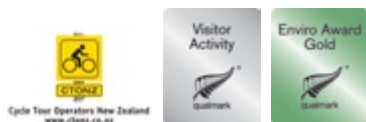


vietnam limestone landscapes



trip highlights

Cycle on quiet lanes amongst limestone islands rising out of rice paddies

Visit the incredible Catholic Cathedral built in 1891 in Phat Diem

See the Bai Dinh pagoda, the largest pagoda in South East Asia, built in Hoa Lu, the ancient capital city of Vietnam

Stay in Cuc Phuong National Park, and visit the Primate Rescue Centre to see endangered Lemurs & Gibbons

Eat delicacies like sticky rice cooked on a bamboo stick

Spend the night in a traditional long-house, a unique cultural experience



Trip Duration 9 days

Grade introductory to moderate

Activities 9 day cycle and cultural experience

Accommodation 8 nights in quality 3.5 - 4.5 star hotels

Kia Ora from Adventure South

Experience Vietnam off the beaten track – easy cycling at its best!

This tour caters for all levels of cyclists, - distances are great enough to challenge strong riders but as the route has lots of flat sections, it is also suitable for recreational cyclists, combined with our full sag wagon support system.

The cycling is superb, at any moment there are a multitude of unique sights to see & we have included many off-the-bike experiences for you to enjoy.

Enjoy delicious meals, Vietnamese cuisine is world renowned with its combination of Western and Asian influences and we have carefully chosen restaurants with a high standard of hygiene.

Above all you will experience the essence of the Limestone Landscapes, with its friendly hill tribe peoples and unique water based lifestyles, you will leave with this beautiful corner of Vietnam occupying a special place in your heart.

why travel with Adventure South?

“Small groups, Great Guides, Superb Holidays.”

This comment encapsulates an Adventure South active holiday in Vietnam. The phrase was not born from a long and tortuous strategic planning process, it came from a client review! We could not have said it any better. Our client feedback also confirms that what helps make our holidays different are the quality of our professional local guides. They share their humour, compassion and wilderness experience to ensure that you have a great vacation and the right degree of personal challenge.

On an Adventure South tour you can also expect the right, proven equipment is provided for your tour; the food is delicious, plentiful and can be catered to your dietary requests; your guides are all First Aid trained; and that the itinerary you have chosen has been carefully crafted from years of personal experience in Vietnam, not from a guide book recommendation.

vietnam limestone landscapes

Cycle amongst limestone islands rising out of rice paddies, take in history and culture along the way



trip dates

2011 22 Oct - 30 Oct

2012 07 Apr - 15 Apr
21 Apr - 29 Apr
05 May - 13 May

trip cost

Joining Hanoi Base Cost: NZD\$2395 /

options & supplements

fast facts

Countries Visited:
Vietnam

Visas:
Yes*

Vaccinations:
Please consult a travel vaccination specialist for up to date information

Private Groups:
Private group options are available for this trip*

Singles:
Single travellers who are unable to be matched with another single traveller of the same gender, must pay a single supplement on this trip.

Leader:
Expert local leader

Brochure Reference:
Adventure South

* Ask our staff for more information

the trip

A 9 day tour taking in the highlights of the Ninh Binh & Mai Chau regions with a combination of hill tribe cultures & unique culture water based life-styles. Enjoy easy to moderate cycling on rural roads alongside the extensive canal network and through small villages. A highlight of the tour is in meeting the locals, with the help of your local guides you will enjoy some wonderful cultural experiences as you learn about life in Vietnam.

about your leader

Enjoy the trip in the company of your fully trained and experienced Vietnamese guides who will provide the local interpretation as well as looking after your every need. You will learn so much from our local English speaking guides who take great pleasure and pride in introducing you to their region. We pride ourselves on the standard and quality of these great people who you will be spending your holiday with. They come from all walks of life but they all have a common desire to give you the best possible experience, heaps of fun and lots of fond memories to take home with you. We provide you with the services of two guides for many of our trips, (this may depend on the size of the group). All are certified in first aid and CPR and many are trained bike mechanics. To check out more about our guides see our 'About us' page on our website (www.advsouth.co.nz).

