

# Vietnam Summer Program

Culture, volunteering, adventure travel



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## ***Program Information Booklet***

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## ***Program Overview***

Get out of school, quit the summer job and head away for four weeks of adventure in Vietnam – one week of volunteer conservation projects and three weeks of interpretive, educational and adventure travel.

Vietnam is an exciting, vibrant country of some 90 million people from 54 different ethnicities. The country was closed to foreign tourists until the 1990s and the people have retained their unique traditions. Whilst a communist country, with the painful scars of war in its recent past, the Vietnamese harbor Westerners no ill feelings. Vietnam has stunning natural landscapes and a fascinating society and culture. Remnants of French colonialism are still observed through architecture, food, tree-lined boulevards and a thriving cafe culture.

Joining this program will take you on a journey to the heart of Vietnam and beyond.

### ***Program Dates***

02 – 30 July 2008

01 – 29 July 2009

30 June – 28 July 2010

Future years: similar dates to be confirmed

### ***Program Start / Finish***

July 2008 Program

Start: Hanoi, Vietnam, 02 July (or San Francisco, 30 June, if on group flight)

Finish: Ho Chi Minh City/Saigon, 30 July (or San Francisco, 30 July, if group flight)

***Program Cost for July 2008*** is \$2,550.00 USD

*“Traveling with Pacific Discovery has been one of the most personally rewarding things I have ever done. The program’s small group sizes and focus on responsible travel allows you to interact with a country’s local culture, customs, and environment on a much deeper level. I had the time of my life on the trip!” M Lowrey, 2007*

## ***Highlights***

- A week of rewarding and insightful volunteer conservation work in Cat Ba National Park
- Exploring the maze of Hanoi's fascinating Old Quarter
- Cycling tour through countryside villages on the outskirts of Hanoi
- Trekking through spectacular mountain scenery in Northern Vietnam – jagged peaks, amazing terraced hillsides, colorful and friendly highland minority peoples
- 3-day boating and kayaking trip in spectacular Halong Bay, based from a live-aboard wooden junk
- Moto tour of Hue, the former imperial capital
- Relaxing in Hoi An – UNESCO World Heritage site – amazing historic buildings, Vietnamese cooking course, tailor-made clothes, markets and a great beach nearby
- Markets and museums of Ho Chi Minh City/Saigon
- Get claustrophobic in the Vietnam War era tunnel systems at Cu Chi
- Mekong Delta tour, exploring by bike and riverboat with an overnight rural homestay
- Fly out across the South China Sea to the little-visited Con Dao Islands for 3 days of snorkeling, exploring and watching sea turtles come ashore to lay eggs by night
- Very personalized small group experience (compare with other programs of up to 40 students)
- Fantastic Pacific Discovery program leader supported by local English speaking guides

## ***Suitability***

This program is suitable for anyone of average fitness with an enthusiasm for conservation and new experiences. You need to be committed to, and prepared for, some physical work whilst on the volunteer component of the program i.e. trail building or beach clean-ups

## ***Group Size***

Usually 8 -16 participants, with a Pacific Discovery program leader. English-speaking local guides join us on several occasions, to assist with interpretation of historical sites and cultural experiences.

## ***Accommodation***

Our accommodation will be comfortable and clean. 15 nights family owned guesthouses with private bathroom and A/C; 5 nights in a longhouse with basic shared facilities in Cat Ba National Park; 3 nights overnight train; 2 nights in cabins on wooden boat; 2 nights homestay; 1 night camping on sea turtle island. Laundry, postal, telephone and email facilities will be available most days, except while in the field on the volunteer project and at the homestays.

## ***Meals***

51 meals are included (all breakfasts, 13 lunches, 10 dinners). For the meals not included, you will have the option of dining out, or self-catering with others in the group. We recommend you budget the sum of \$200 for meals not included in the program cost.

## ***Transport***

We utilize chartered vans and buses, overnight trains, private taxis, charter and local boats, bicycles, moto-taxis and take 3 internal flights.

## ***Free Days***

During the trip, we have free days reasonably spaced (approximately one per week), in towns or cities where there are sufficient facilities to allow you to catch up on personal needs such as resting, laundry, shopping, email etc.

**Program Cost** for July 2008 is \$2,550.00 USD

**Included in Program Cost.** All in-country transport – including 3 flights within Vietnam; All accommodation; Meals as above; 1 week of volunteer conservation projects; All excursions and activities as described in the itinerary; Experienced Pacific Discovery program leader/s and local guides; Online image library for your program

**Not included in Program Cost.** Travel between your home and program start and finish (refer flight options below); Some meals (approx. \$200); Travel insurance; Tourist visa for Vietnam

## International Flight Options

### **Option 1: Group flight - San Francisco to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City/Saigon to San Francisco**

We have arranged a discounted group flight for this program, and you have the option of utilizing this flight, or arranging your own flights to Hanoi/from Ho Chi Minh City. If you choose to buy a group flight ticket the cost is approximately USD\$1,500.00 (current ticket cost). Please note that air ticket surcharges and taxes are likely to increase and flight cost will be confirmed before your final payment is due. Pacific Discovery does not charge any fee or commission for the group flight – this is a free service that we offer to simplify program arrangements for you.

### **Option 2: Arrange your own flights to Hanoi / from Ho Chi Minh City**

You need to arrive in Hanoi before the group flight arrives, and depart Ho Chi Minh City after the group flight departs. Contact us to confirm the dates/times to arrive and depart.

## Optional Extensions

Our program will surely have whet your appetite for travel and you may like to continue your adventures, independently in a neighboring country. If travelling on the group flight ticket, date changes are allowed, and are arranged directly through the airline, but routing changes are not, which means you need to depart from Ho Chi Minh City. If arranging your own flights, you may be able to buy an 'open jaw' ticket into Hanoi and out of another city eg. Bangkok, or you may be able to buy a ticket with a free stopover elsewhere on the way home. For further flight information refer to 'group flight' information later in this booklet.

## Class/Credit Options

Academic credit is an optional, but integral, component of our programs. Hands-on, out-of-class educational opportunities can be a far more effective way of learning than following a conventional classroom routine. The value of such educational experiences is continually being recognized. It is toward this thinking that credit opportunities are made available through the cooperative efforts of many supporting faculty. Click on the link/s below to view class syllabi and registration information for this program.

**Seattle Central Community College** ([www.pacificdiscovery.org/sea/credit/SCCcredit.htm](http://www.pacificdiscovery.org/sea/credit/SCCcredit.htm))

Open to any US or Canadian citizen. 5 or 10 quarter credits (3 or 6 semester credits) available. Credit transferable to accredited universities/colleges.

