



## Wander and wonder in Vietnam

### Description

After a month in our own house in Hoi An it's about time to move on. We travel Vietnam from south to north. We entered Vietnam from Cambodia and make our way slowly up north towards the border with Laos, the next country in our journey. We've been for a month in Mui Ne by the beach in a guesthouse on a monthly rental. When that month was over we traveled to Hoi An where a house that we rented in advance from the internet has already been awaiting us for another month stay. When this month was over we had several days to the flight we booked to Hanoi after we discovered that an airplane ticket will cost us like a bus or a train ticket and decided to go for it.

So there are few more days and the flight is from Da Nang. Okay. From a state of almost zero constraints to affect our daily decisions we moved to a new state where constraints start to add up on the tops of our heads and things start becoming more stressful. The time frame becomes more rigid. We have several days and a flight to catch. The location frame becomes rigid too. The flight is from Da Nang because that's where we found the cheap tickets to fly from instead of spending 16 hours in a bus or 22 hours in a train (or something like that. It's better to ask The One for more accurate information. For me anyway after 10 hours it's just like torturing a dead body). The One initiates an internet research of what to do and where to be during these days. Apparently in Da Nang there is a bridge in the shape of a dragon that once a week spits fire and water and it's worth being there when it happens. The One does some inquiries and tells us that it is supposed to be on Friday night. We plan to arrive in Da Nang from Hoi An on Thursday afternoon to get to the dragon when it spits its things, take a train to Hue for Saturday and Sunday because they say that it has a terrific view to be seen from the train's windows and then slowly return to Da Nang so we can get to the flight on Tuesday morning. When we left Hoi An it all seemed planned to the second.



All is packed on the taxi to Da Nang

And then the road from Hoi An to Da Nang that we were told should take an hour (and we immediately doubled it to two hours because that's™ how it usually works here!) actually takes us exactly 28 minutes including a short pee break. We laugh.

The hotel appears to be a serious splurge – a swimming pool, air condition, parquet floor, rain shower, doorman, elevator, excellent breakfast. What do you know. We enjoy every second of it.



An unexpected surprise. The Gold Coast, a great hotel in Da Nang



with a swimming pool

And then The One says. Listen dear, something came up and youâ€™re not gonna like it. It seems that the dragon breathes fire on Saturdays and Sundays. Not on Fridays.

There goes the plan down the drain. What do we do now.. ?

We decided to cut short our stay in Hue to one night only just enough to be back on time in Da Nang for a date with the dragon on Sunday evening. Okay. And then in the splurge hotel the staff says that they donâ€™t have rooms for Sunday, only Monday. We say okay again. Weâ€™ll find another hotel.

Itâ€™s not that bad. It will be closer to the dragon and to the market and then we can go back for one night to enjoy our time in the luxury hotel right before the flight. Good. And now begins a new saga with the train tickets to Hue and back. After exchanging messages with Hong, the nice guy from one of the local travel agencies, all day long. This saga too reaches its happy climax in the form of one way train tickets and bus tickets on the way back. Okay. Great. Weâ€™re going to Hue.

We really enjoyed Hue. The guesthouse is located in a lovely alley. We like those cute Vietnamese alleys. On the entrance to the alley we find a branch of Ganesh, our favorite Indian restaurants chain. After dinner we go for a night walk in the glittering streets of lovely Hue. The Central as usual runs back and forth like crazy while we walk and gets his flip flops torn apart. Within seconds I spot an open shoes shop (itâ€™s 9pm!). The kid hops on one leg along half of the street including a zebra crossing while The Eldest supports him. We buy him flip flops and continue with our trip not before emotional mommy requests everyone to stand together for a family hug. I just love these parts of our journey when we overcome some crisis together.

The next morning we have a charming trip in the Old Citadel in the city that was once the imperial capital of Vietnam including the necessary tourists rip off. In that case it came in the form of an overpriced â€œcycloâ€ tour (a three wheeled bikes, like a reversed rickshaw. Passengers sit in the front and the driver on the rear). We are all quite content. We start moving towards our guesthouse to pick up our bags (we rode to Hue with only small bags, we left the big baggage in the hotel in Da Nang) and check out, pick up some â€œBanh Miâ€ (the tasty baguettes of Vietnam) for lunch for the road and get in the bus station that unlike what you might imagine when reading the words â€œbus stationâ€ is not really a station but rather some address of a travel agency where the tickets have been ordered from. We should reach it and the bus will pick the passengers up from there.

