



What About Vietnam - Series 3 -16 - Traveling in Vietnam Part 3 - Things NOT always in the tour program

Kerry Newsome: 00:35

Xin Chào, and welcome to What about Vietnam. Time, as we know is always difficult when you're planning a holiday, you only get so many holidays a year, and trying to pack everything into a trip is always difficult. And with a country like Vietnam with so much to offer, I hope you're enjoying this series with Miquel as he shares with us just some of the things that we need to consider when we're doing that planning, even things just as simple as planning in jetlag.

01:08

Miquel Angel comes to the program, as you probably know by now, as Head of the Human Resources and Quality Working Group inside Vietnam Tourism Advisory Board, he has some great insights to share, we talk about and we kind of focus on, in this episode around the highlands. So that's in the north of Vietnam. And you could easily spend your 14 days if that's the only time you've got, just in Hanoi and around some certain areas close to Hanoi. We do also talk about Phú Quốc in this and that's very topical, coming up to its early opening to Vietnam in the next month or so. Please welcome Miquel to the show.

02:03

What are your thoughts about the Central Region? What would you package in the Central Region?

Miquel Angel: 02:09

Well, that central region has a lot of potential there. And as we said before, I cannot put all these destinations in a 13 day program. Because the issue here in Vietnam is that it is so rich in terms of destinations, culture, food, minorities, and all this that make it impossible to put everything there.

02:32

So, in the central region, you have from Ho Chi Minh City there, of course you have Dalat, that's a beautiful French village, may have many meters above the sea level. That's where all the French, during the French colonial period here, were going as a retreat from hot Saigonese summer. So, there are there a lot of French-built villas and houses there. Actually, most of them are now turned into hotels. Some of them are really applying good sustainability principles there.

03:03

So, making five star hotel, Relacionado style inside one of these houses, where the emperor or the prince or whatever were living, in that French style, so, that is fantastic. In some of them, is absolutely beautiful experience with some outdoor heated swimming pool, because it gets a bit chilly during wintertime. But that's fantastic. In Dalat, you have a huge flower market, they export market flower to Europe, huge number of tulips that you find in the Netherlands are exported from here.

Kerry Newsome: 03:39

Wow. And they have Everlasting Flowers, don't forget...

Miquel Angel: 03:44

Absolutely.

Kerry Newsome: 03:45

I didn't know there was such a thing as everlasting flowers but there is.

Miquel Angel: 03:47

In that area, you have also a lot of natural resources and cascades, waterfalls, areas where you can even swim there in a safety way. And you have also other beautiful areas in that zone like can be Kon Tum, for example, or [inaudible 04:06] which are the two, let's say the king and the queen of the coffee production in Vietnam. Because Vietnam is the second worldwide coffee producer after Brazil.

04:15

Many people don't know that the Vietnamese coffee is around the world. So, when you move from Dalat to any of these villages, you either choose, from Dalat you want to continue and go discovering Highlands,

- Means elephant rides.
- Means coffee plantation.
- Means all the kinds of fruits and veggies
- Means minorities living in that areas.
- Means a spectacular 100% Budhmay churches. There is one in Kon Tum village for example.

So, you continue on the highlands, you are bordering Laos. So, there is a mountain range going between Vietnam and Laos which is very steep.

Kerry Newsome: 04:52

Beautiful scenery.

Miquel Angel: 04:54

Amazing-- Instagram lovers and picture lovers and people that love to take a motorbike I can just see that ballets, that is amazing. Or either from Dalat, you drive down by car or by motorbike, if you are interested, that you would like to go there, down to Nha Trang, which is also in the central part of Vietnam. And there you have now big developments, big hotels on the beach, you can stay there and rest two days in the mountain to discover. And another two days to recover, from the elephant, right from the tracking you did. And you keep living and enjoying your trip in the central part of Vietnam.

Kerry Newsome: 05:36

And I think the good point that you made about living, and because I see so many travelers of all ages, getting to the point that they are struggling, because they haven't taken into consideration, the heat, and the humidity, it's the humidity that just absolutely wrings you out. And if you're a Westerner like me, you're just not I mean-- Australia is hot. It can be, but not the same humidity. I think you're taking in lots of different experiences, and why would you want to consume them that fast that you can't have a minute spare to sit down and have a lovely piece of fruit or overlook a beautiful scenery.

06:27

So, in that central area, it's kind of interesting, isn't it? Because there's a few hot spots. You've got Hau Giang, Da Nang is now becoming a very big city. I mean, Da Nang used to be a place where, for me, it was like, okay, I went into that Da Nang, and then I went out of Da Nang. I never stayed in Da Nang.

Miquel Angel: 06:51

But you should.

Kerry Newsome: 06:53

Yeah, now I do. So, the country is evolving at such a rapid rate. I mean, I can remember also, I was talking the other day to someone about Phong Nha, another region that is coming very much on people's radar. And I said,

"I want to wait to talk about Phong Nha. But I think what we have to do is, how long do you need in Phong Nha? Do you need one day, two days, three days four?"

