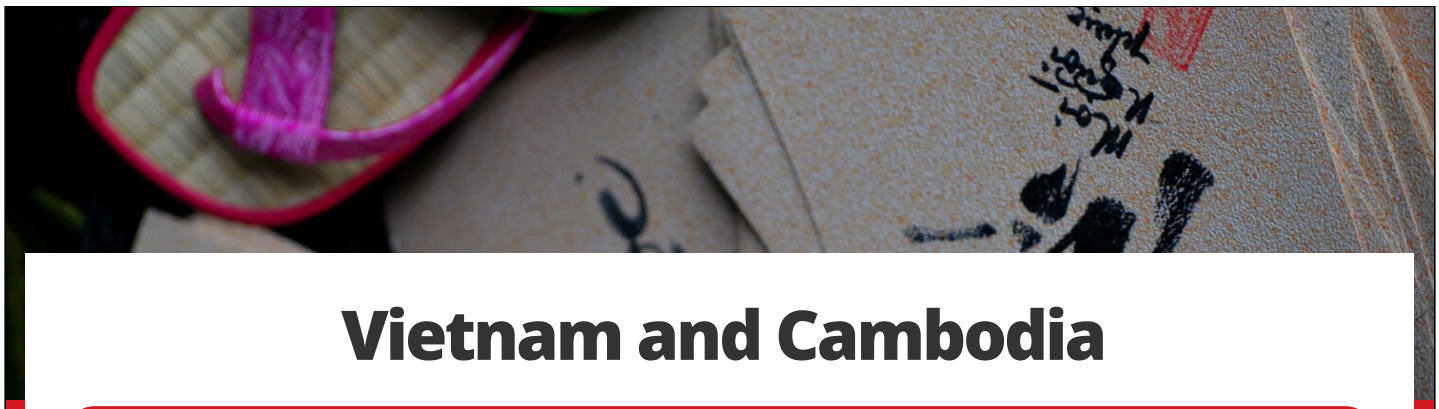


Vietnam and Cambodia

Cultural, Leisure

Country : Vietnam June 2014

The most beautiful pictures





From Hanoi, the capital, to Ho Chi Minh City in the south, passing by the famous Ha Long Bay, the beaches of Nha Trang and the Mekong delta, Vietnam has a lot to offer and change the scenery. The country extends over 1700km, by the coastal road that can be taken by bus or private vehicle.

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By Olivier Paudex

Introduction

Vietnam, an Asian country, has long been separated into two states. **North Vietnam with its capital Hanoi** and **South Vietnam with Saigon, which was renamed Ho Chi Minh City** The two parts were reunited following the end of the Cold War. Today, it is quite possible to travel the country from north to

south without a visa and without crossing a border. The mountains of the north and its famous**Ha-Long Bay** give way to the beaches of **Nha Trang** in the south, not to mention the beautiful **Mekong Delta**. And since neighboring Cambodia is only a 2-hour flight away, this travel will end with a visit to the archaeological site of **Angkor Wat**.

Hanoi

A gigantic city of **8 million people**, Hanoi is a city that teems like an ant farm. City dwellers get around mainly by motorcycle or scooter. It is crossed by the **Red River**. Hanoi was the capital of French Indochina until the mid-20th century. Its old quarter and market are one of its main activities.

Rambutans, a kind of small red fruit covered with thorns, contain a translucent white fruit, similar in structure to a lychee, but with a more bitter taste.








Hanoi's market

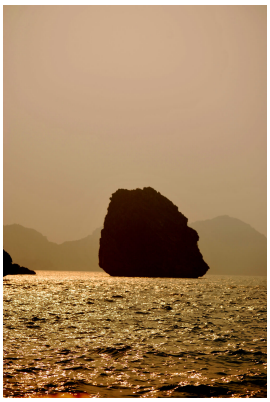
Ha-Long Bay

Ha-Long Bay is **170km** from downtown Hanoi. It takes **3 hours by bus** to get there, then take a ferry. It is possible to spend the night on the water, staying with local people.

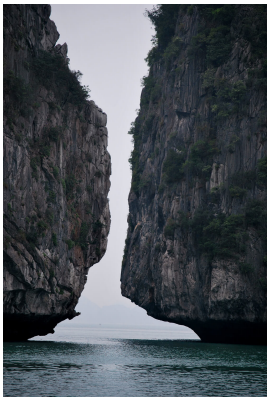
Ha-Long Bay allows for **kayaking**, the most ecological and enjoyable way, alone or with two people, to discover totally untouched coves by passing underneath these amazing rocks.










