



April 2026

Heart-to-Heart

CLUB NEWSLETTER

Inside this issue:

Club Updates **p.1**

Tour Director Message **p.2**

Remembering Ken Condray **p.3**

Vietnam Tour Report **p.5**

HeartCycle Volunteer Member Bios **p.16**

2026 Tour Listing **p.17**

Board and Working Member Contact Info **p.19**



Updates as we roll into the 2026 tour season

By HeartCycle Newsletter Editor
Cody Ensanian

As we roll into a new year of touring, exploring, and connecting, we wanted to share a few updates from around the club.

First, we've taken some time to clean up our HeartCycle Membership Terms and Conditions. Nothing major has changed. The goal was simply to make the language clearer and easier to understand. We've also made them easier to find on our website, with a [direct link now available in the footer](#). As a reminder, these terms apply to your annual club membership, the one you sign up for and renew each year in order to participate in tours. Each time you renew, you are agreeing to these terms.

We've also been making steady improvements to the HeartCycle website. One of the most helpful additions is a more visible [FAQ section](#), now linked directly from the main navigation bar. Over the coming months, we'll continue adding entries to address common questions and areas of confusion. Topics will include the difference between a website account and a membership account, how to reset your password, and how to remove yourself

from the email list if you choose. Our goal is to make it easier for everyone to find answers quickly and keep things running smoothly.

And finally, a fun update. The club has picked up new magnetic logo decals for our Sprinter van, and they look great. Keep an eye out for the van on upcoming rides and events. It is a small but visible way to show off our club pride as we head out on the road.



Thanks to everyone who continues to support and be part of HeartCycle. Here's to a great 2026 season ahead! (Which it's crazy to think our first tour of the season has already wrapped up! And lucky you, the tour report is just a few pages down!)

-Cody





VIETNAM: Ho Chi Minh City to Ninh Binh

Report Compiled by HeartCycle
Members Ed and Julie Cepulis



“Trip of a lifetime.” “Epic.” “Like biking through the pages of a National Geographic Magazine.” That’s how riders on the 2026 Vietnam bike trip described their experiences. This incredible immersion into the people, culture, and geography of Vietnam took us from Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) in the south to Hanoi in the north.

The people of Vietnam made this trip special. We rode through quiet villages where residents never failed to smile widely, wave, and yell a friendly “Hello” as 15 bikes rolled past their homes. The children were especially excited to see us and greeted us warmly everywhere we went, often racing to connect a high five and gesturing their hand signal for “I love you.”

We saw stunning countryside of terraced rice fields, sugar cane, coffee, tea, cashew, peppercorn, eucalyptus, rubber, mango, welcoming villages, and family farms. Gorgeous terrain of steep and rugged karsts, like nothing you see in North America, greeted us in the north. The variety of beautiful terrain kept us engaged the entire ride.

Throughout the journey, we were supported by our ground operator, Mr. Biker Saigon, and HeartCycle. The trip leaders, Trong and Tien from Mr. Biker and Tom Kissinger from HeartCycle, ensured our trip was well executed and enjoyable. Trong and Tien also made sure we learned

about their wonderful country along the way. Their stories made our trip richer, and the food they ordered ensured that we experienced the regional cuisine of the areas we visited.

Day 1: February 24 – Saigon

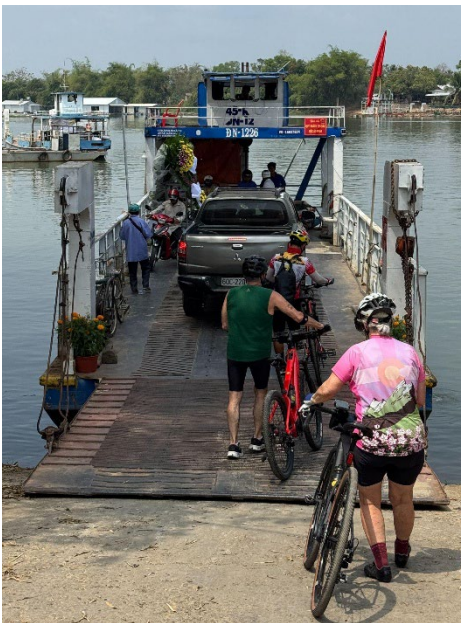
Our journey began in the lobby of Hotel Aquari in Saigon’s District 1. We enjoyed meeting and greeting the 15 group participants and received a formal introduction from our Mr. Biker Saigon tour leader, Trong. We shuttled to the headquarters of Mr. Biker Saigon, where the team prepared our bikes, made final adjustments, and shared excellent Mr. Biker swag. We were outfitted with newly assembled German Cube gravel bikes or electric assist bikes from Trek. Once the final adjustments were made on all the bikes, we shuttled off to dinner and



