

FROM AU LAC TO VIETNAM



2000 years of arts, crafts and architecture
with an extension to the Temples of Angkor, Cambodia

and led by

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Birmingham Museum of Art

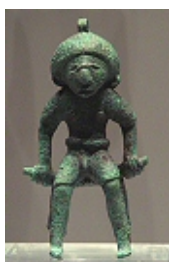
October 2011

Day 1: Birmingham/Gateway/In Flight

Fly today from Birmingham to our gateway city for our flight to Saigon. Depending on our flight we may leave a little after midnight on Day 2

Day 2: In flight/Ho Chi Minh City

Up on arrival at Tan Son Nhat airport we are met and transferred to hotel for check in for the next three nights. Arrival time will depend on our airline and flight.



Day 3: Ho Chi Minh City

This morning we visit the Vietnam History Museum, covering Vietnam from Bronze Age Dong Son culture (over 80 bronze pieces excavated since 1985 are exhibited here) to the present. We'll also visit the Fine Art Museum and see the historical influence on today's modern Vietnamese artists. This afternoon we visit the Cu Chi tunnels, the amazing labyrinth of tunnels used by the guerrillas during the war. We also have the opportunity to witness how rice paper is made (nowadays not from rice). *(B.L.D)*

Day 4: Ho Chi Minh City/Tay Ninh/Ho Chi Minh City

After breakfast at the hotel we travel to Tay Ninh, the birthplace of the unique Cao Dai religion, a fusion of Buddhism,



Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity, Islam and native Vietnamese spiritual beliefs. Every day at noon, worshippers garbed in colorful robes flock to the Cao Dai Great Temple to participate in the daily prayer sessions, which we respectfully observe from the upper balconies.



We return to Ho Chi Minh City in the afternoon, where we focus on the colonial aspects of Saigon, including Reunification Palace, the Central Post Office and Notre Dame Cathedral.

(B.L.D)

Day 5: Ho Chi Minh City/Danang/Hoi An

After breakfast we have a little free time before transferring to the airport for our flight to Danang, from where we travel by



road to Hoi An, our home for the next three nights. Hoi An is a old port town, whose unique architecture has been formed over hundreds of years by Chinese, Japanese, French and European influences. There's a 400 year old Japanese covered bridge, and Phuc Kien Assembly Hall and Phung Hung House are of particular interest. There's a thriving art culture here, shown by the



numerous art galleries. This afternoon we visit the Sa Huynh Culture Museum and the Museum of History and Culture.

(B.L.D)

Day 6: Hoi An

Hoi An has many smaller places of interest, and its culture and history are deserving of a close look. For this reason we have left today free to wander this city and discover our own treasures. Hoi An, and especially the Old Town, with its Chinese shophouses, is very pedestrian friendly, as cars are not permitted to enter the winding lanes (sadly the ubiquitous Asian motorbikes are). While many shops are devoted to tourists, this is still an opportunity to find worthwhile items for purchase. We have left meals free today, as with our Vietnamese dining over the last few days we should have enough experience to find a small local place in the unique atmosphere of Old Town after dark. To help us out we will have an extra guide to assist with our wandering, and a central rendezvous for travel back to the hotel. (B)



Day 7: Hoi An/Danang/Hue

After breakfast we transfer from Hoi An to Hue, stopping along the way at Danang to visit the Cham Museum, an elegant colonial building which now houses the finest collection of Cham sculpture in the world. After checking in to our hotel in Hue we visit the Imperial Citadel, a vast complex built in the early 19th century and modeled after the Forbidden City of Peking. The original walls stretched for 10 km and were surrounded by a wide moat. Today, most of the buildings have been destroyed due to bombing during the Vietnam-American War, but the monuments that remain provide a fascinating glimpse into the court life of the Nguyen Dynasty. We approach the citadel past the striking Flag Tower, an early 19th C three-tiered pyramid, where now a giant Vietnamese flag waves proudly overhead, to the Ngo Mon Gate, the main entrance to the Imperial Enclosure. Here we enter into an area of spacious courtyards and serene lotus ponds, then visit Dien Tho Residence (palace), where the Queen mother lived, visit Thai Hoa Palace, the magnificently decorated reception hall, the Halls of the Mandarins, and see the original Nine Dynastic Urns, the largest urns in Vietnam and symbolizing the sovereignty of the dynasty. We overnight tonight in Hue. (B,L,D)



Day 8: Hue/Hanoi

After breakfast we once again have a little free time to catch up on postcards or other necessities until we transfer to the airport for our flight to Hanoi, where we check in to our hotel, where we stay for four nights. This evening we enjoy a traditional Water Puppet Show at the Thang Long theater. (B,L,D)

