



## **Designing a cuisine tour of central Vietnam for millennial customers**

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## Abstract

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<p>Culinary tourism is emerging as a popular trend, attracting more and more attention from tourists around the world. Exploring local cuisine not only provides an enjoyable culinary experience, but also plays an important role in cultivating a deeper appreciation of each local culture and way of life.</p> <p>Vietnam is an attractive tourist destination, attracting tourists around the world with its diverse landscape, rich history, and attractive cuisine. Central Vietnam is famous for its diverse attractions, from pristine beaches and stunning landscapes to important historical and cultural sites. Although there are many delicious dishes in the region, there is a lack of special tours that highlight the culinary treasures of this place.</p> <p>To fill this gap in the market, the author has cooperated with Vietmark Company, a famous travel service provider headquartered in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The author was tasked with designing 3 days, 2 nights itinerary tailored to the Millennial demographic, with a focus on diverse culinary experiences.</p> <p>The thesis started in October 2023 and completed in April 2024. The author used academic literature, and articles along with the method of non-participant observation. These things are combined with the author's own knowledge, experience, and actual trips to develop the thesis and design the product for the 3-day-2-night trip. Details of the tour are presented in brochures created with Canva and PowerPoint. In the conclusion of the thesis, proposals to promote culinary tourism are presented with the aim of promoting the local and Vietnamese tourism industry.</p>
<b>Key words</b> Food tourism, cuisine tourism, Food trail, Culinary, Gastronomy, Central Viet Nam

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## 1 Introduction culinary tourism in Vietnam

Over the past three decades, culinary tourism has grown strongly because its characteristics such as authenticity, localization and sustainability are in line with global development trends and expectations (Ellis, Park, Kim & Yeoman 2018, 253-257). This has made culinary tourism a popular choice for people who want to experience local culture and cuisine, as well as contribute to the conservation and protection of raw materials and the environment. Vietnam has great potential to develop strongly in the field of culinary tourism for many reasons. Firstly, Vietnam is known for its diversity and richness of cuisine. From beef noodle, banh mi, vermicelli to typical dishes of each region, visitors can enjoy many unique flavors across the country. Besides the quality and reasonable price, the dishes are made from fresh and natural ingredients, visitors can enjoy Vietnamese cuisine at an affordable price, while ensuring quality. Vietnamese cuisine is not just about enjoying food but also a part of culture and lifestyle. Vietnam has a rich and profound cuisine, combining historical, cultural and traditional elements, creating a unique attraction for tourists. The tourism industry in Vietnam is developing strongly, with the Government support and tourism promotions. This creates a favorable environment for developing culinary tourism and attracting international tourists. (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Vietnam, 2023.)

The author contacted Vietmark company to discuss the topic of culinary tours in the central region of Vietnam. By collaborating with author and creating new products to serve the culinary tourism needs of customers living and working in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietmark company is hoping to bring many new, authentic and meaningful experiences and moments to customers. Vietmark is a famous travel company in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, specializing in providing quality and diverse travel services to both domestic and foreign customers. The company was founded in 1994 and has more than 25 years of experience in the tourism industry. (Vietmark 2015.)

In this thesis the author has designed of a tour that includes destinations in a short trip, which is a trend in Vietnam. Each dish is an adventure, a journey to the flavors of a different country, region or culture. This means that every time you enjoy a new dish, you are not only making the meal more enjoyable, but also an opportunity to experience and understand the culture and cuisine the country, region or culture that the dish represents. From a simple sandwich to complex dishes, each dish brings visitors a part of the world's culinary picture, opening the door to the rich and unique world of national cuisine. (Bittman, Oseland, Lonely Planet & Bush 2012, 4-7.)

## 1.1 The goal of thesis

The main purpose of this thesis is to create a tour for customers with special and attractive culinary tourism experiences, different from traditional tours or spiritual tourism that often ignore the importance of culinary tourism. The author will design activities with destinations on the journey. The selection of hotels and restaurants will be chosen by Vietmark company among its partners. The product of this thesis is a unique culinary journey, designed to discover and experience the most unique and famous features of local cuisine and traditional specialties throughout Central Vietnam. This itinerary will include famous historical and cultural cities such as Da Nang, Hoi An and Hue. These cities are not only famous for their rich cultural heritage but also score points for their wonderful natural beauty and unique cuisine, creating a perfect blend of tradition and modernity. Choosing these destinations not only helps visitors discover the quintessence of Central region culture but also creates exquisite and unforgettable culinary experiences.

Furthermore, the thesis aims to shed light on global culinary tourism trends, highlighting its growing popularity and role in promoting local cultural experiences. This growing trend not only offers culinary delights but also enables visitors to further explore and appreciate local culture, history and culinary traditions. For visitors, food is more than just a source of nutrition, providing deep cultural, social and personal connections. Each country and region boasts its own unique dishes, deeply tied to its history, culture and traditions. Therefore, enjoying local cuisine becomes an essential aspect of discovering and understanding the essence of a destination. In addition, food provides opportunities for meaningful interactions with local people, creating lasting memories and cultural exchange. This thesis focuses on exploring the dynamics of culinary tourism, especially in understanding its growth potential and strategic implications. Not only an indispensable part of the trip, cuisine also plays an important role in the travel experience, providing visitors with special cultural, social and personal experiences.

The thesis examined the role of cuisine in creating memories and experiences of unique cultural interactions. At the same time, the thesis also analyzes the global culinary tourism trend and its importance in exploiting and gaining a deeper understanding of local culture, history and culinary traditions. Finally, the author has researched and designed a product to bring a difference to the tourism market in Vietnam and contribute to the development of Vietmark's business activities.

Additionally, by targeting the Millennial demographic in Ho Chi Minh City, the aim is to tap into a generation that significantly influences the travel and tourism sector. This customer group prioritize immersive and authentic experiences, embracing technology for trip planning and exploration. Social connectivity is crucial for Millennials, who value sharing experiences on digital

platforms. Their preference for experiences over possessions drives a demand for tailored travel offerings. Understanding and catering to Millennial preferences is essential for businesses aiming to thrive in the competitive travel industry. (Sofronov 2018, 109-122.) In this thesis their key role as both consumers and influencers in the tourism market is recognized. Capitalizing on the interests and preferences of this demographic group along with Ho Chi Minh City's status as a major tourism hub will create a solid foundation for the research. Choosing Da Nang, Hoi An and Hue as the focal point for culinary tourism activities emphasizes cultural significance and geographical proximity, ensuring a seamless and enriching travel experience for visitors. By crafting a select three-day, two-night itinerary, the tour aims to satisfy the growing preferences of modern travelers looking for enriching culinary experiences.

Familiarization with the culinary cuisine of neighboring countries such as Japan and Thailand would enriches the analysis, providing valuable insights into culinary tourism patterns. The author chose Vietnam as the research center in this thesis, a decision largely based on the familiarity and deep understanding of the local culinary culture. This comparative approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in culinary tourism development, paving the way for the development of effective strategies to promote Vietnam's tourism industry.

In short, this thesis not only aims to contribute to the academic field but also wants to take practical actions to effectively exploit Vietnam's culinary heritage. The author hopes that the tour product designed in this thesis will soon be implemented by Vietmark company into practice. From there, it may create an attraction for tourists when participating in this culinary tour. In addition, the exploitation and development of culinary tourism will also create new job opportunities, increase income for local communities, and contribute to the comprehensive economic development of the country. At the same time, through creating special and unforgettable travel experiences, the thesis also contributes to enhancing the image and reputation of Vietnamese tourism.

## 2 Culinary tourism trends

Culinary tourism research explores different aspects of eating while traveling, from culinary experiences at public restaurants and local markets to private tours. It includes examining the evolution of cuisine from past to present and the formation of new trends in cuisine. Issues such as preserving and marketing local dishes as well as developing and managing culinary tourism experiences are important elements in culinary tourism. At the same time, developing and managing unique, quality culinary tourism experiences is a decisive factor in the attractiveness of a tourist destination. These efforts help create unique culinary experiences, attract tourists and promote the development of culinary tourism trends. (Hall, Cambourne, Sharples, Macionis, & Mitchell 2003, 1-8.)

Events are considered a type of experiential tourism product that reflects the trend of cooperation in the process towards experiential tourism. According to a UNWTO report on culinary tourism, events were identified as the most popular form of marketing in tourism. From researching trends and developments in the culinary tourism industry to organizing events, each stage contributes to a deeper understanding of how the culinary tourism industry reflects and adapts to consumer needs and trends. Events not only provide opportunities for visitors to experience but also highlight and promote the specialties and culinary culture of a locality. (Richards 2012, 15-17.)

Today's travel trends not only reflect the preferences and needs of travelers but are also shaped by messages from the media. Publications, videos, blogs and social networking sites not only introduce tourist destinations but also create unique virtual experiences and suggestions for tourists. Messages from the media are not only a source of inspiration for tourists but also influence their choice of locations, activities and travel experiences. Additionally, the media also plays an important role in creating awareness and encouraging tourists to participate in environmental protection activities, sustainable tourism and cultural interaction. Therefore, the relationship between tourism trends and messages from the media is an indispensable part in shaping and developing the current tourism industry. (Richards 2011, 3-4.)

Social media has changed the way tourists receive messages from tourist destinations. Instead of simply receiving information, visitors are stimulated to experience information that has been previously shared. This provides a deeper and more cohesive look at travel content. The message from the translator becomes a personal and meaningful experience, from objectification becoming part of each visitor's personal experience. Active participation and interaction are not only part of the experience, but also an inspiration for further interaction. When visitors actively participate in activities and interact with content, they become part of the travel experience, thereby creating memorable memories and deeply engaging with the place they are visiting. This makes the travel

experience more unique and enjoyable, while creating a lasting memory in the hearts of travelers. (Campos, Mendes, Valle, & Scott 2015, 3-18.)

In recent years, culinary tourism has seen a significant increase in popularity, fueled by travelers eagerness for unique culinary adventures and in-depth exploration of local culinary culture. First, there is a notable shift towards local authenticity and inclusion. Tourists are ditching the usual tourist dining spots to explore street food markets, participate in cooking sessions with local chefs and visit famous family eateries and learn from local experiences. Cooking experience and traditional recipes help make a difference in the finished product. (Sachdeva 2024.)

