

An ICAEF  
Culinary Learning Journey

# *Spirits of Vietnam & Thailand*

**February 24 – March 5, 2024**

**Optional Extension: Bangkok  
March 5 – 8, 2024**



ica educational foundation  
building better caterers...one scholarship at a time



## *Producers Notes*

At the time of printing, April 2023, the dates of the trip are confirmed, and the hotels are confirmed, but we are still working on some of the activities and restaurant confirmations. Please note that the producers may be changing the schedule of activities and/or restaurants and/or towns slightly to create a better flow of events and accommodate travel times between meals, events, and activities.

# Schedule at a glance

## Vietnam

Land of the Blue Dragon

Night 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Night 2, Ho Chi Minh City

Night 3, Ho Chi Minh City

Night 4, Hanoi

Night 5, Hanoi

Night 6, Halong Bay Cruise

Night 7, Hanoi

## Thailand

Land of Smiles

Night 8, Chiang Mai

Night 9, Chiang Mai

Night 10, Chiang Mai

Day 11, Departures or  
Bangkok Extension

## Extension

Optional

Night 11, Bangkok

Night 12, Bangkok

Night 13, Bangkok

Night 14, Bangkok  
departure



DESTINATION

# Ho Chi Minh City



## Saigon Airport to Hotel City Centre With Guide

**Day 1- February 24, 2024**

Upon your arrival at the airport, meet our representative depending on destination - they will be holding a sign with your surname. Enjoy a convenient, hassle-free transfer to your accommodation. We will be monitoring your flight, however if there are any changes, please contact our operations team.

After checking at Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon, you are free at leisure until meet your guide for the street food tour in the evening.

\*Hotel check in time: 14:00 - 15:00, check out time 11:00 - 12:00

# TRAVEL TO MAKE MEMORIES ALL AROUND THE WORLD



## **In the evening: Saigon Street Eats Evening Private Tour**

**Day 1- February 24, 2024**

Get ready for a culinary night adventure in the heart of Saigon and find out where the locals love to eat. Meet your guide and be transferred to the Cao Thang Street, well known for its abundance of street food. From here, start your leisurely walk and observe the small pop-up restaurants along the street, nightly features that disappear during the day.

First, try out a Vietnamese rice paper pizza (banh trang)! At your next stop, try the iconic Vietnamese sandwich (banh mi) – the best fusion between French and Vietnamese cuisine.

Then, sink your teeth into the flavors of the South. You will take a leisure walk through the Ban Co Market leading to Nguyen Thien Thuat Street and enjoy a scrumptious savory crêpe (banh xeo) and fresh spring rolls at Madam Nga's spot. Finish things off with a taste of one of the city's most popular dishes: hu tieu. Dating back to the 1960s, it can be served as a soup or dry with no broth. End with a tasting of fried rice flour (bot chien): a very popular local street dish which comes along with eggs, onion dipping in a mixed homemade sauce with shredded papaya.

Once you have had your fill of incredible dishes, continue onward to a local coffee shop for a drink and chat as the city's nocturnal side awakens.



# Mekong Delta: Cai Be Full Day Private Tour

Day 2- February 25, 2024

Set off from Ho Chi Minh City today for the charming delta town of Cai Be, famous for its rustic floating communities. By boat, float past a mass of rickety river vessels where water-bound locals spend much of their time between fishing and selling their wares on land. Though the floating market here is not nearly as busy as day's past, you might still spot locals tossing water-melons or pineapples between their boats!

Continue onward visit a family who weave intricate hyacinth products and another that use coconut leaves to thatch house roofs. Then take a sampan to enjoy the charming Mekong scenery through a maze of narrow canals. Back on the boat, continue the cruise until reaching Binh Hoa Phuoc.

Hop on a bicycle and enjoy a short cycling tour along the canal, passing by temples, schools and local houses. Stop at an old house and admire its beautiful architecture and well-preserved interiors. For a special twist, watch a demonstration of how to make a favourite Vietnamese specialty - banh xeo, or a Vietnamese savoury pancake before sitting down for a delicious lunch with local delicacies. Your tour ends with a gentle ride aboard the boat back to Cai Be and your onward drive back to Ho Chi Minh City. On the way back, stop at a home factory and understand the process of making Vietnamese chocolate. Made from local beans, visit the cocoa plantation and tour the small factory to witness the roasting, cracking winnowing and grinding of the cocoa beans before indulging in a cup of hot cocoa.