## ***Volunteer Conservation Overview***

The volunteer conservation project will be based on Cat Ba Island in Ha Long Bay, Northern Vietnam. It is the largest of 366 islands in the Cat Ba Archipelago and shares the distinctive rugged Kast appearance and scenic beauty of the Ha Long Bay Area that was declared a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site, in 1994. The greatest part of the islands' mountain range like most of the smaller offshore islands of the Archipelago, are covered by tropical rainforest. Cat Ba Island also has coral terraces, sandy beaches, freshwater wetland areas, tidal flats, mangrove forests and willow swamp.

Cat Ba National Park was established in 1986 and was Vietnam's first national park to include both terrestrial and marine ecosystems. Cat Ba Island, its national park and the surrounding area are nationally and internationally recognized for their importance to biodiversity conservation, exemplified through the recognition of the Cat Ba Archipelago as a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve, in 2004. This is not only because the area has a high number of different ecosystem and habitat types, but also because it possesses a great variety of plant and animal species, many of which, like the Cat Ba langur, are now rare and endangered.

Some 1500-2000 large and small islands and cliffs rise steeply from the shallow marine waters of Halong Bay, and many of these islands reach towering heights of 150 to 300ft with sheer vertical cliffs on all sides. Spectacular Kast rock formations provide evidence of a long history of erosion and landscape evolution through the sculpturing power of water.

Our volunteering will be in conjunction with the National Park staff. Project work may include trail maintenance, managing visitor impacts, species preservation and monitoring. You do not need any experience to undertake this work – just an interest in conservation and some enthusiasm!

*"I felt that our conservation work actually did help to improve the country's environment; it wasn't just something to make us feel like we weren't just tourists." E Petrofsky, 2007*

*"I think the work we did was instrumental in making my time a life-changing experience. I feel so much more connected with the country, having spent so much time working to maintain its beauty. Volunteering gave me a unique first-hand experience that such a small percentage of the population will ever be so fortunate to participate in." A Richardson, 2007*

## ***Program Itinerary***

**DAY 1-3. Arrive in Hanoi**, the cultural capital of Vietnam, after a flight from the US. A day is lost in flight, but regained on the return journey. We stay in the Old Quarter, where daily life spills out onto the street. Our US dollars become Vietnamese Dong and we'll have the chance to try a new language and take part in local life at street-side restaurants and markets. There will be a program briefing over dinner in an intimate Old Quarter restaurant before we board a train with sleeping compartments for an overnight journey to Lao Cai, a small town on the Chinese border.

**DAY 4. Amazing ethnic groups.** From Lao Cai we travel up, up and up into the hills to the beautiful town of Sapa. Once a resort for French colonialists escaping Hanoi's summer heat, and now a center

for highland ethnic minority people to trade their goods. Don't forget extra camera film...nowhere else can you see so many different ethnic groups in one area. Spend the afternoon catching up on sleep or make friends with some of the local Hmong girls...they are delightful and will have you singing and playing with them in no time!

**DAY 5-6. Trekking.** An overnight trekking trip through minority villages, spectacular rice-field terraces and lush mountainous terrain. We homestay with a warm highland family, enabling us to get a feel for village life.

**Day 7. A day to explore Sapa at your own pace.** We'll meet in Sapa for an early dinner before returning on the train to Hanoi.

**Day 8-12. Volunteer Project.** After an early breakfast in Hanoi, we depart for Cat Ba Island which is in the enormously popular World Heritage Site of Halong Bay. Cat Ba Island is by far the largest island in Halong Bay and half of the island is a National Park, home to a critically endangered monkey species, the Cat Ba Langur. We will stay in simple accommodation inside the National Park. Our work is likely to involve trail maintenance and trash collection, onshore and in the surrounding maritime park. You will be working alongside National Park staff and this week will be a great opportunity to get to know the Vietnamese park staff, undertake some rewarding work and know that you are doing something good for the local environment.

**DAY 13-15. Boating and sea kayaking.** Finish up our volunteer work, farewell our newfound friends and embark on our wooden house boat (junk) to explore Halong Bay. Adjectives can't adequately describe this place! It's studded with 1500 limestone islands rising sheer from the sea. Our skipper guides us through the maze of twisting passages. We find caves, hidden lagoons and uninhabited beaches, swim, sea kayak from the boat and observe people from the floating villages going about their daily lives. We'll stay two nights aboard the boat. Bid farewell to Halong Bay on our final afternoon as we return to Hanoi for dinner and some well earned R&R.

**Day 16. Hanoi's culture.** Explore the colorful streets of the 'Old Quarter', where streets are named for the products they sell...see artisans creating a myriad of products, gravestones being carved, silk merchants haggling, temple finery, flower markets and everything imaginable being bought and sold on the streets. This is your chill out day for shopping, email, laundry and lounging...time to catch our breath before the next adventure.

**Day 17. Hanoi and south to Hue.** Visit Ho Chi Minh in his Mausoleum and check out the Museum of Ethnology's interpretation on Vietnam's ethnic minorities. We'll have an insightful behind-the-scenes look at an organization, which trains and looks after street children, giving them skills to pursue careers in the hospitality and tourism industries. Spend time relaxing in the tranquil Temple of Literature, Vietnam's first university. Then "all aboard" the Reunification Express for our overnight train journey to the old imperial capital, Hue.

**DAY 18. Hue moto-tour.** Today will be a magical mystery tour of Hue and its environs. Our 'posse' of motos joins the melee of bicycle traffic as it surges along tree-lined boulevards. School girls wearing traditional silk ao-dai glide past stalls laden with red dragon fruit as Buddhist monks and produce-laden women jostle by. From Emperors' tombs to Buddhist pagodas, you'll really get a feel for this city. Don't leave home without your sunglasses, camera and a ready smile for your personal 'moto' driver.

**DAY 19-21. Hoi An – silk and sand.** Today we travel to our favorite Vietnamese town, Hoi An. On the way we'll stop at Marble Mountain, where we explore caves and temples atop an enormous rock. One cave was used as a Viet Cong field hospital during the war. Hoi An was an important trading port from the 17th-19th centuries. Wandering the streets, you really feel embraced by history. The town now has UNESCO World Heritage status and its profusion of old houses, quiet streets and covered bridges are being preserved and restored. These days Hoi An is renowned for its diverse architectural heritage, masterful tailors, abundant silks and superb cuisine. Hoi An is also the ultimate place to have affordable clothes tailor-made to order. There's a gorgeous beach nearby for fabulous sunrise dips and people watching on the riverfront, cool drink in hand, is hard to beat! On our second full day in town we'll take an entertaining half-day cooking class and whip up fantastic Vietnamese dishes.

**DAY 22-24. Saigon and Cu Chi tunnels.** A flight south takes us to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). A city of stunning contrasts, bursting with energy and a 24-hour go-go-go attitude. Our guesthouse is renowned for its welcoming hospitality and even hosted Michael Caine, who checked out of his flashy hotel to experience the fantastic hospitality. We venture out into the maelstrom of people, cyclos, motos, carts, trucks and taxis to zigzag our way to the War Remnants Museum, a chilling memorial to the atrocities of the Vietnam War. Then lighten up with a stroll around the unusual Presidential Palace and Ben Thanh, Saigon's central market - a great place to stock up on fresh-baked croissants and fine roasted coffee from the highlands. A dawn start takes us out to visit the legendary Cu Chi Tunnels - over 250kms of tunnels, in some places several floors deep, where Viet Cong forces built pseudo-cities underground, enabling them to infiltrate and control large areas around Saigon virtually undetected. You'll be able to experience, first hand, the claustrophobic existence.

