

Việt-Nam Itinerary

November 1 - 16, 2022

Booking Inquiries: <https://culinaryescapades.openkitchenevents.com/#booking> or call 202-285-9840



• Day 1: Arrival Day – Welcome to Hà Nội!

- Arrival to Nội Bài International Airport (HAN) and transfer to hotel by private car. A Welcome Package awaits you.
- We'll kick off the Việt-Nam Culinary Escapade with an Orientation Meeting where you'll be greeted by Chef Hue-Chan Karels, Open Kitchen Team, and In-Country Team Lead. You'll also meet and get to know the other guests.
- For our Welcome Dinner, we will feast at one of Chef Hue-Chan's favorite restaurants in Hà Nội with a special curated menu, featuring the flavors and exotic specialties of northern Vietnamese cuisine, paired with Vietnam's authentic and award-winning handcrafted rice spirit. You'll meet the chef team and artisans behind this experience.
- Accommodations in Hà Nội - The Apricot Hotel is Hà Nội's small luxury hotel located in the historic district on Hang Trong Street, with sweeping view of the legendary Hoan Kiem Lake.



• Day 2: Hà Nội

- Market Tour, Cooking Class, and Lunch - We will begin our first full day in Hà Nội with a delightful Local Chef who will guide us on a tour of a vibrant market to purchase seasonally fresh ingredients for our hands-on cooking class of traditional Hanoi Cuisine. In this hands-on cooking class, you'll learn the fundamentals of food preparation, ingredients, and style of Northern Vietnamese dishes and experience Vietnamese history and culture through these dishes. We will cook and feast on a multi-course lunch at our Chef's beautiful Indochine-period villa. We'll return to our hotel for some rest after the day's cooking class and lunch.
- Hà Nội by Night Culinary Adventure - Pre-sunset, we'll meet our Local Guide for a culinary tour of Hanoi's famous Old Quarter. Our first stop will be at one of the highest rooftop sky bars in Hà Nội's Old Quarter where you'll have a chance to capture some sunset photos of your time in Hà Nội. Next, we'll tour hidden alleys and traditional architecture around Old Quarter. For dinner, we'll graze the food carts lining Hà Nội's streets and taste its indigenous cuisine. You'll have a chance to chat with street food vendors to learn about techniques and ingredients or simply enjoy the vibrancy of life on the streets of Hà Nội. After dinner, we'll venture to a fun bar to experience the iconic Phở as a cocktail! We'll taste the spices and flavors that make up the best part of Phở in a flaming cocktail. Next, we'll stop for a flight of craft beer at one of the best craft beer taprooms in Hà Nội.



• Day 3: Travel from Hà Nội to Mai Châu

- A Scenic Journey to Mai Châu - After breakfast, we'll travel to Mai Châu by private transportation. You'll enjoy the scenic drive through small farming towns and over epic mountain passes. We'll arrive in Mai Châu around lunch time, check into our hotel overlooking lush gardens and local limestone rock formations, then feast on a meal of local dishes.
- Vibrant Culture Immersion and Adventure in Mai Chau - After lunch, we'll explore Mai Châu's ethnic villages and countryside by bicycle with a Local Guide. We'll tour markets for handcrafts and antiques, meet artisans spinning traditional textiles, and visit an ethnic family to learn more about their culture and way of life. We'll also ride through rice paddies and farms. We'll return to our hotel for a bit of rest or to enjoy a swim in the pool or a cold beer before we meet back up for dinner at a local homestay followed by a performance of traditional dance.
- Accommodations in Mai Châu - Mai Chau Mountain View Resort is at the heart of Bản Lác or Lác Village, located in a beautiful and peaceful location amid mountains and stunning views.



• Day 4: Travel from Mai Châu back to Hà Nội

- Mai Châu Local Cooking Class and Lunch. Mai Châu's cuisine is very different from what you have experienced in Hà Nội. We've designed a special cooking class with a tour of the local market as a wonderful way for you to learn more about Mai Châu's diverse ethnic cultures through its cuisine.
- Travel back to Hà Nội in the Afternoon - We'll travel back to Hà Nội following our cooking class and lunch. You'll enjoy a free night to tour the city or simply rest in the hotel. We will provide sightseeing and dining recommendations.



