



ROMANTIC VIETNAM

FIONA CONNOLLY combs the country's charms in search of the ultimate spots for lovebirds



We set out for 10 days of fun when we booked Vietnam, but little did we expect to find one of the most romantic places on earth. No longer the playground of low-budget honeymoon makers, Vietnam has blossomed into a country of indulgent romance – think long sandy beaches, misty mountains and exquisite resorts in cities so colourful, no Instagram filter is necessary. It seemed an impossible task, but I've nailed down the best three romantic experiences in Vietnam. And the winners are...

FIRST PLACE



Light a lantern in Hoi An & send it down the river

As night falls and loved ones send their colourful lanterns down the Thu Bon River, while row after row of brightly lit Chinese lanterns sway in the breeze, this charming town transforms into one of the most enchanting places on earth. Walking around Hoi An old town at night, as the smell of delicious street food wafts across the river, is about as good as life gets. But if you want to step up the romance, take a bottle of wine and set off on a sunset cruise. For the ultimate romantic gesture, release a paper lantern and make a wish with your beloved. We stayed in Hoi An's most romantic hotel, the La Siesta Resort and Spa, with its one modern and one traditional wing. For a truly out-of-body-experience, make sure you have a couples hot stone massage at the spa. The staff will organise activities, be it a cooking class, designing a new leather jacket together (Hoi An is renowned for its tailoring) or escaping to nearby quiet beaches. You're a scooter or bicycle ride away from it all.



Fiona models her custom-made coat.



The stunningly beautiful Ha Long Bay.

THIRD PLACE



Rooftop bars in Ho Chi Minh City

The best way to see this bustling, fun-loving city is to go up! Grab a beer or some cocktails from not just one, but as many rooftop bars as you can get around to and watch one of the busiest cities in the world go by as the sun sets on the Saigon River below. By day, you'll find plenty to do just exploring the lush parks and crazy scooter traffic, markets, architecture, museums and shopping. Take a day tour of the Cu Chi Tunnels to experience incredible Vietnam War history, cruise along the Mekong Delta in a rowboat, or enjoy the romance of Saigon's hidden paradise, the "secret" island Thanh Do. By night, hit some of the luxury hotel rooftop bars including the Grand Hotel and The Rex, and don't go past the Saigon Saigon Rooftop Bar with its stunning outlook. Also, Chill Sky Bar is a modern neon lights experience, Breeze Sky Bar has a great tasting menu, and Glow Skybar is a bit more up tempo. There's something for everybody.



The Grand Hotel's rooftop bar on the 20th floor.

SECOND PLACE

Take a cruise in Ha Long Bay



Watching the lights from the other junk boats reflecting off the water as the sun sets on limestone caves, we quickly realise Ha Long Bay is not just romantic, it's heavenly. While there are as many as 600 boats taking in this breathtaking formation of mountains and caves – a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the New Seven Wonders of Nature – on the private balcony of our intimate five-star home, it feels like it is just the two of us. The Paradise Cruise getaway has clearly been designed with romance in mind. Rose petals fall upon us the moment we step on board. After a three-and-a-half hour drive north from Vietnam's capital, Hanoi, we are ready to be indulged with a gourmet lunch, massages and cocktails on deck. As we glide along this magical bay, a soft, warm breeze blows through our cabin – we were at peace, and thoroughly spoiled.

BOOK NOW

La Siesta is offering couples a three-night Summer Getaway from \$148 per person. It's valid from May 1 to June 30, 2018, and September, too. Visit lasiestaresorts.com

La Siesta Resort & Spa has it all!



AND IF IT'S THE KIDS FLYING AWAY...

Mummy blogger NIKKI PARKINSON from Styling You shares her coping tips!

1 SUGGEST A TIME FOR DAILY UPDATES

Whether it's with WhatsApp, email or Skype, agreeing on a time and format in advance ensures you keep in touch in a way that's convenient for everyone.

2 GET ALL THE DETAILS Make sure they share their itinerary and hotel details before they leave, preferably on a cloud-based server, so you have access no matter where you are. My daughter had a spreadsheet she shared with us via Google Drive.

3 KEEP BUSY Don't wallow when the kids are away. Book a dinner with girlfriends or schedule a date with your other half outside the house.

