

Secrets of Vietnamese kitchen

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Day 1: Arrival in Hanoi (D)

Upon arrival in Hanoi, you will clear customs and immigration, and be met by our tour operator and head to hotel. After relaxing and a brief lunch, you will take a charming cyclo ride around the city.

Perhaps the most interesting area you will visit is the Old Quarter. Here many tiny streets join to sell a huge diversity of products.

You spend some time visiting several of the most respected galleries, meeting with the owners and artists.

After your ride, you will return to the hotel and prepare for dinner. Before you eat, there will be a short, informal talk on Vietnamese mythology and how it is presented in different forms of Folk Art. The welcome dinner will be in the restaurant. Overnight at hotel in Hanoi.

Day 2: Half Day Hanoi City Tour & Cooking Lessons (B) (L) (D)

This morning you will have your first cooking lesson. The experience starts with a walk, accompanied by the Chef of the Spices Garden Restaurant at the Sofitel Metrople hotel, to the local market, where you get a chance to learn all about Vietnamese ingredients. A cooking demonstration will follow, which takes place directly in the kitchen and where everyone has the chance to get involved. After the class lunch will be served in the Spices Garden Vietnamese Restaurant to sample all the different dishes prepared during the demonstration.

Cooking schedule:

10.00 a.m.: Proceed to the market

11.00 a.m.: Cooking demonstration

12.30 p.m.: Lunch

After lunch, you will begin to tour Hanoi, accompanied by your guide. Your route will take you past the granite and concrete mausoleum where Ho Chi Minh lies in state and the government buildings to the Museum of Fine Arts. Here you will have one of the country's most famous artists as your guide. In front of the museum is the Temple of Literature, called "Le Pagoda des

Corbeaux” by the French because of the huge flocks of crows gathering in the mango trees near the entrance. It is here that Vietnam’s first university was founded. Leaving the museum, you will walk around Hoan Kiem Lake in the middle of the city passing the One Pillar Pagoda, built in 1049 by Emperor Ly Thanh Tong to celebrate the birth of his only son, and Ho Chi Minh’s house, given him by the people of the country in thanks for his leadership. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 3:Hanoi - Ha Long Bay – Hanoi (B) (L) (D)

Head out of Hanoi to Ha Long Bay, recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Board a boat for a 5 hour cruise to explore the mystery and beauty of Ha Long Bay, where among the approximately 1500 square miles of water, sprout numerous limestone islets and strangely shaped rock sculptures. The name, Ha Long, or ‘Descending Dragon’ evokes memories of the many dragon legends that are part of Vietnam’s long history and the mystical belief in yang, the dragon energy and Ying, the mountain energy. Enjoy a leisurely boat trip through the bay stopping to explore some of the many islands, caves and grottoes. Return to Hanoi following a lunch on board of freshly caught seafood. Visit to Dong Trieu pottery village on the way back to Hanoi. Evening is at leisure. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 4:Hanoi – Hue (B) (L) (D)

Catch an early morning flight south to Hue, the imperial city of the Nguyen Kings. Your home for the next two nights is the Huong Giang Hotel, overlooking the Perfume River. The lobby of the Huong Giang is quite ornate and reminiscent of an Imperial assembly hall, and your rooms will overlook the Perfume River. After checking in and dropping your bags at the hotel, you can begin to explore the city.

In the afternoon, you can head into town by cyclo to visit the market and the ancient Royal Citadel, constructed in 1805 and the greatest legacy of the Nguyen emperors. If time permits, you might want to walk back to the hotel along the river, passing the book and card sellers. Overnight in the Huong Giang Hotel.

Day 5:Cooking Lesson for Vietnamese Royal Cuisine (B) (L) (D)

Today you will learn how to cook some of the most famous Vietnamese Royal foods such as Phoenix Spring Rolls (Nem Phuong) and one of the most traditional Hue foods: Mussels with Rice (Com Hen). All of the lessons and practice will be done in the best kitchen in Hue. Spring rolls are called Nem Ran by northerners and Cha Gio in Hue and the south. Although it ranks among Vietnam’s specialty dishes, Nem Ran is very easy to prepare. Consequently, it has long been a preferred food on special occasions such as Tet and other family festivities. Ingredients used for Nem Ran comprise of lean minced pork, sea crabs or unshelled shrimps, two kinds of

edible mushroom (Nam Huong and Moc Nhi), dried onion, duck eggs, pepper, salt and different kinds of seasoning. All are mixed thoroughly before being wrapped with transparent rice paper into small rolls. These rolls are then fried in boiling oil. Phoenix Spring Rolls are basically like normal ones, but require more delicacy in presentation, being shaped like a phoenix.

