



# Living Traditions Private Tour

## Living Traditions Private Tour 12 Days Inclusive from the UK

Discover the traditional cooking techniques and culture of this incredible diverse country

### Inclusive price includes:

- International flights and current taxes
- Domestic transportation
- Accommodation
- Meals as stated
- Touring with Guides and entrance fees
- Visa fees for UK passport holders



### Your Tour Dossier

This document is designed to be read in conjunction with the other pre-departure information provided by Wendy Wu Tours including the tour itinerary as described in our brochure and/or website. It aims to provide a straightforward description of the physical activities involved in sightseeing or travelling during the tour.

If there are any particular challenges, from the length of time spent on your feet, the length of drives and flights, to the standard of remote accommodation; they will be explained here.

All passengers must read this document to ensure the itinerary is suitable for their interests and physical capabilities. This is not your final itinerary and therefore does not mention all the sites visited.

## Welcome to Wendy Wu Tours

Vietnam continues to amaze, fascinate and thrill our passengers, many of whom have travelled to one country in Asia with us, then another, year after year. We urge you to keep in mind all the rewards, as well as challenges of travelling in a country with a history, culture and attitude so unlike your own.

A typical day's sightseeing may include the bustle and noise of a city street, sights and smells of a local market and interacting with the locals. Travelling in Vietnam requires patience and potential delays are to be expected due to standards of service. There is a low level of English spoken throughout Vietnam, so your Local Guide will be indispensable during your trip.

Almost everything will be different to what you may be used to. We have found that our passengers who embark with a sense of humour and adventure, who accept that things do not always go to plan, are those who find their experience most rewarding. It is essential that all passengers recognize the demands of factors such as basic facilities and cultural differences they may encounter in some areas.

## Living Traditions Private Tour - Medium Paced Tour

Our private tours are accessible to everyone. This tour will involve sightseeing on foot, some climbing of stairs and getting on and off boats throughout the tour. Some of the days will be long and very busy.

This tour is not strenuous, and can be taken at the pace, and according to the abilities of passengers travelling in your party. If any member of your party has mobility difficulties, please advise Wendy Wu Tours, so that our operators can be made aware, and may rearrange the itinerary to suit your needs. If at any point during the tour you feel you are being rushed, or not moving fast enough, please let your local guide know, so that they may adjust the touring accordingly and provide you with the best experience possible. Similarly, as you are travelling on a private basis, if you would like to change the touring, dates, timings, please speak to your reservations consultant, prior to travelling, or speak to your local guide whilst in Vietnam.

NB: Please note that times and distances listed in the tour dossier are approximate.

### Days 1-2: UK/Hanoi

*Breakfast, Lunch*

On Day 2, you will be met at Hanoi Airport in the arrivals hall by your Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours and you will transfer (1 hour drive) to your hotel and check-into your room. There is no sightseeing today.

*[NB: Your Local Guide will confirm the menu for tomorrow's seafood lunch on board the junk boat, so please mention any food allergies or dislikes again before the end of today.]*

### Day 3: Hanoi

Both men and women must dress respectfully for the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, with covered shoulders and knees. When visiting the Mausoleum you must be quiet and show respect. Cameras and mobile phones are not allowed. The Mausoleum is closed from September to December. If you are travelling during this time you will view the Mausoleum from the outside. Sightseeing in central Hanoi involves approx. 4 hours on foot.

*Breakfast, Lunch*

### Day 4: Hanoi - Hanoi Cooking Class

Visit a vibrant local market with a local chef from the cooking school, where trainers come from hotels around Hanoi. Select locally produced food, vegetables and spices under the chef's guidance before returning to the kitchen to grasp what Vietnamese traditional cuisine is all about in a hands-on cooking class. You will then get to use your artistic flair to prepare Vietnamese dishes and sample them with the chef. The remainder of the day is free at your leisure.

### Day 5: Hanoi – Halong Bay

Drive 3.5 hours (170km) to Halong City and port, including a 20 minute rest stop. There is usually a crowd of boats at the docks; however the cruise itself will be scenic and relaxing. Boarding your junk boat could involve navigating your way over and through other boats, moored between it and the dock, sometimes without handrails, ladders or assistance from staff. The junk boats have been modelled on the traditional 'junk' which was both home and working vessel for fishermen for centuries. They usually hold about 20 dining passengers (or 18 maximum overnight), have an enclosed dining area and an open deck on the upper deck. Enjoy a 4 hour cruise including lunch on board. Return to the dock and drive back to Hanoi.

*Breakfast, Lunch*

*[NB: Your Halong Bay cruise may be affected by local weather conditions. Please refer to the 'Itinerary Changes' section]*

### Day 6: Hanoi to Hue

Early this morning you will transfer to Hanoi Airport for your flight to Hue. Upon arrival into Hue Airport you will be met and transferred to your hotel for check in. Hue was the imperial capital of Vietnam from 1802 to 1945, when the last emperor abdicated the throne, yet is still regarded as the seat of Vietnam's culture and religion today. The city boasts many significant pagodas and temples, as well as the grand tombs of the Nguyen Emperors. Upon arrival enjoy a cruise in a dragon boat up the majestic Perfume River to Thien Mu Pagoda; this seven-storey tower is built on a hillock overlooking the Perfume River and is Hue's oldest and most beautiful pagoda. It is outside this pagoda that the car, driven by a monk called Thich Quang Duc, sits as a reminder of a change in the regime, which was made after the Vietnamese Buddhist crisis. Thich Quang Duc committed self-immolation in 1963 to protest against the government and in turn unwittingly produced one of the most enduring press photographs of the 20th Century.