The next factor is that sustainability and ethical eating practices have taken center stage. Travelers now prioritize restaurants and experiences that emphasize locally sourced ingredients, support small-scale producers and combat food waste. Concepts like farm-to-table meals, zero-waste cooking classes and eco-friendly food tours are gaining traction with dedicated travelers. What's more, culinary tourism is growing beyond the ordinary, emphasizing adventure and discovery. Travelers are venturing off the beaten path to discover hidden culinary gems, embarking on tours of lesser-known areas and going on expeditions in search of unique gems. Activities like food-focused hikes, wine tastings, and farm stays are attracting more adventurous explorers. Besides, technology is reshaping the culinary tourism landscape. The digital platform facilitates the discovery, booking and engagement of food-related experiences. Virtual cooking classes, online food tours, and other tech-enabled services are revolutionizing travelers interaction with culinary tourism. Culinary tourism acts as a bridge for cultural and diplomatic exchange, promoting connections between countries and communities around the world. Through food festivals, international collaborations and food themed cultural exchanges, diverse culinary traditions are celebrated, promoting cross cultural understanding and global connection. These trends highlight the dynamic growth of culinary tourism, driven by travelers pursuit of authentic, sustainable and culturally rich experiences. As the industry continues to evolve, we can foresee further innovation and diversification in the range of culinary experiences available to travel enthusiasts around the world. (Barten 2024.)



### 3 Culinary tourism in Asian countries

In recent years, the tourism industry in Asia such as Japan, Thailand and Vietnam has grown strongly and diversified. The rapid growth in the number of tourists has attracted more and more international visitors to the region. Asian countries are transforming and developing new tourism products to attract a variety of tourists, including environmental tourism, resort tourism, or sport and culinary tourism. However, with fierce competition between countries and tourist destinations, there is a need for investment in tourism infrastructure and improving service quality. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant decline in Asia's tourism industry, posing a major challenge in recovering and rebuilding the tourism industry after the pandemic. However, despite facing challenges, the tourism industry in Asia continues to grow strongly and diversely. (Grebstad 2024.)

Asia is a remarkable and attractive tourist destination with many famous countries attracting millions of tourists each year. Among them, Japan is famous for its unique traditional culture, diverse and modern cuisine, along with historical sites such as Kyoto and Tokyo. Korea is a famous destination for tourists who love to enjoy cuisine with grilled meat dishes, kimchi, hot pot and visit cities like Seoul and Busan. China, with its long cultural heritage and famous landmarks such as Chengdu and Shanghai, attracts millions of visitors from around the world. Thailand is famous for beautiful beaches like Phuket and Koh Samui and unique and interesting cuisine. Finally, Vietnam is a familiar destination for many tourists who love traditional culture, natural beauty and diverse cuisine from beef noodle, banh mi to typical regional dishes. These countries are attractive destinations for tourists who want to explore the culture, cuisine and natural beauty typical of Asia. (Winter 2009, 3-10.)

When discussing culinary tourism in Asia, tourists often imagine the diverse culture, delicious flavors and rich traditions of this place. Asia, famous for its cultural and culinary diversity, attracts visitors with countless experiences. Each country in this region boasts unique cultures and cuisines, increasing the appeal of culinary tourism. The Asian cultural landscape is drawn by the contributions of ancient and diverse civilizations such as Japan, India, China, Thailand, Korea and Vietnam, each civilization contributing its own unique nature. The traditions, customs and lifestyle of these countries deeply influence their culinary customs and culinary delights. Moreover, Asian cuisine is famous for its abundance of flavors, spanning from subtle and elegant to robust and spicy, presenting a diverse array of enticing dishes. (Cwierka & Walraven 2002, 1-3.)

Depending on the location, one can enjoy dishes such as Japanese sushi, Indian curry, Vietnamese beef noodle or Korean kimchi. Every Asian country is proud of its culinary heritage, with its rich and distinctive dishes. Traditional dishes are often preserved and passed down from generation to

generation, playing an important role in maintaining and developing each country's culinary culture. Therefore, when talking about culinary tourism in Asia, we emphasize the cultural diversity, delicious tastes, and rich culinary heritage of each country, attracting food lovers from all over the world who want to explore and experience. (Mintz 2019.)

### **3.1 Culinary tourism in Japan and Thailand**

Japanese culinary tourism attracts and is famous for tourists from many countries for many reasons. First, Japanese cuisine is very diverse and rich, from sashimi and sushi to ramen, tempura, udon, and many other traditional dishes. Each dish has its own unique way of cooking and serving, creating a unique and rich culinary experience for visitors. Second, Japan is famous for its high standards of quality and culinary sophistication. Fresh ingredients, sophisticated processing techniques, and beautiful presentation are the highlights, attracting the attention of food lovers. Third, Japanese cuisine is not just about enjoying food but also about experiencing and understanding the country's culture and traditions. From traditional dinners at ryokan restaurants to food festivals such as Hanami, cherry blossom viewing, Matsuri festival, visitors can learn more about Japanese life and customs. Finally, besides enjoying cuisine at the restaurant, visitors can also participate in unique experiences such as visiting night markets, participating in traditional cooking classes, visiting sake factories, or participating in natural culinary tours to experience hunting and cooking with local ingredients. In short, Japanese culinary tourism is attractive and famous to tourists not only because of the variety and quality of cuisine, but also because of the delicate combination of tradition, culture and diverse travel experiences. form that this country offers. (Traveling Canucks 2024.)

Thai culinary tourism attracts tourists from all over the world because of the uniqueness and diversity of local cuisine. With its delicate flavors, bold flavors and creativity in preparation, Thai cuisine is a cultural journey and culinary experience not to be missed. Dishes such as phad thai, tom yum, green curry, and mango sticky rice are not only famous worldwide but also demonstrate the richness and diversity of Thai culinary culture. In short, culinary tourism to Thailand is an exciting and colorful journey, providing an experience that not only pleases the taste buds but also enriches visitors' cultural and culinary knowledge. (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2019.)

### 3.2 Culinary tourism in Vietnam and Central Vietnam

Culinary is not only a part of daily life but also a symbol of Vietnam's cultural wealth and national identity. With a delicate combination of diverse ingredients and sophisticated processing techniques, Vietnamese cuisine is not only considered a culinary art but also an indispensable part of the country's history and traditions. Each region, from North to South, has its own unique characteristics in culinary culture, thereby creating unique and unmistakable flavors. For example, northern cuisine often has rich flavors with ingredients taken from the mountains and sea, while central cuisine often focuses on sophistication and balance between spices. In the Mekong delta, cuisine is often sweet and approachable. With a delicate combination of diverse natural ingredients such as fresh seafood from the East Sea, typical spices such as fish sauce and vermicelli noodles, along with sophistication in processing techniques, Central culinary has become one of the symbols of Vietnamese cuisine. Central culinary is not only an important part of Vietnamese culture but also a highlight not to be missed when visiting this country. (Vietnam travel magazine 2020.)

Vietnam is a country located in Southeast Asia. Vietnam is located in the tropical climate zone. Most regions in Vietnam mainly have two seasons: rainy season and dry season. This climatic characteristic has greatly influenced Vietnamese cuisine. Nature and climate are favorable for growing many types of vegetables and spices as well as raising many animals that can provide meat for dishes. Besides, the ingenuity in food processing techniques and the chef's great passion have created a unique and famous Vietnamese culinary.

Vietnamese culinary reflects the quintessence of Vietnamese culture and lifestyle through its own unique features. The sociable nature of the Vietnamese people is evident in their openness to diverse culinary influences, utilizing locally sourced ingredients to prepare delicious and nutritious dishes that highlight Vietnamese ingenuity. Emphasizing balance, Vietnamese culinary meticulously combines protein, fiber and vegetables for a diverse culinary experience, enhanced by customizable dipping sauces like fish sauce. Dining etiquette, symbolized by the use of chopsticks, emphasizes moderation and finesse, enhancing the overall dining experience. Central cuisine in particular represents Vietnamese culinary traditions with unique dishes, ingredients and preparation methods that suit local preferences. Rooted in tradition, Central cuisine reflects a deep understanding of Vietnamese principles such as balance and harmony, ensuring dishes that are rich in flavor and good for health. Furthermore, Central cuisine is also the culinary expression of Vietnamese cultural identity, characterized by craftsmanship and hospitality. Chefs demonstrate meticulousness in preparation and presentation, showing care and affection for diners, while group meals demonstrate the community values and cohesion of Vietnamese people. Overall, Vietnamese cuisine is considered a culinary masterpiece that not only demonstrates culinary excellence but also offers profound insights into Vietnamese cultural identity and lifestyle. Through skillful preparation

techniques and shared culinary traditions, Vietnamese cuisine continues to fascinate food enthusiasts around the world. (Vietravel 2018.)

The culinary of the North, Central, and South of Vietnam has a number of different characteristics. However, the cuisine of all three regions has similarities, creating the richness and diversity of Vietnamese cuisine. Among them, the culinary of the Central region of Vietnam is considered typical of Vietnamese cuisine. The Central region of Vietnam has long been famous for its ancient beauty because it has many mausoleums, temples, and palaces built for ancient kings who once lived in this land. In addition, when talking about cities in the Central region, people will have a deep impression of the meticulously prepared, meticulous, unique and wonderfully flavorful dishes that are famous around the world. (Vietnam tourism 2016.)

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Central cuisine stands out for its rich and spicy flavors, quite different from the milder flavors of Southern and Northern dishes. Chili peppers, a staple ingredient, provide a spicy flavor, supplemented by the region's preference for saltier flavors, influenced by harsh climates and limited food sources. Therefore, Central dishes are meticulously prepared with high-quality ingredients and moderate salt to ensure both visual appeal and culinary satisfaction. Furthermore, the preparation of Central dishes also includes a meticulous process consisting of many steps, drawn from the rich culinary heritage of Hue royal cuisine. Whether it's a daily meal or a ceremonial feast, Central region

chefs approach each dish with precision, choosing fresh ingredients and seasonings skillfully. This attention to detail extends to the presentation of the dishes, which are reminiscent of royal banquets, elevating even the simplest dishes to regal status. Central cuisine also reflects the royal sophistication that stems from the region's historical relationship with the Vietnamese royal family, expressed through innovative cooking techniques despite the scarcity of ingredients. In general, Central cuisine represents the quintessence of Vietnamese culinary traditions, characterized by unique flavors, meticulous preparation, and typical local ingredients. (Tasty kitchen 2021.)

## **4 The position of the Millennial generation customer group in the tourism industry**

The tourism industry should target millennials or generation Y because this is a particularly important and potential customer group. This generation not only makes up the largest proportion of the world's population today, but also tends to travel more than previous generations. Millennials set high standards for travel experiences, they love to explore new places, experience unique culture, and share memories on social networks. They are also important for personalizing the travel experience, from finding unique activities to enjoying premium amenities. By focusing on this generation, the travel industry can create tailored product and service packages, an enhance travel experiences and create deep connections with customers. (World Economic Forum 2021.)