Then okay, we delay a bit during our check out when we meet a nice couple and stop for a chat and Little One is having a hard time carrying her bag, after all she walked all day in the citadel, and we need to buy some plasters to The Central since his new flip flops hurt his foot, poor one!

But so far it is all make sense. It happens that plans have to change. It happens that you get confused with the day for visiting some attraction and it messes you up a little, or a lot. It happens that flip flops get torn. It happens that you have your feet hurt. It happens that children (and adults) complain a little. It happens when time starts pressing. It all makes sense. Itâ€™s all reasonable.

But god help me, what are the odds that:

The One will type by mistake (he never makes mistakes! Itâ€™s an oxymoron and believe me, I havenâ€™t even started yet) to google the drop off point in Da Nang instead of the pick up address in Hue.

And â€œ the address in Hue will be so similar to the address in Da Nang that The One will not even notice the mistake until it is almost too late after weâ€™ve been dragging ourselves along four pretty long streets, sweating, Little One almost collapsing, The Central limping because his foot hurts, The Eldest trying to bite his banh-my while half-walking half-running and me too already in a state that I

have to call "good thing we traveled light to Hue and took with us only one deodorant for all of us because in the situation developed here only men deodorant can withstand the insane sweating that goes around here". We decide to take a taxi and only when the taxi driver tells us in a mix of broken English and hand waving that "there is no number 159 in this street" I say to The One with bits of hysterical tone, "show him the bus tickets".

And what are the odds that "The One starts looking in his pouch and pockets and nothing. No bus tickets. The same tickets that we were busy the entire day yesterday getting them, to a bus that is supposed to leave within 20 minutes from a station that we've got no idea where it is. Gone!

And then what are the odds that "The Central will say in the same moment "Dad, were these tickets some green thing"? Yes! They were in a green envelope! And the boy says, I saw them drop from your pants. Where!? There. When!? Beforehand.

And what are the odds that "the boy will take off his slippers, sprint back about 150 meters and find the green envelope with the tickets inside on the sidewalk! Long minutes after falling from The One's pockets apparently.

So it's true. Everything written above actually happened.

But we came back to Da Nang and we've been there just on time when the dragon spat its fire and water and everybody said "woow" and we met the lovely Hong from the travel agency with his friend who wanted to practice her English with us and guide the tourists a little (us). Add to it a nice local couple that started chatting with us just like that for no reason on the promenade near the dragon and it was a gorgeous evening and The Natives said that the local ice cream is too sweet so I've got it going for me and it's nice.

## Da Nang

*The main city of central Vietnam. It comes equipped with an excellent shore and wide roads. It is much less touristic than its neighboring Hoi An and Hue. We traveled from Hoi An to Da Nang by taxi (11\$) and slept in the [Gold Coast](#) hotel. It is an EXCELLENT 3 stars hotel with breakfast and a pool for the funny price of 25\$ a night for a family room. Its main disadvantage is its relatively remote location from the center of the (big) city, however it is close enough to the beach. While in Da Nang we had a day trip to the **Marble Mountains**, a group of five mountains amidst the plane of Da Nang that in the past used to be a major source of marble stone in the region. There are temples in the perimeter, caves and great viewpoints to the surroundings. The site is located about 5 kilometers south to the hotel and the entrance fee is less than 1\$ per adult.*

*In Da Nang there is a nice promenade along the river Han that crosses the city on its western bank. There are several bridges that cross the river and the most impressive is **Cau Rong** "the dragon bridge, designed as a giant dragon hovering over the river.*

*Another place we visited after all our wondering and wandering was the **Helio Center**. It is some kind of a play center with all sorts of activities for children "ice skating, video games arcade, bowling and of course a kids friendly food court. The prices are very low. For only 7\$ altogether the children got around for two hours and exhausted themselves.*



Resting near one of the view points in the marble mountain



Marble sculptures garden near the marble mountains



## Cau Rong, the dragon bridge



Ice skating in Helio Center

## Hue

The old capital of the imperial Vietnam. It served as the political and cultural center until the beginning of the previous century. We did the trip from Da Nang to Hue on a 3 and a half hours train ride along an amazing route that in many of its part watches over Da Nang bay. The price of the ticket is 3\$ per person.

