
- 03 Cycle through Cam Kim or Tra Que with respect for working paths.
- 04 Use rainy days for museums, cafes, tailoring and hands-on workshops.



WHO IT IS FOR

Couples, families, photographers, food travelers and visitors who enjoy gentle days.

WHERE TO STAY

- [Old Town edge - walkable without being inside the loudest lanes.](#)
- [Cam Chau - rice fields and easy cycling.](#)
- [Cam An / An Bang - beach rhythm, taxi or bicycle to town.](#)
- [Cam Thanh - villas and coconut landscape; check tour-boat noise.](#)

WHAT TO EAT

Cao lau

White rose dumplings

Com ga

Mi Quang

Herbal tea



HONEST CAVEAT

From October to December, riverfront streets and some ground-floor rooms can flood. Ask the property directly about access, backup plans and where rooms sit.

Hoi An: a realistic first route

Use this as a shape, not a timetable. Weather, transfers and energy should decide the final order.

1

DAY 1

Dawn old town, market, heritage houses, lantern evening.

2

DAY 2

Cooking / craft experience, countryside bicycle, local dinner.

3

DAY 3

An Bang, Cam Kim or a slow cafe-and-tailor day.

VIETADVISOR FIELD NOTE

Hoi An's problem is not that it is too touristy; it is that many visitors arrive at exactly the same hour and repeat the same route. Change the time, and the town changes.



READ THE LIVE GUIDE

More Hoi An guides

SAVE BEFORE YOU GO

Opening hours, weather, route access and operator quality can change. Scan for the live version.



10 • SOUTH

HO CHI MINH CITY

Vietnam at full volume: history, commerce, food and late-night momentum.

3 days

Dec-Apr

CITY ENERGY

THE QUICK VERDICT

Give Saigon three well-paced days. The city makes more sense when you balance central landmarks with neighborhoods, food and one excursion - not when you race between photo stops.

Ho Chi Minh City

What makes the trip work

DO THESE FIRST

- 01 Start with the Central Post Office, Book Street and Independence Palace.
- 02 Visit the War Remnants Museum with enough emotional space afterward.
- 03 Eat through Districts 1, 3, 5 or 10 rather than staying around Ben Thanh only.
- 04 Use one day for Cu Chi or a meaningful Mekong extension - not both in a rushed blur.



WHO IT IS FOR

Urban explorers, food lovers, nightlife seekers and travelers who enjoy big-city contrast.

WHERE TO STAY

- [District 1 - easiest first stay, most tourist infrastructure.](#)
- [District 3 - central but more lived-in, strong cafe and food scene.](#)
- [Binh Thanh - modern apartments and quick access to the center.](#)
- [Cholon / District 5 - culture and food, less polished for first arrivals.](#)

WHAT TO EAT

Com tam

Banh xeo

Hu tieu

Oc seafood

Ca phe sua da



HONEST CAVEAT

Cross roads steadily and predictably. Do not stop suddenly in traffic, wave your phone toward the road, or carry bags loosely on the street side.

Ho Chi Minh City: a realistic first route

Use this as a shape, not a timetable. Weather, transfers and energy should decide the final order.

1

DAY 1

Colonial core, Independence Palace, museums, rooftop or river.

2

DAY 2

Cu Chi Tunnels or an in-depth neighborhood day.

3

DAY 3

Market breakfast, Cholon or District 3, food tour, late city walk.

VIETADVISOR FIELD NOTE

Saigon is less about monuments than momentum. Let one day be shaped by food, alleys and the rhythm between old shop houses and new towers.



READ THE LIVE GUIDE

More Ho Chi Minh City guides

SAVE BEFORE YOU GO

Opening hours, weather, route access and operator quality can change. Scan for the live version.



11 • SOUTHWEST

MEKONG DELTA

A region of rivers, orchards and working towns - not one single day-trip attraction.

2-4 days

Dec-Apr

RIVER TIME

THE QUICK VERDICT

The Delta becomes more convincing when you sleep there. Two to three days covers Ben Tre, Cai Be or Can Tho; four or more opens Chau Doc, Tra Su and the quieter western edge.

