

Long known for its century-old ancient town and one-of-a-kind delicacies, Hoi An City in central Vietnam has been gaining popularity among green-fingered tourists with its eco-tours that guarantee full immersion in the agricultural lifestyle of rural Vietnam.

Located some three kilometers from the city's downtown, the Tra Que vegetable village in Cam Ha Commune, Hoi An City can be reached after a 15-minute bicycle ride through the grass-scented roads. The usual tranquil atmosphere of the Vietnamese countryside is pierced by the distant laughter and gossips of tourists being taught to tend lush green vegetable beds and ride gentle-looking water buffalo.

Keeping calm to be a farmer

After a tour around Hoi An Ancient Town, a group of young tourists from the UK and Ukraine decided to hop on rented bicycles to explore the Tra Que vegetable village with their own eyes, ears, and hands. Arriving at the village at 4:00 in the afternoon, the group paid for a homestay house situated only 300 meters from the vegetable fields to spend the night instead of [hotels in Hoi An Ancient Town](#), determined to hit them at first light the next morning.

Farm work in the village begins as early as 3:00am, when farmers carrying flashlights tend and harvest their veggies in time for the morning market. Upon learning that the group of tourists had come to learn vegetable tending, the female house owner quickly brought out a pile of dark-grey rural Vietnamese ensembles, a set of traditional clothing items worn by Vietnamese farmers, suitable for fieldwork thanks to their high absorbency and light weight.

Dana, a 31-year-old Canadian tourist, asked in excitement whether she was now considered a farmer as she put on the Vietnamese ensemble for the first time. "Not yet," a Vietnamese farmer answered. "You still have a whole morning and a wide range of challenging tasks to pass before you can call yourself a real farmer." Through recommendations by an acquaintance, the group is introduced to Le Thi Hoa, an experienced farmer in the village with over 30 years of experience in tending vegetables.

According to Hoa, Tra Que vegetables are famous for their earthy aroma achieved by organic farming methods and a combination of natural factors such as sunlight, water, and soil in the area.

Under the scorching sun of central Vietnam, the group of tourists took turns to perform different steps of tending to vegetables such as collecting seaweeds to use as organic fertilizers, hoeing the soil, sowing the seeds, and harvesting the vegetables.

Drenched in sweat, 27-year-old British tourist Richard grinned widely as he spoke about how he had skillfully performed the work of farmers, for which he was voted the 'genuine' farmer of the group. Richard said it was only after having done the job with his own hands that he understood Vietnam and its hardworking and lovely farmers. A tourist once said if one has a chance to visit Hoi An, they should not miss experiencing what it feels like to ride and command a water buffalo.

In Vietnam, a country founded upon the wet rice civilization, water buffalo have since ancient times been utilized in farming to aid farmers in heavy tasks such as pulling the ploughs or running rice mills.

Le Viet Nhien, owner of a herd of buffalo in Hoi An City, said the animals have been taught since their early ages to understand oral commands by humans. After spending around 15 minutes learning the commands via an interpreter, the group of tourists decided to put their lessons into practice with some initial reluctance.

Richard volunteered to be the first buffalo rider, and the man quickly mounted a buffalo amidst laughter and admiration from the group, who quickly took turns to ride the buffalo themselves. Some hard-headed buffalo refused to listen to the frantic 'Stops' shouted by their riders and continued to charge forward until their owner told them to stop. Richard said the experience was once in a lifetime, and that he would recommend any visitors to give it a try to judge for themselves.

Tran Van Khoa, director of Khoa Tran Eco-Tour and the first to operate a tour of such nature in the city, said using buffalo in eco-tourism helps promote Vietnam's wet rice civilization to international friends and improve the life of locals as well.

According to Nguyen Van Son, vice chairman of the Hoi An City People's Committee, the buffalo-riding tour welcomes from dozens to hundreds of tourists on a daily basis.

"The city aims to maintain areas reserved for paddy fields to promote tourism-focused service agriculture," Son said. "It provides local farmers with income not only from the sale of vegetables but also from the tourist industry."

Source: [Get Vietnam Visa](#)