**Day 25-26, Mekong Delta cycling and rural homestay.** The Mekong Delta, Vietnam's rice bowl, is one of the largest deltas in the world. You'll be in awe of its fertile abundance and beauty as we explore by bicycle and boat, visiting small farms and workshops on islands among the myriad branching waterways and tributaries. Homestay with a rural family before returning to Saigon the next morning.

**Day 27-30. Con Dao Islands.** We take a morning flight 60 miles across the South China Sea to the stunning Con Dao Islands - a chain of 15 islands, with most of the land area forming the Con Dao National Park, protecting the habitat of endangered dugongs and sea turtle nesting grounds. We'll stay in the only town on the islands, which has an unhurried pace and many historical sites of interest. We take an overnight trip to Bay Canh Island to swim, snorkel over coral reefs and watch sea turtles come ashore to lay their eggs at night. On our final day we take a morning flight back to Saigon, and you'll have a free afternoon to rest, repack and shop before tomorrow's departure.

**Day 31. Departure.** Our flight to the US departs mid morning. You'll return home having experienced more in a month in Vietnam than you do in a year at home, and with strong friendships through amazing adventures shared with your fellow group members and local people you've met and worked with along the way.

## Program Route Map



Or, check out the program route map on the website

([www.pacificdiscovery.org/content/pacific-tours.aspx?tripId=11&tab=4&tripPageId=47](http://www.pacificdiscovery.org/content/pacific-tours.aspx?tripId=11&tab=4&tripPageId=47))

## ***Country Information***

Vietnam is astoundingly diverse, stretching along a fertile coastal strip of land sandwiched between the South China Sea and rugged forest-draped mountains bordering Laos. Most of Vietnam has a monsoonal climate, with the exception of the far North, which is more seasonal. Vietnam is exciting and vibrant with a population of some 90 million people from 54 different ethnicities. Whilst a communist country, with the painful scars of war in its recent past, the Vietnamese harbor Westerners no ill feelings. Vietnam is, one of the most interesting countries you will ever visit, with stunning natural landscapes and a fascinating society and culture. Remnants of French colonialism are still observed through architecture, food, tree-lined boulevards and a thriving cafe culture.

Vietnam's history has been characterized by a conflict between imposed rule from other countries and the Vietnamese people's strong desire for independence. Vietnam's people evolved from a feudally organized society, centered in the Red River delta (near Hanoi). From the 2nd century BC, the Chinese empire sought to subjugate the Vietnamese, who actively resisted this vassal role till they were finally able to overthrow Chinese Rule in the 10th century, bringing to an end one thousand years of Chinese domination.

Over the following centuries, the Vietnamese spread south along the coast, gradually displacing the Cham civilization based around Danang and the fringes of the waning Khmer empire in the Mekong Delta. The Vietnamese were ruled by a succession of family dynasties. There were long periods of conflict with China and the Khmer civilization in modern day Cambodia.

From the mid 1600s there was increasing contact with Western countries through seaborne trade. By the early 1800s there were many French interests established in Vietnam from missionaries to businessmen. Protecting their safety fitted with France's expansionist policy at the time. This resulted in France taking Vietnam by military force in 1859. There was widespread resistance to French occupation, which simmered and flared till France's eventual defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

When France withdrew, the country was partitioned into the communist controlled North and an interim government in the South. The United Nations originally planned to have democratic elections to elect a new government and reunite the country. This plan was thwarted by the leader of the interim government in South Vietnam, who realized that Ho Chi Minh would win any nationwide election. In 1959 the Northern Government gave their frustrated supporters in the South permission to use military force in their political struggle to reunite the country. By 1964 regular soldiers of the North Vietnamese Army were infiltrating the Southern guerilla groups and the South Vietnamese military were falling back.

The American involvement till 1973 is well known – a total of three million Americans served in Vietnam. In 1975 the North Vietnamese Army reached Saigon and took control of the whole country. Ten percent of the population were either killed or injured during the North-South war. The reunited country was faced with a mind-boggling array of problems: war damage to infrastructure; millions of people who had been affected either physically or mentally; understandable bitterness on both sides; international isolation.

Reunification was accompanied by political repression. Many in the South had land and jobs confiscated, and were sent to re-education (forced labor) camps. Others fled the country over the next 15 years, often in small boats. Vietnam was a closed country to Westerners from the mid 70s until the

mid 80s when more liberal politicians were appointed to senior positions in the communist party, closely following the opening up of the Soviet Union. Tourism was minimal until the government relaxed some of its stringent requirements. Today two million tourists visit Vietnam annually.

Vietnam is an exciting country to travel in. People are very welcoming, and the isolation and efforts of the government to limit Western influence and encourage support of their own culture, have enabled Vietnam to remain much more culturally intact than most other Asian countries. All young people learn English at school, and many people you meet will be able to converse in English at some level, even if very basic.

### ***Climate***

The climate of Vietnam varies widely from region to region and is governed by two monsoon seasons. Put simply, the winter monsoon comes from the northeast between October and March, while the southwestern monsoon brings warmer weather from April to October. You can expect the following climate during this program.

#### **Hanoi**

Temperature range min/max, 18-28 degrees Celsius  
Rainfall, 20mm

#### **Saigon**

Temperature range min/max, 22-32 degrees Celsius  
Rainfall, 05mm

## ***Leadership***

Our programs succeed because we put a lot of thought into choosing our program leaders. We've selected a dynamic team of supportive, resourceful, experienced and highly organized people to lead our trips. Our program leaders are people in whom you can trust and confide, who remain objective whatever the circumstances and who take a genuine interest in your welfare and safety. They implicitly understand the importance of balancing the needs of individuals with group objectives, facilitating a high level of group cohesion, inspiring a genuine appreciation for the areas visited and an awareness of minimum impact travel ethics. All our leaders are trained in wilderness or remote travel first aid, group leadership and risk assessment/management.

## ***Peace of Mind***

Since its inception, in 2001, Pacific Discovery has taken over 1000 students, graduates, faculty, family and special interest groups, on experiential travel and volunteer tours, utilizing a staff of experienced and qualified program leaders. We have an excellent safety record, comprehensive Risk Management Systems and a database of alumni who are happy to be contacted for feedback. The program carries public liability insurance, and participant payments are held in trust account until disbursement. Bank, accountant and faculty contacts available.

