

Mekong Delta Biking, Vietnam

4 days

Venture off the beaten track and visit the islands and waterways of the breathtaking Mekong Delta.

Highlights:

- Explore the narrow canals and lush orchards of the Mekong River islands, unknown to many tourists
- Ride through rice paddies and rural villages and alongside scenic canals spanned by flimsy 'Monkey' bridges
- Cycle back in time to small fishing communities that live a life far removed from the modern world
- Sail among the boats and barges of the floating markets and barter and haggle for fresh tropical fruits

• Day 1 - Ho Chi Minh City to Mekong River Islands to My Tho

The cycling tour starts just on the outskirts of Ho Chi Minh City where beautiful serene countryside roads take the place of busy main roads. The route passes vivid green rice paddies tended by local farmers and a few oxen, and lush orchards bursting with fruit. Take the local ferry to My Tho where row upon row of rickety wooden buildings overhang the waterfront, and junks, sampans and other curious crafts glide by on the river. In the afternoon visit the Mekong River Islands where miles of placid waterways crisscross the land breaking it up into small evergreen islands filled with tropical gardens unknown to many tourists. Explore the small canals in a hand-rowed sampan, pass through jungle scenery and visit a fruit orchard to listen to traditional music played by a local farming family.

Overnight in My Tho. Approximate distance cycled is 45-55 km over even terrain.

• Day 2 - My Tho to Cai Be to Vinh Long

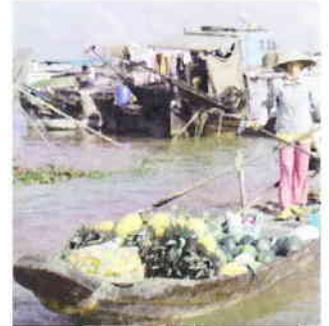
Spend the day cycling besides the upper Mekong River along shaded back roads, passing through rural villages where local villagers go about their daily business of fishing and farming. In Cai Be you can see the floating market where hundreds of local barges are piled high with exotic fruits, vegetables, rice, fish and sometimes even baby pigs. Take a boat trip to Vinh Long along picturesque narrow canals, often straddled by flimsy-looking wooden bridges made from the trunks of coconut palms or bamboo and known as monkey bridges.

Overnight in Vinh Long (breakfast). Approximate distance cycled is 45 to 55 km.

• Day 3 - Vinh Long to Long Ho to Can Tho

Travel by road to Long Ho and then spend the day cycling on quiet country roads around the town of Can Tho. Visit the morning An Hoa Market, and the small riverside fishing community of Tra On where wooden houses perch on stilts overhanging the river bank. This day really ventures off the beaten track to areas that few tourists go and where curious children stare and wave from the dusty roadside.

Overnight in Can Tho (breakfast). Biking distance for this morning is approximately 35 km.



- **Day 4 - Can Tho to Cai Rang to Ho Chi Minh City**

In the early morning set out by boat to explore Cai Rang Floating Market, the biggest and most bustling of the Mekong Delta markets. Early morning the waterway becomes a hive of activity as hundreds of small boats rowed by locals wearing traditional Vietnamese coolie hats weave between the larger barges that sell wholesale produce. Some boats are piled high with mangos, papayas, pineapples and bananas, while others sell soft drinks, beers and snacks. The sellers hang fresh samples of their produce on long poles that tower above the colourful boats so that buyers can see what they are selling from a distance. Sail through the market, listen to people haggle and trade for the best prices, talk with the sellers and sample some of the fruit and snacks yourself. By 9 am, the activity has died down and after exploring some of the backwater canals; it is time to return to the pier. Travel by vehicle to Ho Chi Minh City.
(Breakfast).