



Wendy Wu Tours
Experience a Different *World**

Travellers Choice - Silver Reward Famil

21-31st May 2015 Vietnam with Wendy Wu

What a wonderful country Vietnam is. I was so surprised how clean the whole country was and what wonderful welcoming people the Vietnamese are.

We had the pleasure of flying with Singapore Airlines to Danang via Singapore for our week of luxury. Flights were great for us from Brisbane, unfortunately the Perth group were running to catch the Danang flight but all made it!!

Arriving into Danang we were welcomed by Duang (John) from Wendy Wu Tours at the airport where we were ferried onto our air conditioned bus. Oh my it was hot and humid. Coming from a new Queenslander that is something. We were expecting high 30's temps but they exceeded that on a daily basis. 40+ was our daily temps and it was only going to get hotter. Humid to say the least to add to the mix. Definitely best to travel during the Autumn & Spring months. The rainy season starts in September and ends mid December when it starts to get really cold up north.

In Danang we were taken to a new hotel called A La Carte Hotel. Across the road from the beach and only 1 year old. Beautiful hotel and loved by the locals. The rooms were really big with kitchens, lounge area and great bathrooms. I had one of the lead-in rooms and was very impressed. Some of the others had front corner rooms that were even bigger but they did have the midday sun on their beautiful big windows that really made the air conditioning work hard.



The rooftop pool was very refreshing but there is no shade at all, so very hot to just sit around. The bar is also located up there and had wonderful city views and really came alive at night time. Great food options with the restaurant on the rooftop and a little cafe near reception. Both offering western type food as well as Asian.

The breakfast buffet was very extensive and very busy. There are no stairs that you can utilise to get from the 1st floor where breakfast was to the ground floor and the 3 lifts were really busy as the hotel was full the weekend we stayed there. It does have complimentary Kids Club facilities that the locals used during the day as it was so hot outside.

Next day was a drive down to Hoi An and check in at the Alma Courtyard Hotel in the centre of Hoi An. Fabulous resort that included 2 x 45 minute spa treatments in our 2 night stay and buffet breakfast daily. They have a wonderful pool area with 3 connected pools of varying depth. Definitely would stay at this resort again if only staying for a few nights like we were. We didn't have time for any inspections of the beach resorts so I can't report on any of those.



While in Hoi An we experienced the City Tour that was a easy walking tour taking in the Japanese Bridge, Chapel and lunch along the river. We also have about VD86,000,000 (AU\$5k) worth of clothing tailored for the group in 36 hours. We went to BLUE Clothing Made-to-measure who happened to be a student of our tour guide. (He taught English at the university for a few years). After our walking tour we returned to the resort for the 1st of our massages and a well deserved drink at the bar.

That evening it was time for our cooking classes at the Red Bridge Restaurant. A short tour through the markets for the food we needed and then on a junk boat for a short ride to the

cooking school. Everything was well prepared and the food easy to cook and delicious to eat. We also learnt to carve the food carvings made from vegetables.



Day 3 was our Cycling Tour with Jack Tran Eco Tours.... Awesome tour through the rice fields to an organic farm nurtured by a little 86yo lady, buffalo ride in the canal (very funny), junk boat tour through the reed where the Viet Chan used to hide during the war. We went on basket boat rides through the reeds, threw

fishing nets out off the beach and saw how the villages big fishing net system worked. After all of this we had a very yummy seafood lunch on board the boat. After the tour we went back to the resort to enjoy one of our spa treatments.

Day 4 was a flight from Danang to Hanoi on Vietnam Airlines. Very nice planes with lovely staff. Upon arrival we meet our new tour guide John who was a fantastic character and passionate about Vietnam. He spoke wonderful English too which is very helpful.

We checked into the Movenpick Hotel in the financial district. This hotel is currently being managed by an Australia guy (Anthony) - great guy and was really keen to talk AFL with anyone who wanted to. Great hotel and beautiful rooms again. Breakfast daily was buffet again but very elegant. More for the business traveller this hotel.

Another city walking tour that evening with John taking us through the Old Quarter to good local restaurants to try more authentic Vietnamese food. The restaurants were clean and very hygienic and also had many locals eating there too. We finished that evening with a tuktuk (cyclo) cycle ride, which in the heat and humidity was very appreciated. We ended up at a roof top bar/restaurant overlooking the lake to enjoy dessert. Luckily the bus was there to collect us and take us back to the hotel.



Day 5 was our visit to The Presidential Palace. Here is where they lay Ho Chi Minh in his Mausoleum. Very organised and strict military security all around. He had to line up for about 30 minutes in 43 degree heat to go inside for all of 5 minutes. Constant movement inside in 2 very straight lines were required with no talking. It was air conditioned so that the dear old man who has been dead since 1969 would stay preserved. He is not always there as through the hotter months he heads back to Russia for more preserving for a couple of months. If your clients really want to see him please check that the Mausoleum will be open. Next to this is the gardens with the palace and the house on stilts. Beautiful area with great gardens but in the heat we were in not all of us were coping so our stay was very short.



Following the House on Stilts we went the Chapel of Literature where the university students go to receive their awards. Amazing place surrounded by hawkers so be aware. The rest of the afternoon was ours to enjoy. Some went shopping, other to the Military Museum and others to the Railway

Station. All worth a look if you have the time spare.

This evening was dinner at the KOTO (Know One Teach One) restaurant. We were all expecting a wonderful Vietnamese meal but alas it was western food, with steak and chicken on the menu. A very small restaurant and worth the option if you are craving western food. Next to the Movenpick up on the 19th floor was a great bar/nightclub and that was where we ended the night.

After breakfast and check out the next morning it was off to Halong Bay we went. Everyone you speak to over in Vietnam says its beautiful and they are not wrong. After a 4 hour bus ride with a short stopover at an Arts Centre for people effected by agent orange from the war we arrived at Halong Bay.

Luckily for us we had a 2 night stay onboard the AuCo cruise boat. I really recommend this length of time if you can get it. We were able to go kayaking and enjoyed a swim in warm water at a nice sandy beach, we were taken through a floating fishing village (for show only, not an actual working village we found out later) in wooden boats, through the archway out to the sea and back again.

It was a beautiful cruise on a beautiful boat. Definitely the highlight that everyone promotes. The food was wonderful and plenty and the cabin well appointed. Before leaving our cruise we walked through Sung Sot (Surprise) cave. Amazing formations to see inside. It does have quite a lot of steps to get into the cave and then throughout so a degree of fitness is required.



After finishing our cruise we had to say goodbye to the UNESCO World Heritage listed site. Beautiful memories and photos to share. It was now time to head back to the airport for our flights back to Australia. Once again with Singapore Airlines through Singapore.

I fell in love with Vietnam and can't wait to take my family and friends back there to explore some more. Next time I will be heading south to Saigon as well to see what other experiences it has to offer.



Happy Travels,
Cathy Hewett
Tewantin Travel