## **Registration Information & Checklist**

- ☑ Register online for the program and pay \$400 deposit  
([www.pacificdiscovery.org/content/student-booking.aspx?pagelid=173](http://www.pacificdiscovery.org/content/student-booking.aspx?pagelid=173))
- ☑ Review the pre-departure information for this program in this booklet
- ☑ Obtain a passport
- ☑ Purchase travel insurance
- ☑ Complete the online medical and passport form ([www.pacificdiscovery.org/content/medform.aspx](http://www.pacificdiscovery.org/content/medform.aspx))
- ☑ Decide if you are going to take credit and register for this
- ☑ Decide if you are going to utilize the group flight or make your own flight arrangements
- ☑ May 1<sup>st</sup>: Submit your final payment and group flight payment (if choosing this). An invoice will be emailed to you. If late registration (after May 1<sup>st</sup>) your final payment is due within 14 days of registering.
- ☑ May 1<sup>st</sup>: Apply for your Vietnam Visa. Refer to Visa information on page 14 of this booklet.
- ☑ Start a fitness program – you'll want to be doing at least ½ - 1 hour of exercise, 3 times a week. Anything is good...swimming, running, walking, biking, hiking, and sport. The fitter you are the more you'll get out of the program.
- ☑ Review the gear list and start packing
- ☑ To make the most of your time in Vietnam, read/watch some of the books or movies recommended in this booklet

## **Any Questions?**

***Please don't hesitate to contact us.***

Program Coordinators: Scott Burnett, Rachel Sanson

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*"You will come back inspired in ways you never thought possible. I came back inspired about life. The people you meet will share stories and experiences that change the way you think about the world - to really gain knowledge and understanding of something, you have to experience it firsthand. I was challenged socially, mentally, physically, spiritually and came back a much happier, stronger person because of it. I have some of the best memories of my life on that trip and I am fortunate enough to have shared them with incredible people. For once in my life, I threw away logic, emptied out my savings account and did the one thing in my life I really wanted to do. You just have to open your mind and go after your dreams. The best of luck to all of you." Kelli Barnett, 2000*

## ***Pre-departure Information for Registered Participants***

### **Travel Insurance**

Pacific Discovery requires all participants to have a comprehensive travel insurance policy for the duration of the program. Details of your policy must be supplied to Pacific Discovery when you complete your online medical form.

*What's the difference between health/medical insurance and travel insurance?*

A travel insurance policy will cover you for more than just medical treatment. Most travel insurance policies should cover you for loss/damage of baggage; trip cancellation/curtailment; personal liability. When selecting a travel insurance policy, be sure that you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation, loss or theft of your personal belongings, personal liability and default of an airline.

Please be aware that most insurance policies do not cover expenses resulting from pre-existing medical conditions of which the insurance company has not been informed. If you have a pre-existing condition, it is essential that you inform both the insurance company and Pacific Discovery before traveling, for the safety of the group and yourself, and to avoid the possibility of having to meet emergency evacuation costs which can amount to tens of thousands of dollars.

You can purchase travel insurance from most travel agents, and some insurance brokers. It's worth shopping around before you buy one (the price should be around \$200 for 1 month).

The majority of program participants have purchased travel insurance from either:  
STA (Student Travel)

([www.statravel.com/cps/rde/xchg/us\\_division\\_web\\_live/hs.xsl/travelinsurance.htm](http://www.statravel.com/cps/rde/xchg/us_division_web_live/hs.xsl/travelinsurance.htm))

Travel Guard International ([www.travelguard.com/travelinsurance/](http://www.travelguard.com/travelinsurance/))

### **Passports and Visa**

Travel abroad requires a passport. If you don't have one, you need to apply for one as soon as possible. Passport application forms are available at either your central post office or county courthouse. Link to the US Government Passport website ([http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html)).

If you already have a passport, make sure it is not within 6 months of expiring at program end. If it will expire within 6 months of program end you will need to get a new one issued prior to joining this program, so please do this as soon as possible.

A tourist visa is required for travel to Vietnam and it is your responsibility to apply for this (see 'How to Apply for a Visa to Vietnam' on the next page), at least 1 month prior to program start.

## How to Apply for a Visa to Vietnam

**Option 1: Visa on Arrival:** Apply online for entry permission and then have your visa stamped into your passport on arrival. Costs around \$45 (\$20 when you apply and \$25 on arrival). Details on how to do this are at <http://visa-vietnam.org/>

**Option 2: Visa before Arrival:** A visa can be applied for by mail or in person at the Embassy of Vietnam in Washington. Costs \$65 plus mailing costs. The applicant must submit:

- Original passport
- One completed and signed visa application form with 1 passport-size photo glued or stapled. (Print form from this link: [www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/docs/visaform%2011.06.pdf](http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/docs/visaform%2011.06.pdf))
- Visa fee of \$65 in the form of MONEY ORDER, or CASHIER'S CHECK, or CERTIFIED CHECK payable to "THE EMBASSY OF VIETNAM."
- A self addressed prepaid return envelope. Use US Express Mail – [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com) (UPS and DHL are not accepted for the return envelope).

### ***Processing Time and Procedure***

- 5 - 7 business days are required to process visa applications.
- Please keep the tracking numbers of the envelopes to and from the Embassy. When the above deadlines have passed, use the tracking number to check with the mailing service first. Please do not make telephone inquiries on the status of your application (make sure that you keep your passport number for this request) until after the 7th working day.
- The Embassy will be closed on Vietnamese and US holidays. Please take account of the observed holidays in planning for your visa application.

### ***Notes on Completing the Visa Application Form***

- All questions/fields must be filled out completely in upper case letters except #10 (Name and address of your contact in Vietnam), which is only required for Business Visa applications.
- Do not use PO Box addresses
- Submit or mail to:  
Consular Section  
Embassy of Vietnam  
1233 20th Street, NW  
Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20036

### ***For further information, please contact the Visa Section of the Embassy***

Opening hours: 9:30 – 12:30 Monday through Friday

The Embassy is closed on Saturday, Sunday, and US and Vietnamese holidays.

Tel. 202-861-0737 ext: 221, 243, 236, or 202-861-2293, or 202-861-0694.

Fax: (202) 861- 1297 and (202) 861- 0917

Email: [consular@vietnamembassy.us](mailto:consular@vietnamembassy.us)

Website: [www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/consular\\_services/visa\\_info/](http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/consular_services/visa_info/)

## Health

There are no specific health requirements to participate in the Vietnam Program or to enter Vietnam. However, to maximize your enjoyment of volunteering and adventure travel in a developing country, it is preferable that you are moderately fit.

We urge you to consult your physician regarding recommended vaccinations, and any foreseeable illnesses while traveling. This consultation needs to be at least 2 months prior to departure. Ask your physician about vaccinations/prevention for Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Malaria, and check that your Tetanus and Polio boosters are up to date.

## Spending Money

Spending money usually goes towards snacks, water, souvenirs, email, and entertainment. Vietnam is comparatively inexpensive and we think you could easily get by on \$300. With the addition of your meal money of \$200, this is approximately \$500 - it really depends on your spending habits. Spending money is best carried as US dollars cash and on credit/debit cards.