Steamed white rice is part of every meal in Vietnam, but only in Hue's 'mussels with rice' dish is the rice served cold. Hue people, after deciding that no food should be wasted, have designed this dish using leftover rice. This dish includes Chinese vermicelli, bamboo shoots, lean pork meat, and an assortment of green vegetables (banana leaves, mint, star fruit, etc.). The broth obtained after boiling the mussels is used to flavor the rice. Ginger, sesame and chili are also added to the broth. This dish is very spicy and it is common to see people with watery eyes and sweaty faces while eating it; nevertheless, everyone congratulates the cook for such a delicious meal. Overnight at the Hotel.

Day 6:Hue – Saigon City (B) (L) (D) Flight

Today we get morning flight to Saigon. Upon arrival in Saigon, you head to visit Saigon. Built on the site of an ancient Khmer settlement and an outpost for early pioneers in the 14th century, Saigon (now known as Ho Chi Minh City) did not begin to come into its own until the early 17th century. The derivation of the name, Saigon centers around the waterside location. Some say the name comes from the Annamese word 'Thay Ngon,' meaning a highly populated area near a dammed river. Others claim it is a transcription of the Khmer word Prei Kor or 'Kapok Tree Forest.' In any case, the city is fast regaining its reputation as one of Asia's most vibrant cities. The tree-lined boulevards and French colonial architecture hearkens to the city's recent past, while the bustling markets, changing infrastructure and dynamic people look to the future. You might want to shop in Ben Thanh Market or head over to Cholon, the Chinese Quarter. Overnight in Saigon

Day 7:Cooking lesson at the Vietnam Cooking Center (B) (L) (D)

In the last cooking lesson, you will learn some of the best southern dishes: Caramel Pork, steamed rice in coconut juice and Sour Fish Soup or 'Canh Chua.' Canh Chua originated from the Mekong Delta, more specifically from Dong Thap Muoi. Canh Chua is a fish sour soup made with fish from the Mekong River and the So Dua flower. This dish is mostly served when the So Dua flower first blossoms at the end of the rainy season. A feast is organized and the Sour Fish Soup is among the delicious meals prepared for this event. Sour Fish Soup must be eaten very hot. It must also be eaten all at one time since the taste is not the same when it is reheated. Overnight in the Hotel.

Cooking schedule:

09.30-10.00 am: Welcome drink and Vietnamese Cookery Art presentation

10:00-11:00 am: Cooking demonstration

11:00 am-12:00 pm: Lunch

(A cooking handbook, souvenir gift and Certificate of Completion will be provided after lunch)

Day 8: Depart from Saigon(B)

The day is free at your leisure until the transfer for your departure from Saigon's Tan Son Nhat airport

Rate in USD per person - Validity Until 31 Dec 2009 (except for Christmas and New Year)

- Number of Persons -

Class

2-3

4-5

6-9

Single Sup

4 star 10856350

5 stars

Hotels selected in this trip

 5 stars

Hanoi Sunway - Club classic room

Huong Giang - Deluxe river side

Saigon

Rex - Rex suite room

Tour Cost includes:

- Full transportation by private car or bus as tour program indicated.
- Full meals as indicated (L, D) at the local restaurant.
- Breakfast at hotel.
- 2 domestic flights : Hanoi - Hue, Hue - Saigon
- English or French speaking guide
- Entrance fees.
- Cooking fees
- Visit Market fees
- Private Boat trip in Halong Bay, Tiengiang river in Mytho.
- Twin-share accommodation (AC room)

Tour Cost excludes:

- International airport tax in Hanoi at USD 14.00 nett per person
- International airfare to/from Vietnam
- Personal insurance
- Expenditure of a personal nature, tips, such as drinks, souvenirs, laundry, emergency transfers & etc.
- Visa to Vietnam