The famous rocks of Ha Long Bay






The life of the fishermen





A good idea, visit Ha Long Bay at your own pace by kayak

Cat Ba Island

On the way back from Ha Long Bay, it is possible to dock on**the neighboring island of Cat Ba**. Many hotels welcome tourists who want to extend the Ha-Long Bay experience. Some jungle tours are possible, with the help of a guide. The food is excellent. It is really a resourceful place.





The Vietnamese jungle as we imagine it

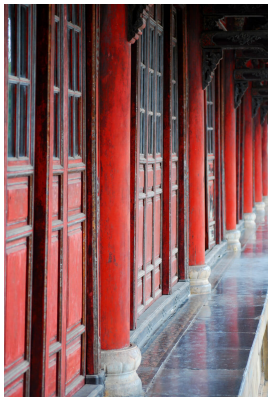
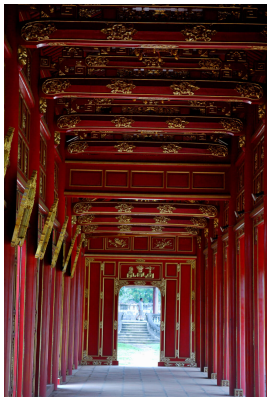




A last tour on the water to taste the local specialties

Hue City

Hue is a city located **700km south of Hanoi**, along the coastal road. Hue is very touristy, because of these old buildings and its Forbidden City, seat of the Nguyen Dynasty. Many shows and concerts are given there in traditional costume.


Architecture of Hue



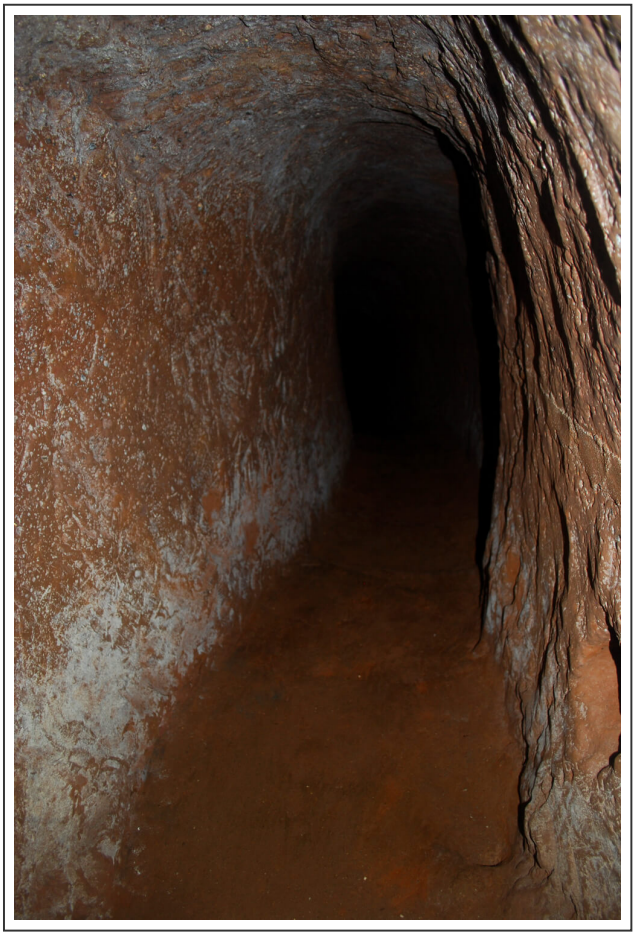


Performance and wardrobes



Handicraft

Hue is also a central point to visit **the Vinh Moc tunnels** used during the war with the Americans, as well as the **demilitarized zone**. It can be reached by car or motorcycle with driver. It is located about **70km north of Hue**.



The tunnels



of Vinh Moc

Hoi An

Hoi An has been a **UNESCO heritage site since 1999**. It is a port city and its old quarter is very popular, even more so during the **Full Moon Lantern Festival.**

The locals live a lot on the products of the sea and tropical forests, such as**the fruit of the Jacquier tree**, which is exclusively grown in Southeast Asia. It can weigh up to 50kg. It is part of the mulberry family, but its taste is mild and sweet, a bit like mango.

While walking on the beaches, you can see natives dressed from head to toe. It may seem strange, but you should know that Vietnamese people do not want to tan, and this for social class reasons. The more tanned you are, the more it means that you work in the fields or outside, so you are poor. It is also a sign of beauty for young women. You can find in supermarkets, anti-UV sun creams with bleaching agents.