## Keeping In Touch

The easiest way to keep in touch with family and friends while in Vietnam is by email and phone call. There is internet access in every town we visit and cost is \$2-3 per hour. Make sure you can access your email account from any computer in the world - a free 'Yahoo' or 'Gmail' account works well. Phone calls are easily made from email cafes in larger towns/cities, but difficult to make outside of email cafes. In email cafes they generally cost \$0.50-\$1 per minute. People in Vietnam are generally not familiar with calling cards, so don't expect to be able to use one.

## Gear List

Traveling light is the 'ideal' in Asia. Everything you bring should fit into a medium sized backpack. Bring only what is on the list below and remember, the more space you have, the more you can take home. When selecting clothing to bring keep in mind that Asia has high humidity.

### Clothing

- Comfortable hiking/running shoes but NOT smooth-soled street shoes
- Comfortable walking sandals
- 2 x comfortable light weight trousers
- 1 x light weight quick-dry hiking shorts (knee length preferable)
- Swimsuit
- 2 x cotton shorts or skirt (knee length or below is best)
- 1 x warm light weight top (light fleece best)
- 1 x light weight raincoat
- 3 x light weight socks
- 1 x light weight long sleeve shirt
- 4 x cotton T-shirt/shirt/tank tops (make sure one is a short sleeve cotton shirt)
- 5 x underwear
- 1 x light weight pack towel
- 1 x sarong to use as a towel - you can buy these cheaply during first day in Asia

### Equipment

- Backpack to bring everything in
- Daypack for daytrips
- Sleeping sheet
- Sleeping pad

### Accessories

- Sunhat and sunglasses
- Pocket knife
- Flashlight/headlamp (compact)
- Watch with an alarm/ travel alarm clock
- Camera
- Ear plugs (optional)
- Eye shade for overnight travel
- Light cord clothesline (approx 20ft)(optional)
- One good book to share
- Personal first aid kit (refer below)
- Discman/iPod (optional)

### Paperwork, Money etc

- Passport & photocopy of same
- Air tickets & photocopies of same
- Travel Insurance policy details
- Money belt
- Debit/credit card, cash
- Travel journal (optional)
- Texts, syllabi, etc if taking credit
- Photos of family, friends, home etc (to show your trip mates and local people you meet)

### Toiletries

- General toiletries (toothbrush, tooth paste, soap, shampoo, sanitary needs etc.)
- Tampons (often unavailable)
- Disposable razors and Gillette cartridges (are readily available)
- Disposable contact lenses and solution
- Sunscreen and lip balm (difficult to obtain)
- Effective insect repellent
- Hand sanitizer/sanitizing wipes

### Personal first aid kit (should contain)

- Any prescribed medications
- Blister tape/moleskin for feet
- Pain relief (Tylenol, Ibuprofen etc)
- Antihistamine (for hayfever, bites, allergies)
- Eye drops
- Sting/bite relief spray or cream (for insect bites)
- Tweezers
- Band-aids
- Antiseptic solution or powder
- Scissors
- Non-adhesive dressing
- Motion sickness pills (non-drowsy)

**Do not bring:** Hairdryers; electric razors; laptops; expensive, irreplaceable jewellery

## Gear Tips

Please refer to the gear list and gear tips when you are packing for the trip. There's quite a lot of information here, so take your time and read through this carefully.

First of all, you don't need to go out and spend lots of money on the latest gear. In fact it's best to bring clothing and footwear that is comfortable and well worn in. Over the course of the trip, your pack and everything inside will take a beating.

**Travel light:** When you begin packing, you'll be tempted to bring more clothing than is on the clothing list because you still have room in your backpack – this is a fatal mistake! If we get one piece of advice from past participants it's consistently, "tell them to bring the absolute minimum".

**Quick dry:** Look at all the clothing you are planning to bring and think to yourself, "How long is that going to take to dry". This goes hand in hand with traveling light.

**Washing/Laundry:** Clothing is rarely washed in washing machines. You'll either be hand washing clothes in your bathroom or getting them laundered, which is often someone out back with a flat area of concrete, a scrubbing brush and color-stripping detergent. You will be able to get clothes laundered on free days, and when we are in cities. Because of this you don't need to bring a month's supply of clothing. You will get sick of wearing the same clothes all the time but don't worry because everyone else will be doing the same and it is much better if all your gear fits into one backpack!

**Cultural stuff:** Throughout SE Asia, even though it's hot, people dress conservatively. It's not such a big deal in larger towns and cities where people are used to Western tourists, but whenever we are in rural areas, villages or visiting temples we expect you to wear pants, or knee length shorts/skirt, and have your shoulders covered.

**Buying clothing in Asia:** If you find you need another pair of pants, skirt, shorts, top or flip flops and are of average build, then you will be able to get them in easily in Asia. Good shoes, comfortable sports sandals, bras, women's swimsuits and clothing for larger builds are almost impossible to buy.

**Your documents and how to keep them safe:** You will want to bring a money belt or neck pouch (pictured below). It's a matter of individual preference which you use. Into it (inside little zip lock bags to keep everything dry) will go your passport, air tickets, travel insurance emergency contact card and the bulk of your cash. You will make sure that you know where this is at all times.

For day to day purchases you'll not want to go digging through your money belt all the time, so bring a small purse or wallet (or buy a great ethnic one cheaply on your first day in Vietnam).

Additionally you will want to have photocopies of your passport, air tickets, travel insurance policy and travelers checks in a zip lock bag down the back of your pack and **make sure you also leave a copy of all of these in the loving care of the folks back home.**



**Footwear:** We recommend trail runners (pictured) or hiking shoes for the trip. These are a happy medium between hiking boots, which are heavy and bulky to carry around and (at the other end of the spectrum) smooth soled running or street shoes, which will not give you enough traction on muddy, slippery trails. Break them in before leaving for Asia, blisters can get infected easily in the tropics.

Sandals like Chaco (pictured) or Teva are perfect for the trip. These are what you'll wear all the time except when trekking. Birkenstock and other walking type sandals are OK but not as good for water sports. The most important thing is that your sandals are comfortable for walking long distances. Try walking in them for an hour...any blisters?



**Raincoat:** Think compact and lightweight.

**Trousers:** Comfortable light weight trousers = light cotton or synthetic, not jeans or cords

**Shorts:** You need to bring a pair of shorts for walking and working in. Considerations here are again 'light weight' and not too short because of cultural sensitivities. Knee length hiking shorts are ideal. No heavy cargo shorts or 'shorty short daisy dukes'.



**Shirts:** Anything goes but it's good to have at least one or two collared cotton shirts like below. We've found these to be the most comfortable things to wear in the heat. You stay cooler than when in a t-shirt. Females can wear one unbuttoned over a tank-top as an easy option for covering shoulders. A long sleeve shirt is essential for sun protection. Men's cotton business shirts from Goodwill are an inexpensive way to go.