## **In the morning: Cooking Class at Agricultural Villages - Private Tour**

**Day 3- February 26, 2024**

This morning, at 7am meet your guide at your hotel to transfer to the Agricultural Villages/ Organic farm outside the city center. Upon arrival, start to visit Cow areas, Buffalo Areas, and Rice Fields and pick some herbs for your cooking class at the a large herbs field, including spices, vegetables and mushrooms.

At around 10am, start your hands on cooking class with three dishes and 1 dessert and enjoy the lunch that you have prepared/cooked. At the end of the cooking class, you will receive nice certificate, recipes and souvenirs.



## In the afternoon: Cu Chi Classic Tour Private Afternoon Tour

Day 3- February 26, 2024

Begin your journey to the Cu Chi Tunnels by departing at around 1pm travel through the countryside which was once a stronghold of the Viet Cong. Upon arrival, watch a short video about what life was like for soldiers who lived there during the war. The cramped tunnels were central to a few of the war's strategic operations, including the famous 1968 Tet Offensive, and they didn't escape damage. American B52 bombers dropped hundreds of missiles leaving huge tell-tale craters behind. The tunnels served not only as living quarters, but as supply routes and hospitals for thousands of guerilla fighters. Many died there from malaria and other diseases, and a few were also born or married. Today they are viewed by some as a testimony to the Vietnamese people's resiliency. Return to Ho Chi Minh City



## In the evening: Indochina Junk Dinner Cruise

This evening, meet your guide at 6pm for the transfer to the dinner cruise. Witness the spectacular views of Saigon by night as you sail down the river, enjoying a delicious dinner and the enchanting sounds of traditional Vietnamese music.

Transferring you to Nha Rong Harbour where you will board a classic Vietnamese junk. Settle down at your table as you begin your journey, admiring the lights of the city as you drift gently down the river. Your dinner will be served to the tune of traditional Vietnamese instruments, with song and dance creating a magical atmosphere that allows you to become fully immersed in the ambiance of Vietnam. Further along the river you will pass the iconic Thu Thiem Bridge providing exceptional photo opportunities to capture the majestic skyline of Saigon. Return to the pier at Nha Rong and transfer back to your hotel at 9pm.

# DESTINATION: Hanoi



## Flight - Saigon to Hanoi

### Day 4- February 27, 2024

Meet our representative at the lobby of your accommodation. Upon your arrival at the Hanoi airport, meet your guide for the private transfer to a local restaurant for lunch. After lunch, transfer to Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi



## In the evening: Hanoi Street Eats Evening Private Tour



Go on a culinary whirlwind tour in the evening, sinking your teeth into the flavors of the North on a street food tour through the alleys of the Old Quarter. Meet your guide at your hotel, before strolling to a secret eco-friendly coffee shop to get your briefing pitch. Here, you will also enjoy a demonstration of the preparation of an iconic drink: Vietnamese egg coffee (with a twist). Then, set off into the maze of alleys and eat a fried nem, standing on the street amongst the busy workers. Continue

and stop at a famous pho stall to slurp up this world renowned beef noodle soup. Next, try some banh ran (sweet fried sticky rice) and a real exotic experience: fried chicken legs (or wings for the less daring travellers). From these unique delights you can enjoy a cultural stop at Hang Ma Street. This street is a key place for all Vietnamese: all year round, locals buy votive paper, lanterns, Christmas decorations, and more. You will continue to the 'bamboo corner', a spot that has been around for decades.

Complete your foodie tour with a classic Vietnamese sandwich (banh mi), at one of the most famous addresses for locals and travellers alike. Finally, your local gastronomy immersion will end with the most social activity in Vietnam: bia hoi. Grab a stool at the neighboring Bia Hoi Corner and watch the commotion as this spot comes to life in the evening, while sipping a tall glass of cold local draft beer. After your refreshing drink, your tour guide will bring you back to your hotel, or feel free to stay and enjoy more of Ta Hien Street by yourself for a fun evening out.



# Story of Hanoi Full Day Private Tour

**Day 5- February 28, 2024**

Begin your Story of Hanoi with a visit to the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum. Here, you will hear about the man who led Vietnam's campaign for independence from French colonial rule. Next, visit the imperial citadel, the apex of regional political power for more than a millennium where research and excavation is still underway. After a Vietnamese lunch, head to another 11th century relic, the Temple of Literature, which was built as an homage to the Chinese scholar Confucius. You will then see the iconic Long Bien Bridge. Constructed across Red River between 1899 and 1902, when Vietnam was still ruled by the French, it is now jammed with whizzing motorbikes and an occasional passenger train chugging into nearby Long Bien Station. The tour continues with a 30-minute cyclo tour through Hanoi's bustling Old Quarter, a place where Hanoians buy everything from noodles to light fixtures to Buddha statues. The quarter's 36 streets were named for the products that were sold from their shops. Today, vendors on Tin and Bamboo Streets still sell the same wares. After exploring the old quarter's shady alleyways, sip a strong Vietnamese coffee in a café overlooking Hoan Kiem Lake - an important symbol in Vietnamese folklore. Snap a photograph of the downtown skyline before returning to your hotel at around 4.30pm.

