



**The What About Vietnam Traveller Insights Podcast –  
Transcript  
What About Vietnam - Series 1 - 3 - How should you travel within  
Vietnam?  
[“How should you Travel within Vietnam”](#)  
[Episode show notes and links](#)**

Xing Chau and Welcome to What About Vietnam. My name is Kerry Newsome and I am your host.

You are listening to the what about Vietnam series - everything you need to go before you go.

My aim is to pass on as much information as I can to ensure you have a great trip. In the previous episode we covered off that age old question “When is it a good time to go?”. In that session I hoped I explained a little bit about how Vietnamese festivals and the weather impacts that decision.

However today we are going to cover off the “**How should you travel to Vietnam** as in what style.... as part of a tour, through a travel agent, do it all yourself, online ???, and the best way to get around.

There isn't really any guide book or website page to help you with the decision of whether to travel to Vietnam, as a solo traveller, couple, in a group, or should you take your extended family.

Or maybe you are thinking of a girls getaway? A flop and drop romantic breakaway ? Are you a thrill seeker, intrepid, Cave discovery, Eco, hiking kind or traveller? Should you take kids? Is it safe? Will the kids get bored? Will you be able to eat the food?

It is such a personal decision. But what I can tell you is what I know to be true from personal experience and that of many travellers I have dealt with over the last few years working with travel agents and service providers in Vietnam.

It depends on a couple of things. Your budget and the kind of experience you want to have. You can buy a 2 star to a 5 star stay in Vietnam. Online there are agencies in all languages. My only advice dealing with an agency, make sure its a reliable one and offers value for their service. To me the biggest advantage of an agent is most in their ability to look after you while on the trip, as in if things go to clay you have a person in charge of your tour who will chase things or fix things for you in the case they don't work out. Online with Online Travel agents that is not always so easy and can be problematic.

Intrinsically how you book to go, depends on your preferred star rating of travel, budget and level of comfort desired. I have stayed in 2 star to 5 star and everything in between and I have my preferred way but that may not be yours.

Im a safety conscious traveller and will not stay anywhere that is a lesser standard of my home, so it least needs to be at that level or above preferrably. Othewirse in my opinion, why leave home.??

Personally I can speak with authority about travelling to Vietnam as a solo traveller. **Is it safe? In my experience yes.** But like any traveller in any country you need to travel with your wits about you and use common sense when it comes to getting yourself around. I like to think having travelled to many countries I have a 'sick sense" about impending danger and try where possible never to let myself be in a position to be vulnerable to that.

So Where are those places ...like in any country, Mostly in the main cities of Hanoi and HCMC, there are a few areas, I would not choose to go alone.

But again, thats just common sense and mostly because, if I found myself in trouble in those areas that don't see many western tourists, I would stand out like the proverbial. And probably struggle to get help other than hailing a taxi or calling a Grab car.

But if you go to outer regions in the country, the locals despite minimal English are always kind and welcoming...in my expereince. And i can only speak from my own experience. You should see what I can do with hand gestures...facial expereissions, you can achieve a lot.

As you may have already guessed I cannot speak Vietnamese and have zero skills in pronunciation. So you will just have to accept that.

In remote areas I would suggest you go with a guide to get the history of the minority groups. Places like Mau Chau, where you will find The White Thai (Thai Trang)

Different from Thai people in Thailand. You will also meet the Hmong people living in and around the Pa Co Nature Reserve. Living as they have for many hundreds of years.

So for adventurers... solo, or as couples,...or families you can feel confident about planning your trip to move freely about Vietnam, with the utmost safety. The most enchanting areas in the north west of Vietnam, and even around the Mekong Delta, you will see a side of life that is existing.... in some ways as it has done for centuries. Hard as that may be to imagine.The friendship offered by the Vietnamese is well documented and continues today. You will be overwhelmed if my expereince is anything to go on.

So getting back to tors, what you want from Vietnam depends largely on your budget and time available.

Should you hire a motorbike and ride through Vietnam? Yes, if you are an experienced rider and you have time on your side. Will all the roads be paved. No. Will there be areas where the roads are windy and dangerous, Yes.

But will you have the time of your life...ABSOLUTELY.

I have known many travelers who have done this and in my new series I will be sharing with them some of these experiences. So stay tuned.

For a family, you have all types of travel at your disposal.

Kids have a plethora of experiences open to them, many made available through the VinPearl group, who has hotels and theme parks like you would get in the states!

But in addition to that you have cultural experiences to open their minds. The chance to visit places to learn how to grow chocolate, make rattan mats, paint masks, make paper lanterns, climb mountains, and visit amazing caves.