**Sarong:** The hitch hiker's guide to the galaxy will tell you that the only essential piece of equipment for travel is a towel. Douglas Adams can't have traveled in Asia because in fact it's a sarong that you want for drying yourself, skirt, picnic rug, pillow case, sun shade, tow rope....the uses are endless and they dry fast. Best to buy one on your first day in Vietnam for a couple of bucks, rather than bringing anything from home. Don't bring a heavy towel that takes ages to dry!

**Sleeping sheet:** A sleeping sheet is like a roomy sleeping bag made out of light weight cotton or silk. If you don't already own one, you can just get an old single summer sheet, fold it in half and sew it into a sleeping bag. In Vietnam it is easy to buy a silk sleeping sheet that compresses down to the size of a tennis ball for \$5 - \$10. In the majority of our accommodation, your bed will have a sheet and pillowcase but no top sheet...only a prickly blanket that may not get washed between guests. Therefore you'll need your sleeping sheet to preserve your modesty and to go between you and the blanket.

**Sleeping pad:** Cheap, foam, and something you're happy to give away. Don't bring a thermarest – it's likely to get punctured.



## Backpack

For the Vietnam program you don't need an enormous pig that buckles your knees every time you attempt to lift it. In fact you only need a medium sized pack eg. 4000 - 5000cu.in. You will want to buy/borrow a pack with an internal frame. Not only are internal frame packs more comfortable to carry, but they survive airlines much, much better than external.

**Buying a backpack:** You need to decide whether you want a backpacking pack or a travel pack. This depends on what you think you will be using it for in the future. If you think that you will not be doing any backpacking in the future, then a good travel pack should be comfortable enough for the backpacking we do on the program.

In general our trip leaders prefer backpacking packs for both travel, and backpacking, because...

- In any travel situation you will have to carry your pack further than you thought. All backpacking packs are designed for carrying a decent load comfortably for long periods of time, while travel packs vary from having reasonably comfortable harnesses to being a glorified soft suitcase with shoulder straps.
- Backpacking packs tend to be fairly tall and narrow, while travel packs are squat and wide. Backpacking packs are designed this way to keep the weight close to your back, keeping you more stable and enabling a range of movement in your arms - something you will appreciate whether you are grabbing for a tree to stop from tripping over in the jungle or running to catch a train in Zurich.
- Backpacking packs tend to be more weather resistant and have fewer zips that can break at inconvenient moments. With a backpacking pack, you are always ready for adventure.

*Here's an example of a great backpack...*

REI Venus 75 Pack (women's backpack)

Volume 4,577 cu in

Weight 5 lbs 11 oz

\$199 (but last year's model may be available cheaper)

Great value backpack with excellent harness and a great zip under the flap on front which makes the pack very easy to load/unload. Internal sleeping bag compartment with removable divider. An excellent pack. Good pack manufacturers with packs readily available in the USA are: Arcteryx, Osprey, North Face, Lowe Alpine, Gregory, and REI.



The most important thing when selecting a pack is the **harness**. It should fit comfortably and be sized and adjusted to your body. Most manufacturers make each pack model with small, medium and large harnesses. The only way to check whether the pack fits properly is have someone in the store help you fit the pack with weight in it. **Shoulder straps** should sit comfortably on the shoulders. This is especially important if you have narrow shoulders as you will have to look for a pack that fits your shoulder width. **Hip belt** should sit comfortably on your hips - not on your waist or thighs! The **sternum strap** should be adjustable up or down and is important as it helps keep your shoulder straps sitting snugly on your shoulders and not riding out towards the edges.

Simple is good. The more bells and whistles a pack has, the more things there are that can break and the more the pack will weigh before you put anything into it. Weight is also something to consider when choosing a pack. Why carry 2lbs more weight because of extra features, when you don't need to.

The pack you choose, should cinch down well when it's only half full. Look for side and top compression straps.

Some packs have a single compartment while others have a zipped sleeping bag compartment at the bottom. If you are looking at a pack with a separate sleeping bag compartment, check that the divider between the compartments is removable. If it is not removable the pack will sag in that area and be less comfortable to carry, unless totally full.

**Daypack/small backpack:** Similar to a backpacking pack but smaller. Must have 2 shoulder straps and have plenty of room for rain jacket, camera, sunscreen, sunglasses, water bottle, diary etc. 2000-2500cu is ideal.



### Other things to think about...

**Electrical Items:** If you plan to bring an electrical item, look at the label on the item or its charger for the voltage information. If it says 100-240V it can be used in Vietnam. If it says 110V it will blow-up in Vietnam! Outlets in Vietnam are the same shape as the US, so you don't need to buy an outlet adapter.

**Camera:** You will want to bring a camera to SE Asia. If photography is not your consuming passion a compact digital camera is much easier to travel with, fits in a pocket and is easier to look after than a big SLR with interchangeable lenses. Make sure you bring more than one memory card. We've had problems with people's cards getting damaged by heat and moisture. Some people make their digital file sizes smaller so they can fit lots of images onto a card but we don't think there's any point taking photos unless you have big enough files that they're of good enough quality to make prints once you return home.

**Video camera:** People who've taken a video camera on our trips have said on the positive side that they've taken awesome footage but on the negative that it's another thing to worry about and to try and get a waterproof case if you can.

**Discman/iPod:** Good escapism. Batteries available everywhere. Don't bring too many CD's as you can buy everything you can imagine in Vietnam cheaply.

**Toiletries:** You may not be able to get the same brand of contact lens solution, toothpaste or shampoo. If you are particular about which brands you use, bring enough to last till you return home.

Once you've made a pile of everything you might bring, double check to see if you can leave anything behind...but make sure you DO bring the required clothing and equipment. Honestly...everyone on our trips thinks they bring too much casual clothing.

## ***July 2008 Program Information***

### **Group Flight Details**

Departure from San Francisco if choosing the group flight is June 30. Participants travelling on the group flight will rendezvous in San Francisco prior to check in. Please arrange connecting travel to San Francisco that allows you sufficient time to make the rendezvous. Group rendezvous prior to check-in is at 11:00am on June 30 - rendezvous details will be emailed to you closer to departure. Return to San Francisco is July 30.

#### ***Flight itinerary for Singapore Airlines group flight***

Mon 30 June, Group flight rendezvous at 11:00am San Francisco International Airport

Mon 30 June, SQ15 departs San Francisco at 1415 / arrives Singapore 0100 on 2 July

9 hour overnight stopover in Singapore with 6 hour sleep at Singapore Airport Hotel

Wed 2 July, SQ176 departs Singapore at 1000 / arrives Hanoi at 1230 (same day)

Wed 30 July, SQ171 departs Saigon at 1000 / arrives Singapore 1255

Wed 30 July, SQ5 departs Singapore 1750 / arrives San Francisco 2015 (same day)

**Group Flight cost** payable with your final payment is approx USD\$1500 (including taxes/fuel charges/ticketing fee charged by airline, and airport hotel in Singapore on 30 June).

