

The Dragon Ascending

A Custom Tour of Vietnam
for a Delegation representing
the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians.

February 4 – 18, 2020

LEM*NGRASS
TOURS

THE DRAGON ASCENDING



Explore the culture, history and cuisine of this intriguing Southeast Asian country that's so much more than you imagine. Marvel at stunning natural beauty, bustling cities, Imperial ruins and stately colonial buildings. Delight in the hospitality of its charming, friendly people. Feast on its fabulous food. Discover why Vietnam keeps even seasoned travellers coming back again – and again.

Day 1, Tuesday, Feb. 4 Arrive Ho Chi Minh City

Group arrives individually in Ho Chi Minh City, the former Saigon which is the economic capital of Vietnam.

After clearing customs and immigration, transfer to the Majestic Hotel Saigon www.majesticsaigon.com where we will stay for 3 nights.

There will be a brief orientation meeting at the hotel before the welcome dinner at one of Saigon's excellent Vietnamese restaurants.

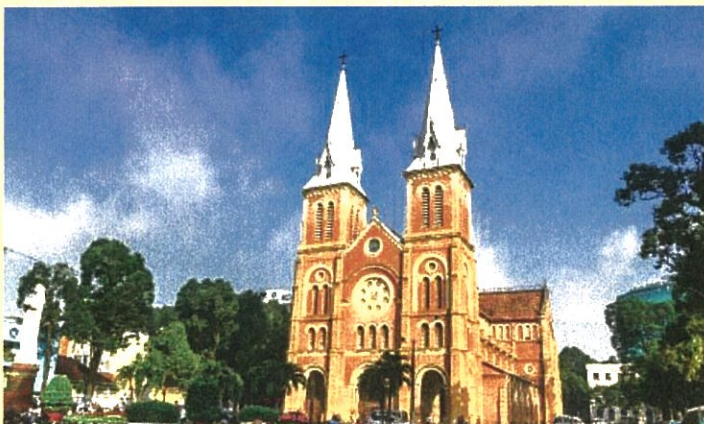
Meals: D

Day 2, Wednesday, Feb. 5 Ho Chi Minh City

After breakfast in the hotel's rooftop restaurant that overlooks the Saigon River, take a City tour.

Stops include the War Remnants Museum which give visitors insight into how war has shaped modern Vietnam, and other city landmarks such as the Central Post Office, a beautifully preserved example of the country's complicated past.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 3, Thursday, Feb. 6 Ho Chi Minh City

After breakfast, we'll continue exploring Ho Chi Minh City visiting the Jade Emperor Pagoda, a delightful Taoist temple, and Cholon, the city's Chinatown. Today Cholon is one of the busiest commercial districts but during the War, its back streets were a thriving black market for US soldiers.

Meals: B, L

NOTE: An optional tour of Cu Chi Tunnels can be arranged today for anyone interested.



Day 4, Friday, Feb. 7 Ho Chi Minh City - Mekong Delta

After an early breakfast, check out of hotel. We'll drive to Cai Be to board our chartered boat – a luxury wooden rice barge with private bathrooms in each cabin – for an overnight cruise on the Mekong Delta. Called the rice bowl of Vietnam, it's a vast maze of rivers, canals and streams that bisect the countryside and the verdant rice paddies. After a welcome lunch on board, we'll disembark to meet with locals at a riverside village and visit an orchard or some nearby rice fields. Enjoy cocktails on the deck at sunset.

Meals: B at hotel, L/D on boat

NOTE: Cabins, all of which have en suite bathrooms, are very limited so single travellers may need to share a twin bed room on the cruise.

Scheduled events and their timing are subject to events.



Day 5, Saturday, Feb. 8 Mekong Cruise - Hoi An

Rise early today to see life on the Delta. After breakfast on board, we'll disembark to visit the Cai Rang Floating Market, the largest daily market still operating anywhere on the Mekong River. Lunch will be at a local restaurant after which we'll drive to the Tan Son Nhat airport in Ho Chi Minh City to catch a 6 p.m. flight to Danang, the third largest city in Vietnam and the place where the U.S. Marines landed in 1965.

On arrival, we'll check into Vinh Hung Riverside Resort www.vinhhungresort.com for 3 nights.

Meals: B on boat, L in a local restaurant

Day 6, Sunday, Feb. 9 Hoi An

Morning visit to My Son. Built by the Cham, a powerful Hindu-influenced empire that ruled the centre of Vietnam from the 7th to the 12th centuries, it is Vietnam's version of Angkor Wat. Heavily bombed during the War, it nonetheless remains powerfully evocative. We need to go early before all the tour buses and cruise ship expeditions get there. Not only is it more atmospheric, it's less hot.

