



**RAILWAY
ADVENTURES**

2023

VIETNAM

BY PRIVATE TRAIN AND BOAT

With Bernadette Eichner

13 - 30 MARCH 2023

• HO CHI MINH CITY • NHA TRANG • HOI AN • HUE • HANOI • SAPA • HALONG BAY •

INTRODUCTION

Take advantage of this rare opportunity to explore Vietnam by private train on the legendary *Reunification Express*—one of the world's greatest rail journeys. Welcomed onto your private rail carriages in Ho Chi Minh City, you will travel in several spectacular stages, enjoying Vietnam's most iconic destinations on a 2,500km odyssey all the way north to Hanoi and on to Sapa and the astounding Halong Bay. Our exclusive private train runs during the daytime and evening hours to make the most of the scenery and consists of a dining car and a sleeping car (used as a daytime place to rest and recline) attached to the back of selected express trains. When our train arrives at a destination we transfer to our hotels for the overnight stays and our carriages are parked, awaiting the next part of our trip north.

Your adventure includes many side journeys along the way and after time in Hanoi, we embark on stage two of the tour, where private carriages are attached to the day train for the journey up to the old French Hill Station of Sapa. The icing on the cake is a two-night cruise on our private boat around the islands of the stunning World Heritage-listed Ha Long Bay, where you'll marvel at its soaring limestone islands and stunning coastal vistas. Enjoy luxury hotels, sumptuous meals, and expert guides all through the tour. Along the way, you'll discover the rich culture of Vietnam, its ancient kingdoms and colourful colonial past, fascinating ethnic diversity, and triumphant post-war reconstruction. Legendary food, friendly people, and excellent shopping enhance the experience of this wonderful and unique railway adventure.

CAMBODIA OPTIONAL PRE-TOUR BY PRIVATE TRAIN EARLY MARCH 2023

Cambodia has recently seen a complete restoration of its old French-built metre gauge railway system. Railway Adventures and PTG of the UK are working on a tour of this fascinating country using a specially chartered private train. Over approximately 7 days you will get to ride the rails across the country from the ports and resorts of Sihanoukville in the south through Phnom Penh to Poi Pet, the junction of the railway on the border with Thailand. Your tour which is timed to fit nicely with this Vietnam Adventure will incorporate many cultural and scenic side trips to places such as Angkor Watt and Siem Reap.

We are seeking EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST as a prelude to sharing a more detailed itinerary and pricing in due course.



HIGHLIGHTS

- 17 nights in quality 4 or 5-star hotels with daily breakfasts
- Exclusive travel aboard Railway Adventures' private carriages attached to the Reunification and Sapa Express Trains
- Private boat cruises on the Mekong and Perfume Rivers
- Two-night cruise aboard a luxury junk on Ha Long Bay
- Fully escorted by an expert Australian leader and local guides throughout
- Luxury coach connections with luggage transport throughout
- Comprehensive sightseeing including six World Heritage sites
- Multiple nights stays in most places and hotel portage
- Most meals included with drinks at welcome and farewell dinners

MEET YOUR TOUR LEADER



Bernadette Eichner

Bernadette is a trained actor, psychologist, businesswoman, and writer. Passionate about the arts, culture, and how others live, Bernadette's travel experiences are many and varied. She's explored every state and territory in Australia and has the greatest fondness for those 'out of the way', quirky experiences that can only be found outside the cities. Internationally, she's travelled to many countries across Asia, Europe, North America, and Africa. Bernadette has navigated groups of kids through Eisteddfod competitions, teens through personal development programs, and adults across countries. She's been a big part of our team and has co-hosted many tours with Scott McGregor as well as running a few in her own right.

TOUR MAP



WHY TRAVEL WITH US

The joy of travel is not confined to the destination. How you travel is a large and rich part of the experience. Railway Adventures offers a truly unique perspective on some of the world's most spectacular destinations, with the confidence that the journey will be just as magical and memorable as what is discovered at the end of the line.



