



MUM ON THE MOVE

guide to

Hoi An with Kids

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Hoi An with Kids

Hoi An in Vietnam is one of our favourite places in Southeast Asia to spend a few days with the kids. The beaches here are incredible – long stretches of beautiful white sand for you to run and play on, and there are so many child-friendly resorts in Hoi An to choose from.

But there is so much more to Hoi An than the beach and your resort pool. The town itself is easy to navigate, even with a buggy (although you will sometimes be pushing it along the road alongside the motorbikes), the locals are welcoming to children and there are lots of fun activities to indulge your kids' adventurous sides too.



Things to Do in Hoi An with Kids

Explore the Old Town

You could happily spend a few hours wandering around the winding streets of Hoi An, popping into souvenir and art shops and stopping off for a Vietnamese Coffee or cold beer in the charming little courtyard restaurants that line the streets.

If your children are too small to walk too far (or even if they're not), one of the most fun ways to take in the sights is to hire a cyclo for a half-hour or hour turn around the town. You could book through a tour company, or you will usually find a willing cyclo driver sitting in the shade on the corner near the Japanese Bridge. Make sure you negotiate before you set off!

Farming & Fishing Tour

A Farming & Fishing Tour is a great fun day out and a good way to see some of the beautiful countryside surrounding countryside, as well as educate your kids in the local way of life beyond the beaches and swimming pools.

Cycle through the paddy fields, learn to plant vegetables, ride a water buffalo, how to cast a fishing net from a traditional fishing boat and how to steer the round bamboo basket boats. Fun and educational – ideal. Read more about our Farming & Fishing Tour below.



Take a Boat Ride

If you don't have time to dedicate a full day to exploring the farming and fishing communities, you can still get out on the water. Several companies offer boat trips ranging from one hour to half-day trips, but you can also just take a wander along the river on Bach Dang Street near An Hoi Bridge and negotiate with the many boat owners there to take you for a ride up the Thu Bon river. Of course your destination is in the hands of your helmsman but you should be able to take in some of the atmosphere of the rural riverside communities.

Take a Food Tour

Hoi An is renowned for its fabulous food, from small snack stalls at the side of the road to family-run restaurants that have dished up secret recipe meals for generations. Taking a food tour with a local guide is a great way to get to know all the best joints in town for lunch and dinner.

We joined Hoi An Food Tour and learned how to make Banh Bao Banh Vac (white rose dumplings) as the most famous White Rose restaurant in town; visited Anthony Bourdain's favourite Banh Mi takeaway; sat at the side of the road and ate Xi Ma (sweet black sesame soup) and visited the bustling Central Market for a piping bowl of Cao Lau (Hoi An Noodle Dish). Read more about our Hoi An Food Tour below.



Get Some Clothes Made

Hoi An is also famous for its tailor shops, which are everywhere. Come armed with a favourite outfit to have copied, or browse through Pinterest on the shop's magazines or iPads to choose your style. Ask your hotel for a recommendation, as the quality of the shops varies hugely. It's not just for adults either – my 3-year old loved picking out some material and being measured up for a new skirt.

Farming and Fishing Tour in Hoi An Vietnam

One of our favourite day trips we have done in Hoi An is a farming and fishing tour in the beautiful surrounding countryside. Everybody told us we were crazy taking our 2-year old and 4-year old out on a 6-hour day tour in the full-on Vietnamese heat, but they couldn't have been more wrong. We had a blast, and it was an incredible experience for the kids, who loved every minute.



We kicked off our Hoi An tour by cycling bikes through the paddy fields and taking in the rural scenes – conical hat wearing farmers tending to their crops and water buffalo ploughing the fields.

Our first stop was at the Tra Que Vegetable Village. This organic vegetable and herb farm is so beautifully presented, it is hard to believe it is a working farm that supplies much of Hoi An with its fresh produce. Here, we learnt the traditional methods for planting and watering the vegetables, with everyone having a chance for some hands-on fun.

My 4-year old daughter loved learning to till the soil and plant the vegetables – while I had a bit of fun wielding a watering can! I hear there is a very good restaurant on site here too, where you can also do cooking classes.