In the evening, at around 6pm meet your guide for the transfer to a local restaurant for dinner. After dinner, transfer back to your hotel.

**DESTINATION**

# Ha Long Bay Cruise



## **Day 6- February 29, 2024**

After having breakfast at your hotel, meet your guide at 8am for the transfer to Halong Bay for the overnight cruise at Lan Ha Bay. Please pack an overnight bag.



### **11:45 – 12.00 approx**

- Arrive Tuan Chau marina, transferred by speedboat to Stellar of the Seas. Welcome aboard to our cruise. Refresh with our welcome drink.
- Meet the captain, crew on our cruise and join briefing and learn safety instruction.
- Set sail as lunch is served



### **12:30 – 17:00**

- Join us for a typical lunch in the luxury dining room with indoor or outdoor dining area.
- Check-in your cabin. Time to refresh and unwind
- Continue cruising through Con Vit islet, Thumb islet and Gia Luan harbor where belonged to Cat Ba area.
- Discover lagoon natural area belong to Lan Ha bay. Drop anchor for Kayaking or swimming or just simply sunbathe on our cruise (private, wild and fresh air).
- Heading back toward the sleeping area



### **Early evening**

Gather around the sundeck for watching the sunset, enjoy Sunset party with complimentary cocktails demonstration. It's ideal time to make acquaintance with new friends, sharing your traveling experience or simply watching the sunset or just relax in the seasonal swimming pool, or enjoy your time in our golf course or do the exercise at fitness area.



### **18:00**

Join us for a short class of cooking demonstration. Our chef will guide you how to make famous traditional Vietnamese spring rolls. Here you will understand the culinary culture of the Vietnamese.



### **19:00**

- BBQ dinner is served with fresh food menu outside of swimming pool area.
- After dinner, reward yourself with a large selection of cocktails at panoramic bar with seasonal pool view, at wine and cigars cellar, or take one of our onboard activities: boardgames, movies, and squid fishing... or relaxing with massage services.

*Overnight on board*

# Ha Long Bay Cruise

(Continued)

## Day 7- March 1, 2024

### 06:30

Join us for a Tai Chi session on the sundeck for early riser. Tai chi helps focus the mind and condition the body, joining Tai Chi session or do the exercise at fitness area to full charge your energy for the new day.

### 07:00 – 7:45

Local light breakfast is served

### 08:00

- Mingling yourself in the stunning views of the Bay and it's dramatic limestone islets as we sail through the calm emerald waters heading to Dark & Bright Cave (Hang Sang & Toi)
- Take your option either exploring the cave by yourself on kayak or comfortably on local boat rowed by the locals.

### 09:30

Check-out the rooms

### 10:00

Vietnamese cuisine is served.

### 12:00

- Disembark from the cruise as our crew say farewell, back to Tuan Chau Marina by our speedboat
- Transferred by ultra-luxurious limousine or MPV Kia Sedona return to Hanoi (for the guest use our transfer service)
- Arrival back at your hotel approximately 15:00

**At around 6:30pm, meet your guide to transfer to farewell dinner**

\*The farewell dinner takes place at Ly's Cub (or similar). Including free flow drinks in 2 hours: soft drinks, local beers and waters. The attraction of Lý Club is from the luxury ambiance, ancient features associated with the cultural values of Vietnam. With the exquisite arrangement, interior décor, you will have the feeling of entering a new world, a quiet and relaxing space separated from the outside.

**After the dinner, transfer back to Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi.**







**DESTINATION**  
**Thailand:**  
**Chiang**  
**Mai**



## Flight - Hanoi to Chiang Mai

### Day 8- March 2, 2024

This morning you are free at leisure, until meet your guide to transfer to local restaurant for lunch. After lunch, head to Hanoi airport for your flight to Chiang Mai. Upon your arrival at the Chiang Rai airport, meet our representative depending on destination. Enjoy a convenient, hassle-free transfer to your accommodation. 3 nights at Cross Chiang Mai Riverside.



Today is a free day. feel free to take a nap, relax by the pool, shop or catch up on work!