*Breakfast*

### Day 7: Hue

This morning you will visit the UNESCO World Heritage listed Imperial Citadel. Dominating the city, the Imperial Citadel was modelled on China's Forbidden City. Enter through the towering main gate to appreciate the magnificent architecture and gardens while your guide explains the history of the former royal court. Despite being bombed heavily, there are some incredibly well preserved sections still intact and others which are being restored. Later, enjoy a walking tour through the colourful Dong Ba Market to learn about all kinds of Hue recipes and ingredients. This afternoon you will visit the tomb of the 4th Emperor Tu Duc, who had 104 concubines, 50 dishes at every meal and a tomb that covered 10 hectares and took 4000 men three years to build. You will also visit to the French influenced tomb of the 12th Emperor Khai Dinh.

*Breakfast*

### Day 8: Hue to Hoi An

After breakfast, you will drive over the scenic Hai Van Pass before entering the Hai Van Tunnel to the ancient town of Hoi An. Perhaps more than any other place in Vietnam, Hoi An retains the feel of centuries past. Once known as Faifo, Hoi An was an influential port on the Silk Road. For over 500 years merchants from China, Japan, France and Portugal settled in the prosperous town resulting in a distinctive blend of culture, cuisine, religion and architecture. In 1999, the town was declared a UNESCO World Heritage listed site for having the most unique architecture in Southeast Asia. It has been restored and protected by both the UNESCO fund and proud locals ever since.

This afternoon, enjoy a walking tour of the narrow and ancient streets of this charming town. You will visit one of Hoi An's oldest homes, built over 200 years ago and still

occupied by the descendants of the merchant family that originally built it, as well as the traditional Hoi An Market, the Quan Cong Chinese Temple and the Japanese Covered Bridge.

This evening board a boat for a leisurely cruise along the Hoi An River to the cooking school. (If weather does not permit you will be taken by road.)

On arrival, you will have a chance to explore the cooking school's herb and vegetable garden, before learning about some of Hoi An's and Vietnam's well-known dishes. The school's chefs will have cooking demonstrations and a brief introduction to Vietnamese food carving (plate decoration). You will then enjoy the meal you have cooked for dinner.

*Breakfast, Dinner*

### Day 9: Hoi An to Saigon

This morning after breakfast and checkout, you will be transferred to Danang airport for your early morning flight to Saigon.

Upon arrival, you will drive directly 1.5 hours to Ben Tre, a southern province located in the Mekong Delta. You will notice lush rice paddies and fruit farms emerging alongside the highway as you leave the city behind.

Upon arrival in Ben Tre, you will take a short stroll through a shaded area of coconut gardens before reaching a rest-stop to enjoy freshly picked fruit, a cup of honey tea and a traditional folk song performance.

Walk further to the river bank and continue your journey by sampan. Take the time to discover the maze of small palm-lined canals.

Directly in front of a small pier you will have the chance to see a family run-business where they make coconut candy.

Embark on another motorized boat ride toward Turtle Island. Take some time to enjoy a leisurely walk through the village observing fruit orchards along the way

Your lunch will consist of typical Mekong dishes at a local restaurant.

After lunch cruise to Chuong Duong waterfront pier where you can take in the Delta scenery of houses built on stilts and local fish farms.

You will return to Saigon around mid-afternoon.

*[NB: Check-out time in Vietnam is midday so your group's rooms are unlikely to be available. This morning you will commence sightseeing and check-in at your hotel later.]*

*Breakfast, Lunch*

### Day 10: Saigon

This morning you will be accompanied by a local chef to the vibrant Central Market to select the best vegetables and other ingredients under the chef's guidance. You will then proceed to the cooking school for your private hands-on cooking class.

Here you can see a traditional Vietnamese kitchen corner with stoves made by clay, wooden 'garden-manger'. Use your artistic flair to present your favourite Vietnamese dish.

This cooking class truly offers an authentic southern cuisine, which you can sample when you have finished.

Later this afternoon, you will enjoy a leisurely walk to visit some highlights of the city with its French colonial architecture and funky cafes and boutiques. Start with a visit to the Post Office and Notre Dame Cathedral followed by the Reunification Palace.

The remainder of the afternoon is free at your leisure for shopping or to further explore the city of Saigon.

*Breakfast, Lunch*

#### **Day 11: Saigon/UK**

You will be transferred from the hotel to the airport, according to the departure time of your international flight. Transfer from your hotel to Saigon airport, for your overnight

flight back to the UK. Depending on your chosen airline, some flights to the UK will arrive on Day 11, whereas others will arrive the following day.