For this generation, travel is not just a leisure activity, but also a part of lifestyle. They do not hesitate to spend more to experience new things and explore the world around them. Traveling is not simply for relaxation, but also an opportunity for them to expand their horizons, enrich their knowledge and experience diverse cultural values. This shows a change in the perspectives and dreams of today's young generation, as they not only focus on accumulating wealth but also appreciate the experiences and memories that travel brings. Even sometimes this generation, they may spend more on travel trips than they earn. (Taylor 2018, 165-167.)

Millennials, also known as Generation Y, are individuals born between 1980 and 2000, marking a generation shaped by rapid technological advances and global connectivity. Growing up amid economic turmoil and geopolitical shifts, they witnessed the transformative power of technology and digital innovation. This era of constant evolution has given the millennial generation unparalleled access to information and the unprecedented ability to engage with diverse perspectives and cultures around the world. Embracing this digital age, millennials aim for a landscape where connectivity knows no bounds, cultivating a generation characterized by adaptability, creativity, and deep awareness of global issues. (Naumovska 2017, 123–133.)

### **4.1 Characteristics of millennial generation tourists from Ho Chi Minh City**

Millennials in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, demonstrate diversity and uniqueness when participating in the tourism industry. They also prioritize health and beauty, promote the mindset of "green living", and are willing to pay higher prices for green tourism and community tourism. In addition, this generation also actively participates in volunteer activities, advocates for gender equality, and protects the environment and resources. The combination of tradition and modernity in tourism consumption is their highlight. Furthermore, they do not hesitate to explore new, modern tourism trends while still

maintaining their love and appreciation for traditional Vietnamese culture. Their creativity and dynamism help them create unique and attractive travel experiences, which they often share widely on social networks. (Minh Hai 2018.)

The millennial generation in Ho Chi Minh city also welcomes the digitalization trend in tourism, regularly searching for information and booking services through mobile applications and websites. They also value tourism experiences that are sustainable and meaningful to local communities, demonstrate social spirit, and support local economic and cultural development. To effectively attract and serve millennials, travel businesses need to promote flexibility and innovation in their approach and delivery of travel experiences. This can include leveraging digital technology to create smart mobile applications, interactive websites, and virtual reality experiences to stimulate visitor interaction and engagement. Additionally, developing diverse and flexible travel packages, from tours through local communities to nature and adventure experiences, is also an effective way to attract interest of this generation. In addition, businesses also need to focus on sustainable development and environmental protection in tourism activities. Designing tourism programs that have a low impact on the environment, encouraging the use of public transport and electric vehicles, and encouraging environmentally friendly tourism activities are important factors that millennials are very concerned about. Finally, sharing, and re-respecting Vietnam's unique cultural values also plays an important role in attracting the interest of this generation. Businesses can organize cultural experience activities to introduce and honor the unique cultural identity of a country. These activities may include learning to cook traditional dishes, participating in local cultural festivals, or visiting historical and cultural relics. (Minh Hai 2018.)

#### **4.2 Needs and desires of millennial generation tourists from Ho Chi Minh City**

In the vibrant urban landscape of Ho Chi Minh City, millennials thrive amid economic growth that is driving Vietnam forward. Positioned at the forefront of travel trends, this dynamic generation has a significant influence on industry spending dynamics. With a deep awareness of the preferences of the millennial generation, millions of innovative resort models have appeared, infusing the market with a new vitality. Traveling experts unanimously acknowledge millennials are not only avid travelers but also the demographic most inclined to invest in transformative experiences. They are the architects of paradigm shifts in the global tourism sector, nurtured in the digital age where technology rules. Blessed with natural tech savvy, millennials navigate the online domain with ease, laying the foundation for the explosive growth of social media platforms. (Minh Hai 2018.)

Driven by a desire to explore, millennials head to destinations that spark their imagination online before embarking on real-life adventures. Their penchant for documenting and sharing their adventures on social media platforms is testament to their desire to be part of a larger story, to enjoy and

express the distinctive nature of their journey. Therefore, travel services that promise unique and enriching experiences will attract a discerning millennial audience. Furthermore, the hospitality industry in Ho Chi Minh City has responded to the preferences of millennials by offering innovative accommodation options tailored to their needs. From boutique hotels with sleek designs and high-tech amenities to co-living spaces that foster community and connectivity, the city's accommodation scene reflects the millennial generation's desire for authenticity, convenience, and social interaction. Moreover, the dining scene in Ho Chi Minh City has also evolved to cater to millennial tastes and preferences. From trendy cafes serving artisanal coffee and Instagram-worthy dishes to street food markets offering a diverse array of local and international flavors, millennials have a plethora of culinary experiences to choose from. This culinary diversity aligns with millennials' desire for exploration and discovery, making Ho Chi Minh City an ideal destination for food-loving travelers seeking authentic and memorable dining experiences. (Truong Think 2021.)



## 5 Process description

In mid-summer 2023, after a successful two-months trip in central Vietnam, the author leveraged the network to connect with individuals in travel companies based in Ho Chi Minh City. During an important meeting with the Deputy Managing Director of Vietmark Travel Company, author gained a better understanding of their continuous efforts in developing new tourism ideas for the central region of Vietnam. The author's introduction to the emerging culinary tourism trend clearly piqued the interest of Vietmark company. The author was assigned by Vietmark company to design a trip: 3 days, 2 nights journey to explore the cuisine of central Viet Nam. Figure 1 below illustrates the detailed steps in the thesis implementation process.

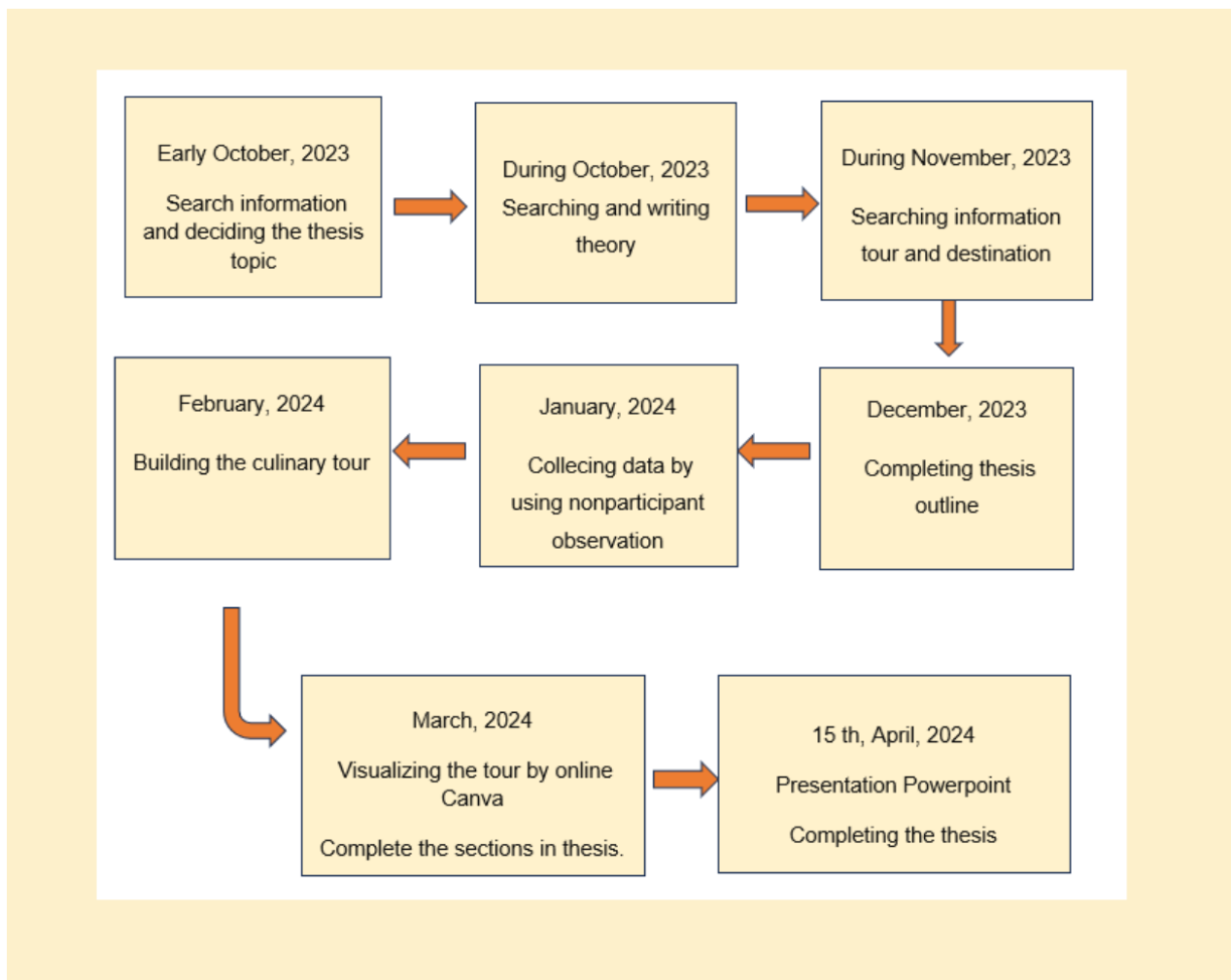


Figure 1. Progress of the thesis

To ensure timely completion of the thesis by April 2024, author have developed a comprehensive thesis schedule. Initially, author's focus was on gaining a solid foundational understanding of the theoretical framework, a task that required significant time and effort. The challenge of sourcing appropriate information and citing accurate references added the complexity of this phase. Moving to the next stage, author delved into the geographical landscape and tourism assets of central Vietnam. This observation plays a key role in identifying potential customer segments to target effectively.

In the process of designing a tour, identifying target customers is important to clearly define the tour's goals and create a suitable and attractive travel experience for the specific customer group. To do this, it is necessary to understand and analyze factors including customer group characteristics, travel purposes, budget and economic conditions, geographical and cultural characteristics, as well as competition paintings and distinguishing factors. Conducting customer research and studying the attractions and activities at tourist destinations will set the stage for developing appealing and successful tourism products in the market, effectively targeting specific customer groups. Working with corporate partners VietMark further refined the focus, narrowing the target demographic to millennials residing in Ho Chi Minh City. In addition, the author needs to apply this knowledge in the process of carefully reviewing information related to the tourism attraction factors of the central region and the unique characteristics of potential customer groups.

## **5.1 Methodology**

In this thesis, the author used the non-participant observation method to research factors related to culinary tourism from which the author made practical and valuable conclusions and recommendations in the field of culinary tourism. Additionally, this approach serves as a framework to explain and gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind observed events and behaviors and their consequences. The versatility and flexibility of this method provides researchers with a broad and thorough means of investigating and elucidating phenomena observed during research. (Grbich, Kitto, & Chesters, 2008, 243.)