After lunch, we'll visit Hoi An's local orphanage which has recently expanded to care for needy elderly people.

Meals: B, L, D

Day 7, Monday, Feb. 10 Hoi An

In the morning, enjoy a walking tour of Hoi An's lovely Old Quarter, which was featured in the 2002 movie adaptation of Graham Greene's novel *The Quiet American*. It's a car-free area of ancient trading houses, Chinese assembly halls, a silk making factory and numerous tailor shops and art galleries - all of which were miraculously unharmed during the War. Lunch today will be at the Red Bridge Restaurant. Located out of town at a romantic riverside setting, we go there - and back - via a scenic river cruise.

Meals: B, L

NOTE: An optional tour to the nearby Marble Mountains, a cluster of 5 marble and limestone hills that contain Buddhist and Hindu grottoes as well as the remains of a Viet Cong Hospital, can be arranged for those interested. Caution: It's a strenuous outing.

NOTE: An optional pre-lunch Red Bridge cooking class can be booked for anyone interested.

Day 8, Tuesday, Feb. 11 Hoi An - Hue

After breakfast, we'll drive to Hue, stopping at China Beach, the Cham museum in Danang, before climbing up along the scenic coastal highway to the beautiful Hai Van (Heavenly Clouds) Pass.

Descending, we'll pass by oyster farms, rural villages, war cemeteries to Lang Co beach, where we'll eat lunch before continuing to Hue.

On arrival, we'll check into the Hotel Saigon Morin www.morinhotel.com.vn for 2 nights.

Meals: B, L, D



Scheduled events and their timing are subject to events.



Day 9, Wednesday, Feb. 12 Hue

After breakfast, a full day sightseeing of the former Imperial Capital. Start with a cruise on a traditional dragon boat on the Perfume River to the iconic Thien Mu pagoda, followed by visits to the extraordinary Imperial tomb of Tu Duc, the longest reigning Nguyen Emperor.

After lunch, we'll explore the restored Forbidden Purple City, which was extensively damaged during the 1968 TET Offensive in which US and South Vietnamese soldiers fought virtually hand-to-hand with the Viet Cong in one of the most intense and bloody battles of the War.

Meals: B, L

Day 10, Thursday, Feb. 13 Hue - Hanoi

After early breakfast, check out and drive to Hue airport to catch a 10:45 flight to Hanoi.

After checking into the O'Gallery Classy Hotel and Spa www.ogalleryclassyhotel.com where we'll spend 5 nights, we'll either have a briefing from Canadian ambassador Deborah Paul and her senior staff (timing and place to be finalized) or we'll take a cyclo tour of the chaotic, but infinitely picturesque, Old Quarter and the Ngoc Son Temple.

Meals: B, D

Day 11, Friday, Feb. 14 Hanoi

At 10 o'clock this morning, the group will be officially welcomed at the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam by a senior Vietnamese official. There will next be a short private tour of the building which was completed in the fall of 2014.

After a brief explanation of how the Vietnamese political system works, there will be a 90-minute round table discussion. It will provide the group with an opportunity to exchange views on subjects of mutual interest with knowledgeable Vietnamese speakers.

After lunch, visit the Temple of Literature. Built in 1070 and dedicated to Confucius, it was Vietnam's first national university where bureaucrats, nobles, and royals were educated.

Today, it is a beautiful space filled with courtyards, statues, stelae of successful scholars, gardens, an excellent bookstore and a performance hall where traditional instruments are played.

Meals: B,L

NOTE: Before dinner, optional performance of the acclaimed Thang Long Water Puppets can be booked. This art form which is unique to Vietnam has its roots in 11th Century folk lore.



Scheduled events and their timing are subject to events.



Day 12, Saturday, Feb. 15 Hanoi

After breakfast, we'll meet our Sophie's Art Tour guide in the hotel lobby. This 4-hour tour which includes a coffee break takes a close look at Vietnam's fascinating history through the eyes of artists who studied, fought, witnessed and documented major changes in both the 20th and the 21st centuries. We will visit private collections and contemporary art spaces as well as the National Fine Arts Museum. Pending an invitation, there will be a cocktail reception with the Vietnam Canada Parliamentary Friendship Group.