From Tra Que Vegetable Village we cycled along palm-lined paths through the paddy fields, passing flocks of ducks scrabbling up muddy banks and water buffalo catching forty winks in the shade to reach our next stop – water buffalo riding! My kids were beyond excited at the prospect of riding a water buffalo, and it didn't disappoint – although I confess my thighs were sore for days afterwards from gripping on for dear life.



Our brush with the farming life over, we joined a boat on the Cua Dai River for the fishing section of the tour. First we learnt to paddle bamboo basket boats and take them for a ride along the secluded waterways, before meeting up with some local fishermen – an ancient husband and wife team who taught us to a few traditional net fishing techniques. We were none of us very good – but it was certainly fun to give it a go.

Our tour ended with a delicious Vietnamese lunch on board the boat, cooked by our friendly crew, who also kept the kids entertained by making them some amazingly intricate creations from palm fronds.

A Street Food Tour of Hoi An

Hands up who loves Vietnamese food! Me! I first visited Vietnam in 2003 and I was blown away by the quality of the cuisine. I was living in Edinburgh at the time – a beautiful city, but not exactly renowned for its eclectic mix of Southeast Asian restaurants. So my first experience of Vietnamese food was when I stepped off the plane in Hanoi with my Lonely Planet World Food Vietnam book clutched in my sweaty hand.



And I didn't look back. From a piping hot bowl of spicy Pho Bo, laced with fresh herbs, to a plate of crispy crunchy spring rolls, Vietnamese food has become one of my favourite cuisines in the world.

So during our trip to Hoi An, we tracked down a local guide to take us on a food tour to find Hoi An's best local street food and snacks.

Below are some of the highlights of our food tour of Hoi An.

Banh Bao Banh Vac (White Rose)

Banh Bao Banh Vac (named by the French as White Rose due to its appearance) is a steamed shrimp dumpling, exclusively found in Vietnam. It is so exclusive that all the White Rose dumplings in Hoi An come from one shop, which supplies all the Banh Bao Banh Vac to all the restaurants in town.

Obviously the recipe is a highly guarded secret, but we do know that the rice flour is sourced from the Mekong Delta, and water to make it must be sourced from the old Ba Le well in Hoi An.

You can head to the family restaurant, run by Mr Tran Tuan Ngai, the third generation of his family, at 533 Hai Ba Trung Street in Hoi An, to see the ladies in action who churn out 6,000 of these dumplings every day. We were lucky enough to be invited to join them, and have our own go at making the dumplings – a tricky undertaking, but fun nonetheless. My 4-year old loved it!



Banh Bao Banh Vac is available at many restaurants across Hoi An, but they will all have been sourced from the original restaurant, and therefore re-heated. 533 Hai Ba Trung street is the only place in town to sample the freshly produced dumplings.

Xi Ma (Sweet Soup made from Black Sesame)

From the White Rose restaurant, we wandered around the corner and took a seat on some small plastic stools on the pavement of Nguyen Truong To Street. Here we were served a small bowl of Xi Ma, a warm, sweet soup made from ground black sesame, raw sugar and other secret Chinese Medicine ingredients – surprisingly good for a bowl of black gloop.

The Xi Ma stall on Nguyen Truong To street is the stuff of Hoi An legends. Originally run by Mr Ngo Thieu, who sold bowls of his (secret recipe) Xi Ma for more than 70 years, the stall is now run by his daughter who retired from teaching to carry on the family tradition when her father turned 100.



Ca Phe Da (Vietnamese Coffee)

No trip to Vietnam is complete without sampling their deliciously sweet iced coffee. Made from drip-filtered coffee mixed with condensed milk and poured over ice, for me Vietnamese coffee is the perfect sweet end to any meal – although the Vietnamese prefer to drink it for breakfast.

Banh Mi (Vietnamese Baguette)

Banh Mi Phuong has been serving up banh mi to locals for more than 20 years and has long been known as the go-to place for your banh mi fix. However an encounter with Anthony Bourdain during his No Reservations tour of Vietnam has catapulted this small sandwich shop to international fame and now hoards of tourists and locals alike flock here.