In Hue we stayed in [Ngoc Binh](#) hotel in a family room for 18\$ a night including breakfast.

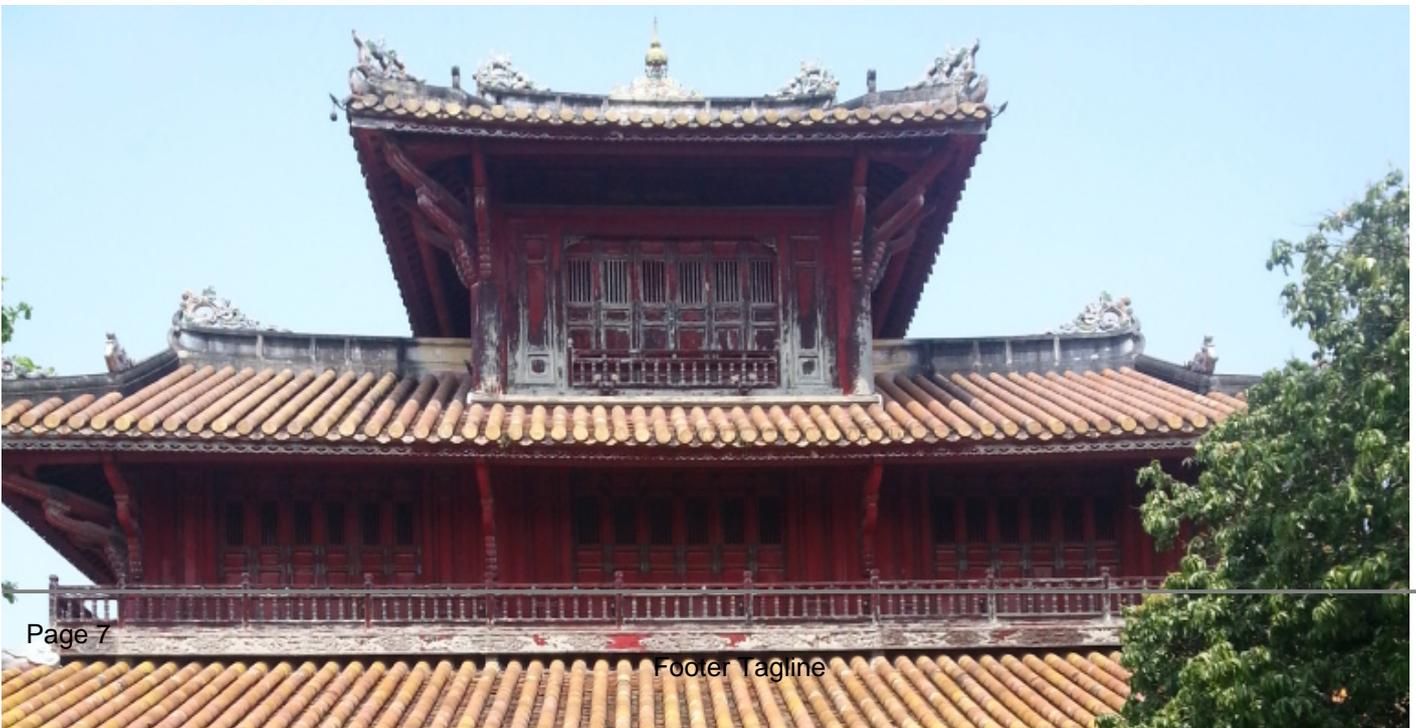
Hue is divided by the Perfume River. There is a nice promenade between the two bridges that cross it with an open art market in the evening hours. In Hue there were many harsh battles that took place during the American War and you can see remnants from that time all over the city.

During the short time we had in Hue we visited the **Old Citadel**, the center of the Imperial Vietnamese regime and the residential of the royal dynasty. The place as mentioned has been severely harmed during the civil war in Vietnam and bullets and shells holes are evident all around the partially reconstructed walls of the citadel. Visiting the Old Citadel took about 3 hours and the price was 5\$ per adult.

Another point of interest in Hue is the family house of Ho Chi Minh, the father of the nation of modern Vietnam. It's amazing to see how basic were the conditions this leader used to live in.



The view from the window of the train from Da Nang to Hue



The Citadel in Hue

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