In addition they can enjoy affordable water sports at some of the most picturesque beaches in the world. I took my grandson last year, who is 16, and I thought without his devices he would be bored, but quite the contrary..he was fascinated with the adventure of seeing a new culture, experiencing the beaches at An Bang at Hoi An, visiting the Old town and seeing the Hoi An Memories show; climbing Marble mountain and even participating in a cooking class which his parents would never have believed had I not taken a video. So you can relax, finding things for your whole family to enjoy will not be a problem. We will talk more about specific locations in future episodes.

Vietnam is generously available to all travel types.

You can come to Vietnam and get around to most parts by Air, bike, Train, private driver, bus and or river. You cannot however hire a car yourself...as you can in most other countries in the world. Thus you wont see any car Hire places like Hertz or Europcar at the airports. But arranging a quality driver and car with aircon is very easy at any tourist desk in the main cities. And reasonably priced. These tourist desks exist as an easy place to organise your own day tours and adventures. You can do this from your hotel as well if you feel more comfortable, but you will pay more.

One visit, my husband and I stayed in Hanoi for a month.

Staying at a homestay hotel, at \$30 AU a night, we used the city as our base to plan day and over night trips to Ninh Binh and Sapa. All very affordable and easy to arrange. The overnight train trip to Sapa was something id wanted to do, and Im glad I did it, just for the experience. Most places of interest are connected by bus and now Air.

You can reach most places within Vietnam by air in about 1 hour - 1 hour 30 mins.

Flights are available through:

- ASCO Air Vietnam
- JetStar Pacific Airlines
- Vietjet Air
- Vietnam Airlines
- Air Mekong

Air is the way to go if you are strapped for time and the terrain you are traveling in between uninteresting.

As I have said bus is a common and very cheap form of travel. But slow. And not always comfortable as many roads a windy and the buses old and rickety. Not my preferred way to travel when its easier to get a flight and it is NOT that expensive.

I do have it on good authority that some train trips, especially the one from Danang to Hanoi through the Hai van Pass offers some great views so it may be something to consider given you have time as the trip is long 10-12 hours.

In regard to bike trips, I will save some of the hair raising stories of fun, and exhilarating experiences for my guests in the next series. I certainly have loved getting around small towns like Hoi An on the back of a scooter within a group tour or with a friend. I do not have a bike licence so that it my only, ....legal option. To ride as a passenger.

I won't get into those that still do hire bikes without a licence as it's fun, until.....it's not when an accident happens. 90% of Travel Insurance companies do not cover bike riding in Vietnam.

Lastly, many ask me, if they should book everything before they leave, or wait and book over there.

My advice comes back to a question. What are you most comfortable doing? If you do book EVERYTHING before you leave, you are committed and that may be a good thing or a bad thing. Personally, I like to book my flights and some accommodation over there, and then make it up as I go using the various Tour desks.

The advantage of group tours, is the pricing and the chance to hang with a group of people and possibly make new friends.

Is there is safety in crowds...I guess.

I loathe BIG group tours, as I feel they show the stadium experience of Vietnam and not the grass roots version. You only get to eat at and visit places that can accommodate large numbers, and they aren't always the prettiest versions or the most authentic. Not all, but some as I hate to generalise.

Large groups are not well liked for how they treat the environment. So be careful and choose wisely. I deal with all types so please send me a question if you are unsure.

In regard to the food. I have mixed it,.... with all kinds of tastes, allergies and nerves about the quality of food and I am glad to say, I have always found options for all palates. The food is amazingly fresh, cheap if you are prepared to eat like Vietnamese and lush if you are prepared to pay extra. Seafood is bountiful ....as is fresh fruits.

I have one friend who is a seasoned traveller and prefers to eat seafood selected from the buckets where you can pick your own.

I could spend a whole session just talking about the amazing food. But I will save it for some experiences I have to share in the next series. I hope I am wetting your appetite for the next series.

So in wrapping up this session,

“How should you travel to Vietnam as in what style, as part of a tour, through a travel agent, or do it all yourself???, and what is the best way to get around??”

Now you are gathering more info about Vietnam, ask yourself the question, How committed do you want to be before you leave, and what are you prepared to leave to Chance???

Knowing you have lots of options to DIY.

In how to get around:-

I rate Air, Car with a driver, train for experience, river boat for experience in the Mekong, ....Bike if you have an International bike licence, not just a car licence,( Police cracking down on this more and more) and lastly bus.

For solo, couples, families, kids and intrepid travellers, Vietnam has it all, dependant on budget, and time basically.

Please check with the Episode notes for any links mentioned and feel free to contact me anytime.

I look forward to paving the way for you to have a magical time in Vietnam as I share more trip planning tips over future episodes ...

....stay tuned for more to come in the super 6 series, Whatabout Vietnam - before you book.

Thanks for listening.....Bye for now...