# In the morning: Almsgiving with City and Temple Walking Tour

**Day 9- March 3, 2024**

Rise early (6:30AM) while Chiang Mai's streets are still relatively deserted in the early morning darkness. Leave your usual early hours sleeping sanctuary at the hotel behind and head to one of the ancient gate of Chiang Mai. Soak up the hypnotic chants of the resident monks as the gentle sounds drift through the stone pillars and incense smoke. Take part in the ancient spiritual sensation of giving alms to the Buddhist monks and nuns, a ritual practiced as a show of respect from the followers to the resident practitioners of the temples. Enjoy a small local breakfast to store up some energy for the next few hours of exploring Chiang Mai's temples. After this unique experience, get ready to explore some of Chiang Mai's ancient Buddhist temples, each with their own unique design and history. First temple is Wat Chedi Luang, a Lanna-style chedi that was once one of the tallest structures in ancient Chiang Mai. Continue to nearby Wat Phan Tao, an intricate teak Buddhist temple with gilded accents and colourful mosaics, founded in the 14th century. Next, take a short walk to the Three Kings Monument, a large statue of the three founders of Chiang Mai, before heading to Wat Chiang Man, the city's oldest temple. Continue the tour at Wat Phra Singh, or the 'Temple of the Lion Buddha'. Home to the eponymous and highly revered Buddha image, it's considered one of the finest examples of Lanna architecture in the city, featuring impressive murals paintings that depict scenes of ancient tales and daily life. Finish the morning at Wat Suan Dok. Known as the 'Flower Garden Temple', it's home to a 500-year-old bronze Buddha statue which is considered one of the largest in Thailand.



## In the afternoon: Doi Suthep Temple & White Hmong Half-Day

After lunch, head out on this half-day tour to one of Chiang Mai's most sacred landmarks, Doi Suthep Temple. Perched 15 kilometers away on the glorious mountain overlooking the city, your route up to the temple is fun and exciting, with the road twisting and turning through the jungle. Once at the top, take the 300 stairs of the beautiful carved mythical Naga Serpent Staircase - or the cable car for a relaxing final stretch - to reach the temple. Here, get up-close with the glistening golden chedi that makes this temple famous, and admire the intricate Lanna-Buddhist architecture. Afterwards, head back down to the roadside, and swap the car for an open-air truck to continue up the mountain. Pass by the Coffee Research Department of Chiang Mai University, where you can taste fresh "Coffee Arabica", before finally reaching a remote White Hmong hill tribe village. Here, keep your eyes peeled for the famous bamboo housing raised on stilts above the ground. Meet the locals here and get a closer look at how the community is sustained with traditional handicrafts before heading back to town.



## In the evening: Local dinner experience



Meet our guides for the transfer to a local restaurant for dinner.

## In the morning: Mae Ping River Trip with Khao Soi Noodle Tour



### Day 10- March 4, 2024

Begin your boat trip down the grand Ping River. From here, take in the gorgeous scenery as you sail past old teak wood houses, riverside farms and lush jungles intertwined along the riverbank. Around noon, make a pit stop at a typical Thai farm house for a traditional lunch of "khao soi", a spicy curry noodle soup considered a specialty of northern Thailand before transferring back to your hotel to enjoy a leisurely afternoon.

## In the evening: Chiang Mai Street Eats Private Evening Tour

Meet your tour guide at hotel. Safety brief for walking/local taxi tour. Start walking to Chiang Mai Gate local market (south gate) and taste some local food, snacks. sold by street vendors. Continue walking through old city and stop for your main dish of northern dinner called "Khao Soi" at Heun Phen local restaurant. The restaurant is actually famous for their Khao Soi noodle curry. Lunch and dinner times can be busy with the restaurant serving variety of northern Thai cuisines. Heun Phen converts to a canteen-style eatery during the day and then transforms into a romantic restaurant by night. After that, walking to visit Wat Chedi Luang by night. Then keep walking to Chang Peuk Gate local market (north gate) and your choice of fruit shake or Thai dessert. Take local songtaew (red taxi) to flower market, walk around to explore local food (what local people eat), fruits, flowers and walk across Ping river to see Wat Gate Garam by night. Ended your trip at local bar by the Ping river (1 choice of beer or soft drinks). Take local songtaew back to hotel (in town only) or your choice to continue drinking at local bar.



## DESTINATION

# Bangkok

Optional Extension



## Saigon Airport to Hotel City Centre With Guide

**Day 11- March 5, 2024**

Check out of hotel in Chiang Mai. Departures to home **OR** optional extension to Bangkok, Thailand.

Upon your arrival at the Bangkok airport, meet your guide for the transfer to local restaurant for lunch. After lunch, transfer to Montien Hotel Surawong Bangkok. You are free at leisure until meet tour guide for the Siam Niramit Show in the evening.



