

# ADVANTAGE

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EMBRAER QUARTERLY  
VOL 14 ➔ 2021

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# EXOTIC CHARM

*Compelling history, unbeatable  
gastronomy and raw beauty make  
Vietnam one of Asia's most intriguing  
destinations*

**F**rom ancient Buddhist temples to modern skyscrapers, hill-tribe villages to bustling cities, towering peaks to golden beaches, this dynamic nation wedged between Cambodia and the South China Sea has something for every type of traveler.

## Hanoi

Gracing the banks of the Red River for more than a thousand years, Hanoi is one of the world's oldest capitals. The city's diverse heritage presents itself in ancient temples, a 13<sup>th</sup>-century historic quarter, well-preserved French colonial architecture, and a flavor-rich food scene. Its cultural offerings are also plentiful, featuring world-class museums and galleries to more traditional arts like opera, theater and water puppetry. To get a genuine feel for Hanoi, rise early and head to Ngoc Son Temple and Huc Bridge in the northern reaches of Hoàn Kiếm Lake. Grab a hot Vietnamese egg coffee served roadside and settle in to watch locals flood the banks to practice Tai Chi, students scurrying to school and elderly men playing Chinese checkers in the soft morning light.

An entertaining way to explore must-see sights of the Old Quarter is from a cyclo—a bicycle-powered rickshaw driven by a native Hanoian. Call on travel company Smiling Albino to pair you with a local guide for an inside track to the historic warren of Communal Houses, the Vietnam Fine Art Museum and the Temple of Literature. To escape city congestion, get out to the surrounding countryside, stopping in local markets and pottery villages on the way to Co Loa Citadel, a spiral-shaped fortress dating back to the third century B.C.



WORDS Nora Walsh, IMAGE © Frederik Wissink for Zannier Hotels

At Zannier Hotels Bãi San Hò guests can choose from a collection of 73 free-standing villas to immerse in Vietnam's rich history and traditions

Wherever you are in Hanoi, you're never far from a palatable bowl of pho, an emblematic delicacy of rice noodle soup served with slices of beef or chicken, crunchy bean sprouts and zesty condiments. Pair it with a bia hoi, a local beer served streetside. In the evening, lay your head down at the iconic Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi known for hosting writers, dignitaries and magnates throughout its century-long history, or newcomer Capella Hanoi—a Bill Bensley-designed Art Nouveau property nestled on a serene boulevard along Hồ Hoàn Kiếm.

### Sapa

In northern Vietnam, Sapa dazzles with high-altitude mountains, cascading rice paddies and colorful glimpses of local hill-tribe life. (The best time to visit is from August to November.) Hop on the back of a motorcycle or e-bike to cruise alpine roads and mountain passes while exploring the surrounding Hmong communities in areas like Hà Giang and Lào Cai. Or put your legs to work trekking Vietnam's tallest peak, Mount Fansipan,

sometimes dubbed the rooftop of the Indochina peninsula. Sapa's arresting scenery is some of the best the country has to offer. Overnight at Hotel de La Coupole, MGallery to luxuriate in French-Vietnamese flair or Topas Ecolodge for panoramic views of Sapa.

### Halong Bay & Lan Ha Bay

For a leisurely way to explore the wonders of this UNESCO World Heritage Site, book a private charter with Orchid Premium Cruises or a roomier Heritage Line vessel for larger families. Halong Bay's glistening waters are sprinkled with soaring limestone karsts and floating villages whose inhabitants have been relying on fishing and aquaculture as a way of life for generations. To skirt the crowds, make your way to lesser-known Lan Ha Bay, which traces the eastern coastline of Cat Ba Island. More than 400 islets are braided with hidden coves, white-sand beaches and prehistoric caves best explored by kayak. But pack your snorkel gear: Under the water's surface, sea-grass beds and red coral reefs are home to sea horses, sea turtles and shoals of exotic fish.