The author conducted a product-based thesis by building theoretical frameworks along with creating specific products. This requires the author not only to research and learn about relevant theoretical knowledge, but also to have practical skills to implement and create products corresponding to the framework theory. By combining theory and practice, the author not only creates new information but also brings specific and valuable applications in practice. At the same time, creating products also helps reinforce and demonstrate the proposed theories, creating greater persuasion and application in the research and practice community.

In the summer of 2023, the author spent time thoroughly researching the central region to collect information for this thesis. Through trips to this land, the author was able to directly interact with the culture, geography, and local people. This helped the author have a more comprehensive and profound view of the unique features and tourism potential of the central region. At the same time, through these direct experiences, the author also could record emotions and information from reality. Although the author lives in Finland but has family and friends in the central provinces of Vietnam, which helps her gather information about local cuisine. Besides, the author has also lived in Ho Chi Minh City for more than 20 years, which has helped the author accumulate a lot of experience and a deep understanding of the needs and interests of the local community. This understanding not only helps the author shape appropriate travel activities and experiences, but also creates a friendly and attractive travel environment for customers participating in the tour. Therefore, based on the developed theoretical framework and surveys and practical experiences, the author can find suitable locations based on previous experience and knowledge, which will help the author in the process of researching and designing a tour product to explore the cuisine of central Vietnam.

From this perspective, the author can draw inferences from the observed texts and use them to reflect on the concepts and themes explored. This facilitates decisions regarding the selection or exclusion of locations or stops throughout the tour design process. In addition, the author also uses analysis and comparison methods to evaluate the feasibility and priority of each option. Aims to ensure that the final decision is made based on rigorous and reasonable arguments.

Considering this perspective, the author wishes to provide suggestions to enrich the image of local cuisine. This effort seeks to enhance the authenticity and regional nature of tourism experiences, in line with the insights presented in the theoretical framework. This may entail promoting more interactive encounters, such as participating in culinary demonstrations or exploring local markets to purchase ingredients. In addition, the author also wants to encourage the use of local ingredients and serving styles to create rich and diverse culinary experiences for visitors. This not only helps increase the attractiveness of the tour but also promotes the development and preservation of local culinary culture.

## **5.2 Creating the observation table and setting up the criteria of the chosen spot**

When designing a culinary tour, choosing a destination not only creates a unique culinary experience but also an opportunity for visitors to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the local culture and lifestyle. A carefully selected destination can be an opportunity to taste typical dishes, participate in traditional activities and meet local people to better understand how they prepare and enjoy dishes. Therefore, choosing a location is an important part of building a meaningful and memorable culinary tourism experience. The goal is to conduct a culinary tour throughout the central region at

the request of VietMark company for a group of millennial customers from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Throughout this culinary journey, participants will enjoy about 9 different dishes and drinks at 9 separate locations, carefully selected to have the most optimal itinerary in terms of time, space and location. When coming up with an idea for a culinary tour of the central region, the author wanted to seamlessly combine world-famous culinary trends to increase appeal and meet customers innovative needs. This effort not only enriches participants understanding and appreciation of local culinary traditions but also provides an authentic taste of culinary tourism in the region. Furthermore, this initiative is also a platform to promote cooperation between tourism companies and local households, promoting cultural exchange, tourism development and economic growth in the community. Cooperation between tourism companies and local households will promote mutual benefits, promote cultural exchange, and boost the local economy through tourism development initiatives.

When designing a culinary tour, choosing a destination requires careful consideration based on many important criteria. Firstly, the destination needs to reflect the diversity and richness of local cuisine, including signature dishes and culinary cultures. This helps create unique culinary experiences for visitors. Another equally important criterion is the sincerity and tradition of local cuisine, contributing to making the travel experience more profound and meaningful. Additionally, food safety and cleanliness are also considered indispensable factors, ensuring that visitors can enjoy cuisine comfortably and with peace of mind. Finally, choosing a destination needs to consider popularity and convenience, helping culinary tours attract many customers and be easy to organize. The author used some of the standard premises described in appendix 2.

### **5.3 Search and choose places to enjoy local culinary**

The author spent a lot of time searching for information from existing tours of tourism companies operating strongly in Vietnam such as: Saigontourist, Vietravel, Sinh travel... In addition to searching for information online through search engines, the author also actively consulted blogs and reviews about culinary tours from diverse sources. These articles not only provide an overview of local culinary destinations but also share real-life experiences from tourists, travel companies and local people. Thanks to these reviews, the author was able to better understand the richness and diversity of local cuisine, as well as received suggestions and advice from people who have gone through the experience before. By using keywords and phrases related to culinary tour design, the author was able to expand the search to places to enjoy the cuisine of central Vietnam city areas in an effective way. Keywords such as "Central culinary tourism", "Central specialties", "Central local restaurants", "Da Nang cuisine", "Hue cuisine", "Hoi An cuisine" can be used helps the author discovered rich destinations with typical local cuisine. At the same time, using phrases such as "Hue places to eat", "Hoi An restaurants", "Da Nang delicacies" will also helped the author find detailed and diverse information about dishes and culinary locations of central cities.

The author has invested time and effort to research famous tourist destinations in central Vietnam and compiled the information in appendix 3. By extensively learning about local culture and cuisine, the author could accurately assess the travel experiences millennials can expect when visiting the area. Besides, during the field survey trip, the author had the opportunity to directly contact the attractions. This helps the author better understand the expectations, preferences and needs of the millennial generation when participating in travel activities. Based on feedback from this tour, the author can adjust and refine the travel plan to best meet the needs of his target customers.

After observing and researching famous tourist destinations in the central region, the author continued to learn more about the specialty dishes of these locations. This process not only helps the author better understand the culinary culture of each locality but also opens a new door to explore the diversity and richness of central region cuisine. In this way, the author can collect detailed information about the ingredients, preparation methods, and origins of specialty dishes, thereby creating a foundation for creating culinary experiences that appeal to tourists.

Furthermore, enjoying specialty dishes and participating in their preparation with local people is a unique and meaningful unforgettable experience. Stories about the origin, preparation, and cultural significance of each dish shared by local people not only help visitors gain a deeper understanding of local cuisine but also create a cultural connection deeply between them and the local community. This not only helps visitors have a unique cultural experience but also promotes interaction and cultural exchange between communities, contributing to promoting understanding and stimulating the spirit of discovery among tourists sustainable calendar.

Referencing existing tours from other companies is an important part of the process of designing a new culinary tour for the central region of Vietnam. Firstly, this helps the author better understand the strengths and weaknesses of existing tours, from which valuable lessons can be drawn to apply to new tour design. In addition, researching existing tours also helps the author shape market trends and requirements, thereby best meeting the wishes and needs of tourists. Besides, referencing existing tours also helps the author find new and creative points to highlight his tour, thereby attracting customer attention and creating competition for its tourism products. Finally, consulting existing tours also helps the author build a system of standards and quality for his tour, from choosing locations, to organizing activities and services client. After consulting the tours, the author summarizes the locations and specialty dishes of the cities of Da Nang, Hoi An, and Hue to make appropriate choices in the process of designing a culinary tour.

## 6 Product description 3 day food tour to Central Vietnam

A culinary tour to explore Central Vietnam helps customers discover the typical flavors and culinary traditions of the central region. Tour departs from Tan Son Nhat airport, Ho Chi Minh City. For distances over 150km, the customers will travel by plane, ensuring swift transportation. For shorter distances, the customers will enjoy the comfort of a luxuriously designed car with 40 spacious seats. The tour itinerary is properly arranged for the customers to explore the bustling streets of Da Nang, the tranquility of Cu Lao Cham, the antiquity of Hoi An Ancient Town and the luxury of Hue royal court. Designed for food enthusiasts, this tour with a variety of activities will bring countless unforgettable culinary experiences to the customers every day.

Designed for food enthusiasts, this culinary tour is explained in more detail in chapters 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 with a variety of activities will bring countless unforgettable culinary experiences to visitors every day. In this thesis, the author designed activities in a culinary tour to explore central Vietnam. After that, the choice of restaurants, hotels and means of transportation will be chosen and decided by Vietmark company. The following is a summary of the main activities during the culinary tour:

Day 1: enjoy seafood cuisine in stunning Da Nang and Cu Lao Cham, where tourists have the chance to sample a range of local delicacies.

Day 2: invites guests to immerse themselves in the culinary wonders of Hoi An Ancient Town, followed by an enchanting evening boat tour along the river, offering captivating views of this historic site.

Day 3: brings the opportunity to explore the culinary beauty of Hue City. Visitors will participate in an interactive cooking class and interact with local people. Thereby helping visitors gain knowledge about the rich culinary culture of this land.

Brochure introducing the culinary tour has been designed with basic and necessary information to help customers visualize the basic information about the tour (Appendix 1). Author also discussed with some employees of VietMark company to come up with the expected price for this culinary tour. Price for adults is 8,500,000 VND (around 330 euros). Children from 2 to 5 years old will be free. Children from 6 years old to 11 years old will be charged 70% of the ticket price compared to the adult price. This ticket price includes hotel rental, transportation by plane, tour bus, boat, and ship. Ticket price also includes meals and tour guide. Especially when customers book a trip for 5 adults at the same time, they will receive a 10% discount per adult.

During each day's tour, visitors will be led through a variety of culinary experiences, from traditional local dishes to new, unique culinary experiences. The activities on the trip are not only about enjoying delicious flavors, but each dish is also an opportunity for visitors to gain a deeper understanding of the history, culture, and culinary traditions. From how to prepare dishes to interesting stories about them, visitors will go through a journey of thought and deep understanding of the culinary heritage of Central Vietnam. Figure 2 below presents the key information about the 3 days of the trip.