• Day 5: Hà Nội

- Coffee Making Class, A Taste of Hà Nội Food Walking Tour, and Tea Tasting Ceremony - We have designed a special Coffee Making Class to kick off our last day in Hà Nội with our local coffee tour guide, Công, who will share his passion with Vietnamese coffee and teach our group how to make 3-4 amazing coffee drinks.
- Next, we will have a Private Food Walking Tour to explore the real Hà Nội including a visit to the Đồng Xuân Market that was originally built by the French in 1889 and now the largest covered market in Hà Nội. We will explore the charming French corners, the Old Quarter, and indulge in the local atmosphere while tasting amazing authentic Hà Nội Street food and drinks. We conclude our walk tour with a tea tasting ceremony with a local tea master.
- Free Evening in Hà Nội - We'll return to the hotel and you'll enjoy your last evening in Hà Nội on your own to shop for souvenirs, tour the city or simply rest in the hotel. We will provide sightseeing and dining recommendations.



• Day 6: Hà Nội to Hạ Long Bay

- Hạ Long Bay Adventure Day 1 - We'll check out of our hotel in Hà Nội and begin our 2 1/2-hour journey to Hạ Long Bay on private transportation and transfer to our privately chartered Orchid Classic Cruise by speedboat.
- After lunch, we'll do some kayaking to explore Ao Ếch (Frog Lake) in the remote Lan Hạ Bay that's a bit south of Hạ Long Bay and may visit one of the four fishing villages if weather permits.
- We'll return to the Orchid Classic Cruise before sunset to sail to our sleeping area for anchoring and enjoying the breathtaking sunset on the sundeck.
- There will be a cooking demonstration by our chef prior to dinner. Following dinner, you can enjoy time on your own at the Orchid Classic Cruise panoramic bar, partaking of squid fishing or movies in your cabin.
- Accommodation in Hạ Long Bay - We will overnight for our Hạ Long Bay adventure on board a privately chartered Orchid Classic Cruise.



• Day 7: Hạ Long Bay – to Huế - Hạ Long Bay Adventure, Day 2

- For those early risers, there will be Tai Chi at sunrise on the sundeck. We'll have a light breakfast then off to visit a beautiful water cave named "Dark & Bright" on a bamboo boat. (The Dark & Light Cave is a system made up of two separate caves. The "Dark" Cave is 100 meters long with very little natural light. The "Light" Cave, on the other hand, is considerably shorter and has lots of natural light beaming through gaps and holes in the rock making it feel like a church. The Light Cave is always accessible whereas the Dark Cave is sometimes swallowed by the tide.) Going through the Dark & Light cave, we will come to a lagoon, surrounded by magnificent mountains.
- We'll row back to the Orchid Classic Cruise to pack up our luggage and check out the cabin room, followed by brunch as we cruise back to Tuần Châu Pier for our next adventure.
- Part 2 - Flying to Huế, Huế Cultural and Culinary Immersion, and a Royal Welcome Dinner - We'll travel to Nội Bài International Airport by private transportation for our 1-hour flight to Huế. After checking into our hotel, we will attend a private art and fashion show featuring "Áo Dài" the traditional Vietnamese dresses that originated from the Nguyễn Dynasty. For our Welcome Dinner in Huế, we will experience Việt-Nam's royal era with a Classical Royal Feast, complete with royal costumes for you change into, royal music and performances, and royalty dishes beautifully prepared.
- Accommodation in Huế - Azerai La Residence is a lovely property within a 5-minute cyclo journey to the world heritage city of Huế and the ancient citadel. The central part of the resort was originally home to the French envoy and in 2005 was carefully restored and extended with two additional wings added to create an exceptional boutique hotel.



• Day 8: Huế

- Exploring Huế's Imperial City and Food Scenes on Scooter, Cooking Demonstration of Huế's Royal Foods - We will meet our Local Guide and venture on scooters to explore Huế's impressive Imperial City and discover and taste amazing authentic Huế dishes in the most hidden places in this beautiful city. A highlight of this exploration is a visit to a family who has been making traditional Huế steamed dumplings for the imperial royal court for 3 generations! You'll have the chance to learn how to make these amazingly delicious dumplings, taste these freshly steamed, and chat with this family about Huế's cultural heritage, traditions, and local life.
- We will conclude this tour with some delicious Huế beer and snacks at a local restaurant on the beautiful Perfume River before heading back to the hotel for some rest before a fun dinner!
- Free Night in Huế - We'll return to the hotel and you'll enjoy your last evening in Huế on your own to shop for souvenirs, tour the city or simply rest in the hotel. We will provide sightseeing and dining recommendations.



