PRINT EDITION

The S Culture: Tri-State to Vietnam Planner

Curated by The S Culture editorial team

From the Tri-State to Saigon: a 7-to-10-day Vietnam trip out of JFK and Newark.

Editor's note: The route and the hotel, restaurant and cruise picks in this article are the independent recommendations of The S Culture editorial team. Facts about flights, visas, hotels, cruises and MICHELIN stars come from the sources cited in the article, checked on 25 November 2026, and may change. No hotel, airline, cruise line, restaurant or organisation mentioned selected, reviewed or paid for this article; see the not-sponsored disclosure at the end.

Checked on 25 November 2026 (America/New_York). Facts may change.

Leave JFK or Newark on a weekday afternoon, and about a day later you are in Hanoi. Late light is already on the lake, the streets coming on, a bowl still waiting after dark. By dawn the water is still, and the Turtle Tower stands in clear air. Then the bay: limestone close to the balcony, quiet enough that you hear the water against the hull.

This is The S Culture team's own 7-to-10-day route for friends in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, with the top room category each house lists, a set menu or Chef's Table where the house prints one, and Business or First where the airline lists those cabins.

Quick facts

Flights.

When we checked on 25 November 2026, there was no nonstop from JFK or Newark to Hanoi or Saigon; schedules may change. On the FlightConnections aggregator, one-stop itineraries run from about 18 hours of flying time, not counting layovers, via Hong Kong, Doha, Taipei, Seoul or a European hub. Carriers such as Cathay Pacific, Qatar Airways, EVA Air, Korean Air, Asiana, Emirates, Turkish Airlines, or Vietnam Airlines on a connecting leg, appear on those itineraries, depending on the date. Vietnam Airlines' U.S. page lists one U.S. nonstop, Ho Chi Minh City to San Francisco; New York is reached via Frankfurt or San Francisco. Our pick is Business or First, if the airline still shows that cabin; Qsuite is on some Qatar Airways routes, confirm at booking, and it may be unavailable after an aircraft change. Economy, Premium Economy, Business and First appear on these one-stop routes; that is not a promise of a First seat on the flight you just opened. We are not printing a fare. Ask the carrier, and read the seat map for the exact flight.

Visa.

U.S. citizens need a visa or e-visa. Apply only at https://evisa.gov.vn or https://thithucdientu.gov.vn, the government e-visa portal, which the Immigration Department says has operated since 08:00 on 11 November 2024 (GMT+7). An e-visa can last up to 90 days, single or multiple entry. The fee is paid online and is not refunded if the application is refused. It is issued only for the dates you enter on the form, so include any extra days. It cannot be extended once you are in Vietnam, and an overstay can be fined. Fees listed by the U.S. Embassy in Vietnam on 25 November 2026: USD 25 for a single entry, USD 50 for multiple entry, paid by bank transfer; fees may change. Processing is 3 to 5 working days; print the e-visa and bring a 4x6 cm photo. You may enter and exit only at 42 designated international checkpoints, including every international airport; recheck that list on the portal the day you apply. Do not treat a third-party agency site as the source.

Passport.

Valid for six months after you plan to leave Vietnam, with at least one blank visa page, according to the U.S. Department of State. The State Department's travel advisory for Vietnam is currently Level 1 (exercise normal precautions), as the U.S. Embassy page showed on 25 November 2026. The CDC Travelers' Health page for Vietnam lists vaccines to consider; ask a doctor or a travel clinic a few weeks before you fly. We are not listing each vaccine, and advisories may change.

Best months.

March to May is the window vietnam.travel calls "best weather countrywide," though no season is entirely wrong, because some part of the country is always in good weather. For Hạ Long Bay, April to June or September to November give a better chance of sun; December to March can be cool, with mist and cloud; June to August is hot, humid, and typhoon-prone, and tropical storms sometimes cancel cruises. If the trip falls in Tết, many shops and services close for a few days; read more: ten places for Tết (https://thesculture.com/en/2026/11/25/top-10-places-to-spend-tet-2027/). Tết Đinh Mùi 2027 begins on Saturday 6 February 2027; public-sector leave runs 4-10 February 2027 under Thông báo 11483/TB-BNV, and may change.

Time difference.

Vietnam uses ICT, UTC+7, all year. New York is 12 hours behind in late November (EST, UTC-5) and 11 hours behind in summer (EDT, UTC-4). On the first night, keep dinner light, and do not book a tasting menu for the hour you just landed.