And the guy said,

"To be honest, if you're flying into Phong Nha, you probably need three or four days minimum."

07:34

So, it is the thing that we get most out of this podcast for my listeners, I hope.

Time is the thing to plan with this trip. And I think, everyone can Google and look up, especially trips that include a lot of these destinations. And I probably jump to the north very quickly in how long it takes to get to places. I mean, there's all those wonderful pictures of terraced rice fields and all the rest of it. And people say,

"Oh, you know, how far is that from Hanoi?"

And I go,

"Oh, about 200 kilometers",...like, "Oh, that's nothing?"

08:19

Well, yes, it is. You'd need a day to get there and then a day to get back. And you probably need two to three days to get around to have a look at some of the ways the minority groups live. Because there's still a lot of traditional markets and blah, blah, blah, ... And you're going to be tired walking up those terraces because you have to walk up some of them. Because guess what, there's just no steps and there's no paved roads and things like this. So, it's kind of chunking it down for people so that they can grasp what's achievable in the timeframe. And we hope and we want them to come back and do the next region as a separate trip.

Miquel Angel: 09:03

Time is always in your hands. So having a destination I think from like Vietnam, so close. To say close from Australia because you are correct. So, it is relatively close. And now with the flight also, Europe also is getting close as of now. Middle East, many opening [crosstalk] are getting easier to arrive to the destination there. Yeah, so the only question is that you need to say

"Okay, I have these two weeks now in 2022. Let's move next year. So, these two weeks, I'm going to do the highlands of Vietnam and the center."

That's a fantastic choice.

09:45

You will probably still have areas to visit during that two weeks, if you choose the north or the south, the same. So, let's move to the north part of Vietnam. If you are landing in Hanoi, let's say you fly from whatever place in Australia, you arrive to Hanoi. So, you have options there not to be missed.

10:02

Me, I recommend, you arrive to Hanoi, and you control your first day, if you want to take a nap afterwards and-- you don't book anything on your first day of arrival, you just lay down in the hotel if you want to, doesn't matter if it is a five star hotel or whatever, or a one star hotel, doesn't matter. It will be noisier, probably the one star, but just take rest. And just walk around a bit there. And just- done. [crosstalk] correct, without any tour-guide, without anything there, let's say that you come by yourself, or you organize a trip, but you organize the rest of the days a bit too. So, in Hanoi, you can get lost easily.

Kerry Newsome: 10:40

And have a lot of fun, I think getting lost is the best fun.

Miquel Angel: 10:43

Just seeing that Vietnam is, I will say, quite safe in terms of walking around. And people.

Kerry Newsome: 10:51

I've never felt any issues.

Miquel Angel: 10:56

Correct. So, that's important, even for us living here. So don't go around just flashing your new iPhone 13, or your camera or whatever. But if you have a little bit of sense, and you keep things there normal, you can take a picture, whatever. But by yourself here in Hanoi, these two or three days, plenty of things depending on what you like. If you say "No, I'd like to stroll around the Old Quarter and see all these; the Bamboo Street, the Painting Street, the Wherever, you get lost there.

11:24

If you say you want to visit the Red River, nobody has time to visit the Red River, 600 kilometers, just coming from China all along the north-west part of Vietnam, next to the train. That's amazing. Nobody visits that. There is also one iron bridge that you can walk and cross the Red River, you cannot believe. I have some pictures of the last time I was there. I went to Long Beach just to walk up and down and take some pictures, when the train behind you, that's an amazing experience. No time, it is not in any program, you cannot put in there.

Kerry Newsome: 12:05

I know what you are saying. So, I think we've actually got the message very clear that everybody needs to chunk it down. And as you say,

- maybe do a Highlands one trip,
- maybe do the South and the Mekong another,
- maybe do the central area another and
- maybe includes some tracking, some caving.

All of that sort of stuff. People might want to do more of a cultural stay, or some people might just want to lie on the beach. I mean, there's 3200 kilometers of beach.

12:40

So, there's plenty of beach stays. With the Phú Quốc Island opening first. I think even that is just a good display to people about what is available in Vietnam. And see now when I went and visited that island, what I took away was pepper. I didn't realize that it grew the most amazing pepper.

Miquel Angel: 13:06

You cannot visit, it is out of the program. No way.

Kerry Newsome: 13:11

My company put it in the program, they said,

"We need to go, and we need to see those pepper farmers."

"Really?"

The pepper was fantastic, it was amazing.

Miquel Angel: 13:26

Here, in Phú Quốc Island, you can also include the-- now I am talking about islands, we have Côn Đảo, we have Chàm Islands, we have Phú Quốc there. A beautiful places to visit is the bee farms in Phú Quốc, that's amazing. You cannot believe, bee farms, making 100% natural honey... it is not in the program. We cannot do everything there.

OUTRO 13:52

Thank you for listening. Check out the episode notes for more information. What About Vietnam. Don't forget to subscribe, rate and review, and stay tuned for more fun adventures in Vietnam. What About Vietnam.