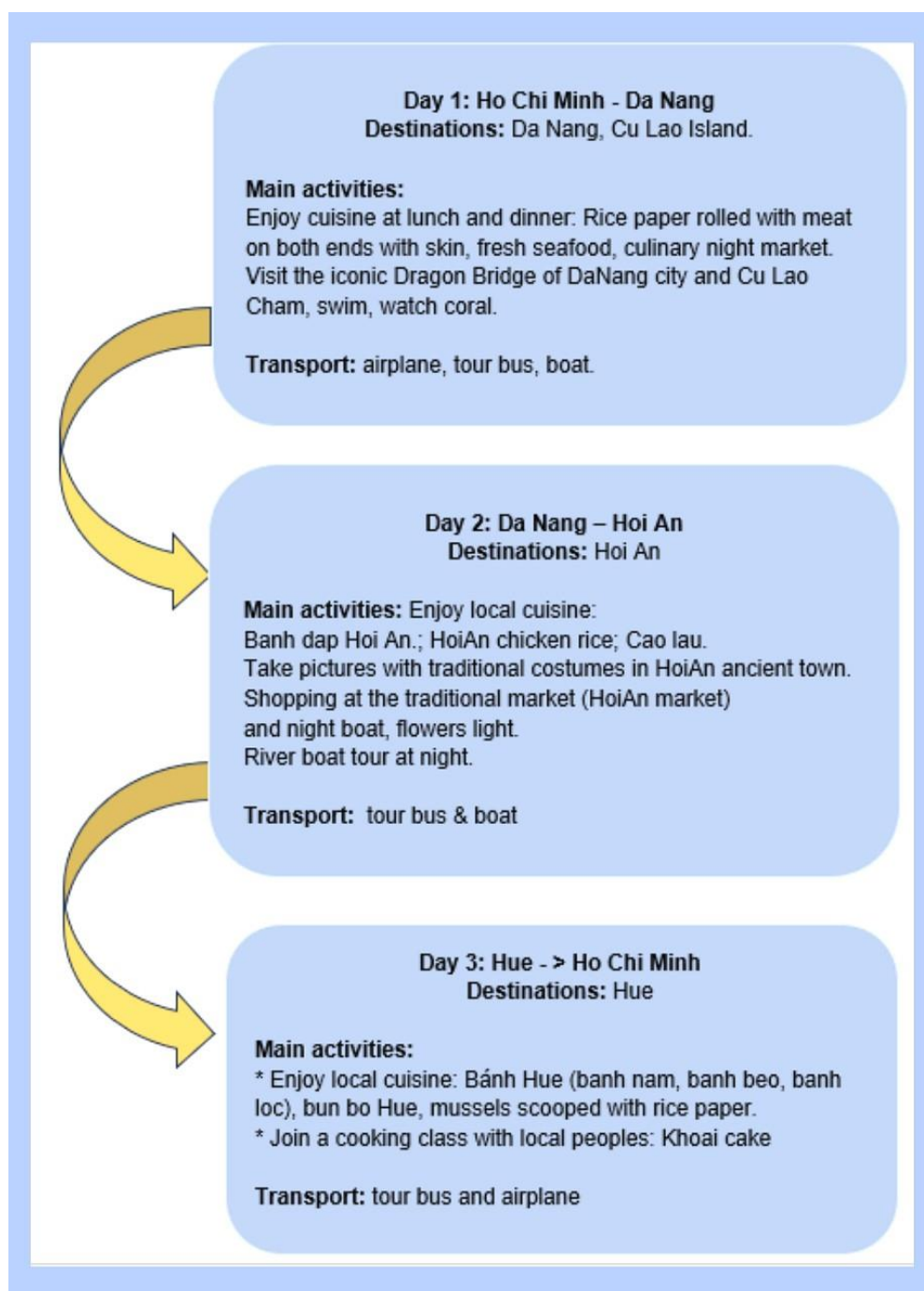


Figure 2. Key information about the 3 days of the trip

## 6.1 Day 1: Culinary experience in Da Nang city and Cham Islands

The departure point at Tan Son Nhat Airport brings convenience and efficiency to passengers, ensuring quick travel to the destination. Strategically located in Ho Chi Minh City, this airport serves as a gateway to countless other tourist destinations in Vietnam and is also one of the two largest airports in Vietnam with international flights go all over the world. This is the ideal departure point for domestic and international trips by plane.

Da Nang international airport, located in the heart of central Vietnam, serves as an important hub for travelers to explore the region's diverse attractions. With modern facilities and efficient services, the airport ensures a smooth and convenient travel experience for travelers to or from this vibrant coastal city. From here, the customers can start an unforgettable journey to explore the natural beauty of the scenic spots of Da Nang and surrounding areas. From the airport tourists will be picked up by tour bus and start the tour with some sights like Dragon Bridge which symbolizes the prosperity and resilience of Da Nang city. Dragon Bridge stretches across the Han River, this architectural wonder is famous for its enchanting dragon design and spectacular fire spray on weekend evenings. After visiting Dragon Bridge, visitors will enjoy a delicious lunch of rice paper rolls with pork skin on both ends.

This is a culinary tour so the customers will enjoy specialty dishes at special restaurants. Vietmark company will discuss with the restaurant in advance so that the restaurant manager or restaurant staff will prepare content to introduce in detail the typical ingredients and an overview of how to prepare the dish. In addition, VietMark tour guides and restaurant staff will guide customers on how to enjoy food properly, so that each meal becomes a unique and wonderful cultural and culinary experience.

The customers will not only be welcomed with enthusiasm from restaurant staff in introducing dishes but will also be encouraged to feel free to ask about all relevant details. Staff is willing to share information about ingredients, preparation methods and how to fully enjoy the dish. In the case of this dish, especially the rice paper rolled with pork skin on both ends (Figure 3), tourists may express curiosity about why the pork has skin on both sides. This not only evokes curiosity but also creates a fun and engaging experience, making enjoying the food special and unforgettable for the customers.





Figure 3. Rice paper rolls with pork skin on both ends

Rice paper rolled with pork skin on both ends is one of the specialties not to be missed when traveling to Da Nang. This dish harmoniously combines the crunchiness of rice paper, the aroma of pork and the sweetness of raw vegetables, creating a unique and attractive culinary experience. The main ingredients of this cake include thin rice paper leaves made from rice flour, thinly sliced pork skin on both ends, and raw vegetables such as raw vegetables, herbs, spice, and special dipping with the sauce. The preparation is simple but sophisticated, each pork rice paper roll is carefully and evenly wrapped, creating an attractive shape and attractive color. When enjoying, the customers will feel the rich taste of 2-skin pork mixed with the crispy taste of rice paper and the aroma of herbs and lettuce. Discovering rice paper rolls with pork skin on both ends is a great experience to explore the unique culinary culture of Da Nang and enjoy the exquisite flavors of central Vietnam. An indispensable part of the experience of enjoying pork skin rice paper rolls in Da Nang is the special dipping sauce that comes with it. This dipping sauce not only enhances the crispy taste of the rice paper but also highlights the typical flavor of the pork and accompanying vegetables. The dipping sauce is usually made from a delicate blend of fish sauce, sugar, garlic, chili, and lemon. With the ideal mixing ratio, the sauce will have a flavor that is both rich, sweet and sour, perfectly balanced. When the customers enjoying pork rice paper rolls, dipping the rolls in the dipping sauce will create a new and attractive experience. (Vinwonders 2023.)

After lunch and exploring Da Nang's famous dishes, the customers will start the sightseeing bus trip to the next stop: Cu Lao Cham. As the journey unfolds, the tour guide will paint a vivid picture of the charm and charm that awaits on Cu Lao Cham, enticing tourists with its pristine beaches, lush land-

scapes, and rich cultural heritage. Upon arrival, tourists will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a variety of culinary activities specifically designed to showcase the island's fresh seafood dishes.

At Cu Lao Cham, snorkeling to see coral is an experience not to be missed for tourists who like to explore the ocean. Vietmark company will contact a team of professional and experienced tour guides so that visitors can immerse themselves in the exciting underwater world, discovering the diverse beauty of various types of coral and marine life. If the customers don't want to snorkel to see coral or swim, they can visit local seafood markets to enjoy fresh seafood dishes. One of the famous markets is Bai Bang market, located near the coast with a diverse selection of fresh seafood brought out daily by local fishermen.

Enjoying seafood dishes at Cu Lao Cham is not only a wonderful culinary experience but also an opportunity to discover the unique and rich flavors of the sea. With a variety of seafood types and rich ways of preparation, the customers can enjoy wonderful delicacies such as: stone crab, squid, abalone, lobsters (Figure 4) etc. Enjoying seafood dishes is not just about a taste experience that also brings many health benefits. Seafood is rich in protein, omega-3 fats, and other important nutrients, which help provide energy, increase resistance, and maintain heart health. At the same time, enjoying fresh seafood is also a great way to end a long day of exploring and relaxing on a beautiful island like Cu Lao Cham.



Figure 4. Lobsters

After watching the sunset at Cu Lao Cham, the customers will return to Da Nang city, check in to the hotel and rest. After that, the tourists will begin the journey to explore and dine at the famous night food market in Da Nang. At this bustling food market, the customers can enjoy a variety of local

specialties without spending much time traveling. From delicious street food to mouth-watering seafood dishes, the night food market offers countless delicious dishes to suit every taste. The customers can immerse themselves in the vibrant atmosphere, enjoy the flavors of Central region cuisine and enjoy the vibrant atmosphere of the market. The distance from Cu Lao Cham to Da Nang city center is only about 45 kilometers, which is a very reasonable distance for tourists without spending too much time traveling. Staying in the central area of Da Nang city gives the customers the opportunity to admire the sparkling city lights at night and enjoy many diverse amenities right in the city center.

## 6.2 Day 2: Explore the culinary of Hoi An ancient town and night boat tour on the river

On the second day of the trip, the customers will travel by bus to the ancient town of Hoi An, located about 40 km from Da Nang. In the morning, the customers will visit famous relics of the Old Town and enjoy Hoi An banh dap as the breakfast (Figure 5). Hoi An Banh Dap is not simply a type of cake but also a symbol of the unique culinary culture of this ancient land. The cake is made from thin, smooth rice paper sheets, prepared from natural rice flour and rich local fish sauce. A special feature of Hoi An pounding cake is the traditional processing process and the hand-beating process. After being baked until golden and crispy, the cake will be gently beaten with a wooden stick to create small pieces of cake. These small pieces of cake will become crispy and more flavorful.



Figure 5. Banh dap Hoi An

The next activity is a visit to traditional food markets, where the customers will witness and experience the vibrant atmosphere of local life and see firsthand the ingredients, foods, and specialties of this land. At noon, the customers will enjoy Hoi An chicken rice (Figure 6), with detailed explanations of the ingredients and preparation from the restaurant staff. VietMark company will discuss with the restaurant in advance so they can prepare a presentation to introduce the dish to the customers. Emphasizing that this is a culinary tour will help restaurant staff pay attention to introducing culinary-related factors in more detail. Hoi An chicken rice dish usually includes main ingredients such as soft, fragrant boiled chicken, thinly sliced; sticky and delicious white rice; Fresh raw vegetables such as spinach, cucumber and cabbage; accompanied by a bowl of rich broth made from chicken bones and natural spices.



Figure 6. Chicken rice Hoi An

The special feature of Hoi An chicken rice is not only the delicious taste of the dish but also the way it is prepared and served. After being boiled, the chicken will be sliced thinly and marinated with spices, creating a unique and delicious flavor. The rice is cooked evenly, soft, and fragrant, creating the perfect combination with the chicken and broth. Hoi An chicken rice is often served with spices such as sweet and sour fish sauce, soy sauce and green chili, creating a rich and attractive flavor. This dish is not only a culinary experience but also a part of Hoi An's tourist culture, attracting tourists from all over to enjoy and explore.

