

## KAUST



### Northern Vietnam Community Service & Exploration

**Day 1 Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> March**

**Jeddah / Hanoi**

Having left Jeddah the previous night, we arrive in the capital of Vietnam, Hanoi, at 16:05 this afternoon. After clearing customs and immigration, we board our private coach for our 50-minute ride to the city center and our hotel.

We have time to shower and change before our cyclo / electric cart ride to the Old Quarter and our first culinary adventure with true Vietnamese cuisine.

**Day 2 Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> March**

**Hanoi**

We eat breakfast at the hotel and start our exploration of Hanoi with a visit to the Museum of Ethnology which focuses on the diversity of ethnic groups which make up the Vietnamese population. As we will learn, there are 54 officially recognized ethnic groups in Vietnam and we'll view displays of traditional costumes, tools, elements of domestic life and reconstructed homes. More interesting exhibits include artefacts related to various religious customs, ritual weddings and funeral ceremonies.

At midday, we then begin our 4-hour bus journey through stunning scenery that takes us to Mai Chau, home of the White Thai ethnic minority group near the Laotian border. The White Thai maintain a traditional lifestyle, live in long-houses on stilts and carry out unique religious and ceremonial practices (such as singing and dancing to welcome in the rice harvests). Upon arrival in Mai Chau district we begin our exploration with a short walk to our guest house where we have time to freshen up. Our host family will prepare a delicious evening meal as we learn about the local customs and folklore of the regions inhabitants. We will then have an evening meeting regarding the next day's start of our community service project.



*Please note: While Mai Chau is truly one of the trip highlights, the facilities are quite basic. A thin mattress, pillow and mosquito net will be provided in the long-house. Toilets and showering facilities are simple. Good quality walking shoes/boots are necessary and please bring along a pair of work gloves. A local cook will prepare all meals during our community service project.*

**Day 3 & 4    Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> & Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> March    Mai Chau**

We are up early for breakfast and take our part in a community service house building project. Our energy will be put to good use in the form of practical building and some substantial laboring tasks, which surely will be new to us. Though our



time here is primarily to assist a needy community in this remote region of western Vietnam, we'll also become friends of the village, learn of the rituals of the local White Thai inhabitants, gain an understanding of their sense of community and see how the villagers have adapted to their environment, especially in agriculture. As the village of our build is 2.5 kilometers from our homestay, we begin each day with a hike along traditional paths, along valley floors and rolling hillsides,

encountering friendly faces, terraced paddy fields and intriguing irrigation systems. During our days with the locals, our discussions will touch upon the significance of family in Vietnamese society, the economic impact of socialism in the region, the role, if any, of religion in day-to-day life and how the flow of migration from rural to urban has affected the region. Each evening we will make our way back to our guest house in the late afternoon with time for showers before dinner.

**Day 5            Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> March                            Mai Chau / Hanoi**

We make our way to the village for our final hours of construction, completing the project and reaching our goal. We will have a short ceremony inaugurating the home, thanking our hosts for their hospitality and saying goodbye to our new friends. We then make our way back to our guest house and after collecting our bags we board the coach for our return journey to the capital, Hanoi. After checking into our hotel and a warm refreshing shower, we get the chance to fully explore traditional cuisine with our hands-on cooking session. In this relaxed and informal evening we will gather to prepare our evening meal – all typical Vietnamese dishes – and come away with the secrets of this famous regional cuisine.

**Day 6            Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> March                            Ha Long Bay**

We enjoy breakfast at our Hanoi hotel and then board our private coach for Ha Long Bay. From Hanoi we journey east toward the Gulf of Tonkin, arriving before lunchtime. We make our way to the port and board our private sleeper-boat to go cruising in this secluded bay with its 3000 limestone peaks. Topped with thick jungle vegetation, each island rises spectacularly from the ocean, clear waters

dotted with floating fishing villages. As with inland karst mountains, many are actually hollow, with enormous caves, one of which we will explore during our time in the bay. We will also dine on a seafood buffet lunch and dinner.



*Please note: The sleeper-boat is equipped with lifejackets, a shower and toilet facilities. All meals will be prepared on board. Sleeping arrangements will be twin room share. The boat trip is calm as Ha Long Bay is sheltered from the open sea.*

**Day 7                      Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> March                      Hanoi / Jeddah**

We start with breakfast before heading back to port. During the journey there is more time to view the amazing karst topography which makes up the dense cluster of monolithic islands. Back on land, we make our way back to Hanoi where we arrive in time to check-in at the airport. Our flight departs at 17:30 and after changing planes in Doha we get to Jeddah at 03:05 on Friday, 31<sup>st</sup> March.

*The above itinerary is property of **etr** educational travel. Any dissemination, distribution or duplication of this communication without prior written consent from **etr** educational travel is strictly prohibited. Thank you.*