SOUTHWEST

Mekong Delta

What makes the trip work

DO THESE FIRST

- 01 Choose one sub-region instead of trying to “see the Mekong” in a day.
- 02 Wake early for markets, ferries and working river traffic.
- 03 Cycle orchard lanes and small village roads with a local guide.
- 04 Use Can Tho or Chau Doc as real cities, not just launch points.



WHO IT IS FOR

Slow travelers, photographers, food lovers and anyone interested in everyday river life.

WHERE TO STAY

- [Ben Tre - coconuts, canals and easy HCMC access.](#)
- [Cai Be - heritage houses and smaller river routes.](#)
- [Can Tho - best transport base and dawn-market logistics.](#)
- [Chau Doc - border culture, Tra Su and onward Cambodia routes.](#)

WHAT TO EAT

Lau mam

Hu tieu

Elephant-ear fish

Coconut sweets

Fresh tropical fruit



HONEST CAVEAT

Large group tours can reduce the Delta to staged candy stops and a short rowboat ride. Ask how much time is spent on the water, walking, cycling and in actual communities.

Mekong Delta: a realistic first route

Use this as a shape, not a timetable. Weather, transfers and energy should decide the final order.

1

DAY 1

HCMC to Ben Tre or Cai Be; canals, orchard lanes, homestay.

2

DAY 2

Local market, cycling, transfer to Can Tho.

3

DAY 3

Dawn river activity, city food, continue or return.

4

DAY 4

Chau Doc and Tra Su for a deeper western extension.

VIETADVISOR FIELD NOTE

The Delta is not a spectacle waiting at a dock. It is a huge lived-in region. The slower your route, the less performative the experience becomes.



READ THE LIVE GUIDE

More Mekong Delta guides

SAVE BEFORE YOU GO

Opening hours, weather, route access and operator quality can change. Scan for the live version.



12 • GULF OF THAILAND

PHU QUOC

An island of resort comfort, fishing communities and tropical escapes - choose the coast carefully.

4-5 days

Nov-Apr

ISLAND

THE QUICK VERDICT

Phu Quoc works when you match your base to your trip. Long Beach is convenient, Ong Lang is quieter, the south is attraction-heavy and the north feels more spread out.

Phu Quoc

What makes the trip work

DO THESE FIRST

- 01 Plan one An Thoi islands / snorkeling day in the dry season.
- 02 Take the Hon Thom cable car for scale, not as the only reason to visit.
- 03 Find a west-coast sunset away from the busiest beach clubs.
- 04 Visit pepper farms, fishing areas or the national-park side with realistic drive times.



WHERE TO STAY

- [Long Beach / Duong Dong - easiest first visit and sunsets.](#)
- [Ong Lang - quieter couples and boutique stays.](#)
- [Khem / south coast - resorts and major attractions.](#)
- [North island - nature and large resorts; long distances to town.](#)

