

Treasures of the East: Ho Chi Minh City to Shanghai

https://www.irtsociety.com/?post_type=journeys&p=22642



Overview

The Highlights

- Four nights on board the *Vietnam Express*;
- Five nights on board the *Golden Eagle Silk Road Express*;
- Accommodation at the five-star Park Hyatt hotel (or similar) in Ho Chi Minh City for two nights;
- Accommodation at the five-star Ritz-Carlton Shanghai (or similar) hotel for two nights;
- Explore UNESCO-listed gems – including the Hoi An Ancient Town, My Son Sanctuary, Halong Bay and Wuyi Mountains.

- Private cruise through Ha Long & Bai Tu Long Bays;
- Hands-on porcelain experience in Jingdezhen;
- Afternoon tea while admiring the view from the 120th floor of Shanghai Tower;
- Sunset yacht cruise in Shanghai;
- Fully inclusive meals, drinks, gratuities, touring & transfers.

The Tour

Embark on an unforgettable journey from the tropical vibrancy of Vietnam to the imperial majesty of China, where ancient traditions, captivating landscapes, and rich cultural encounters unfold in seamless luxury on board the *Vietnam Express* and *Golden Eagle Silk Road Express*.

From the lively streets of Ho Chi Minh City and a speedboat ride to the Cu Chi Tunnels, to lantern-lit Hoi An, the serene waterways of Ninh Binh, and a private cruise through the unspoiled beauty of Ha Long Bay, discover Vietnam like never before.

Itinerary

Day 1: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

On arrival in Ho Chi Minh City, you will be met and transferred to the five-star Park Hyatt hotel (or similar) for a two-night stay.

Settle in and relax before gathering this evening for a Welcome Reception Dinner - a grand introduction to Vietnam's rich culinary traditions and a chance to meet your fellow travelers.

Day 2: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

This morning, embark on a private speedboat excursion along the Saigon River to the historic Cu Chi Tunnels by private speedboat. Explore the vast underground network used by Viet Cong fighters. Alternatively, you may choose a morning at leisure in the comfort of the hotel.

This afternoon, uncover the rich layers of Ho Chi Minh City's history on a guided tour of its most iconic landmarks: the red-brick Notre Dame Cathedral, the French colonial-era Central Post Office, the former Presidential Palace and the powerful War Remnants Museum. Along the way, pause for a tasting of Vietnamese street coffee as your guide offers a brief language lesson and a glimpse into daily life.

This evening, experience the lively atmosphere of Nguyen Hue Walking Street, where locals

gather amid glowing lights, street performers, and open-air markets. You may choose to attend the celebrated A O Show at the historic Saigon Opera House. This dynamic fusion of acrobatics, dance, and traditional Vietnamese storytelling is sure to make your night memorable.

Return to the hotel for the night before boarding the *Vietnam Express* tomorrow.

Day 3: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Enjoy your morning at leisure with breakfast at the hotel, then take time to relax or explore the city's lively boulevards at your own pace.

Midday, board the *Vietnam Express* and settle into the comfort of your private cabin. Enjoy a gourmet lunch on board as the train travels northward toward Hoi An. Spend the afternoon immersed in gracious service and refined surroundings, with sweeping views of emerald rice paddies, forested hills and timeless village scenes unfolding beyond your window.

Dinner and overnight on board.

Day 4: Da Nang, Vietnam & Hoi An, Vietnam

After breakfast on board, disembark in Da Nang and prepare to immerse yourself the cultural heart of central Vietnam with a choice of two unforgettable excursions.

Option one invites you to the enchanting town of Hoi An, a UNESCO World Heritage Site once known as Faifo. Meander along lantern-lit lanes on a guided walking tour, where centuries-old merchant houses, temples, and the iconic Japanese Covered Bridge reveal a rich tapestry of Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese influences. Visit the bustling market, renowned for its silk and skilled tailors, before embarking on a serene cruise along the Thu Bon River to Thanh Ha Pottery Village. Here, local artisans carry on time-honored ceramic traditions. Enjoy a hands-on pottery experience and craft your own silk lantern.

Alternatively, venture into the forested valley of My Son, the sacred spiritual center of the ancient Champa Kingdom. Explore its temple towers dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, adorned with intricate carvings that whisper stories of a vanished civilization. A live Champa dance performance, set amid the ruins, offers a mesmerizing glimpse into the sacred rituals and vibrant artistry of this UNESCO-listed site.