• Day 9: Travel from Huế to Hội An

- A Scenic Journey to Hội An with a visit to Children of Việt-Nam in Đà Nẵng, a Home Cooked Lunch
- We will travel from Huế to Hội An by private bus. Enroute we will make a stop in Đà Nẵng, Chef Hue-Chan's birthplace, to visit a charity that is near and dear to her heart – Children of Việt-Nam (COV) in Đà Nẵng, whose mission is to "... lift children out of poverty by eliminating barriers to fulfilling their potential through wraparound services that focus on one child, one family, one community at a time." COV serves Đà Nẵng City and the surrounding areas and focus on children with disabilities, ethnic minority and rural children living in poverty, children living in poverty at risk for dropping out of school, children living in single-mother households. Open Kitchen has arranged for a home cooked lunch by local families supported by COV programs with Đà Nẵng specialty dishes. Open Kitchen will donate a portion of our proceeds from our Việt-Nam Culinary Escapade to further COV's mission.
- Welcome to Hội An! - We will arrive late afternoon to Hội An. Following hotel check-in, our Local Guide will pick us up for a brief tour of this charming ancient town then we will have a Welcome Dinner at the famous Cargo Club restaurant by the acclaimed chef, restaurateur and author Trinh Diem Vy, that showcase Vietnam's and Hội An's cuisine.
- Accommodation in Hội An - Anantara Hoi An Resort is set on the Thu Bồn River and less than a mile from Hội An's historic area. The resort's 94 rooms are all set in traditionally styled, two- or three-story townhouses reflecting Hoi An's history of trade with Holland, Japan, China and France.



• Day 10: Hội An

- Bicycle Ride to Local Market and through Rice Paddies and Organic Garden, Cooking Class, and Lunch - After breakfast at the hotel, we will meet our Local Guide for a delightful bicycle ride to a colorful local market to purchase fresh ingredients for our hands-on cooking class and lunch that day. Our cooking instructor, a wonderful, knowledgeable Local Chef, has designed a cooking menu featuring Hội An's distinctive regional cuisine. We will be cooking at his family's charming restaurant on An Bàng Beach, a beautiful 3-mile stretch of sandy, peaceful beach about 2 miles outside Hội An.
- At the market we will have the opportunity to meet vendors as we select our ingredients – this will give you a genuine Vietnamese atmosphere of local life.
- We will then ride our bicycles, with our purchases, through rice paddies and a vegetable village, to An Bàng Beach. After some cool drinks, we will begin our cooking class! Our Chef will discuss local spices and their uses and benefits, while working with you to prepare three delicious dishes. We will enjoy our lunch and take in the vibe of the local village. After lunch, we'll have a chance to take a walk on this beautiful beach, go for a swim, or have a drink under an umbrella and enjoy the view.
- Free Afternoon and Evening to enjoy in Hội An - After our wonderful day at An Bàng Beach, we'll ride back to our hotel for some free time for the afternoon and evening to stroll the streets and enjoy the night market. We will provide sightseeing and dining recommendations.



• Day 11: Hội An

- Hội An Noodle Making Demonstration by Local Charity, and Country Side Bike Tour - We will enjoy a leisurely breakfast and morning then meet our local guide to visit a local charity Streets International for a "OODLES OF NOODLES" demonstration and lunch of traditional Hội An noodles and dishes, followed by lunch. Streets International's mission is to "provide impoverished youth with professional level training and apprenticing, including English language and life skills, for careers in culinary arts and hospitality service." Open Kitchen will donate a portion of our proceeds from our Việt-Nam Culinary Escapade to further Streets International's mission.
- Following the noodle making demonstration, we will join the Hội An Countryside Bike Tour for an idyllic ride through rice fields and rural countryside. You'll ride through beautiful emerald villages with water buffalos on farmlands and meet local artisans who will be happy to share with you their crafts. There will be endless photo opportunities as we will take the most scenic country paths.
- We will stop at a small fishing village for a cold drink and enjoy the local life and weather permitting, we will take a boat ride to discover the Thu Bồn River and its waterway. The scenic boat trip will take approximately 40 minutes.
- Free Afternoon, Sunset Seafood BBQ Beach Dinner on An Bàng Beach - We will return to our hotel for a little rest before heading off by private bus to a wonderful Sunset Seafood BBQ beach dinner in An Bàng Beach prepared by our Local Chef!