Currency.

The currency is the dong, abbreviated internationally as VND. On entry and on exit, declare Vietnamese dong above VND 15,000,000, or foreign currency above 5,000 U.S. dollars or the equivalent, according to the U.S. State Department. We are not printing an exchange rate.

Day by day

This is our route: tight, and that is the point. Two nights in Hanoi, one night on a ship, two nights in Hội An and Đà Nẵng, a full Saigon day and a last night, then home, or one more morning. From 12 June 2025, Nghị quyết 202/2025/QH15 redrew the map; Hội An now sits inside the new Đà Nẵng city. Domestic flights link Hanoi, Đà Nẵng and Ho Chi Minh City throughout the day; we are not printing a clock time. Book the ship and the onward ticket in the same sitting, and ask the cruise house how they will get you to the airport on the morning of day 4.

Day 1. Hanoi.

Morning or afternoon: land at Noi Bai, take a private car into the city, go up to the room, and sleep. Evening: a bowl, a chair, then bed. Sleep: Capella Hanoi, the Madama Butterfly Suite, or Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi, the Imperial Suite.

Day 2. Hanoi.

Morning: a private guide, the Temple of Literature, the streets. Afternoon: a museum if you still have the hours. Evening: a booked one-star table. Sleep: the same suite as night 1.

Day 3. Lan Ha Bay.

Morning: board the ship. Afternoon: kayaking, or the cycle through Viet Hai village on Cat Ba, as the house itinerary lists. Evening: dinner on board. Sleep: Heritage Line Ginger, a Regent Suite, Blue Phoenix or White Crane.

Day 4. Đà Nẵng and Hội An.

Morning: disembark, transfer, fly to Đà Nẵng. Afternoon: into the villa, then the old town. Evening: the lantern streets, or a table already booked. Sleep: Four Seasons Resort The Nam Hai, or InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula, in the villa we name below.

Day 5. Hội An and Đà Nẵng.

Morning: the Nam Hai Cooking Academy, or a house experience at InterContinental. Afternoon: the town, and an áo dài fitting if you want one. Evening: the Chef's Table or the set menu at La Maison 1888, if you are at InterContinental; or a table already booked. Sleep: the same villa as night 4.

Day 6. Saigon.

Midday or afternoon: fly into Tan Son Nhat, private car to the Times Square Building. Evening: Long Trieu, or another booked one-star table. Sleep: The Reverie Saigon, The Reverie Suite.

Day 7. Saigon, then home, or one more morning.

Morning: Independence Palace, or a slower walk. Afternoon or night: the flight back to JFK or Newark, or one more night and a morning departure. If you still have three days, pick exactly one extension.

Each stop: stay, eat, do

Hanoi

Wow moment

Wow moment: go up to the Madama Butterfly Suite, 194 square metres, the category the house calls "our grandest suite," and take the rooftop jacuzzi, a "leisurely soak at the top of Hoàn Kiếm district." Book that exact suite, and check that it is still available, because this is the category the house itself writes as its grandest. Stay. Our pick: Capella Hanoi, 11 Le Phung Hieu, Hoan Kiem, +84 24 3987 8888, 47 rooms and suites. Ask the house for the Madama Butterfly Suite, 194 square metres, with a rooftop jacuzzi, a dining room for 10, a kitchen and an outdoor bar. Or: Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi, 15 Ngo Quyen, +84 243 826 6919, 358 rooms and suites. Ask the house for the Imperial Suite, 176 square metres, in the Opera Wing, which the house page calls "the Metropole's largest suite," with a living room, dining area, library, pantry and a private spa room. The Metropole already has a piece in the capital's luxury hotel race (https://thesculture.com/en/2026/11/25/hanoi-metropole-luxury-hotel-race/). Ask the house for rates and availability. Eat. Night 1: a bowl, then upstairs. Night 2: one of Hanoi's four one-star tables in the 2026 MICHELIN Guide Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang (Gia, Hibana by Koki, ONVIT, Tầm Vị), announced in the 6 June 2026 ceremony article. Book ahead, and ask the house whether a tasting menu or a Chef's Table is offered on your night; we are not inventing a menu. Read more: The S List (https://thesculture.com/en/2026/11/24/the-s-list-vietnam-michelin-starred-restaurants/). Do. A private car and a private guide for the day. The Temple of Literature, the streets, and the Hanoi bowls that still live on the pavement: phở, bún chả, the shops your concierge still sends people to. If you have time for a museum, two buildings you can enter (https://thesculture.com/en/2026/11/25/two-buildings-you-can-enter-and-a-skyline/) already maps the door. Getting there. Land at Noi Bai. There is no nonstop from JFK or Newark; see Quick facts. A private car from the airport, not a race into the Old Quarter.