Rejoin the train for dinner, drinks, and overnight on board.

Day 5: Ninh Binh, Vietnam

This morning, arrive in Ninh Binh, Vietnam's first imperial capital. Visit Hoa Lu, where the remnants of 10th- and 11th-century temples are nestled among striking limestone karsts. Uncover the enduring legacies of the Dinh and Le dynasties — foundations of Vietnam's early identity.

Following, visit the peaceful Emerald Tam Coc Resort for a leisurely lunch of refined Vietnamese

cuisine.

This afternoon, drift along the quiet waters of Thung Nang in a traditional sampan. The adventure continues by open-air jeep through villages and vibrant paddies, and offers an intimate look at rural life.

Rejoin the *Vietnam Express* in the evening for dinner and overnight on board.

Day 6: Ha Long Bay, Vietnam

This morning, depart for the enchanting waters of Ha Long Bay, where a private cruise awaits at the pier. Step aboard and set sail across this UNESCO World Heritage Site, a dreamscape of emerald waters and limestone pillars rising dramatically from the sea. Leaving the main route behind, your journey continues into the serene embrace of Bai Tu Long Bay. A gourmet lunch is served on board, with panoramic views of secluded islands.

In the afternoon, arrive at Vung Vieng, a traditional floating village. Choose to explore by kayak, paddling at your own pace, or opt for a gentle rowing boat guided by a local resident.

Later, arrive at Hon Co Island. Here, you may venture ashore to visit the hidden Thien Canh Son cave, where delicate stalactites catch the light in a peaceful subterranean world. Alternatively, remain on deck, where the passing seascape offers a meditative calm as the sun begins its descent.

Return to the train in the evening for your final night onboard the *Vietnam Express*.

Day 7: Hanoi, Vietnam

Begin your final day in Vietnam with a captivating one-hour cyclo tour through Hanoi's Old Quarter.

Ride through the famed "36 Streets of 36 Wares," a maze of narrow alleyways named for the artisan guilds that once thrived here. From vibrant market stalls to the distinctive "tube houses," this district offers a living portrait of Hanoi's layered history. Along the way, catch glimpses of hidden courtyards, timeworn facades, and the enduring rhythm of local life.

Continue to the Temple of Literature, Vietnam's first national university. Founded in the 11th century and featured on the 100,000 dong banknote, this serene complex of courtyards, pavilions, and ancient stelae offers a graceful homage to the nation's scholarly heritage.

If you wish, you may also enjoy an optional visit to Hoa Lo Prison, grimly remembered as the "Hanoi Hilton." This visit offers a sobering look into Vietnam's tumultuous past. Originally built by the French colonial administration and later used during the Vietnam War, the site's evocative exhibits bear witness to stories of hardship, resilience, and the enduring struggle for independence.

Return to the station in time for a final Vietnamese lunch served on the *Vietnam Express*.

As the train winds north toward the Chinese border, bid farewell to Vietnam and prepare for the next chapter of your journey on the *Golden Eagle Silk Road Express*, beginning with an elegant welcome dinner on board.

Day 8: Guilin, China

Enjoy your morning in the comfort of your private cabin on the *Golden Eagle Silk Road Express*.

Head to the dining car for breakfast as the striking landscapes of southern China come into view as your head to next destination: Guilin.

Upon arrival, disembark to join a privately chartered cruise along the fabled Lijiang River to Yangshuo.

In the evening in Yangshuo, board an exclusive fishing boat for a serene sunset voyage. Here, witness the centuries-old art of cormorant fishing, an unforgettable conclusion to your day.

Rejoin the train for restful overnight as the travel travels towards Guangzhou.

Day 9: Guangzhou, China

Today you will explore the vibrant city of Guangzhou, where culinary artistry and cultural heritage come together. Begin with a curated dim sum experience in one of the city's historic teahouses, savoring delicate steamed buns, crystal dumplings, and aromatic teas. This refined ritual, set amid the lively ambiance of morning diners, offers a window into the heart of Cantonese cuisine.

Afterward, enjoy a guided stroll through the evocative Shamian District. Once a foreign concession, this leafy enclave is graced with colonial-era architecture, quiet boulevards, and tranquil river views. Continue to Yongqing Fang Square, a beautifully revitalized quarter where traditional Lingnan-style architecture. Take time to explore at your leisure.