## In the evening: Siam Niramit Shows with Dinner Tour

This “must” evening begins with a sumptuous Thai and international buffet dinner. Dinner is followed with an extravagantly staged performance depicting Thailand’s historical and spiritual heritage. Boasting over 150 dazzling performers and state-of-the-art special effects, this \$40 million production takes you on a journey to the enchanting Kingdom of Siam. Transfers from the hotel and back are included.

# DESTINATION: Bangkok



## Bangkok Highlights Full Day Tour

**Day 12- March 6, 2024**

Take on Bangkok's finest attractions and journey around the city's fascinating canal network. Start at the magnificent Grand Palace to take in the beauty of this sprawling temple complex boasting some of the finest Thai-Buddhist architecture in the entire country. Explore the vast grounds and numerous dazzling buildings, including the highly revered Wat Phra Kaew, home to the prized Emerald Buddha statue dating back to the 14th Century. Afterwards, head across the road to Wat Pho, one of the largest and oldest temples in Bangkok home to more than 1,000 Buddha images. The temple is considered as the first public university in the Kingdom and the birthplace of traditional Thai massage housing one of the oldest massage schools in the country. After grabbing lunch at a local restaurant, in the afternoon a visit to Museum Siam reveals several exhibits displaying the national identity and history of Thai people and their relationships with neighbouring cultures. The concept of the museum is 'Play + Learn = Joyously', achieved through a series of interactive exhibits. Next, hop on a traditional longtail boat to meander through the quaint canals taking in the quieter side of Bangkok life, which would not be complete without an exploration of the spectacular and iconic Wat Arun. Take time to explore the iconic temple towering 79 metres over the Chao Phraya River offering panorama across Bangkok from the Thonburi side.

## In the evening: Bangkok Street Eats Private Tour By Tuk Tuk

Embark from the meeting point on an exciting tuk-tuk ride through Bangkok's vibrant streets. Along the way, get a glimpse of an important Bangkokian landmarks – the Democracy Monument before arriving Michelin Bib Gourmand listing Pad Thai Restaurant and enjoy the explosion of spicy and savory flavors as well as the amazing variety of textures from the delicate noodles to the crunchy peanuts Hop back into the iconic vehicle and continue this culinary excursion of the city's hidden eateries. But first, let's have a photo break at the Giant Swing. Next stop would be a local night market. Wander the rows of bustling stalls, learn about local delicacies and sample from the vast array of street food. There will be plenty of options to test your umami and sweet taste buds namely: suckling Thai-style grilled meat, khao kha mu (stewed pork leg), coconut pudding, Bua Loi Khai Waan (glutious rice balls with egg), etc. Take a short break from eating and stroll through Pak Klong Talat, Thailand's largest flower market, which only operates overnight. Let's try to fold some fresh lotus here while getting to know how important this kind of flower is in Thai worshipping culture. Next up, getting to know Thai wedding tradition from a local store selling special desserts just for this occasion. Take away some Thong Yip and Thong Yod to try at the final stop. End the night at a laid-back riverside rooftop bar. Sip on a refreshing beer or your choice of drink whilst taking in the splendid views of the Chao Phraya River and the twinkling buildings along the riverbanks before friendly tuk tuk driver bid farewell at the nearest MRT station.







# Damnoen Saduak & Patom Organic Village Full Day Tour

## Day 13- March 7, 2024

Start this busy day with an early morning departure with your guide, heading for the province of Ratchaburi around 100 kilometers southwest of Bangkok. This quaint old province is home to one of the most famous floating markets in the country, Damnoen Saduak, and there's ample time to explore the network of canals via traditional longtail boat. You can also walk around, taking in the vibrant sights, sounds, and smells, as well as bargaining for some souvenirs or indulging in some local delicacies. After exploring the market, enjoy the simple charms of rural Thailand with an excursion to the Patom Organic Village, a family-run eco-cultural project on the banks of the idyllic Tachine River. Enjoy the sumptuous international buffet lunch prepared from mostly organic ingredients, homegrown or sourced directly from local farmers. Immerse in organic living concept and participate in a wide range of engaging hands-on workshops including creating small elephant sculptures out of clay, preparing a Thai dessert and making rice body scrub. Take a rest at the organic coffee shop before going back to Bangkok.

In the evening, transfer to local restaurant for dinner.



## Departures

### Day 14- March 8, 2024

Our wonderful journey comes to an end. We will take our memories and friendships with us!

Meet our representative at the lobby of your accommodation, pick-up time will be confirmed beforehand but is typically 2 hours before departure for domestic flights, and 3 hours for international.