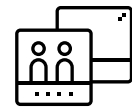
Unique
itineraries



Authentic local
experiences



Expert local
guides and operators



Fully
escorted



Small
group sizes



Customer
satisfaction

SOME WAYS YOU'LL TRAVEL

The best train trips possible, private luxury coach for off-train travel, guided walking where suitable, and other appropriate and appealing options to make exploration easy.



Private carriages on the Reunification Express



Dragon Boat on the Perfume River at Hue



Luxury Private Junk on Halong Bay

Day 1 • Monday 13 March: ARRIVE IN HO CHI MINH CITY

On arrival, you'll be met at the airport for your private transfer to your centrally-located hotel. Later this evening, enjoy a welcome dinner with your tour leader, a team of local guides, and fellow travellers.

Overnight: *Grand Hotel, Ho Chi Minh City (D)*

Day 2 • Tuesday 14 March: HO CHI MINH CITY

Begin your exploration of Ho Chi Minh City with a city tour stopping at the bustling Ben Thanh Market, the historic City Post Office, and Notre Dame Cathedral. After lunch at a local restaurant, explore the War Remnants Museum and the old Presidential Palace, now known as the Reunification Palace, including a seldom-visited secret VC hiding place that stored weapons for an attack on the Independence Palace in 1968. Later, return to your hotel and enjoy dinner at a popular local restaurant.

Overnight: *Grand Hotel, Ho Chi Minh City (B, L, D)*

Day 3 • Wednesday 15 March: HO CHI MINH CITY - MY THO - MEKONG RIVER

After breakfast, you will follow the path of Vietnam's very first railway line (opened in 1885, and abandoned in 1958) to My Tho, 70km southwest of Ho Chi Minh City in the Mekong Delta. On the way, you will be introduced to the railway history of southern Vietnam and will see some of the surviving vestiges of the abandoned line. From the site of the former railway station on the My Tho quayside, take a cruise on the Mekong River to a nearby island where you can walk through rice fields and orchards, sample local fruit and rice wine, and listen to a musical performance.

Afterwards, we row along the island waterways and canals in a sampan to another island where you'll have lunch, sampling the delicious local specialty – 'elephant ear fish'. Then, it's back to Ho Chi Minh City and an afternoon and evening of leisure.

Overnight: *Grand Hotel, Ho Chi Minh City (B, L)*

Day 4 • Thursday 16 March: HO CHI MINH CITY - NHA TRANG

After breakfast, you will head to Saigon Railway Station where your private railway carriage is coupled onto Train SE6, departing at 9 am. The first of our scenic train journeys takes us along the southernmost section of the former Transindochinois railway, built between 1904 and 1913. It meanders across the rice paddies and busy towns of the fertile south while morning tea and lunch is served in your private buffet car. We arrive at the popular resort city of Nha Trang in the early afternoon and head to our beach-front hotel to check-in. Later in the afternoon, we enjoy a short exploration of the environs by coach, taking in the cityscape, the giant sitting Buddha, and the preserved 13th-century temples of the ancient Cham civilization of Po Nagar which sit on a sacred hill overlooking the bustling city. Here you will discover more about these ancient people who left their architectural mark on the entire south-central coastal region of Vietnam.

Dinner this evening is at the beach-side pavilion of the famous Sailing Club.

Overnight: *Intercontinental Hotel Nha Trang Beach (B, L, D)*

Day 5 • Friday 17 March: NHA TRANG - DANANG - HOI AN

In the morning we take a boat trip out into the bay to explore the wonders of the coral-fringed islands and coast, returning to the city to check out and have lunch at the hotel. We then board our private carriages on the SE8 afternoon train for the spectacular journey along the route of the Transindochinois railway, which was the last section built by the French colonial government between 1935 and 1936. This is a stunning section of coastline-hugging railway, with mountains and lakes a part of the ever-changing scenery. Dinner will be served in our private dining car as the countryside rolls by in the deep glow of evening. Your journey is accompanied by a talk on the history of the line you are riding with a soundtrack provided by the onboard music and movie system. The train pulls into Danang station at 11 pm and our coach will then transfer you to your luxurious resort hotel in the heart of old Hoi An.