After enjoying a delicious lunch with the famous Hoi An chicken rice dish, the customers will have the opportunity to visit souvenir stalls in the Old Town to look for unique and typical items of this land. At these stalls, they can buy souvenirs, local specialties or handicraft products made by local artisans.

Besides, the customers will also experience a part of traditional Vietnamese culture by taking photos in traditional costumes in the Old Quarter. In traditional costumes, the customers can pose and capture beautiful and impressive moments, to bring back unique photos and memories of their memorable journey in Hoi An.

The afternoon will continue with visiting some unique tourist attractions and enjoying Cao Lau which is a dish imbued with the cultural identity of Hoi An (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Cao lau Hoi An

Cao Lau dish is one of the typical culinary symbols of Hoi An, famous for its unique flavor and delicate combination of local ingredients. This is a traditional dish originating from the ancient land of Hoi An and has become an indispensable part of the menu of many restaurants and eateries in this locality. Cao Lau dishes are often made from basic ingredients such as vermicelli, pork or shrimp, lettuce, some other herbs, and typical spices such as broth from pork bones. The name "Cao lau" comes from the way the noodles are made, where the noodles are made from special rice flour soaked in ash or large water, then cooked in a delicious broth. A special feature of Cao Lau dish is the richness and diversity in how it is prepared and served. Each restaurant or person cooks broth and prepares Cao Lau noodles in a unique way, creating unique and characteristic flavors. Pork is often sliced thinly and deep-fried, creating a delicious crispy crust when eaten with noodles and broth. In the evening, the customers begin their boat trip along the river in Hoi An ancient town area. Colorful lanterns with sparkling lights will create an impression on visitors.

During the trip, the customers are invited to participate in a special tradition: releasing flower lanterns onto the shimmering river surfaces. Each lantern is decorated with flower petals and lit by small candles, carrying wishes of happiness, prosperity, and love. As the lanterns float gently on the water, the gentle light creates an enchanting scene, making everyone on board feel relaxed and at peace. This experience will leave a deep impression, a memorable memory of the ancient beauty of Hoi An ancient town. At the end of the second day of the trip, after spending an exciting day in Hoi An, the customers will return to Da Nang city to rest and relax. On the way back, they can enjoy the beautiful views of the coast and the sparkling night streets of Da Nang.

### **6.3 Day 3: Explore the culinary of Hue city with cooking class and local people**

After leaving Da Nang, the tour bus will take tourists to Hue city, an important historical and cultural destination of Vietnam. The distance between Da Nang and Hue is about 100 kilometers. When the customers visit Hue, they will experience a special breakfast with traditional Hue cakes (Figure 8)



Figure 8. Hue cake

The list of cakes can include banh beo, banh nam, and banh loc. Each type of cake has its own unique flavor and method of making, creating a diverse and rich culinary experience. Hue cake is not only an indispensable part of Hue cuisine but also a symbol of the unique culinary culture of this city. This demonstrates the magic of processing techniques and creativity in using local ingredients to create delicious and unique dishes. Banh beo, banh nam, and banh loc are three famous and typical traditional cakes of Hue cuisine for many reasons such as typical ingredients: These cakes are made from rich and diverse ingredients usually rice flour, starch, and other natural ingredients taken from Hue land. Combining unique processing techniques: Making and processing banh beo, banh nam, and banh loc requires skill and sophistication. From cooking the dough, kneading the dough, to folding and cooking the cake, each step is done carefully and meticulously. Therefore, the cook can create unique flavors: Each type of cake has a unique and different flavor. Banh beo often has a sweet taste from shrimp or pork, banh nam often has a rich flavor from pork or shrimp, and

banh beo often has the chewy taste of the dough and the softness of the filling. These traditional cakes have been an indispensable part of Hue cuisine and culture since ancient times, growing and developing strongly until now. Passed down through many generations, the art of making these cakes is still preserved and ensures the uniqueness and essence of Hue.

Furthermore, this hands-on experience not only provides insight into the complex preparation process of these delicacies but also fosters a deeper connection with Hue's culinary traditions. The customers can enjoy local ingredients, understand the importance of each step in the baking process, and appreciate the craftsmanship that goes into creating these iconic dishes. This interactive session promotes cultural exchange and appreciation as visitors actively participate in preserving and promoting Hue's culinary heritage. It serves as a bridge between generations, ensuring that these age-old recipes continue to be treasured and passed down for years to come. Through this rich culinary journey, the customers not only enjoy the flavors of Hue but also bring home a new appreciation for its culinary arts and cultural heritage.

After enjoying Hue's traditional breakfast, the customers will visit some famous historical sites in the city center, such as Hue Royal Palace, Hue Citadel, or Thien Mu Pagoda. These sites are important symbols of the Hue royal court and provide insight into the history and culture of this land. After exploring the historical sites, lunch time will be an opportunity to enjoy Hue beef noodle soup, a famous and typical dish of this land. Bun Bo Hue (Figure 9) is a hot vermicelli soup made from vermicelli, beef, and some spices, served with lettuce and herbs. The main ingredient of this dish is beef, usually ham or shoulder meat, cooked in a delicious broth from beef bones, along with spices such as lime leaves, chili, and pepper powder. Hue beef noodle dish is often eaten with raw vegetables such as raw vegetables, bean sprouts, bananas, and a little fish sauce can be added to enhance the flavor. This is a popular dish and is loved by Hue people not only because of its unique flavor but also because of its richness and sophistication in preparation.



Figure 9. Bun bo Hue

After enjoying a delicious lunch of Hue beef noodle soup, the customers will continue to visit one of the famous traditional markets in Hue. Hue Market is not only a place to shop but also an indispensable part of local life and culture. The famous market in Hue is called Dong Ba Market. This is one of the city's most unique shopping attractions and cultural experiences. Dong Ba Market is not only a place to shop for specialties and handicrafts, but also an indispensable part of the journey to discover Hue cuisine and culture. The customers will have the opportunity to visit and buy famous Hue specialties at Dong Ba Market such as green bean cake, rice cake, jam, Hue bread, shrimp cake, and many other specialty spices. In addition, the market also has stalls selling handicraft products such as ceramics, lanterns, patterns, and items made from bamboo and rattan. Visiting Dong Ba Market is not only an opportunity to shop for specialties and handicraft products, but also a fun experience to interact with local people and understand more about their culture and lifestyle. This is a multi-dimensional and colorful destination during a tour of Hue.

After exploring and shopping at Dong Ba market, the customers will be taken to a class on making Hue Khoai cake (Figure 10), a traditional cake of Hue city. Joining a cooking class with locals is a great opportunity to learn more about Hue's culinary heritage.



Figure 10. Hue Khoai cake

A cooking class with locals provides a unique and meaningful experience for the customers because it creates the opportunity for direct contact with local culture. Instead of just enjoying the food, tourists can participate in the baking process with local people, creating a unique cultural exchange and sharing environment. Learning to bake from locals also helps the customers better understand the origin and meaning of local dishes, creating a profound and memorable experience in their journey of cultural discovery. In this special classroom, the customers will learn how to make Khoai cake, a



traditional Hue delicacy. Banh Khoai is a delicious crepe made from rice flour, turmeric powder, water and a mixed filling of shrimp, pork, diced green onions, green bean sprouts and sometimes sliced mushrooms. The batter is poured onto a hot griddle and spread thinly to create a crispy yet tender crepe. After being cooked, the crepe will be folded in half and served with fresh vegetables such as lettuce, herbs and a special dipping sauce made from fermented soybean paste, sugar and chili. During this cooking lesson, local instructors will personally guide the customers through the entire process, from preparing the ingredients to cooking the crepes delicately and to perfection. The customers not only learn how to bake correctly, but they will also learn about the importance of balancing flavors and textures in this dish. At the same time, the customers will also discover the deep cultural meaning of Banh Khoai in the context of Hue cuisine, step by step from the preparation process to enjoying this typical dish.

Besides discovering more deeply about Hue culinary culture, this experience also enables the customers to interact and connect with the local community on a more personal and intimate level. By participating in the baking process with local people, the customers not only learn traditional baking techniques but also share special stories, experiences, and memories with these locals. Thereby, the relationship between tourists and the local community becomes closer, creating memorable memories and at the same time promoting understanding and respect for local culture.

After completing the process of learning how to make Khoai cake, the customers will have the opportunity to enjoy dinner with just made Khoai cake along with another Hue specialty dish, mussels with rice paper cake (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Mussels with rice paper cake

Mussels with rice paper cakes are a specialty dish of Hue, famous for its rich and rich flavor. This dish is not only an indispensable part of Hue cuisine but also a symbol of local culinary culture. Mussels are small scallops found widely in the rivers, canals, and wetlands of central Vietnam. The

characteristics of mussels are their natural sweetness and soft meat. When combined with spices and raw vegetables, they create a unique flavor for mussels with rice paper cakes. The process of preparing mussels with rice paper cake begins by stir-frying the mussels with spices such as onions, garlic, chili, and some sauces to create a rich and delicious flavor. Then, the mussels are presented on *banh da*, a type of crispy and cool bread, creating a harmonious combination between the crispiness of the cake and the sweetness of the mussels.

After the evening, the customers group will be transferred to Hue airport to prepare for the flight back to Ho Chi Minh City. Hue's airport is called Phu Bai international airport. This is an international airport serving Hue city and surrounding areas, about 15 km south of Hue city center. A day in Hue with many activities such as: visiting historical landmarks and experiencing Hue cuisine, baking experiences to shopping at traditional markets, each activity will bring visitors unique impressions. unforgettable impression of this ancient city.

The 3-day, 2-night itinerary departs from Ho Chi Minh City with main destinations including Da Nang, Cu Lao Cham, Hoi An and Hue, promising a culinary adventure with many unique dishes of the central region. Information about culinary tour activities is described by the author with pictures in part appendix 3. This tour not only provides the opportunity to enjoy unique, traditional dishes but also a great experience to learn more deeply about the local culture, lifestyle and cuisine associated with the community.

Through culinary activities, the customers not only experience the joy of enjoying delicious dishes but also learn about the stories, history, and traditions associated with each dish. These culinary tours will also contribute to promoting local economic development through culinary tourism.

## 7 Thesis process and product evaluation

In this section, the author provides assessments and contributions to the development of a culinary tour in central Vietnam, as well as offers recommendations for future research efforts on culinary tourism in central Vietnam area. In addition, the author offers reflections on her personal learning process and the insights gained throughout the dissertation journey.

The strategic nature of the tour is not only expressed through optimizing time and resources, but also through building a diverse and rich itinerary that fully meets the desires and interests of tourists. Additionally, by enhancing the culinary experience, this tour also helps strengthen the company's competitive advantage in the tourism industry, further highlighting their position in the market. By carefully selecting destinations that prioritize sustainability, local authenticity, engaging stories, and convenient stops, the tour not only promises to provide travelers with a memorable experience but also an opportunity for them to further explore the region's unique culture and cuisine. Carefully selected destinations will help travelers better understand the unique values and characteristics of the country and culture of Vietnam, while creating unique and memorable experiences on their journey.