### **Arranging Your International Flights to and from Vietnam Independently**

You are welcome to make your own travel arrangements to Hanoi and from Ho Chi Minh City/Saigon. If you are planning on doing so, please contact us and we will give you clear information regarding the Vietnam arrival procedure, and how to rendezvous with the group on arrival in Hanoi.

When arranging your own flights, it is imperative that you arrive in Hanoi at the same time, or earlier, than the group. You will want to depart Saigon at program conclusion, at the same time, or later, than the group. See group flight details above.

### **Group Flight Air Tickets and Ticket Changes**

Group flight air tickets will be issued as E-tickets, emailed to you a few weeks before departure. You will need to print your ticket and carry it with you. Tickets are your responsibility once emailed to you. If you need to make a seating or special (vegetarian) meal request please phone Singapore Airlines in the US at least 72 hours before your departure, 1 800 262 1234.

Air tickets are valid for 6 months, so you may extend your return date, for up to 5 months after program conclusion. Pacific Discovery does not arrange or cover the cost of date changes to your ticket. These are your responsibility.

Date changes to your return date can be made after you commence travel, subject to seat availability. Date changes must be arranged by you through the airline, and will incur a fee of approx \$100. There are Singapore Airline offices in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Contact details for Singapore Airline offices will be in your program handbook.

Routing changes are not possible on a Singapore Airlines group ticket. However, it is only a short flight to Cambodia or Thailand and there are often discounted fares to these destinations, so you may be interested in doing a roundtrip extension from Saigon to another nearby country.

## ***Recommended Books***

### **Fiction & non-fiction**

*Catfish and Mandala* by Andrew X Pham

Fantastic piece of travel writing and childhood reminiscence by a young Vietnamese American about his return to Vietnam for the first time since his family fled when he was a young boy. Awesome!

*When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* by Le Ly Hayslip

An autobiography of a young Vietnamese girl during the Vietnam War. Experience what life was like for the general populace during the war. Story made into an Oliver Stone film named Heaven and Earth.

*Over The Moat* by James Sullivan

True story written by a young American tourist who fell in love with a woman from Hue in the early 90's. Well written and engaging. A very good insight into Vietnamese culture.

*Vietnam Now: A Reporter Returns* by David Lamb

A Vietnam War reporter returns to Vietnam in 1997 to establish the Los Angeles Times Vietnam Bureau. An excellent book examining how Vietnam has recovered from the war - demonstrates the author's empathy for the country and its peoples.

*The Sorrow of War* by Bao Ninh

Sad, reflective, poetic book written by a North Vietnamese soldier. Banned in Vietnam. Highly recommended.

*The Cat from Hue: A Vietnam War Story* by John Laurence

With over half a decade of service as a war correspondent in Vietnam, John Laurence earned deserved accolades for his reportage. In this superb book he returns to that time, drawing on long-buried memories to capture the confusion, deceit, and terror of the era.

*A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* by Neil Sheehan

My favorite book on the war. The definitive expose on why America lost the war - won the Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction in 1989.

*Understanding Vietnam* by Neil L Jamieson

A comprehensive scholarly analysis of Vietnamese culture and history. Won 'Outstanding Academic Book' in 1994.

*Stormy Escape: A Vietnamese Woman's Account of Her 1980 Flight Through Cambodia to Thailand* by Kim Ha

This is the powerful and poignant story of a family's six month struggle to escape the Communists in Vietnam.

*The Girl in the Picture* by Denise Chong

One of the most enduring photos from the Vietnam War was of Kim Phuc as a little girl running naked and screaming from a napalm attack on her village. This is her biography telling what happened and her life after the photo was taken.

*Ho Chi Minh* by William J Duiker

Biography of Ho Chi Minh. Incredibly detailed.

*Shadows and Wind* by Robert Temple

The most up to date in depth examination of the problems facing Vietnam today. Examines social and political issues and doesn't pull any punches.

*Vietnam: A History* by Stanley Karnow

Good general history of Vietnam.

*The House on Dream Street* by Dana Sachs

Entertaining insight into a young American woman's experience of living for a year in Hanoi during the mid 1990's.

*A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* by Robert Owen Butler

Pulitzer prize winning short stories written from the first person perspective of overseas Vietnamese living in the southern United States.

### **More Vietnam War**

*Dispatches* by Michael Herr

Brilliantly written account of a young journalist's experiences during the Vietnam War

*A Rumor of War* by Philip Caputo

If you want to know what fighting the Vietnam War was really like, I can't imagine how any book can possibly be better than *Rumor of War*.

*Born on the 4th of July* by Ron Kovic

The book every aspiring soldier should read, to be thoroughly put off.

*Chickenhawk* by Robert Mason

Vivid account by American helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War. Highly recommended if you've ever wondered what flying a helicopter is like or the psychological effects of war. But not so good for gaining insight into Vietnam.

*We Were Soldiers Once and Young* by General Hal Moore

Set in Vietnam 's Central Highlands and detailing one of the fiercest battles of the Vietnam War.

*Once Upon a Distant War: David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, Peter Arnett - Young War Correspondents and Their Early Vietnam Battles* by William Prochnau

A good companion book to Neil Sheehan's *A Bright and Shining Lie*.

*Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu* by Bernard Fall

An excellent and assiduously researched account of the most famous battle of the Franco Viet war, which spelled the withdrawal of France from Indochina. Bernard Fall, himself was killed on patrol with US marines in 1967 shortly before his book was published.

*Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* by Frances Fitzgerald

Excellent Pulitzer Prize winning account of the Vietnamese and American involvement in the Vietnam War.

## ***Recommended Movies***

*Heaven and Earth*, Director Oliver Stone

Based on Le Ly Hayslip's book - When heaven and earth changed places

*Born on the 4th of July*, Director Oliver Stone

Based on Ron Kovic's book of the same name.

*Indochine*

Régis Wargnier's 1992 Oscar winner for Best Foreign Film is a bit like watching paint dry, despite its exotic locale and lead performance by the legendary Catherine Deneuve.

*Cyclo*

French made film with English subtitles about a boy who works as a cyclo driver in Saigon and his disintegrating life. Beautifully filmed and set in modern day Saigon. So a good chance to see what it's like. But be warned, it's a bleak and violent film focused on the underworld of Saigon.

*Three Seasons*

Stars Harvey Keitel. A movie that follows a number of different lives. Set in today's Saigon. It's good but not brilliant.

*Dear America: Letters home from Vietnam*

This award winning documentary, produced by HBO for cable television, received such high critical acclaim that it was later released in the theaters.

*The Vertical Ray of the Sun*

From the director of *Cyclo*. 'The Vertical Ray of Sun' is beautiful, languorous and quiet. Filmed in Hanoi. It tells the stories of three sisters, two married, one single and the entwined stories simmering beneath their relationship.