Lan Ha Bay

Wow moment

Wow moment: take a Regent Suite, Blue Phoenix or White Crane, on Heritage Line Ginger, 50 square metres, the category the house calls "the most luxurious accommodations aboard," with a front-facing private balcony and a large Jacuzzi in the bathroom, and let the limestone slide past the glass. At dinner, the Ginger ship page describes a nearly 360-degree glass restaurant and an open kitchen; ask the house for a table with a view of the line. Stay. Our pick for the one-night circuit is Heritage Line Ginger, 12 suites, each with a private balcony. Ask the house for a Regent Suite, Blue Phoenix or White Crane; the house lists only two. Ylang lists a two-night itinerary, and calls its Premium Regency Suites, 51 square metres at the bow, with a front-facing balcony and an outdoor Jacuzzi, "the premium luxury living choice." If you want that ship, rebuild the week around two nights on the bay; the one-night circuit, on the same page, is sold on sister ship Ginger. Bay admission, according to the house page, sits outside the rate, along with tips and drinks off the list. We are not printing a "from" price. Ask the house. Eat. Dinner on board, and, on Ginger, the open kitchen as the house describes it. Do not book a MICHELIN table for this night. Do. On the one-night circuit: cycling through Viet Hai village on Cat Ba, and kayaking in the bay. Ask the house for a private kayak, if they still have one. Getting there. A private car from Hanoi to the pier, following the ship's instructions. Ask how they will get you to the airport on the morning of day 4.

Hội An and Đà Nẵng

Wow moment

Wow moment: book the Chef's Table at La Maison 1888, the 2026 one-star restaurant on the InterContinental grounds, "up close and personal with the restaurant's culinary masters at our Chef's Table," with a set menu "specially designed by the chef at the helm Christian Le Squer." If you still have a sitting for two, the same page lists the Nam Tram Dining Journey: "Dine as you glide through the rainforest in a private cabin, savouring a curated menu at every stop from the mountaintop to the sea. A moving feast for two." Ask the house whether those seatings are open, and do not force both into a single night if the hours do not fit. Stay. Our pick on the beach: Four Seasons Resort The Nam Hai, Block Ha My Dong B, Dien Ban Dong Ward, Da Nang City, +84 235 394 0000, 100 villas, Ha My Beach. The resort prints "Forbes 5-Star"; that is the house's wording, not a ranking by The S Culture. Ask the house for the Beachfront Five-Bedroom Pool Villa, 660 square metres, which the villa page calls "The Resort's most expansive residence," five bedrooms, an infinity pool facing the sea, and direct access to Ha My Beach; that page lists occupancy of up to 15 adults, and a booking number, +84 235 395 9879. If you are travelling as two, ask the house for the one-bedroom pool villas they are selling, because the five-bedroom residence is built for a group. Or, on our list: InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula, Son Tra Peninsula, +84 236 393 8888, reservations.icdanang@ihg.com. Ask the house for the Three-Bedroom Sun Peninsula Residence, 1,000 square metres, three king bedrooms, two infinity pools, a private stair to the beach, and a Người Dẫn Lối host, Occupancy is up to nine adults. Eat. If you are at InterContinental, our table is La Maison 1888: the set menu and the Chef's Table, as in the wow box. Book ahead. In Hội An, the street bowls still earn a meal without a star: cao lầu, bánh bao bánh vạc (white rose), bánh mì. The 2026 Guide does not list a Hội An address among the stars, the Bibs or the Selected; a new administrative map does not, by itself, become a line in the Guide. The Nam Hai Cooking Academy is on the house page, with estate-grown produce; ask for the Academy if you are at Nam Hai. Do. A full day: the old town in the afternoon, the lanterns at night. The town already has a piece about staying an extra night; read more: four heritage towns (https://thesculture.com/en/2026/11/25/four-heritage-towns-worth-an-extra-night/). If you want an áo dài made before you fly home, five houses to call (https://thesculture.com/en/2026/11/25/five-ao-dai-houses-to-call-before-tet/) already have the numbers. Getting there. Fly Hanoi to Đà Nẵng after you leave the ship. A private car out to the beach. We are not printing a clock time.