The author spent time and focused on analyzing information about tours in central Vietnam from travel companies as well as collecting opinions from tourists and the local community. Since then, the author has chosen suitable and famous locations to attract customers. In addition, the author has also proposed a travel plan appropriate to factors such as the attractiveness of the destination, the uniqueness of the experience as well as the ability to create memorable stories for visitors. The author has chosen places to visit combined with culinary experiences to create a culinary travel itinerary that is not only diverse and attractive but also ensures positive interaction with the local community. At the same time, it brings economic and social benefits to localities where customers come to experience services in that locality. Culinary tourism is not only a research topic but also a deep passion of the author, an important source of encouragement to help the author overcome challenges during project implementation. Despite the difficulty in finding relevant documents and articles, the author remained patient and tried to collect as much information as possible. This reflects the author's commitment and perseverance to the topic and his desire to bring quality and meaningful results to the project.

This culinary tour is not just a simple journey but also a sophisticated and multi-dimensional experience specifically for millennials. From enjoying unique dishes to participating in cultural experience activities, visitors will be immersed in the colorful and attractive culinary space of central Vietnam. Carefully selected destinations not only offer unique culinary experiences but also help visitors better understand the country's culture and culinary traditions.

Within the theoretical framework, culinary trends play an important role, providing tangible criteria that shape the decision-making process. Digging deeper into the analysis, the author identifies four key trends viability, locality and authenticity, storytelling, and short breaks that are considered integral to development strategies. product development. These trends not only reflect the preferences of the target audience but also contribute to creating an engaging and enriching culinary experience for tourists.

### **7.1 Suggestions for further research and the author's learning process**

During a field trip in the summer of 2023, the author embarked on a culinary adventure, indulging in all the dishes, and immersing themselves in the selected locations. This hands-on experience offered invaluable insights from the perspective of a traveler, deepening the author's understanding, and enriching their knowledge base. However, despite the firsthand encounters, the theoretical framework could be strengthened with additional scholarly sources and more extensive reading to elevate its depth and comprehensiveness. Expanding the literature review would provide a broader context and ensure a more robust theoretical foundation for the studying.

This tour is meticulously crafted, based not only on a theoretical framework but also on the author's first-hand observations, experiences and insights from extensive surveys conducted during the research process. However, to ensure the effectiveness and quality of the tour, it would greatly benefit from thematic interviews with key stakeholders in the culinary tourism industry. Involving experienced tour guides and local vendors, who provide food and activities for tourists, can provide perspectives and expertise. Furthermore, considering the vastness of central Vietnam, it must be acknowledged that in addition to the three main cities selected by the author, there are countless other attractive destinations with unique and quintessential Vietnamese cuisine. Therefore, the author has proposed specific criteria related to location and time, aiming to combine the selection of destinations that demonstrate diverse geographical locations, rich cultures, and unique culinary traditions unique to the central region of Vietnam.

Working on this thesis marks the author's beginning in academic writing in English, which provides the opportunity to improve English proficiency, especially in written expression. Lasting nearly three months, the thesis journey was a learning challenge, imparting invaluable lessons on time management, meticulous planning, and goal setting. Through this process, the author gained a better understanding of effective management, prioritizing tasks, and achieving balance between different responsibilities.

At the outset of this thesis, the author delved into the exploration and discourse surrounding culinary tourism trends, advocating for the necessity of organizing such tours to garner stakeholder approval.

This endeavor honed persuasive skills crucial for advancing one's career, presenting opportunities to advocate for novel ideas. The author extended profound gratitude to the thesis supervisor for invaluable guidance, imparting a wealth of knowledge and methodologies, and offering constructive critique pivotal for completing this endeavor.

In summary, the author's research on culinary tourism has not only expanded the understanding of the subject but also deepened the appreciation for the rich cultural heritage and diverse culinary traditions of the central region of Vietnam. Moreover, the insights gleaned from this thesis serve as a valuable platform for exploring adjacent areas of research, such as sustainable tourism development, cultural preservation, and strategic community engagement. The author regarded the completion of this thesis as a significant milestone in his academic journey, following more than 3 years of study at Haaga-Helia university of applied sciences. This milestone signifies not only personal growth and achievements but also underscores the author's commitment to advancing research and contributing to the development of Vietnamese tourism, as well as promoting Vietnamese cuisine to both domestic and international audiences. The author is keen to continue researching culinary tourism in future studies, with a particular focus on its development in Vietnam. Additionally, the author is deeply interested in contributing to the growth of the tourism industry in Vietnam. This entails exploring innovative strategies to enhance the country's tourism offerings, promoting sustainable practices, and fostering partnerships between stakeholders to ensure the long-term success and viability of the tourism sector. Through ongoing research and active participation in industry initiatives, the author aims to play a meaningful role in shaping the future of tourism in Vietnam and showcasing its rich culinary heritage to the world.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Brochure tour 3 days, 2 nights explore cuisine central Viet Nam

# Explore Cuisine Central Viet Nam



**Vietmark®**  
TOURS & M.I.C.E

**Price**  
8.500.000  
VND  
Adult



**Day 1**  
Ho Chi Minh - Da Nang



**Day 2**  
Hoi An



**Day 3**  
Hue

#### Package Include

- ✓ Hotel Room
- ✓ Breakfast, Lunch, & Dinner
- ✓ Destination Tickets
- ✓ Photographer
- ✓ Tour Guide

#### Special Offer

Book for a minimal 5 person and get

**10%** Price off /person

**Viet Mark**  
385 Tran Hung Dao street, District 1  
Ho Chi Minh city, Viet Nam

**Contact Us**  
(+84) 028 5404 5404. info@vietmark.vn

## Appendix 2. Basic criteria for choosing destinations

<b>Basic information of Tour</b>	<b>Unique Experiences Themes</b>	<b>The accessibility of the destination in terms of transportation options</b>	<b>Sustainability</b>	<b>Food trends</b>	<b>Rating or customer's review</b>
<p><i>Price, times, destinations.</i></p> <p><i>Seasonal Variations</i></p>	<p><i>Each location has a different theme</i></p>	<p><i>Supporting local food production, provides economic advantages to local ecosystems, and a commitment to environmental stewardship</i></p>	<p><i>Expressing local uniqueness; stories behind the dishes, promoting culture</i></p>	<p><i>Reviews from Travel agents; Evaluate from tourists</i></p>	<p><i>Ensure the chosen destinations meet expectations and deliver memorable culinary experiences.</i></p>

## Appendix 3. Supporting table for observing destinations

Table 2. Supporting table for observing destinations

Company	URL of the tour	Tour code	Destination 1	Destination 2	Destination 3	Destination 4	Destination 5
Danangxanh	<a href="https://danangxanh.vn/47-tour-mien-trung-3-ngay-2-dem.html">https://danangxanh.vn/47-tour-mien-trung-3-ngay-2-dem.html</a>	DNX/VN-3005	Ba Na	Hoi An	My Son	Son Tra	Da Nang
Happy vivu	<a href="https://happyvivu.com/san-pham/tour-thien-duong-mien-trung-3n2d-da-nang/">https://happyvivu.com/san-pham/tour-thien-duong-mien-trung-3n2d-da-nang/</a>		Da Nang	Son Tra	Ba Na	Hoi An	Hue
Danang travel	<a href="https://www.danangtravel.vn/85-tour-mien-trung-3-ngay-2-dem.html">https://www.danangtravel.vn/85-tour-mien-trung-3-ngay-2-dem.html</a>	TLX G 3018	Da Nang	Son Tra	Non Nuoc	Hoi An	Cu Lao Cham
PYS travel	<a href="https://pystravel.vn/tour/3038-tour-da-nang-thien-duong-mien-trung-3-ngay-2-dem.html">https://pystravel.vn/tour/3038-tour-da-nang-thien-duong-mien-trung-3-ngay-2-dem.html</a>		Son Tra	Ba Na	Hoi An	Hue	Da Nang
Du lich Viet	<a href="https://dulichviet.com.vn/du-lich-mien-trung">https://dulichviet.com.vn/du-lich-mien-trung</a>	17014	Nha Trang	Thap Ba Ponagar	Cau Da port	Rock church	coral bay

Du lich Viet	<a href="https://dulichviet.com.vn/du-lich-trong-nuoc/du-lich-da-nang-be-ne-hoi-an-mua-xuan-tu-sai-gon-2024?idschedule=89067">https://dulichviet.com.vn/du-lich-trong-nuoc/du-lich-da-nang-be-ne-hoi-an-mua-xuan-tu-sai-gon-2024?idschedule=89067</a>	17053	Da Nang	Ba Na	Hoi An	Hue	
Du lich Viet	<a href="https://dulichviet.com.vn/du-lich-trong-nuoc/du-lich-quy-nhon-phu-yen-mua-xuan-4-ngay-tu-sai-gon-2024?idschedule=88377">https://dulichviet.com.vn/du-lich-trong-nuoc/du-lich-quy-nhon-phu-yen-mua-xuan-4-ngay-tu-sai-gon-2024?idschedule=88377</a>	17015	Ganh Da dia	Bai xep	Ham Ho tourist area		
Du lich Viet	<a href="https://dulichviet.com.vn/du-lich-trong-nuoc/du-lich-da-nang-hoi-an-hue-mua-xuan-3-ngay-tu-sai-gon-2024?idschedule=89073">https://dulichviet.com.vn/du-lich-trong-nuoc/du-lich-da-nang-hoi-an-hue-mua-xuan-3-ngay-tu-sai-gon-2024?idschedule=89073</a>	17054	Da Nang	Ba Na	Ngu hanh son	Hoi An	Hue
Du lich Viet	<a href="https://dulichviet.com.vn/du-lich-trong-nuoc/du-lich-da-nang-mua-xuan-hue-dong-phong-nha-5-ngay-tu-sai-gon-2024?idschedule=89097">https://dulichviet.com.vn/du-lich-trong-nuoc/du-lich-da-nang-mua-xuan-hue-dong-phong-nha-5-ngay-tu-sai-gon-2024?idschedule=89097</a>	17063	Da Nang	Hoi An	La Vang	Dong Nha	Co do Hue
Hoa Binh tourist	<a href="https://hoabinhtourist.com/tour-du-lich-da-nang-hoi-an-be-ne-hue-dong-thien-duong-4-ngay-3-dem">https://hoabinhtourist.com/tour-du-lich-da-nang-hoi-an-be-ne-hue-dong-thien-duong-4-ngay-3-dem</a>		Da nang	Hoi An	Ba Na	Hue	Dong Phong nha
Viet nam Travel mart	<a href="https://vietnamtravelmart.com.vn/tour-du-lich-da-nang-tuong-me-vnah-chung-tich-son-m-y-son-da-nang.html">https://vietnamtravelmart.com.vn/tour-du-lich-da-nang-tuong-me-vnah-chung-tich-son-m-y-son-da-nang.html</a>	NE-DN-HA-HUE	Da Nang	Son Tra	Hoi An	Ba Na	Hue
Viet Nam Tourist	<a href="https://vietnamtouristvn.com/tour-da-nang-hoi-an-3n2d">https://vietnamtouristvn.com/tour-da-nang-hoi-an-3n2d</a>		Da Nang	Ba Na	Hoi An	Hue	Dong Phong Nha