Overnight: *Anantara Hoi An Resort, Hoi An (B, L, D)*

Day 6 • Saturday 18 March: HOI AN

Enjoy a free morning to take your time over breakfast, relax in the hotel and explore the district. Your guided walking tour of the town begins just before lunch, exploring the Thien Hau Temple, the Japanese Covered Bridge, and several of the wonderful old ancient trading houses. Hoi An is also renowned for its skilled tailors who can create any type of garment within 24 hours, so today will also provide an opportunity for a fitting session.

A leisurely lunch is served at the Cargo Club in the heart of the old town and afterwards, you are free to stroll around the ancient town and return to the hotel in your own time.

Overnight: *Anantara Resort, Hoi An (B, L)*

Day 7 • Sunday 19 March: HOI AN

This is a free day for you to enjoy and explore the wonders of Hoi An at your leisure. One highly recommended option is a traditional Vietnamese cooking class. You will be in the company of an experienced chef who will guide you through the procurement of ingredients at the local village market and then provide in-depth, hands-on cooking instructions followed by lunch.

Alternatively, another option you can enjoy is an early morning trip to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed My Son temple complex, a cluster of stone towers and sanctuaries built by the Cham people from the 7th to the 14th centuries. The complex is often compared to South East Asia's other major temple complexes such as Angkor Wat, Borobudur, Bagan, and Ayutthaya.

Overnight: *Anantara Resort, Hoi An (B)*

Day 8 • Monday 20 March: HOI AN - DANANG - HUE

Today we find ourselves back on the rails. Departing Hoi An after breakfast, you will visit the busy Danang Railway Workshops and meet the manager who is passionate about the work they do and the future of the national railway system. You will also visit the world-renowned Cham Sculpture Museum, established in 1915/1916 by academics of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient. It contains the world's largest and most valuable collection of Cham sculptures from various temple sites, dating from the 4th to the 15th centuries. Following this, you can enjoy lunch at a famous local restaurant.

Later in the afternoon, re-board your private carriages at Danang Station coupled onto Train SE4. Snacks will be served in the buffet car as the train rolls over the stunningly beautiful Hai Van Pass. Stone-lined tunnels and viaducts are a feature of this dramatically engineered line completed by the French in 1906. Perched on a cliff and hugging the coastline, the railway has wide views across the sea and beyond to your next destination, the old imperial capital of Hue. The train will pull into the grand colonial station at 3 pm, where you will be transferred to the luxury Imperial Hotel. The evening is yours to enjoy the multitude of dining options in-house or in the vibrant district around the hotel.

Overnight: *Imperial Hotel, Hue (B, L)*

Day 9 • Tuesday 21 March: HUE

Hue acted as Vietnam's political and royal capital during the 19th century and remains one of the country's most important cultural and religious centres. Your full-day tour begins with a visit to the vast Hue Citadel, followed by visits to the Tu Duc and Khai Dinh Mausolea, and the Royal Arena where tigers and elephants once fought for the king's amusement. You can also visit a 'garden house,' a unique architectural feature of Nguyen-dynasty which is surrounded by flower gardens and orchards.

After a picnic lunch, explore the tranquil Thien Mu Pagoda before taking a boat trip back to your hotel along the Perfume River. In the evening, enjoy a royal banquet featuring dishes once only served in the Forbidden City.

Overnight: *Imperial Hotel, Hue (B, L, D)*

Day 10 • Wednesday 22 March: HUE - HANOI

Mid-morning sees you boarding a flight for the short trip to Vietnam's historic and dynamic capital, Hanoi. Enjoy lunch at an atmospheric local favourite eatery on the way into town, before checking into your centrally located hotel for the next few nights.