Saigon

Wow moment

Wow moment: take The Reverie Suite, 313 square metres, on floors 38 and 39, one unit only, the category the house calls "the stateliest of all," with a river view. Complimentary round-trip airport transfers are listed in a Bentley or a Rolls-Royce, "subject to availability at time of booking." Ask the house whether that suite, and that car, are still open before you fly in. We are not printing the "from" rate, because the figure moves. Stay. Our pick: The Reverie Saigon, Times Square Building, 22-36 Nguyen Hue and 57-69F Dong Khoi, Sai Gon Ward, +84 (0) 28 3823 6688, 286 guestrooms and 89 suites. Ask the house for The Reverie Suite itself, two bedrooms, two super-king beds, occupancy four. A second address many readers still ask for is Park Hyatt Saigon; ask the house for the address, the top room category and the rates when you book. Eat. Long Trieu is in the house, and is one of the city's six one-star tables in the 2026 Guide, with Ănăn Saigon, CoCo Dining, Akuna, CieL and Upstairs (new). Book ahead, and ask the house for the tasting menu on your night. If night 6 did not take you to Long Trieu, our suggestion for lunch or dinner on day 7 is still a one-star table. Do. Independence Palace and the museums, when you want a building you can enter, already have a piece; read more (https://thesculture.com/en/2026/11/25/two-buildings-you-can-enter-and-a-skyline/). The streets, a coffee, a slower walk. Getting there. Fly Đà Nẵng to Tan Son Nhat, then a private car to the house. Fly back to JFK or Newark on the night of day 7, or the next morning, depending on the seat.

The extension

Wow moment

Wow moment, Phú Quốc: ask the house for LAMARCK House, the seven-bedroom beachfront villa, 1,300 square metres, maximum occupancy 21, where the house writes that "a magnificent seven-bedroom beachfront villa, redefines luxury living on the shore." The resort names Bill Bensley as the designer, and describes a "19th-century French university" as the resort's story. Phú Quốc. JW Marriott Phu Quoc Emerald Bay Resort & Spa, Khem Beach, Phu Quoc Special Economic Zone, An Giang Province. Phu Quoc International Airport (PQC) is about 11.3 km from the hotel. The overview prints a toll-free number, +84-27-73779999; confirm it with the house before you call. Ask for LAMARCK House itself. The 2027 Phú Quốc MICHELIN map (https://thesculture.com/en/2026/11/25/phu-quoc-joins-the-michelin-map-in-2027/) and a day at An Thới harbour (https://thesculture.com/en/2026/11/25/a-day-at-an-thoi-harbour-phu-quoc/) already have their own pieces; this one only gets you to the gate. Côn Đảo. Six Senses Con Dao, Dat Doc Beach, Con Dao Special Zone, Ho Chi Minh City: 50 private-pool villas and residences; email reservations-condao@sixsenses.com, +84 28 3823 2229. The flight from Ho Chi Minh City is about 45 minutes; that is the house's wording, it may change, and you should ask the airline. Ask the house for the top villa category it is selling. Ninh Vân Bay. Six Senses Ninh Van Bay, Ninh Hoa, Khanh Hoa, email reservations-ninhvan@sixsenses.com, +84 258 3524 268 and +84 258 7307 788. Transfers are by road and water, and a five-hour island-hopping trip. The house "when to visit" page says most times are excellent; scuba, on that page, is better from February to October; sailing and hiking, from March to November. Ask the house for the current meeting point, and for the top villa category they are selling. That is the wow of this bay: leave the mainland by water, then go island-hopping for five hours, as the house prints it. A week from the Tri-State does not need one more unsourced superlative. It needs a Business or First seat you have checked on a map, a printed e-visa, a suite or villa the house itself calls its grandest, largest or most expansive, a booked set-menu table, and one night on the water. The rest, Vietnam will do. Share this itinerary, and keep The S Culture credit line when you send it on. If you want a wider hotel map, not this seven-day route, Top 10 luxury hotels in Vietnam 2026 (https://thesculture.com/en/2026/11/24/top-10-luxury-hotels-in-vietnam-2026/) is still live.

Not sponsored

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