## Booking Conditions and Liability Release for Pacific Discovery Programs

### Payment Schedule & Booking Conditions

Prices in brochures and on website are correct at the time of publishing.

Pacific Discovery reserves the right to alter these prices at any time. The price of your program is guaranteed when you have paid in full.

All program participants must acknowledge reading and agreement with Booking Conditions and Liability Release, at the time of registration. A Medical Form must be completed once final payment is made. By advancing deposit to Pacific Discovery, the depositor thereby agrees to be bound by the booking conditions and payment schedule.

Upon receiving your forms and confirming space on the program of your choice, we will contact you with pre-travel information covering gear to bring, health & vaccinations, travel insurance, climate, spending money, cultural tips, and a list of recommended books and films.

If the program date you request is already full we will not process your deposit, but will contact you and add you to the waiting list.

The final payment covering balance of program cost and optional group flights is due 90 days before program departure, unless late booking. Master Card or Visa accepted.

Bookings accepted less than 90 days prior to departure can be secured with the deposit; full payment must then reach us within a further 14 days.

If the balance is not received by the specified date, we reserve the right to cancel your booking and your deposit may be forfeited.

### **Cancellations**

If you decide to cancel your program, the following fees apply at the time (prior to departure) we receive written notice of your cancellation: More than 91 days before departure - loss of deposit; 31 to 90 days before departure - 50% of program cost; 0 to 30 days before departure - 100% of program cost.

If you fail to join the program, join after its departure or leave prior to its completion, Pacific Discovery reserves the right to set the amount of refund (if any). Such terms are adopted in a similar form throughout the travel industry. They are usually covered by your trip cancellation/travel insurance, provided the reason for cancellation falls within the terms of the policy.

### **If we cancel a program**

Pacific Discovery reserves the right to cancel any program if sign-up is inadequate to make the program economically feasible for us to operate. If this happens, we give a full refund of program cost paid. However, Pacific Discovery is not responsible for additional expenses incurred by you in preparing for the trip (e.g. non-refundable air tickets, gear or medical expenses). If a program is under-booked we will inform you before final payment is due.

### Liability Release

Pacific Discovery Limited is a private New Zealand NGO formed to promote experiential education and sustainable tourism. Our incorporation number is WN/1148326.

### **Medical Considerations**

Pacific Discovery is not a medical facility and therefore is unable to accept any responsibility regarding medical advice, medications or inoculations that you or your doctor deem necessary for your safe participation. Pacific Discovery assumes no liability regarding provision of medical care.

### **Insurance**

Travel insurance is compulsory for all program participants. Your travel insurance must provide cover against personal accident, medical expenses, emergency repatriation and personal liability. We also recommend it covers cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects.

### **Responsibility**

By participating in a Pacific Discovery program, you assume certain obligations to Pacific Discovery and the other program members. It is your responsibility to:

- Understand the conditions implied in the Pacific Discovery itinerary and trip suitability description.
- Select a program (with the help of the Pacific Discovery staff) that is appropriate to your interests and abilities.
- Prepare for the program by familiarizing yourself with the itinerary and program dossier sent by Pacific Discovery.
- Bring appropriate gear and clothing as advised by Pacific Discovery.
- Follow considerate standards of personal hygiene in order to reduce risk of contracting diseases.
- Follow considerate social behavior with other program participants and respect their habits.
- Act in an appropriate and courteous manner befitting the customs of countries you visit.
- Complete the program itinerary as scheduled (or as adjusted by your program leader as necessary).
- Respect the countries we visit by using environmentally safe products, staying on established routes of travel and not littering.

You are aware that travel within a group may involve compromise to accommodate the diverse desires and physical abilities of group members. Your program leader will do their utmost to ensure that any problems are solved for the benefit of the group as a whole. Signing this Liability Release Form signifies your acceptance of the leader's authority to make decisions affecting the group or individuals. For instance, he/she may require an individual to leave the group if he/she believes that a person's health is at risk, if an illegal act is committed, or their behavior becomes detrimental to the safety, enjoyment and well-being of the group. Should the leader take such action, that person would not be entitled to any refund. Similarly, a participant leaving a program en-route will not be entitled to any refund. Under these circumstances Pacific Discovery reserves the right to set the amount of refund (if any).

Pacific Discovery will not accept responsibility or liability for any program participant who contravenes any law or regulation of any country visited.

You acknowledge that travel on a Pacific Discovery program requires a degree of flexibility, and understand that the route, accommodation and modes of transport are subject to change without prior notice due to local circumstances. We reserve the right to make reasonable changes in the itinerary where deemed advisable for the comfort and well-being of program members. These changes are

binding and additional expenses will be charged to you if the reason for any alteration is outside the control of Pacific Discovery.

You acknowledge that Pacific Discovery contracts with a network of companies, government agencies and individuals to assist in the running of its programs. To the best of Pacific Discovery's knowledge, these third parties are qualified to perform the duties they are contracted to perform. However Pacific Discovery will not be held liable for any injury, damage, loss, delay or irregularity that may occur due to the behavior of these third parties.

Any air travel that is part of any program is subject to the conditions as stipulated by the airline concerned and liability is limited in accordance with International Convention.

No employee, servant or agent of Pacific Discovery has authority to vary these conditions.

The terms and conditions of all agreements made with Pacific Discovery shall be subject to, and governed by, New Zealand law. You agree New Zealand will be the forum for resolution of any dispute related to your participation in this program.

If a dispute arises, you will try to resolve it directly with Pacific Discovery. If you cannot resolve the dispute you agree to go to mediation first. You will agree the mediator with Pacific Discovery within 10 days of notification of the dispute. If a mediator is not agreed or appointed, you and Pacific Discovery agree to participate in arbitration under the Arbitration Act 1996 (NZ).

The terms of this agreement shall serve as a release and assumption of risk binding on your heirs, executor, administrator and all members of your family.

You understand that traveling with Pacific Discovery may involve risks (and rewards) above and beyond those encountered on a more conventional holiday, and that you are undertaking an adventure program with inherent dangers. You understand that you are traveling to geographical areas where, amongst other things, the standard of accommodation, transport, safety, hygiene, cleanliness, medical facilities, telecommunications and infrastructure development may not be of the standard you are used to at home or would find on a conventional holiday. You have read and understood the itinerary and suitability for this program you are undertaking and have provided details of any pre-existing medical conditions. You accept these risks and obligations and you fully assume the risks of travel. You release Pacific Discovery from any liabilities connected to these risks to the maximum extent permitted by law.

*I understand that this is a release of liability and a contract between me and Pacific Discovery Limited and/or its contracted tour operators or affiliated organizations, and I sign this agreement of my own free will. If any part of this agreement is deemed unenforceable, all other parts shall remain in full force and effect.*

Please contact us with any questions.  
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