On board your coach, you will receive a short orientation of the city's nightlife en-route to the evening's restaurant for a dinner featuring the special cuisine of the North. Later, return to the hotel through the bustling Old Quarter by traditional rickshaw.

Overnight: *Hilton Hanoi Opera Hotel, Hanoi (B, L, D)*

Day 11 • Thursday 23 March: HANOI

Enjoy a full-day tour of Hanoi, with the morning, spent exploring some of the capital city's more famous sights, including the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and Presidential Palace Vestiges Area, the One-Pillar Pagoda, and the Temple of Literature. Lunch will be hosted at a local restaurant and then the tour of this fascinating ancient city continues in the afternoon.

An optional visit to the famous Water Puppet Theatre is highly recommended and is easily arranged.

Overnight: *Hilton Hanoi Opera Hotel, Hanoi, (B, L)*

Day 12 • Friday 24 March: HANOI

Today you have the option to take it easy, do some shopping, or experience any number of other optional activities which your guides and host can facilitate.

Overnight: *Hilton Hanoi Opera Hotel, Hanoi (B)*

Day 13 • Saturday 25 March: HANOI - SAPA

In the early morning, we transfer to Hanoi Railway station, board our special private train and begin our journey to the glorious Hill Station town of Sapa. As we settle in for breakfast on board our dining car, the narrow alleyways of Hanoi roll by with the train hugging the inner suburban landscape before the country opens up along the valley of the vast Red River. Relax on board all morning in the dining car or your compartment. Lunch is also taken on board before rolling into a station near the Chinese border for the one-hour coach transfer to your iconic hotel perched high above the bustling town of Sapa.

You have some time to explore the charming garden surroundings before dinner at the hotel.

Overnight: *Victoria Hotel Sapa (B, L, D)*

Day 14 • Sunday 26 March: LAO CAI - SAPA - DRAGON JAW MOUNTAIN - SAPA

Today you will visit Sapa town, Sapa Post Office, and Sapa Hospital and be taken to the best walking tracks for a view of the valley. Lunch will be enjoyed at the hotel before you trek up to Ham Rong Mountain to view an amazing panorama of Sapa town. Following this, visit the Orchid Garden and a traditional ethnic village before making your way back to the hotel for an evening at leisure.

Overnight: *Victoria Sapa Resort, Sapa, (B, L)*

Day 15 • Monday 27 March: SAPA - CAT CAT - SILVER WATERFALL - LAO CAI

After breakfast, you will undertake a morning excursion by road and foot to Cat Cat Village where the Black H'mong ethnic minority live. Lunch will be at the hotel followed by checkout and a transfer to Silver Waterfall. You will then continue to Lao Cai City and visit Upper Temple and the Lao Cai International border. Dinner is at a local restaurant before boarding our private train and its sleeping car, all set up with bedding for the overnight journey back to Hanoi.

Overnight: *on the train, (B, L, D)*

Day 16 • Tuesday 28 March: HANOI - HA LONG BAY

Arriving early in Hanoi, we transfer to a convenient hotel for breakfast and some free time before departing by coach to Halong Bay around 9 am. The morning's coach trip will bring you to the coastal port of Ha Long City where you will board a special overnight luxury junk for a two-night cruise on the stunning Ha Long Bay. After checking in, enjoy a welcome drink and soak up the atmosphere of the spacious traditional teak cruising junk. It sets sail through the mysterious bay while you are served an exquisite lunch, the vessel floating among the natural rock formations and picturesque beauty of this UNESCO World Heritage-listed seascape.

We visit the Ba Hang floating village and drop anchor in the calm water surrounded by beautiful islets where you can swim, kayak, and experience an optional visit to Luon Cave.

Enjoy the sunset party on the sundeck with local wine and fresh fruits and, as the sun sets over the islands, you will hear more from the guide about the customs and lifestyles of the locals. You can also join a cooking demonstration, learning about the craft of fruit and vegetable carving. After dinner, try squid fishing with the crew, watch a movie, have a drink at the bar, or just relax in your cabin listening to the gentle sound of the water lapping the sides of the ship as it rocks you to sleep.