WHAT TO EAT

Seafood hotpot

Herring salad

Crab and shellfish

Pepper-seasoned dishes

Night-market snacks

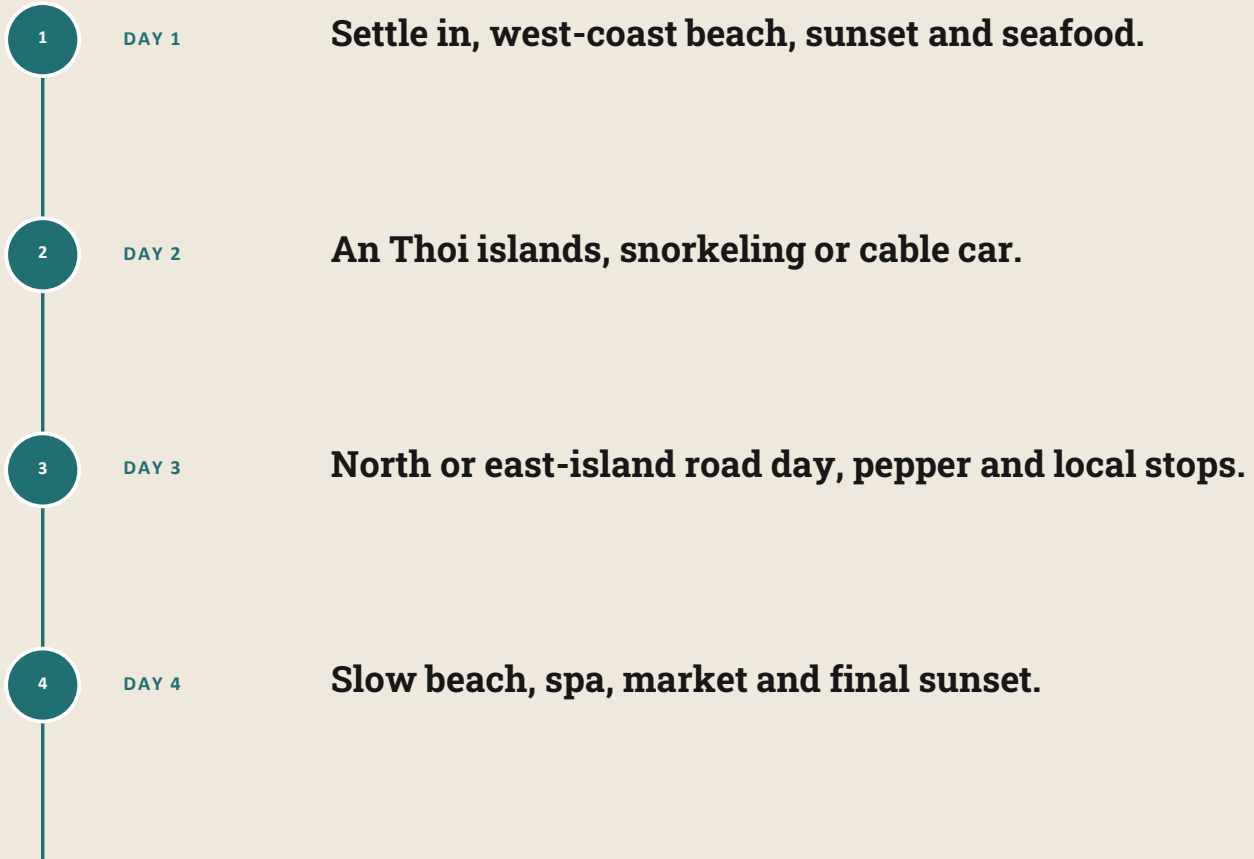


HONEST CAVEAT

Island distances are deceptive. A cheap hotel can cost time and taxi money if it sits far from the beach, town or tours you actually want.

Phu Quoc: a realistic first route

Use this as a shape, not a timetable. Weather, transfers and energy should decide the final order.



VIETADVISOR FIELD NOTE

Phu Quoc is no longer a hidden island. Its value now comes from choosing the right pocket, the right season and enough unplanned time to enjoy the water.



READ THE LIVE GUIDE

More Phu Quoc guides

SAVE BEFORE YOU GO

Opening hours, weather, route access and operator quality can change. Scan for the live version.

One bag, three climates

The same trip can include humid city heat, air-conditioned transport, cold mountain nights and sudden tropical rain. Pack for systems, not outfits.

EVERYWHERE

01 **Breathable layers**

02 **Light rain shell**

03 **Shoes with grip**

04 **Refillable bottle**

05 **Small cross-body bag**

06 **Sun protection**

MOUNTAINS

01 **Warm mid-layer**

02 **Long trousers**

03 **Dry socks**

04 **Buff / scarf**

05 **Motion-sickness option**

06 **Offline maps**

COAST + SOUTH

01 **Swimwear**

02 **Quick-dry towel**

03 **Sandals**

04 **Electrolytes**

05 **Mosquito repellent**

06 **Waterproof pouch**

LEAVE SPACE

Vietnam is easy to shop in. Keep room for tailoring, textiles, coffee, ceramics and things you did not know you wanted before the trip.



THE GUIDE CONTINUES ONLINE

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