**Right page (top)**  
Vietnamese cuisine offers a brilliant balance of aromatics and heat balanced by sweet and sour

**Right page (bottom)**  
Beyond their economic aspects, local markets are an integral part of everyday life in Vietnamese culture



**Left page**  
Topas Ecolodge is a boutique hotel situated atop a beautiful hillside just 45 minutes outside Sapa in northern Vietnam

**Above**  
Lan Ha Bay is covered by thousands of limestone cliffs and has been a safe shelter for floating villages for centuries

IMAGES (clockwise from left page) Courtesy of Topas Ecolodge, © Ull / Heritage Line, © Jesper Rais, © Zammier Hotels

### Hôi An

Five centuries ago, this atmospheric riverside gem was once Vietnam's most important port. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, its past lingers on in the form of repurposed shophouses, Chinese temples and historic Japanese merchant homes. Wander ancient alleyways on foot through the peeling yellow facades of Old Town, and stroll the lengths of Chu Trinh, Trần Phú and Trang Phu streets to marvel at hundreds of protected architectural landmarks. Visit the fresh market and amble down narrow lanes parallel to Tu Bồn River, popping into heritage houses and Fukkian shrines. Rest your feet at LE Fe Cafeteria to enjoy the local roast; then, head to waterside restaurant Hoa Hiên for delicious Cao Lầu, a typical dish of noodles, pork and local greens that's only found in Hôi An. Be sure to block time for souvenir shopping at artisan boutiques brimming with ceramics, art, lanterns, and leather goods. Tailoring is a specialty here. Have clothes or shoes custom-made at Tuong Tailor or Mr. Xe Tailor, both family-run businesses known for their quality. Check into Anantara Hôi An for outstanding riverfront vistas or Four Seasons Nam Hai, a beachfront property just minutes away from Old Town featuring excellent spa treatments with singing bowls.





## ACCESSING ZANNIER HOTELS BAI SAN HO, PHU YEN PROVINCE

### GPS COORDINATES

13°33'07.2"N 109°16'30.4"E

The closest airports are **Phu Cat (UIH) in Quy Nhon** and **Tuy Hoa (TBB) in Phu Yen**, both are a mere 60 to 80 minutes by car. Trips from the airport can be combined with Cham ruins visit for a welcome into the history of the area.

Guests may also travel on **The Vietage**, a luxury train from **Hoi An to Quy Nhon**. Private experiences can be arranged on the train—a great way to slow down and enjoy the passing countryside.

**To organize your journey throughout Vietnam, contact: [smilingalbino.com](http://smilingalbino.com)**



IMAGES (left page, bottom) © Wing Chan Photography, (left page top & right page) © Frederik Wissink for Zannier Hotels



## Bãi San Hô

To discover an under-the-radar region of Vietnam, tap Smiling Albino to charter a seaplane to the newly minted Zannier Hotel set on a secluded peninsula in Bãi San Hô. A verdant oasis surrounded by 245 acres of rolling paddy fields, lush hilltops and powder white sands, guests revel in tranquil solitude, gourmet South Asian menus and Grandma Hai-style regional cooking, as well as an expansive spa with a hammam and tea room. Explore the private bay by catamaran or venture out to 11<sup>th</sup>-century Cham ruins, fishing villages and glassy salt fields where locals harvest salt from seawater.

## Ho Chi Minh City

Drop your bags at over-the-top opulent Reverie Saigon or chic Hotel des Arts, offering sunset views from its rooftop. Ho Chi Minh City, still referred to as Saigon by the locals, is an

urban medley of old meets new. The best way to negotiate the deluge of mopeds is to get on the back of one yourself to soak up the sights, smells and culinary delights of this chaotic metropolis. Munch on a bánh mì (Vietnamese baguette) before visiting the flower market to sample fresh spring rolls. Wander the historic city center on foot to take in its French colonial landmarks, tree-lined boulevards and whizzing motorbikes as well as the aromatic district of Cho Lon—Saigon’s Chinatown. Traversing the backstreets to local-favorite Pho Hung for a steaming bowl of pho, you’ll get an authentic sense of local life pulsing with unrelenting vitality. For some perspective on Vietnam’s wartime past, visit the War Remnants Museum and Reunification Palace, and if time allows, the Củ Chi Tunnels dug by the Viet Cong in the 1960s. Before you leave, pay a visit to the lively Bến Thành Market to pick up Vietnamese coffee, lacquerware souvenirs and a traditional conical hat (great to hang on a wall) as a reminder of your trip. ←

**Left page (top)**  
At Zannier Hotels Bãi San Hô, the Beach Pool Villas evoke the Cham tribes and have direct access to the beach

**Left page (bottom)**  
A rudimentary farming practice, plowing paddy fields with water buffalo is a unique and immersive experience for foreign visitors

**Right page**  
The Phu Yen province encompasses diverse landscapes with nearly 125 miles of shoreline along Vietnam’s curving south-central coast