at a glance

DAY 1	HANOI
DAY 2	HANOI TO NINH BINH
DAY 3	NINH BINH TO PHAT DIEM RETURN TO NINH BINH
DAY 4	NINH BINH TO CUC PHUONG NATIONAL PARK
DAY 5	CUC PHUONG HEADQUARTERS TO PARK CENTRE AND RETURN
DAY 6	CUC PHUONG TO MAI CHAU
DAY 7	MAI CHAU
DAY 8	MAI CHAU TO HANOI
DAY 9	TOUR ENDS AFTER BREAKFAST

what's included

- 8 breakfasts, 6 lunches and 7 dinners
- Bilingual group leader and bike mechanic
- Air-conditioned support vehicle
- Medical Kit

detailed itinerary

DAY 1 Hanoi

Meet at Galaxy Hotel at 3.00 p.m.. You will join the rest of the group for a briefing, bike fitting & short test ride. Dinner will be at a local restaurant

meals: D

DAY 2 Hanoi to Ninh Binh

An early start sees us drive out of the city to the small village of Ben Yen. Here we start cycling on rural roads surrounded by kaarst rock formations as we enter the Limestone Country. The route has several turns so we advise cycling with your guide and there are a few ups & downs as you traverse the narrow gaps between the structures. Lunch is at a local restaurant before continuing on a spectacular flat afternoon ride to Ninh Binh through a beautiful landscape of limestone islands

vietnam limestone landscapes

Cycle amongst limestone islands rising out of rice paddies, take in history and culture along the way



surrounded by rice fields and canals. You will cycle between “Mountain gates”, the local term for the gaps between the limestone formations. Tonight’s lodging is at the luxurious Legend Hotel, the welcoming swimming pool

is always popular after a hard day’s cycling.

Cycling Distance Morning 41km/25miles - Afternoon 29kms/18 miles

meals: B,L,D

DAY 3 Ninh Binh to Phat Diem return to Ninh Binh

This morning’s ride is another beautiful route via quiet lanes amongst limestone islands rising out of rice paddies surrounded by canals and rivers. At Phat Diem we visit the incredible Catholic Cathedral built in 1891. Apart from gigantic pillars made from single trees this massive building is built entirely of stone with numerous stone sculptures on the walls and a large bell cast in the 1890s weighing nearly 2 tons. Your guide will explain the amazing story of how this structure was built. This afternoon we drive to meet our boat, for the trip to visit the remarkable Kenh Gha village. The journey to the village is a unique experience, as we glide along the Hoang Long river and weave our way past boathouses and fishing vessels. Surrounded by limestone cliffs the village’s main access is by boat, and the people in Kenh Gha row boats with their feet, leaning back and watching the world go by.

Cycling distances – Ninh Binh to Phat Diem 23kms/14miles,

Optional return 28kms/17 miles

meals: B,L,D

DAY 4 Ninh Binh to Cuc Phuong National Park

Today sees us ride through quiet back roads on the gentle climb to Cuc Phuong National Park Headquarters, our base for the next two nights. The scenery is spectacular as we cycle through small villages & alongside rice fields before we enter the national park in the afternoon. On the way we pass through a spectacular gorge which offers some wonderful photo opportunities and visit the modern Bai Dinh pagoda, the largest pagoda in South East Asia, built on the site of Hoa Lu, the ancient capital city of Vietnam. There is an option here, for a beautiful walk to view a 30 tonne gold Buddha. Created by Ho Chi Minh in 1963 Cuc Phuong was Vietnam’s first National Park. Tonight we stay in comfortable guest houses at the park headquarters & there is time this afternoon for a short hike around nearby Mac Lake or the botanical gardens

Cycling Distance - Ninh Binh to Cuc Phuong National park 45kms/28miles

meals: B,L,D

DAY 5 Cuc Phuong Headquarters to Park Centre and return

Surrounded by limestone cliffs, Cuc Phuong National Park is considered the most important nature reserve in Viet Nam. It has 222 square km. of primary tropical forest and is famous for its variety of wildlife, there are an estimated 2,000 different species of flora and the 450 species fauna in the park.

This morning you will visit the famous Primate Rescue Centre www.primatecenter.org with 14 species of threatened gibbon and langur on site. A visit to the park headquarters to view the interpretation panels is also recommended. We then head into the park centre, depending on your fitness you can cycle or drive, with a visit on the way to the “cave of the Prehistoric Man.” After lunch at Bong, the park centre, we will go for a 2hr hike on an easy trail into the forest to see the ancient trees & prolific birdlife. To end the day we

have a cruisy downhill ride back to the Park Headquarters. Tonight your guides will treat you to a tour highlight, a Vietnamese cooking school where you will learn to create some local favourite dishes for your evening meal.

Cycling distance to Park Centre – 20kms/12miles each way

meals: B,L,D

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DAY 6 Cuc Phuong to Mai Chau

Today is a cycling day as we follow the Bui River valley towards Mai Chau. We cycle briefly on the northern section of the famous Ho Chi Minh Trail, now a paved highway traveling south all the way to Saigon, before continuing riding to Muong Khen where you have the option to ride in the support vehicle to traverse the formidable Thung Khe pass. (Those who want a challenge on the bike will find this climb offers great satisfaction, once you reach the summit an awesome downhill is just reward). Near the top we stop at some roadside stalls and meet some local ethnic Muong people who will introduce you to one of their delicacies, the delicious sticky rice cooked on a bamboo stick. The descent into Mai Chau is spectacular with beautiful views into the valley. The day ends at a local ethnic White Thai village where we will join our hosts in

a meal combined with a cultural & musical performance in their traditional

longhouse. Tonight's lodging is in a traditional long-house with communal sleeping & shared bathrooms. This is a unique cultural experience but we do understand that it may not be satisfactory to all participants. There is an option to stay at the near-by Mai Chau Lodge (which will involve an extra cost of NZD \$84pp) please let us know if this is your preference.