Meals: B

Day 13, Sunday, Feb. 16 Hanoi

After breakfast, we'll tour the Museum of Ethnic Minorities with Mark Rapoport, an ex-pat medical doctor from New York City who has become an international expert on Vietnam's minorities. Built with French money, the museum is a state-of-the-art facility that offers good insights into this multi-ethnic and socio-culturally diverse country. After lunch at the Metropole Hotel's renowned Spices Garden restaurant, we can visit Mark's gallery-cum-store where he has an unrivaled collection of genuine Vietnamese artefacts.

Meals: B, L

Day 14, Monday, Feb. 17 Hanoi

This is a free day.

Our hotel is right in the historic Hoan Kiem Lake area, an easy stroll to the best shopping - as well as a host of good commercial art galleries in the city. For anyone wishing more sightseeing, a visit to the Hoa Lo Prison museum, a.k.a. the Hanoi Hilton, or to the Presidential Palace complex which contains the austere Ho Chi Minh stilt house, or to the Women's Museum can be arranged. Tonight, enjoy a farewell dinner at one of Hanoi's best fusion restaurants.

Meals: B, D

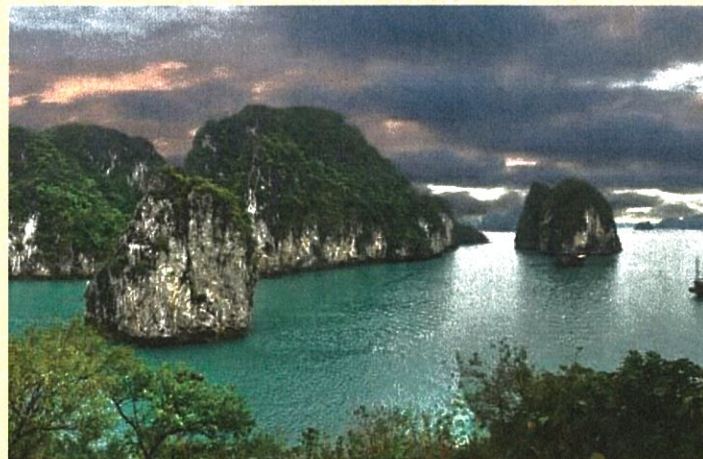
Day 15, Tuesday, Feb. 18 Hanoi Departure

After breakfast, depart Hanoi for Canada.

Meals: B

Post Tour Extension Options:

1. Extension tour to Halong Bay, Vietnam



2. Extension tour to Siem Reap, Cambodia, home of the famous Angkor Wat Temple Complex.



Scheduled events and their timing are subject to events.



Please note that the tour will be strictly limited to 20 people, on a first come, first served basis.

- The land only cost of the 15 day visit is **\$3,950.00 USD** per person, based on double occupancy. All taxes are included.
- The single supplement is an additional **\$846.00 USD**.
- A non-refundable payment of **\$1,029.00 USD** per person is required upon booking to reserve your place.
- Deposits must be made by credit card by calling the CAFP office toll free at 1-888-567-4764.
- The final non-refundable balance is due October 30, 2019.
- Travel Insurance: Out of country medical insurance and trip cancellation/interruption insurance are highly recommended.
- CAFP is not responsible for trip cancellation by participants, trip interruptions, lost or damaged luggage, theft or personal injury or other mishaps.

PRICE INCLUDES:

- Hotel accommodation with daily breakfast.
- Private ground transportation in chartered air-conditioned vehicles.
- Private Mekong Delta overnight boat cruise.
- Domestic air tickets based on economy class - Saigon/Danang and Hue/Hanoi.
- Sightseeing with English-speaking local guides as per itinerary .
- Admission fees for all attractions in the itinerary.
- Other meals as specified in the itinerary (B = Breakfast; L = Lunch; D = Dinner). Beer, soft drinks and water are included at lunch and dinner

PRICE EXCLUDES:

- International flights to and from Vietnam.
- Airport transfers in Saigon or Hanoi.
- Wine with meals -- except at the welcome and farewell dinners
- Visa fees for Vietnam
- Excess luggage fees
- Travel Insurance
- Items of a purely personal nature
- Trip cancellation and personal insurance.
- Fees for optional outings or performances

Note: Gratuities to guides, drivers, porters, etc. will be collected in a separate tip kitty that will be determined once the tour group is finalized.

CONTACT:

For anyone wishing assistance, **Nora McCabe**, who designed and will escort this trip, can help arrange international airfare, Vietnam visas and/or travel insurance.

For more information, call 416-465-7984.
Or email: noramccabe@gmail.com