Of course Anthony Bourdain had very reliable sources and the Banh Mi here is to-die-for. Layers of grilled pork, Vietnamese sausage, grilled chicken, pate, salad and a concoction of homemade sauces are piled into freshly baked Vietnamese baguettes to give you one of the most delicious sandwiches you will try in your life.



Cao Lau (Hoi An Noodle Dish)

Of course we couldn't take a food tour of Hoi An without dropping by the town's fantastic Central Market. Laden with fresh food and vegetables, this market is an explosion of colours and aromas.

Within the market is a small food hall, featuring several stalls dishing up a variety of local dishes, with the most ubiquitous being Cao Lau. This legendary noodle dish, exclusive to Hoi An, sees thick chewy rice noodles steeped in a little broth, and topped with slices of delicious cha siu pork and an abundance of fresh herbs. Although you may find imitations elsewhere in Vietnam, locals believe true Cao Lau can only be made with water from the ancient Ba Le well in Hoi An.

Our guide for this food tour was the lovely Hong of Hoi An Food Tour.

Best Restaurants in Hoi An Vietnam

One of the real pleasures of a visitor to Hoi An, is its food. Well known as an epicenter for foodies, Hoi An is renowned for its fabulous street food specialties, and the town is brimming with quaint little restaurants. You just need to take a walk through the Central Market to appreciate how beautifully fresh all the fruit and vegetables are for these restaurants to work with.



For unforgettable Hoi An eating moments, I definitely recommend heading to the Central Market and sitting down with the locals to enjoy a bowl of piping hot Cau Lau; fighting through the masses to bag yourself a scrumptious Banh Mi at Banh Mi Phuong; and taking a load off in a coffee shop to partake in a Vietnamese coffee.

But if you're looking for something a bit more substantial and refined, then below is our pick of some of the best restaurants in Hoi An, Vietnam.

Morning Glory

I always like to have at least one meal at Morning Glory when I visit Hoi An. Many will argue that Morning Glory has become a victim of its own success – and it is true that the restaurant is now a popular stop-off for tour groups. But the food speaks for itself.

Named after the ubiquitous vegetable that graces menus around Vietnam, the Morning Glory menu is centred around Hoi An street food specialties, and family classics. Cao Lau and My Quang noodles are featured alongside White Rose dumplings and Banh Xeo (crispy pancakes), while more gourmet dishes include Pork Belly with Five Spice and Caramel Sauce and family favourites Smoky Eggplant with Minced Pork and Fresh Mackerel in Banana Leaf. All the dishes are freshly prepared in the central show kitchen, adding to the bustle of this laid-back cozy restaurant.



Mango Rooms

Across the road from Morning Glory is the bright and cheerful Mango Rooms. Helmed by Vietnamese American chef Tran Duc, the Mango Rooms specializes in Vietnamese fusion cuisine, offering all the classics with an inventive twist, indicative of Tran Duc's international career.

So, dishes such as La Cubana - bite-size tender beef seasoned with garlic, pepper, soy and cumin, flame-broiled with Cuban rum and served with Latino-style mango salsa – rubs shoulders with Imperial Mango spring rolls and 'Indochina Diva' – Vietnamese/Japanese vegetable tempura.

The festive atmosphere makes this a fun and breezy place to hang out, with its bright green and yellow walls, brightly coloured furniture and cushions, and patterned floor tiles. The best seat in the house is at the front of the restaurant, where you can lounge on cushions around a low table, and admire the views of the Thu Bon River out the window.

Mango Mango

Sticking with the mango theme, and riding on his success with the Mango Rooms, chef Tran Duc has now opened another restaurant across the river called Mango Mango. The main advantage that Mango Mango has over its sister restaurant is its location. Residing across the river right opposite the Japanese Bridge, gives Mango Mango an unrivalled perspective of Hoi An's old town – particularly impressive if you manage to bag an upstairs table on the terrace at night.