Hai Dang travel	<a href="https://www.dulichhaidang.com/tour-mien-trung-quy-nhon-phu-yen-3-ngay-2-dem">https://www.dulichhaidang.com/tour-mien-trung-quy-nhon-phu-yen-3-ngay-2-dem</a>		Quang Trung museum	Ky Co	Eo gio	Quy Nhon	
Top ten travel	<a href="https://toptentravel.com.vn/tour-da-nang-thien-duong-mien-trung-3n2d.html">https://toptentravel.com.vn/tour-da-nang-thien-duong-mien-trung-3n2d.html</a>		Da Nang	My Son	Hoi An	Ba Na	Ngu hanh son
Cloud tour	<a href="https://cloudtour.vn/du-lich-trong-nuoc/tour-du-lich-da-nang-3-ngay-2-dem.html">https://cloudtour.vn/du-lich-trong-nuoc/tour-du-lich-da-nang-3-ngay-2-dem.html</a>		Ngu Hanh Son	Pho co Hoi An	My Khe beach	Son Tra	Song Han
Du lich Nang Moi Sai gon	<a href="https://www.dulichnangmoi.com/tour-khach-doen-du-lich-mien-trung-3-ngay-2-dem-bang-may-bay.html">https://www.dulichnangmoi.com/tour-khach-doen-du-lich-mien-trung-3-ngay-2-dem-bang-may-bay.html</a>	TD-1271	Da Nang	Song Han	Hue	Hoi An	Ngu hanh son
VN tour	<a href="https://www.dulichnangmoi.com/tour-khach-doen-du-lich-mien-trung-3-ngay-2-dem-bang-may-bay.html">https://www.dulichnangmoi.com/tour-khach-doen-du-lich-mien-trung-3-ngay-2-dem-bang-may-bay.html</a>		Da Nang	Hoi An	Hue	Ba Na	

Appendix 4. Describes the tour 3 days, 2 nights explore cuisine central Viet Nam

**Vietmark**  
TOURS & M.I.C.E

**Culinary journey to explore  
Central Vietnam, food tour  
3 days- 2 nights**



**Day 1: Culinary experience in  
Da Nang city and Cham Island**



TSN airport  
Ho Chi Minh  
city

1 hour 10 mins



Da Nang airport  
Da Nang city



45 mins



Cham Island

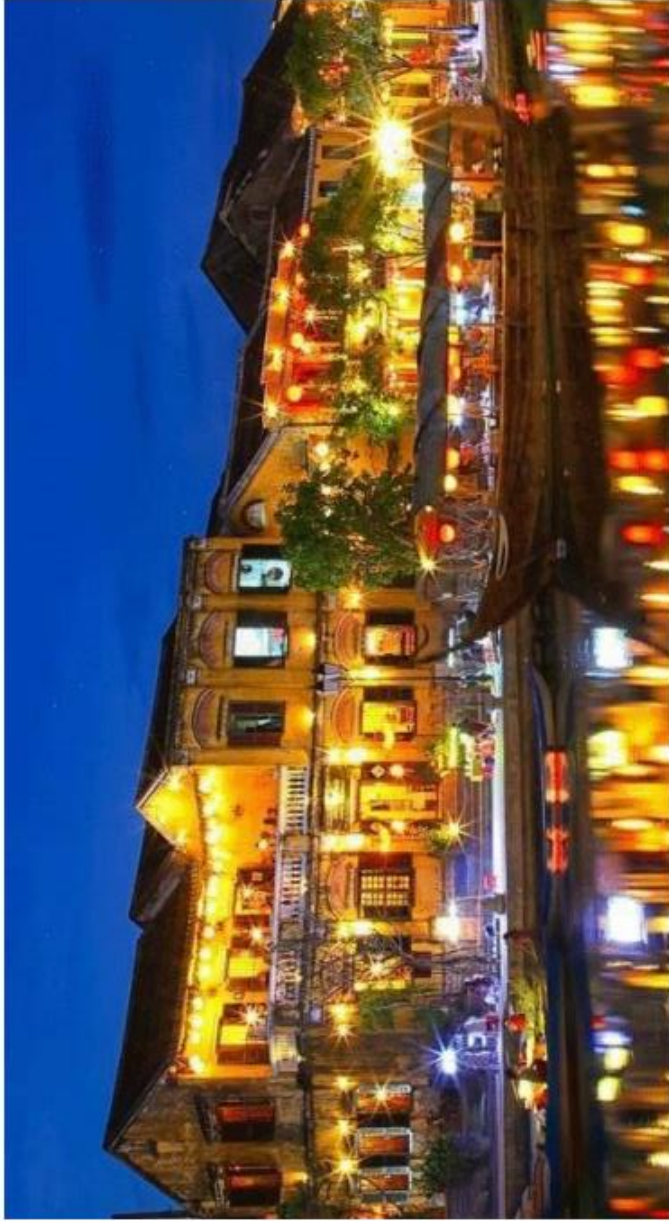
- Explore culinary tourism: Rice paper rolled with meat on both ends with skin, fresh seafood, culinary at night market.
- Visit the iconic Dragon Bridge of DaNang city and Cu Lao Cham, swim, watch coral, culinary night market.





- Day 2: Explore the culinary of Hoi An ancient town and night boat tour on the river



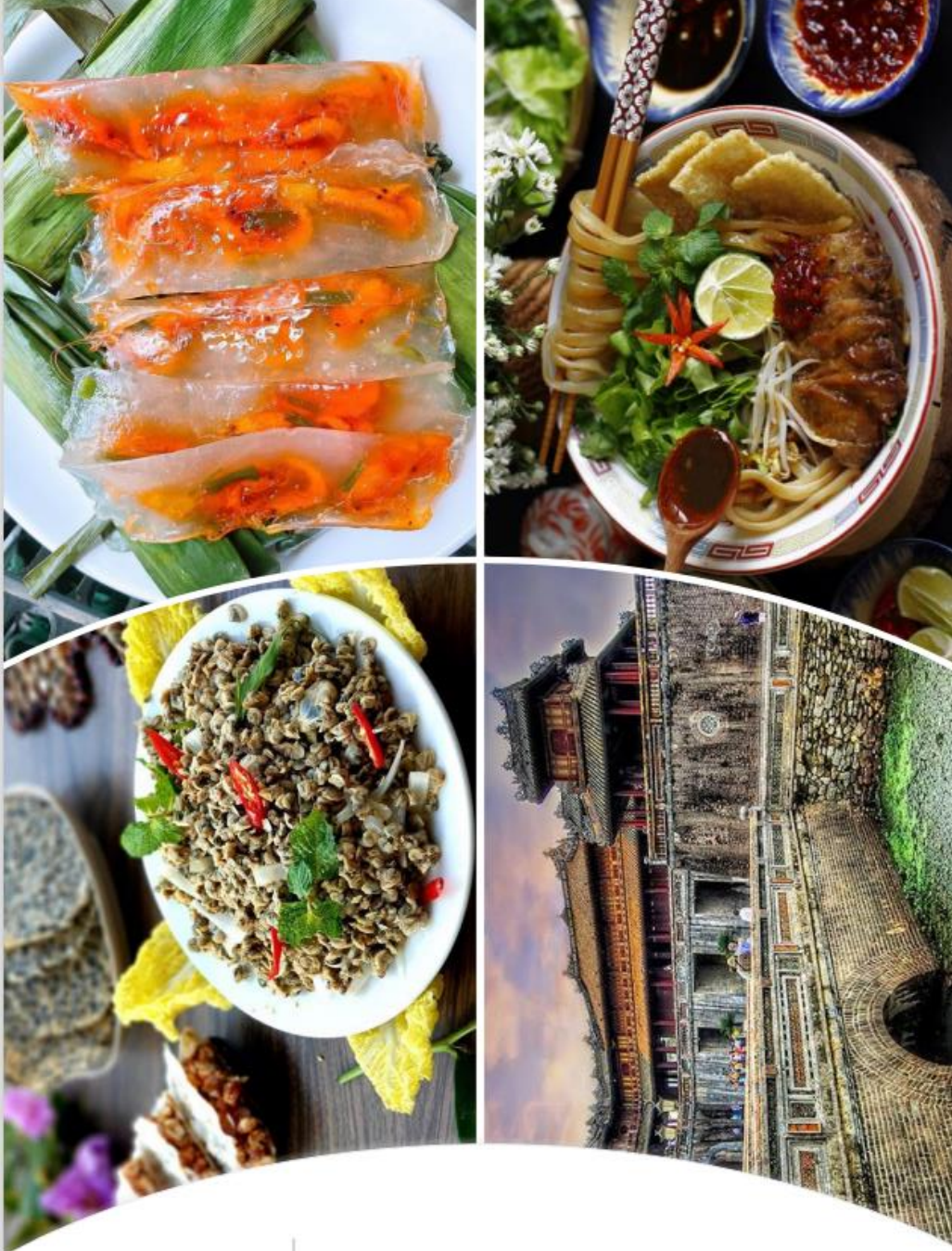


**Hoi An was recognized by UNESCO as a world cultural heritage in 1999**



- Banh dap Hoi An; Hoi An chicken rice; Cao Lau.
- Take pictures with traditional costumes in Hoi An ancient town
- Shopping at the traditional market (Hoi An market)
- River boat tour at night (flowers light)

**Day 3 : Explore  
the culinary of  
Hue city with  
cooking class  
and local  
people**





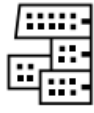
# Cooking class with Khoai cake





Da Nang city

70 mins  
by tour bus

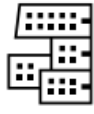


Hue city

20 mins  
by tour bus



Dong Ba  
market



Hue city

80 mins  
by airplane



TSN airport  
Ho Chi Minh  
city

- Enjoy local cuisine: Bánh Hue (banh nam, banh beo, banh loc), bun bo Hue, mussels scooped with rice paper.
- visit some famous historical destination
- Visit Dong Ba Market
- Join a cooking class with local peoples: Khoai cake