Cycling Distance – Up to 77kms/48miles

meals: B,L,D

DAY 7 Mai Chau

The lowland valleys around Mai Chau are inhabited by the Thai people and the high country is the home of the H'Mong ethnic minority. This morning we drive up the Ma'a River to an altitude of 1000 meters to visit a traditional H'Mong village at Sa Linh. We cycle back to our resort on a thrilling downhill run for a late lunch and the afternoon is free to relax and enjoy our beautiful lodgings.

Tonight we stay at Mai Chau lodge, a new resort reflecting the local culture, nestled amongst the rice fields and surrounding mountains the beautiful swimming pool is a popular place this afternoon. Tonight's meal is on your own at the delightful restaurant at the Mai Chau Lodge.

Cycling distance – 35kms/22miles

meals: B

DAY 8 Mai Chau to Hanoi

This morning we drive to the top of Khung The Pass before a thrilling downhill sets us up for the days riding. The landscape changes as we farewell the limestone country and gradually descend towards Hanoi. Lunch today is at an excellent local restaurant in Hoa Binh before loading up for the drive back to Hanoi. Tonight we experience the famous & spectacular Water Puppet show before our celebration farewell dinner and a chance to reflect on the experiences of the last eight days.

Cycling Distance – Summit Thung Khe Pass to Hoa Binh 48kms/29miles

meals: B,L,D

DAY 9 Tour ends after breakfast

meals: B

This itinerary is subject to change with any change in Community regulations as well as Governmental changes and natural circumstances beyond our control.

country information

All nationalities require a visa. It is your responsibility to arrange visas before you travel. Your travel agent can assist. You will need to send off your passport & should allow 3 weeks for processing. The cost is different in each country.

Passports are required by all visitors to Vietnam except children under the age of sixteen accompanied by a parent, provided the child is included in a valid family passport. Passports



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must be valid for a period of not less than two months beyond the date the visitor intends leaving Vietnam.

All the roads we cycle on are sealed, although there will be some rougher sections with potholes etc. The Vietnamese are rapidly improving their roading infrastructure so you will encounter some construction. There are over 80 million people in Vietnam, a country the size of New Zealand, so although we have chosen quieter roads for this tour it is hard to get away from people & you will still be with some traffic. Such traffic will include bicycles, motor bikes, rickshaws, buffalo carts & motorized vehicles and buses/trucks. Traffic is heavier in the towns & cities, and on certain sections on days one & two but the tour is designed that if you are uncomfortable about biking in the urban areas or on busier sections of road you can use the support vehicle.

Our guides all speak English & will be close at hand to interpret for you. Apart from isolated rural areas, basic English is widely spoken, especially among the younger people & most service staff will speak some English. It is however very important that you speak slowly to be understood.

We recommend that you do not drink any tap water in Vietnam. Bottled water is everywhere & cheap. Ice made from purified water is becoming readily available & your guides will advise you as to its safety.

We choose our restaurants for their local character, great cuisine and hygiene standards. Meals are eaten Asian style with the sharing of dishes among the group, being able to use chopsticks is an advantage but not essential. Meals are based around rice with several courses, including lots of fresh vegetables & seafood. Our meals are slightly Westernized in that they are not too spicy & we do not put local North Vietnamese delicacies like Dog Meat or Lizards on the menu (unless you are brave & want to try them?) On many days breakfasts are a highlight, showing the French influence with baguettes, cheeses & yoghurt readily available - you will enjoy the local coffee. Note - on some cycling days we are in very isolated areas so we have little choice for lunch venues.