Overnight: *Bhaya luxury cruise boat on Ha Long Bay, (B, L, D)*

Day 17 • Wednesday 29 March: HA LONG BAY

Join your fellow travellers for a light breakfast while sailing to Sung Sot Cave, where you can explore one of the largest and most beautiful caves in Ha Long Bay. This cave has been called 'the opera house' because it can hold 1,000 people at once, and has three main chambers covering an area of over 10,000 sq m. Once back at the boat enjoy a buffet lunch served onboard while the junk moves through the bay.

The afternoon is yours to relax or enjoy one of the many activities on offer such as a kayak tour, and swimming or hiking on one of the islands. In the evening, enjoy drinks on the deck and a sumptuous farewell banquet with your tour leader and your fellow travellers.

Overnight: *Bhaya luxury cruise boat on Ha Long Bay, (B, L, D)*

Day 18 • Thursday 30 March: HA LONG BAY - NOI BAI AIRPORT - DEPART

Enjoy a lazy morning as the junk slowly makes its way back to port. Before disembarking, enjoy an early lunch on board and bid farewell to the crew. Your coach will take you back to Hanoi and directly to the airport in time for the afternoon flight home or beyond.



WHAT'S **INCLUDED**

- 17 nights accommodation in quality, centrally located 4 and 5-star hotels
 - 2 nights on Bhaya luxury cruise boat on Halong Bay
 - 1 night on board the Hara coach special train
- Breakfast daily, fourteen lunches and ten dinners
- Drinks included with welcome and farewell dinners
- Luxury chartered coach, with luggage transport throughout the tour
- Comprehensive sightseeing with expert local guides
- All excursions and entrance fees, as listed in the itinerary
- Vietnam Visa
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure

WHAT WE **DON'T INCLUDE**

- International flights
- Meals and services not mentioned in the itinerary
- All other personal expenses such as drinks, phone calls, laundry services, and camera fees where applicable
- Excursions listed as optional and extra in the brochure

FITNESS **RATING**

Two 'Locos'

The most common grading for our tours. Two loco itineraries offer many activities that require a little extra fitness – walking on uneven ground, climbing hills to enter towns or historic sites, walks of 1-3 kilometres as well as getting on and off transport. You need to have good mobility and aerobic fitness and be able to manage your own luggage.



Vietnam Coast

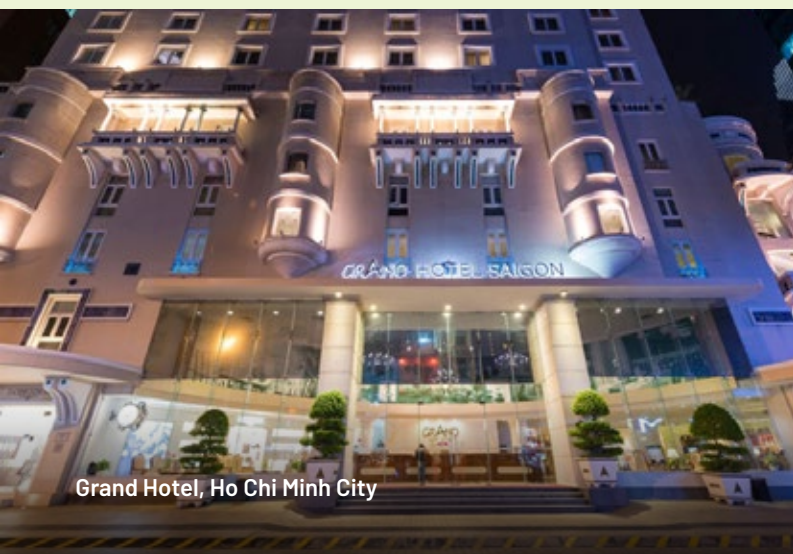


Daytime rest compartment on the Reunification Express

SOME PLACES **YOU'LL STAY**

Hand-picked hotels and resorts based on location, customer feedback, value and atmosphere.