• Day 12: Travelling From Hội An to Hồ Chí Minh City

- Flying to Hồ Chí Minh City (HCMC), Uber-Urban Cultural and Culinary Immersion, and a Welcome Lunch - We'll travel to Đà Nẵng International Airport by private transportation for our 1 1/2-hour flight to HCMC.
- After checking into our hotel, we will have an exciting interactive Welcome Lunch in HCMC at a hip restaurant by Chef Nikki Tran who's appeared on Netflix's Street Food. After lunch, our Local Guide will meet us and commence our Cyclo Tour of HCMC where we will be immersed in the sights and sounds of this energized city! After what promises to be an exciting ride, we'll arrive at the Reunification Palace for a curated guide of its history and significance. Our Cyclo Tour will conclude late afternoon and our Local Guide will bring us back to our hotel.
- Free Night in HCMC - We'll have a free night in HCMC to relax and enjoy this great city before departing for the Mê Kông Delta the next day.
- Accommodation in Hồ Chí Minh City - Hôtel des Arts Saigon, located in the heart of Hồ Chí Minh City, is an exquisite 5-star boutique hotel features décor that fuses the classical charm of French Indochina with period artwork and beautiful furnishings custom designed by Vietnamese artisans. It has a gorgeous rooftop infinity pool and restaurants with amazing city views.



• Day 13: Travelling from Hồ Chí Minh City to the Mê Kông Delta

- Mê Kông Delta Tour, A Visit to a Floating Market, Cooking Demonstration, and Experience an Authentic Homestay - We will be picked up at our hotel after breakfast to begin our amazing adventure to the Mê Kông Delta (about 2 1/2 hours). Our first stop is the Cái Bè Pier along the mighty Mê Kông River where we will board a motorboat to visit the vibrant Cái Bè Floating Market, the original style of commerce on the Mê Kông River, and other local artisanal food producers along the river. We will transfer onto authentic and charming sampans with local rowers for a 40-minute journey along the mangrove canal to Tân Phong Island, a serene laid back green island with an abundance of fruit orchards, aquaculture, and fishing. Next, we'll cross the Mê Kông River to An Binh Island to visit a one of the very few remaining examples of 19th-century residences in the Mekong Delta. This ancient house showcases a blend of Vietnamese-French architecture.
- We will then row to our homestay – Út Thủy. After our check-in, we will cycle around the village paths and stop at a local house explore local rural life in the early evening. We will return to Út Thủy and have a cooking demonstration to prepare Bánh Khọt, savory mini pancakes, and papaya salad for our dinner!
- Accommodation in Mê Kông Delta - Út Thủy Homestay in the heart of the Mê Kông Delta where will experience the depth of local life and soak in its laid-back character.



• Day 14: Mê Kông Delta to Hồ Chí Minh City

- Journey back to HCMC, Scooter Foodie Tour - After breakfast at the serene Út Thủy, we will journey back to HCMC by early evening and check back into our hotel.
- After some rest, we'll embark on an exciting scooter foodie tour of HCMC to experience and taste some of the best and hidden places only accessible by way of scooter.



• Day 15: Hồ Chí Minh City – Last Day!

- Morning Cooking Class and Lunch, Free Afternoon, Departure Dinner - After breakfast we'll have our last private cooking class that will provide a wonderful conclusion of our Vietnamese culinary experience. In addition to learning the fundamentals of food preparation where we will be able to select our own produce, herbs, spices, and sauces for the cooking process, we will learn plating techniques to create our beautiful lunch. After a wonderful lunch of your creation, you will have a Free Afternoon to enjoy your last day in HCMC and Việt-Nam. Now is a good time to do some shopping for gifts and souvenirs!
- We will meet up for our Departure Dinner to say goodbye to our friends for one last awesome meal in Việt-Nam at Anan, an elevated "Cuisine Mới," or "New Cuisine" restaurant by Chef Peter Cuong Franklin's Anan Saigon that's voted top 50 restaurants in Asia.



• Day 16: Departure

- Breakfast and Departure - After breakfast, you'll check out and make your journey back home with such amazing memories of your time on Open Kitchen's Culinary Escapade to Việt-Nam!
- The closest airport is Tân Sơn Nhất International Airport (SGN).
- Transfers by private car to the airport. Bon Voyage! Travel Safe!