Fishermen, Woman dressed on the beach, Lantern festival, Jacquier fruit






Faces during the lantern festival in Hoi An

Cat Tien National Park

Cat Tien is a tropical national reserve. It is located **150km northeast of Ho Chi Minh City.**It is entered by purchasing a ticket in the village of **Nam Cat Tien**. It is possible to rent bicycles in the park to visit it, which is very nice. Some rooms are also available for overnight stays. Its ecosystem includes many species of

trees that are several hundred years old. The park is full of hiking trails, as well as botanical gardens and unusual wildlife, including crocodiles. The climate is tropical.





A good cold beer, children met in the park





Centenary trees

Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

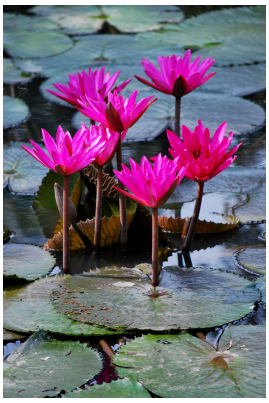
The city is the capital of South Vietnam. The architecture of the buildings has nothing to do with Hanoi. It's much more modern and very Western. The impression of being in a European city could almost be true. It's very touristy and it's especially the obligatory passage to reach the Mekong Delta or to take the plane to leave elsewhere.



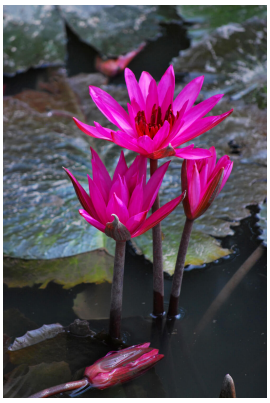
The central station of Saigon

Mekong Delta

The Mekong Delta is a vast and very fertile region where the branches of several rivers, including the Mekong, flow into the sea. Interesting places to visit are **Vinh Long**, **Can Tho** and **Bac Liêu**, at the very south.





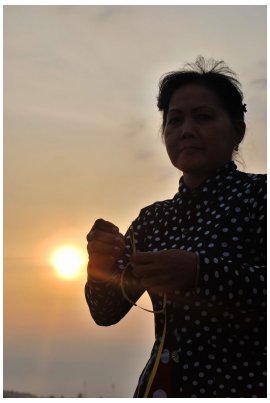






Flowers and exotic fruits

One of the attractions not to be missed is the floating market. But for this, you have to book your place in a boat at an agency and get up early, very early. **The market starts at 5am**. The goods pass from one boat to another.
















We can't get enough of all these smiles





The Bac Liêu floating market

Angkor Wat (Cambodia)

Having planned to visit Cambodia to put a fitting end to this travel, the best thing to do was to go back up to **Ho Chi Minh City** and fly to **Siem Reap**. The archaeological site of **Angkor Wat**, the jewel of Cambodia, is only **500km** from Ho Chi Minh City and no more than **2 hours by plane**. Siem Reap town adjoins the site and it is very easy to get a bicycle to ride around.



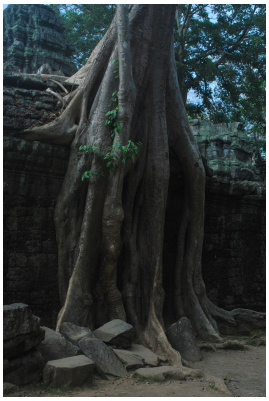


The temples of Angkor Wat

If you ride a bicycle along the temple circuit, you can see an architecture unique in the world. Nature has regained its rights and the roots of trees grow in the old walls left to abandon.





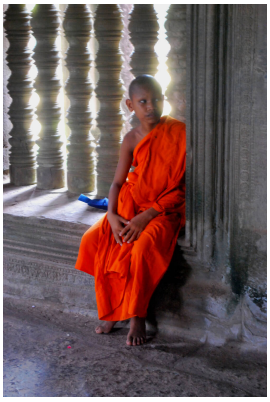




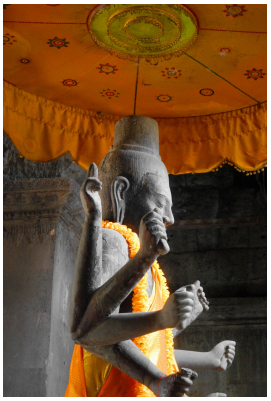
Trees with long roots grow in old ruined temples

It is not uncommon to come across processions of young monks or entire groups following Buddha's teachings.





The novice monks


Buddha with multiple arms and temples at night

That's it, the travel stops here. Cambodia is much bigger, starting with its capital, Phnom Penh. Maybe that will be for another time.