Please Note: Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted.



Grand Hotel, Ho Chi Minh City



Anantara Resort, Hoi An



Hilton Hanoi Opera Hotel, Hanoi

PRICE

Per person twin share **\$9,975**
Single supplement **\$2,795**
Deposit (per person) **\$1000 at time of booking**
Final payment due by **12 January 2023**

Tour Code: 2303VTN

Please contact the office if you are interested in the Cambodian Pre-Tour.

SUGGESTED FLIGHTS

We have suggested flights for this itinerary depending on your departure point from Australia, any preferred stopovers en-route and/or your planned pre- and post-tour activities. We can also investigate your preferred airline and offer you a solution based on connection times and prices. Contact 1300 800 977 to discuss your options.

HOW TO BOOK

Download a booking form from our website and follow the easy steps to getting on board. Alternatively, contact us on 1300 800 977 or info@railwayadventures.com if you'd prefer a form be sent to you. Complete the form and submit it, along with your \$1000 pp deposit to secure your place on the tour.

DETAILS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

We endeavour to have all the details of our tours correct at the time of printing. However, sometimes factors beyond our control may affect the final inclusions and prices. These factors may include, but not be limited to; significant fluctuations in currency exchange rates, individual hotel/restaurant decisions that may affect bookings; weather events forcing a change of itinerary; unexpected trackwork on rail lines, unexpected closure of site attractions and so forth. Therefore, items mentioned in the brochure such as quoted prices, hotels and inclusions are subject to change. If a change is imposed on us, we will endeavour to ensure the substitute is of the same quality that you've paid for.

TOUR PACE / LEVEL OF FITNESS:

Our itineraries are designed to make the most of each destination, so a reasonable amount of activity is built into most days, which is why we call them adventures. Our philosophy is to offer you the best experience possible, while leaving you, our guest, the flexibility to pace yourself and choose how much or how little you want to do. Each Railway Adventures tour incorporates periods of free time for your own exploration and relaxation.

While you don't need to be a 'gym junky', a reasonable level of fitness is required for most of our tours. The ability to manage your own luggage, get on and off all manner of trains and coaches, walk for extended periods, stand comfortably, and climb steps and stairs will ensure you get the maximum enjoyment from your adventure.

ADDITIONAL TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

In addition to assisting with flight suggestions and bookings, we can also give you some ideas of what you could do before and after your Railway Adventure.

We can also organise your all-important Travel Insurance for you. Call our office on 1300 800 977 if you would like to discuss options.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

For more information on factors such as travel insurance requirements, fitness levels, fees and charges, tour cancellations, payment schedules, and so on, please refer to our Terms and Conditions, which accompany the booking form. They can also be found on our website at www.railwayadventures.com



**RAILWAY
ADVENTURES**

THE RAILWAY ADVENTURES **STORY**

Railway Adventures was launched in 2012 by well-known Australian TV personality and self-confessed rail fan, Scott McGregor. A lifelong passion for travel has taken Scott to scores of countries and his preference for rail has seen him exploring many of the world's great train journeys, confirming his belief that the most relaxing, romantic and engaging way to see a country is by rail. He even has his own life-sized, fully restored opulent train accommodation atop the Great Dividing Range near Mudgee, offering guests a rare and special bush retreat experience.

Since 2012 Railway Adventures has thrilled and delighted more than 1200 travellers on over 100 tours from Sweden to Sri Lanka, Tasmania to Transylvania, Britain to Burma, Venice to Vietnam and all manner of shorter adventures in our own wonderful country. Scott's numerous rail-themed TV documentaries, his ongoing involvement in rail heritage and his extensive connections with private train owners around the world, guarantee that every Railway Adventures tour is exclusive, entertaining and authentic. 02 September 2022.

1300 800 977
railwayadventures.com



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Your travel agent