While chef Tran Duc sticks to the traditional essence of Vietnamese cuisine, incorporating the five essential elements of sour, bitter, sweet, salty, and spicy, it is obvious that he likes to have fun with his cooking. The menu of inventive modern Vietnamese dishes is littered with quirky names such as Rocking Rolls, Lord of the Squid Rings and Peekin' Duckling, while his sense of adventure is evident in the dish Flying Phoenix – duck with passionfruit and chocolate. Don't forget to start your meal with a cocktail or two – Passion in Love, with vodka, passionfruit and watermelon is sure to start your meal with a bang!



Secret Garden

For my birthday this year, we were planning to treat ourselves to a meal at La Maison 1888 (see below). However, best laid plans and all that – my daughter had a croup attack the night before and, not wanting to leave her with a babysitter, we instead opted for an early family dinner at the Secret Garden. And it certainly wasn't a disappointment as a second-choice option.

The Secret Garden is just that – secret. It's not the kind of restaurant you are going to stumble upon; you need to be 'in-the-know' to find it – and even then, we nearly turned back thinking we had taken a wrong turn. But trust your instinct and follow the alleyway next to 60 Le Loi, and you will come across a special little oasis tucked in behind the wall at the end.

There's a huge menu of solid Vietnamese classics on offer here, but what really makes the restaurant is its beautiful garden setting. White linen covered tables are scattered throughout the open-air restaurant and around the leafy courtyard, with subtle lanterns highlighting the fishponds and tinkling water fountains. Secret Garden also runs a cooking school.

La Maison 1888

La Maison 1888 is actually in Danang, inside the stunning Intercontinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort. I wanted to include it on my list here, as many people visiting Hoi An actually stay in one of the beachside resorts on the Danang strip, making La Maison 1888 around a 30-minute drive (it would probably be closer to an hour from Hoi An). For a special occasion, it is certainly worth the trip.

La Maison 1888 is the first restaurant in Vietnam to feature a Michelin-starred chef. Michel Roux from Le Gavroche in London was originally at the helm, and he has recently made way for esteemed French chef Pierre Gagnaire, so you know you are in for some spectacular French fine-dining cuisine. We feasted on Blue Crab Velouté, Pan-Fried Lobster Medallions and Roasted Challan Duck, and knew that this would be a meal to be remembered.

The setting is nothing short of fabulous, and La Maison 1888 was named in the Architectural Digest top ten list of the most beautiful new restaurants. The restaurant is reached via a funicular from the hotel lobby, a fun way to arrive at this stunning 'antique' colonial French mansion, resplendent with black and white floor tiles, leafy tropical plants and lavish furnishings.

Children under 12 are not permitted in the restaurant, so book a babysitter and enjoy a very special date night at La Maison 1888.

Family-Friendly Hotels in Hoi An and Danang

Hoi An in Vietnam is a very popular destination for a family vacation, and one of the questions I get asked most is whether I can recommend the best family-friendly hotels in Hoi An and Danang.

Hoi An and Danang have a lot to offer for a family holiday – beautiful beaches, fabulous restaurants and lots of fun activities to entertain the kids.



One thing to note is that Hoi An and Danang are very close to each other – just a 20-30 minute drive, and so it doesn't matter too much which area you choose to stay in. While Hoi An boasts all the ethnic and architectural charm and beauty, the stretch of beach running up to Danang is just stunning, making this a popular spot for many of the family-friendly resorts in the area.

The Cua Dai beach area closer to Hoi An is still a popular location for family resorts, but the beach here has suffered significant coastal erosion in recent years, meaning the beach is unfortunately not what it once was.

So if you are trying to decide where to stay for your family vacation, here is our selection of the best family friendly resorts in Hoi An and Danang.

Hyatt Regency Resort & Spa

The Hyatt Regency Danang is one of the most popular family-friendly resorts in Danang, with kids' facilities galore. The main pool (there are five in total) is enormous, with plenty of nooks and crannies to explore. At one end you have the super-fun helter-skelter waterslide, and at the other end a sandy 'beach' dotted with buckets and spades, where the water is shallow enough for mum and dad to lie back with a cocktail while the kids run in and out to their hearts' content.



This family friendly Danang hotel also boasts a fab kids' club, three restaurants, loads of grassy areas to run around on, and an amazing white sand beach. We particularly love the residences, which come in 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom configurations, and are an excellent choice for families, as they benefit from fully equipped kitchenettes and separate living and dining areas.

