



Where to go when island-hopping around Nha Trang

Nha Trang Bay includes a network of islands and islets, making it the perfect spot for island-hopping. Here are some pristine places you should add to your itinerary...

Looking for the classic 'sun, sea and sand' vacation? Consider Nha Trang. Out of all the places in Vietnam, it gets the most sunshine – over 300 days per year. It also has the shortest rainy season (from September to December). So it's perfect for a beachy break.

The bay the city is in is dotted with 19 islands and islets, making it ideal for an island-hopping holiday. Once you've enjoyed the many activities the city and its beaches offer, head out to one (or more) of the adjacent islands. The marine life around Nha Trang is among the country's most bio-diverse – great for diving and snorkelling.

Many companies offer one-day island-hopping tours, which often include transfers, food, entertainment and activities. For example, your tour may start with a visit to the National Oceanographic Museum of Vietnam. Then you'll sail to the islands for snorkelling, swimming, and other water sports. Local guides may offer onboard entertainment. There are 'booze cruises', for those wanting to 'chillax' with a cocktail in hand. And some boats have glass bottoms, so you can admire the marine life as you traverse Nha Trang's clear waters.

Alternatively, take your time to enjoy individual islands more fully, by staying overnight. With so many to choose from, which islands are best? Below is a guide to some of the most popular among them.

HÒN MUN

This island, about 10km from the Cau Da port, takes approximately 45 minutes to get to by boat. It's named Hon Mun (which means 'Black Island') because of its unique ebony-hued rocks and cliffs, which are home to many birds. Its location, near to the warm currents around the equator, means hundreds of different types of corals and tropical sea creatures are found in its waters. In fact, Hon Mun Island was the first marine bio-diverse area to be recognized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). That's why it's a favourite among not only tourists, but oceanographers and marine researchers, too. Marvel at the island's coral forests from a glass-bottomed boat. Or take the plunge and sign up for a diving course.



"A 45-minute boat ride from Nha Trang city lies Hòn Mun. This was the first marine bio-diverse area to be recognized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)."

HON NOI (Yen Island)

This relatively unknown island paradise can only be visited for a day tour. As daily visitor numbers are limited to 100, there's only one-morning boat trip per day. Before getting on board, you'll be asked to sanitize your shoes, to protect the island's ecosystem. Once there, you'll be blown away by the island's beauty. A highlight is the sand bar that separates two sides of the sea. The two sides differ in colour and temperature, and there are beach huts and loungers strategically placed so you can easily hop between the two beaches. Hon Noi is also known as a 'Bird's Nest Island' because of the number of swiftlets that breed there.



"To protect its ecosystem, daily visitor numbers to Hon Noi (Yen Island) are limited. It's known for the swimmers that feed here and for the sandbar that separates two stunning beaches."

HON MIEU

The biggest tourist attraction on this popular island, which is home to about 3 000 locals, is the Tri Nguyen aquarium. Beside Bai Soi (Bai San) Beach, it looks like a towering pirate ship. It has several floors to explore, with fish lakes at ground level, a restaurant on the third floor, and a viewing deck up top. Admire the many species of fish, feed the turtles or go fishing. While the Bai Soi beach nearby is somewhat pebbly, people like to camp or barbeque here. To relax on softer sand, head to Bai Tranh beach.

DIEP SON ISLAND

About 60km from Nha Trang, in Van Phong Bay, lies a mini-archipelago of little islands seemingly strung together, known as 'the road that floats in the middle of the ocean'. The sandy path that connects these three islets only emerges when the tide is low, so walking between them can be quite thrilling. For white-sand beaches and crystal-clear waters, Diep Son is a dream.

BÌNH HƯNG

Further out, some 80km away, you'll find Bình Hưng island. It's a small island of about 2km², and it's a hidden gem. Beaches here include Bai Tien, Bai Chuoi and Bai Kinh. Bai Nuoc Ngot (Fresh Water Beach) is unusual because it features both seawater and freshwater, which comes from a mountain stream via a cave. The local communities are fishers and lobster farmers. Naturally, this place is a paradise for seafood lovers. For an experience to remember, overnight on a floating raft house.



"The small island of Bình Hưng is a hidden gem. Beaches here include Bai Tien, Bai Chuoi and Bai Kinh."

BÌNH BA

In the same bay, another island with beautiful, unspoilt beaches and delicious, affordable seafood is Binh Ba, also called 'lobster island'. This larger island has several uncrowded beaches, including Bai Chuong, Bai Nom, and Bai Nha Cu. Hire a motorbike to explore the beaches and sites. One of these is Nam Hai Tomb (Tomb of Whale). Built at the end of the eighteenth century, it features an impressive whale skeleton. Fishermen have long carried out rituals here.



"Wanting to visit a beautiful island where you can feast on fresh, affordable seafood? Binh Ba, also known as 'lobster island', is the one to choose."

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