

# HO CHI MINH CITY

*Saigon, surely one of the most evocative place names in Asia and definitely one of its most extraordinary cities. The most Western in atmosphere of Vietnam's cities, Ho Chi Minh City (to use its official name - although to residents and visitors alike it is universally and affectionately known as Saigon) has a population of 5 million, and a booming free-market economy. It is a city of amazing contrasts: elegant new international hotels, exclusive restaurants and trendy bars side-by-side with roadside noodle stalls, street children and vociferous cyclo drivers. Golf courses, bowling alleys and shopping malls vie for space with fruit and vegetable markets, pagodas and karaoke rooms. Bustling, booming, crowded, noisy - all words that barely scratch the surface of the addictive and often mesmerising chaos that is Saigon. And yet there are the elegant colonial French boulevards and buildings, the Cathedral, the riverfront, the quiet moments at a sidewalk cafe watching the world literally go by you at breakneck speed. Saigon. A city that is almost indescribable and completely unforgettable.*



## **DAY ONE**

Arrive into Ho Chi Minh City and transfer to your city hotel via air-conditioned vehicle, with optional VIP arrival enhancements. Tonight our welcome dinner is at Nam Phan Restaurant where you will sample exquisite Vietnamese cuisine amongst an eclectic mix of traditional and antique décor.

Your home away from home is the Intercontinental Hotel, one of Saigon's newest, with a view of the Notre Dame Cathedral and close to shops, cafes, restaurants and bars. The rooms are spacious with a modern design with all the amenities for a relaxing stay. Guests can indulge in spa treatments or a swim in the roof top pool and enjoy some of the best restaurants in town.



## **DAY TWO**

Enjoy a full Breakfast Buffet at the hotel before proceeding to take on the town! On this morning's 'Experience Saigon Tour' you will discover the contrasts of bustling Ho Chi Minh City. Amongst the grand old buildings, you will see colourful markets selling everything from chillies to French bread and, of course, an endless stream of bicycles, cyclos and motorbikes. Visit Notre Dame Cathedral, and the Reunification Palace before continuing to the main market, where you will wander the colourful stalls and stands of this central area of trade and commerce. Complete the tour with a cyclo – Vietnam's oldest form of transport – or Vespa ride – before continuing to lunch at the famed Temple Club. The afternoon is at leisure to enjoy soaking up the atmosphere or a spot of shopping Dinner tonight is at Xu, a sleek and trendy

restaurant offering interesting Western cuisine with a hint of Asia.

## **DAY THREE**

Today following breakfast, head out to the infamous Cu Chi Tunnels. The drive out of Ho Chi Minh City into the surrounding countryside is lined by rice paddies, and the main "highway" is thronged with bicycles, heavily laden buses and people making their way to market. The Cu Chi area is famous for its 200 kilometer network of underground tunnels, which was used by the Viet Cong forces to fight against both the French and later the Americans. The tunnel entrances are well hidden. Many rooms have been opened and ventilated so that you can more easily experience the underground meeting rooms, kitchen, hospital and sleeping areas. More adventurous tunnel explorers can experience an unlit tunnel passage which has not been enlarged for the comfort of visitors! On return, enjoy lunch at one of the most renowned Vietnamese restaurants in Saigon, with excellent local dishes served to the accompaniment of traditional musical



entertainment. The afternoon is your own before enjoying dinner atop one of the highest buildings in the city, taking full advantage of the stunning view and photography opportunities.

#### **DAY FOUR**

After breakfast, enjoy a full day tour to the Mekong Delta. The highlight of your day is a fascinating boat trip on the Mekong River, where you'll see all manner of boats - from dug-out canoes to barges and houseboats to passenger ferries. Many of the wooden boats have an unusual "eye" painted on their bows.

Your boat trip will take you to one of the islands in the Mekong Delta to see a traditional farmer's home and fruit orchards, where you will have the opportunity to sample exotic tropical fruits. Enjoy the beautiful scenery and peace and quiet of these waterways whilst floating in your sampan along the Mekong's tributaries. A truly unforgettable experience!

A seafood lunch will be served at a local restaurant overlooking a tributary of the Mekong. The exotic specialty here is freshly caught Elephant Ear Fish wrapped in rice paper.

Tonight a special dinner onboard a catered cocktail and dinner cruise on the Saigon River rounds out the program,

#### **DAY FIVE**

Enjoy the breakfast buffet at your hotel before departure transfer to your onward flight