*Breakfast*

#### **Land Only**

If you are travelling on a land only basis, then you will need to make your own way to the starting hotel in Hanoi on Day 2. On Day 11, you will checkout from your Saigon hotel, and continue as per your own arrangements.

Please refer to the Wendy Wu Tours brochure and/or website for details on departure dates, prices, itineraries, inclusions and tour extensions available as well as full booking conditions.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

#### **Before You Leave**

**Itinerary Changes** - The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. The schedules of the domestic airlines in Vietnam are subject to frequent changes. For this reason, we have indicated approximate times only. Your Local Guide will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Roads in Vietnam have generally been improved over recent years, but some road construction and/or weather conditions may still lengthen the driving times. Our intention is to adhere to the day to day itinerary as printed; however order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

1. Vietnam Airlines' domestic flights are subject to frequent changes. For this reason we have indicated morning, afternoon or evening flights only. Your Local Guide will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them.
2. The Halong Bay Authorities are taking extra precautions to ensure the safety of all passengers cruising around Halong Bay. Weather conditions such as mist, fog, wind, rain and storms may delay the departure time of your cruise, or in some cases your cruise may be cancelled. Notifications of any delays or cancellations may not be known until your group's arrival in Halong Bay. If your cruise is cancelled after your arrival in Halong Bay, you will have lunch in Halong City and return to Hanoi. If notification of the cruise cancellation is given prior to your departure for Halong Bay an alternative day trip will be arranged to Hoa Lu and Tam Coc or 'Halong Bay on Land', an area located approximately 2 hours from Hanoi. Our guides will make every effort to inform the group at the earliest possible moment should there be any itinerary changes.

**Visas** - A visa is required for entry into Vietnam. A standard visa processing service is included in your tour cost. We will require your passport, completed visa application form, and 1 passport photo, taken within the last 6 months, to process your visa. We will require all this information 8 weeks prior to departure. As per our standard visa processing service, we will have your passport for at least 4 weeks. In rare cases you may be required to provide further information or documentation to the Vietnamese Embassy and/or be required to attend an interview at the embassy in London. If this is the case we will notify you as soon as possible.

**Vaccinations and Your Health** - We recommend that you contact either your local GP or a travel doctor for advice on vaccinations and travel health. [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk) is a comprehensive website that you may also find useful.

**Climate** - Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

**Insurance** - It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Book now on **0844 499 3899** visit [www.wendywutours.co.uk](http://www.wendywutours.co.uk) or see your preferred travel agent.

**Luggage** - All clients are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of 5kg. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

### **What to Expect on Tour**

**Development** - Although Vietnam is developing, it still lacks international standards of civil infrastructure and therefore tourist facilities. For example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade; concepts of personal responsibility are different to those in the UK. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in the UK. However, all of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense as well as refer to notices and follow advice from your Local Guides.

**Seatbelts** - Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in Vietnam and therefore the Vietnamese people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving. If you have any concerns, please notify your Local Guide.

**Traffic in Vietnam** - Roads in Vietnam have generally been improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road – not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections above are approximations only.

**Accommodation** - Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and Vietnam. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

Four and five star hotels are also available on private tours. If you would like to upgrade, please speak to one of our reservation consultants.

**Tipping** - As with most countries, tipping is a way of life in Vietnam. For private tours we recommend an amount of US \$7-10 per person per day for tipping to be distributed amongst drivers, restaurants, guides etc. This amount is at your own discretion.

**Exchanging Cash** - It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling outside major cities in Vietnam. US Dollars are easily exchanged throughout Vietnam, however other currencies such as British Sterling can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are new and undamaged. US Dollars should be from the new series from the year 2003 onwards. Old series notes can be difficult to exchange, apart from in some national banks in Vietnam, such as Vietcombank. We suggest for your convenience that you ensure your US Dollars are from the new series to avoid any difficulties exchanging money during your trip. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited.

**Meals** - Some meals are included in our private tours, please see inclusions above. If you would like to travel on a fully inclusive meal basis please speak to Wendy Wu Tours, to arrange this prior to travel. Included meals are designed so that you can experience the local dishes, their individual flavours as well as the different ways they are prepared and cooked throughout Vietnam. For meals not included, Local Guides will be happy to assist with recommendations on where and what to eat in order to fully appreciate this vastly different cuisine.

**Personal Expenses-** You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of £150 per week should be sufficient; however for those that can't resist a bargain, consider allocating a higher amount.

**Optional Extras** - Our tours are planned to be as fully inclusive as possible. However, from time-to-time your Local Guide may suggest optional tours/sightseeing in addition to the standard sightseeing planned for that city. Such options are at an additional cost, with prices ranging from US\$20-US\$50 per person (payable in local currency). If you do not wish to take part in any optional extras, you will have the option of enjoying some free time at leisure or to return to the hotel.

### **After Your Booking**

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form, help sheet, and an Indochina travel guide. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approx. 2 weeks prior to departure, and will include a travel wallet, badge, lanyard, suggested packing list and a phrase book, along with your final itinerary and international etickets.

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