You can read our full Review of the Hyatt Regency Danang Resort & Spa [here](#).

[Click here to check latest prices for the Hyatt Regency Danang Resort & Spa](#)

Nam Hai

The Nam Hai is one of the best upscale family resorts in Hoi An. This all-villa resort offers 1-, 2-, 3-, 4- and even 5-bedroom villas, making life easy for family vacations in Hoi An.

This luxury family friendly Hoi An resort boasts three gorgeous swimming pools, all lined with palm trees and enjoying uninterrupted views out to sea (although children are only allowed in one of the three swimming pools).



There is also a tennis court, a fabulous spa and plenty of grass for the kids to run around on... and of course not forgetting the endless stretch of pristine beach. If you need some adult-only time, there is a kids activity villa, where you can drop off children aged 4-12, to be entertained with a variety of games and activities.

However, note that the bedrooms are full of hazards if you are travelling with toddlers or small children – the beds sit on raised platforms, there is both a sunken writing desk and a sunken bath in the room and steps leading from the bedroom to the living area. If you opt for a pool villa, you obviously have another hazard right there in your garden! But if you are looking for a luxury family vacation with older children, the Nam Hai is definitely one of the best family friendly hotels in Hoi An.

You can read our full review of the Nam Hai Hoi An here.

[Click here to check latest prices for the Nam Hai](#)

Intercontinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort

Talking of luxury family hotels in Danang, you can't get much better than the Intercontinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort. This is one of the most beautiful resorts I have been lucky enough to step foot in. The award-winning architecture is nothing short of spectacular, taking inspiration from the Vietnamese Buddhist temples, palaces, Royal tombs and humble village dwellings.



A variety of rooms, suites and villas are scattered over the hillside that overlooks the 700m private beach. Note if you have small children, the resort is built on the side of the hill and so there are lots of steps to endure – but the kids will love riding the funky funicular designed to take you up and down the hill with less effort.

A choice of three restaurants and two bars will keep you happy during your stay at this family friendly Danang hotel, including the super fabulous Maison 1888, helmed by renowned French chef Pierre Gagnaire. This restaurant is strictly adults-only, so book a babysitter and enjoy dinner followed by drinks and dancing at the M nightclub and lounge, or hit up the M Rouge karaoke lounge.

But what really makes this one of the best family hotels in Danang, is the plethora of child-friendly facilities. The Resort Garden Pool has a kids pool, perfect for splashing about in, there is an awesome kids club for kids aged 4-12, and Project VN will keep teenagers happy with its playstation, Wii, pool table and internet station. Add to this the comprehensive schedule of activities and everyone's a winner.

[Click here to check latest prices for the Intercontinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort](#)

Sunrise Premium Resort Hoi An

The Sunrise Premium Resort is another popular family hotel in Hoi An. This 5 star Hoi An hotel has a large selection of rooms, suites and villas to suit families, but we particularly love the Family Two-bedroom Villas, which comprise a master bedroom, twin bedroom, separate living room and outdoor terrace and balcony.



There are plenty of family-friendly facilities in this Hoi An resort, including two swimming pools, three restaurants, a fun kids club and an indoor entertainment centre. Kids aged 3-12 will love the Kids Club, which includes a daily schedule of games and activities and older kids will appreciate the indoor entertainment centre, which includes table tennis, table soccer and a movie theatre showing three different movies a day.

The Sunrise Premium Resort overlooks the South China Sea and is just a ten-minute taxi ride to the centre of Hoi An, making this one of the best centrally located family friendly hotels in Hoi An.

[Click here to check latest prices for the The Sunrise Premium Resort Hoi An](#)

Victoria Hoi An Beach Resort & Spa

If you're looking for a friendly and relaxed hotel that oozes old world charm and colonial style, then look no further than the Victoria Hoi An Beach Resort & Spa. This family friendly resort in Hoi An is located on Cua Dai beach, just a 10-minute drive into central Hoi An.