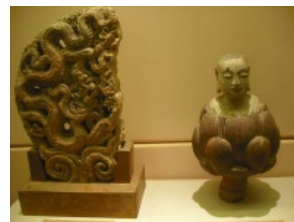


Day 9: Hanoi



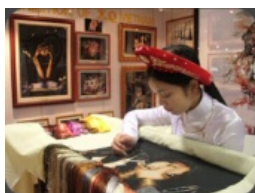
This morning we visit the Temple of Literature, the first university of Vietnam, where just opposite the Fine Art Museum exhibits approximately 10,000 art works in 16 showrooms, ranging from Primitive Eras, Feudalism (11th-18th centuries), modern fine art to folk printing. This afternoon we visit The Hanoi History Museum, is housed in an elegant building from the 1930s which used to be the museum of the Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient; and include exhibits spanning the entirety of Vietnam's history including prehistory, proto-Vietnamese civilizations, the Dong Son culture, the Oc-Eo

culture and the Khmer Kingdoms. The Museum of Ethnology brings to life the astonishing ethnic diversity in Vietnam, with art and artifacts from the 54 different ethnic groups that inhabit the country. Inside the museum are detailed descriptions of minority groups, with examples of their traditional clothing and way of life. Outside are faithful reconstructions of traditional longhouses, cemeteries and other distinctive ethnic buildings. (B,L,D)



Day 10: Hanoi

This morning we visit the Ngoc Son Temple on Hoan Kiem Lake and the Van Phuc silk making village. After lunch we travel to Quat Dong, a village about 20 km from Hanoi which specializes in embroidering. This village is famous due to many International Exhibitions showing its excellent work. The scenes of villagers through openings to the home courtyards are reminiscent of much older villages throughout the world. The embroiderers can make embroidery copies of any image, and participants may be interested in taking a favorite photo or piece of artwork to have transformed into a unique souvenir. (B,L,D)



Day 11: Hanoi

After breakfast at our hotel the rest of today is free for several organized options, with some participants expected to return for longer sojourns at previously visited places, such as the silk or embroidery village, or for activities of personal interest, such as a day trip to scenic Ha Long Bay. While some of today's activities will be arranged for you in advance, our guide and representatives in Hanoi will be available help organize any additional activities. (B,D)



Day 12: Hanoi/In Flight

Sadly we say farewell to this friendly and special place, and transfer back to the airport for our flight back to the US, taking with us many memories, both in our minds and in our bags, of Vietnam. (B,M)

Day 13: In Flight/Gateway/Home City

We arrive back in our gateway city today, pass through customs and immigration, then board our flight for Birmingham. (B)

(B: Breakfast; L: Lunch; D: Dinner; M: Meal* In flight meal)

THE TEMPLES OF ANGKOR



EXTENSION

Day 1: Hanoi/Siem Reap

Fly from Hanoi this morning to Siem Reap, Cambodia. After clearing the formalities of visa on arrival, immigration and customs we are transfer to our hotel and check in. We have a little time to clean up, then lunch depending on flight time. This afternoon we visit the jungle covered temple of Ta Prohm, an incredible sight. There are enormous fig trees and gigantic creepers which embrace the stone foundations of the structure giving the impression of man's creation being reclaimed by the powerful forces of nature. If time permits, we will also explore the surrounded temples. We enjoy a typical Cambodian dinner tonight, welcoming us to the Khmer Kingdom. *(L,D)*



Day 2: Siem Reap

After breakfast we spend a full day exploring the wondrous ancient ruins with the South Gate of Angkor Thom, which is famous for its series of colossal human faces carved in stone, the impressive Bayon Temple, the Royal Enclosure, Phimeanakas, the Elephant Terrace, the Terrace of the Leper King and the largest as well as the most complete temple of Angkor Wat. This architectural masterpiece was constructed in the 12th century and covers an area of about 210 hectares. We stroll around this massive edifice, seeing the many galleries with columns, libraries, pavilions, courtyards and ponds full of water reflecting the towering temple. *(B,L,D)*



Day 3: Siem Reap / In Flight



We head further out of town by traveling on a newly paved road to the intricately carved and well preserved temple of Banteay Srei. Along the way we make stopover at the Preah Dark village and we follow these with a visit the Banteay Samre Temple adorned with impressive relief's depicting scenes of Vishnu as well as Krishna legends. After lunch we visit the floating village of Choueng Kneas, where you can find schools, restaurants, hospitals and much more on the great lake of Tonle sap. We return to Siem Reap where we have several hotel rooms available to clean up before our late evening flight home. This evening we enjoy a farewell dinner, then transfer to the airport for our flight home.



(B.L.D)

Day 4: In Flight / US Gateway / Birmingham

We arrive back in our gateway city today, then transfer to our flight to Birmingham.

(B)