Return to the train for lunch and relax in the Observation Car. Enjoy a cocktail as you glide through southern China, or retire to your private cabin for a moment of quiet.

Day 10: Jingdezhen, China

Begin your day in Jingdezhen, China's porcelain capital, with a visit to the Chinese Ceramic Museum. Wander through galleries that celebrate over two millennia of ceramic mastery. Guided by experts, discover the fascinating tales of emperors and artisans whose artistry established Jingdezhen's world-renowned legacy.

Continue onto the Ancient Kilns & Folk Customs Expo Area, where centuries-old dragon kilns continue to burn with tradition. Amid restored workshops and glowing wood-fired furnaces, experience a rare, hands-on opportunity to craft your own porcelain masterpiece under the tutelage of master potters. Shape, carve, and paint using time-honored techniques.

In the afternoon, return to the train to continue your journey toward Yichang, carrying with you memories of this timeless art form.

Day 11: Wuyi Mountains, China

This morning, you will embark on a scenic journey to the Wuyi Mountains, a tranquil sanctuary of misty peaks and ancient lore. You may choose to begin the day with an optional excursion along the Jiuqu River, gently drifting on a traditional bamboo raft as the water winds past emerald forests and towering cliffs. This serene voyage offers a deeply immersive way to experience the natural beauty of this UNESCO World Heritage landscape. In the afternoon, explore the storied legacy of one of China's most treasured exports during the Wuyi Mountain Tea Culture Experience. At a renowned tea estate, enjoy a guided tasting session and discover the art of cultivating and crafting oolong tea, including the legendary Da Hong Pao. In the evening, rejoin the *Golden Eagle Silk Road Express* for a celebratory farewell dinner on board.

Day 12: Shanghai, China

This morning, you will board the *Golden Eagle Silk Road Express* with breakfast and lunch, as you arrive in Shanghai where you will stay at five-star hotel for two nights. Disembark in the afternoon to visit the sky-high Shanghai Tower, a feat of modern engineering and the tallest structure in China. Ascend to the 120th floor, where the J Hotel's lounge offers a refined setting for afternoon tea. Sip rare teas and savor delicately crafted pastries accented with regional flavors such as lychee and osmanthus. In the evening, join a private yacht for an exclusive evening cruise along the Huangpu River. A bespoke dinner is served on board, blending the elegance of Shanghainese cuisine with international flair and expertly paired wines.

Day 13: Shanghai, China

This morning, you will enjoy two unique experiences that capture the essence of Shanghai's cultural charm. For those seeking a tranquil escape, an optional visit to Zhujiajiao Ancient Town awaits. Often called the "Venice of the East," this 1,700-year-old water town enchants with stone bridges, willow-draped canals, and centuries-old residences. Travel through its quiet waterways by a traditional sculling boat, accompanied by your expert guide who brings the town's Ming and Qing dynasty heritage to life. Following, stroll along cobbled lanes, browse artisan boutiques, and sip tea in traditional teahouses. Alternatively, opt to experience Shanghai's vibrant culinary scene with an exclusive cooking class. Begin with a guided visit to a bustling local market, hand-selecting ingredients alongside your host chef. In a private kitchen setting, learn to craft beloved dishes such as xiaolongbao (soup dumplings), before sitting down to savor your creations. The afternoon is yours to enjoy at leisure. Rejuvenate at the five-star hotel spa, or explore the city's world-class shopping districts, from the heritage charm of the Bund to the cosmopolitan flair of Nanjing Road. This evening, enjoy a Farewell Dinner with your fellow travelers to mark your final night of this unforgettable adventure.

Day 14: Shanghai, China

This morning, you are transferred to the airport for your departing flight.

Dates & Prices

2026 Dates

April 6 - April 19

| Vietnam Express Accommodations | Golden Eagle Silk Road Accommodations | Double | Single | Deposit |
|---------------------------------------|--|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Classic Cabin Twin/Double | Superior Cabin Twin/Double | \$27,900 | \$44,900 | 25% |
| Classic Cabin Twin/Double | Han Dynasty Suite | \$50,900 | On request | 25% |

Accommodations are priced for 4 nights on the Vietnam Express and 5 nights on the Golden Eagle Silk Road Express, as well as hotel accommodation as outlined in the itinerary.
All prices are per person.