Vietnam is very safe to travel in, tourism is a very important part of the economy & the authorities crack down heavily on people who transgress against foreigners. However there are a lot of poor people in the country & it pays to take the usual precautions with your valuables when traveling in a foreign country.

climate

Vietnam has a remarkably diverse climate because of its wide range of latitudes and altitudes. The North of Vietnam experiences cool, damp winters between November and April with temperatures in Hanoi falling to around 15°C. The summer months from May to October are very hot and dry. A popular time to visit is spring (March-April) or autumn (September - October) although you must still expect high humidity and some hot days.

a typical day

A typical day see us cycling an easy 40 - 50 kms, with options for more distance for strong riders. By mid-afternoon we are enjoying the comfort of our luxurious lodgings or out exploring the local attractions in the company of your local guides. The local food is a highlight and your guides will introduce you to an array of great local dishes.

accommodation on the trip

During the tour we stay at a high standard of accommodation, some with swimming pools. The rooms are based on a twin/double share with en-suite facilities. A guaranteed room to yourself is available for an extra payment of NZD \$335



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pre and post tour accommodation

If you would like some help booking pre/post tour accommodation speak to our staff as they can help with different suggestions.

what you carry

The tour is fully supported so you won't have to carry a thing. If hiring one of our bikes it will have a small front handlebar bag. Enough space to put your camera, wallet, phone etc. We recommend you pack your luggage in a soft sports bag for easy stowing in the trailer/vehicle. We urge you to keep your luggage to a minimum. If you have extra luggage you do not require for your holiday we can easily arrange to have it stored until the end of the trip.

equipment required

A bicycle helmet is compulsory on this trip. A comprehensive gear list will be provided on booking.

what's not included

- Bicycle Helmet
- Airport Transfer
- Optional activities listed in the itinerary
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry
- Beverages and meals not listed in the itinerary
- International airfares and departure taxes
- Visa costs
- Travel insurance. NOTE - this is compulsory for this tour.

responsible travel

We all have a responsibility to minimise the impact we have on the environment and communities we visit when we travel. Since our beginnings this has been a cornerstone of our company. The New Zealand travel industry has become a world leader in developing an external audit process to identify quality, and that process has been extended to now include a 3 level Enviro Mark based on company processes. We're very proud that we've received a Gold rating, the highest category; each year since this initiative began. We've just introduced the use of bio-diesel to our fleet; we've established a fund for certain local communities to support their ongoing work which includes building infrastructure, while in other cases it's used develop new methods of achieving sustainable practices. Being responsible when we travel isn't about a single process or project but rather a way of thinking and then doing. We started this journey many years ago, and acknowledge we still have a lot to learn. We invite you to join us!

trip grading

To consider the grade of a particular adventure we consider a number of factors. These include the condition of the terrain, the altitude and the length of the trip. The Limestone Landscapes is a graded introductory to moderate. You will need a reasonable level of fitness and we suggest 30 minutes of aerobic type exercise (either cycling or jogging) three times a week for the three months leading up to your trip.

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adventure travel

By its very nature adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected. In remote areas and other countries do not expect the standards you are used to at home. Remote areas are sometimes unpredictable and itineraries may need to be altered as a result. To get the most out of your adventure it is important that you are mentally flexible, positive and eager to take on all the challenges that arise. If you are uncertain about your suitability for this trip we recommend that you speak with your consultant or travel agent.

important note

These trip notes represent the most current information for this itinerary, and may supersede any information in the current brochure, including but not limited to the itinerary and price. The itinerary should be seen as a guide only. This itinerary may change at any time due to inclement weather, forces of nature and other circumstances beyond our control.

private groups

The adventures featured in our brochures, and on our website, are just a starting point. Planning and providing special group departures is something we do exceptionally well. Over the past 18 years we have developed some exceptional itineraries, from cycling to hiking or combination multi-adventure trips. School groups, charities, work colleagues and cycling buddies have all been part of our experience. Our team can assist you with all aspects of your private group to ensure the trip is tailored just right for your group. Contact our team today.

subscribe to our e-newsletter

To keep up to date with the new and exciting trip releases, special offers plus more please subscribe to our free e-newsletter at www.adventuresouthnz.com.au. Or why not view past travellers images and join in on the conversation at [facebook.com/AdventureSouthNZ](https://www.facebook.com/AdventureSouthNZ)

trip availability

If this trip seems right for you then we encourage you to call us now to check availability. A popular reason to travel with Adventure South is because of our small group sizes. These can fill quickly so it is important to check your availability well in advance. We always need to ensure other services, like train tickets or accommodations, are also available before we can confirm your place on our tours. To ensure we can assist you onto your New Zealand adventure of a lifetime we ask that you check your trip availability with our team at your earliest convenience.

how to book

To book an Adventure South holiday, you can book directly online (<http://www.advsouth.com/booking.aspx>) or you will need to complete a booking form (found at the back of our brochure). You can also download a copy from www.advsouth.com . On completion, please fax or post the form to Adventure South or your nearest World Expeditions office, along with your non-refundable deposit. If you're coming from outside New Zealand call your nearest World Expeditions office or travel agent for assistance with your travel arrangements including flights, travel insurance and additional accommodation. If you're unsure what would be the best option for you call us NZ free phone 0800 00 11 66, AUS free phone 1800 10 70 60, USA free phone 1866 479 9827 anywhere else +64 3 942 1222 or email us on guide@advsouth.co.nz