There is much here to entice families vacationing in Hoi An – large bedrooms with balconies (note that not all rooms have baths though), a gorgeous infinity pool overlooking the ocean, and shallow kids pool perfect for splashing about in.

There's a small kids club where you can drop off the kids and head to the spa and cheap babysitting to allow you to escape into Hoi An for dinner in the evenings. Alternatively, kids will enjoy the dinnertime entertainment provided in the L'Annam restaurant. Older kids will enjoy the games room, which has pool tables and the library provides board games.

As already mentioned, much of Cua Dai beach has suffered from coastal erosion, but the Victoria has solved this problem by providing guests with its own private beach just a short walk from the hotel – a little slice of white sandy beach, which is more often than not deserted. Perfect for sandcastle building and paddling!

[Click here to check latest prices for the Victoria Hoi An Beach Resort & Spa](#)

Premier Village Danang Resort

If you're looking for space and privacy, then the Premier Village Danang Resort is a great option for a family-friendly hotel in Danang, providing villa living in a luxury hotel environment.



Accommodation at this beachfront resort is in large, modern 4-bedroom villas. All villas come with fully equipped kitchens, private plunge pools and private gardens. All bedrooms benefit from ensuite bathrooms, making this one of the best Danang hotels for two or more families vacationing together.

There are so many little touches that make this one of the best hotels in Danang for kids. Firstly there is the four-storey kids club, complete with playground, ball pit and a whole host of games and activities. Older kids are treated to playstation consoles and there is a movie theater too. Outside at the beach, you will find a shaded play area with buckets and spades, as well as facilities for beach basketball, volleyball and badminton.

Then there are two swimming pools, two kids swimming pools, two restaurants and a beach bar. We particularly love the friendly dragon mascot who greets the kids at breakfast, handing out balloons!

[Click here to check latest prices for the Premier Village Danang Resort](#)

Pullman Danang Beach Resort

The newly renovated Pullman Danang Beach Resort is another popular family-friendly resort located along the white sandy stretch of Bac My An Beach.



There is a range of rooms and suites to choose from, but we particularly like the look of the Cottages, set in a separate 'village' within the resort, and offer private gardens and outdoor dining areas. One thing to note however, is that the two bedroom cottages have the bedrooms housed in two separate buildings, meaning this may not be ideal if you are travelling with small children.

There are plenty of family-friendly facilities at this luxury Danang hotel – including a kids club, a gorgeous infinity pool with separate shallow kids area, and, of course, that amazing white-sand beach. There is a comprehensive schedule of complimentary activities on offer, including aerobics, water polo, kite flying, stand-up paddle boarding, volleyball and kayaking.

There are two restaurants to choose from, but our vote goes to the awesome Azure Beach Lounge, which has an onsite playground – meaning mum and dad can enjoy a leisurely lunch while the kids play – ideal!

[Click here to check latest prices for the Pullman Danang Beach Resort](#)

Vin Pearl Danang Resort & Villas

The luxury Vin Pearl Danang Resort & Villas is another good hotel for a family vacation in Danang. All 200 rooms boast balconies overlooking the ocean and main pool, and there is plenty of green garden space for kids to run around on. For the ultimate in family accommodation, check into one of the 23 beachfront villas, which benefit from separate living rooms, fully equipped kitchens, private swimming pools and private gardens.

Within this luxury Danang family hotel you will find two restaurants, three bars, a kids club (for children aged 5+), a small shopping mall and five – yes FIVE – swimming pools! That should keep the kids happy.

[Click here to check latest prices for the Vin Pearl Danang Resort & Villas](#)



Golden Sand Resort & Spa

The Golden Sand Resort & Spa is another good option to explore if you are trying to decide where to stay in Hoi An with kids. It has all the facilities you would expect at a luxury family hotel – spacious rooms, kids club, choice of restaurants, watersports and fun activities.

But the star of the show at this beachfront Hoi An hotel is the swimming pool – Vietnam’s longest swimming pool stretches the length of three Olympic pools along the beach – amazing! And even better are the two kids pools, complete with in-pool playground with water slides and water guns. Fun!

[Click here to check latest prices for the Golden Sand Resort & Spa](#)