had a festive evening getting to know one another. We concluded the evening back at the hotel with personalized gift bags from Tom for all the riders. We all appreciated the generous bags, complete with sunscreen, lip balms, neck gaiters, socks, ear plugs, hand sanitizer, etc. Thank you, Tom!

Day 2: February 25 – Saigon to Bao Loc

On our first full day together, and our first riding day, we started off with a 2.5-hour drive from Saigon through the countryside of Saigon’s District 2 and beyond. Our launch point was a coffee shop where we were served our first taste of Vietnamese coffee—thick, sweet, and rocket-fueled. It became our daily ritual. After a delicious coffee, we started a ride through the countryside. Children and adults waved and said “hello” throughout the day, and immediately we felt welcomed in Vietnam. We pedaled past pepper vines drying on roadside tarps and shared a ferry with a motorcycle





carrying a 10-meter-high floral memorial. We had lunch along the river and learned about Vietnam's cashew and rice production. After almost 55k of riding and a transfer, we finished the ride in Bao Loc, a town that few tourists visit.

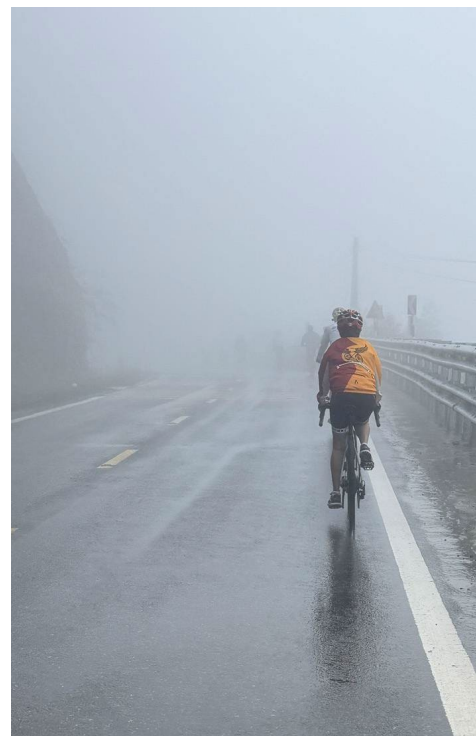
Day 3: February 26 – Bao Loc to Dalat

The 50-km ride from Bao Loc to Dalat was our first test of climbing. We jumped in the vans and sagged about 1 hour to our start location, a coffee shop. Again, strong Vietnamese

coffee was served to all who were brave enough to indulge. It was another beautiful ride in the countryside with more welcoming people. They created such a joyful experience for us. Early in the ride, we were challenged with a long climb that hit a 20% grade. We all made it one way or another, but it was a bit of a wake-up call of what could be ahead of us. We stopped mid-ride for a visit with the owner of a coffee plantation and learned about his ranch, his coffee varieties, and the production process. The day progressed in the direction of Dalat, where we saw greenhouses in the rolling hills as far as the eye can see. We navigated narrow lanes and some off-road sections that some riders welcomed and others dreaded. After a further ride through rolling hills, the vans drove us into the city of Dalat. Our hotel for the night was a classic French hotel that was one of the original four built by the French in Dalat.

Day 4: February 27 – Dalat to Nha Trang

This was a riding day we won't forget. We crested Bi Doup Mountain in a thick morning fog before launching

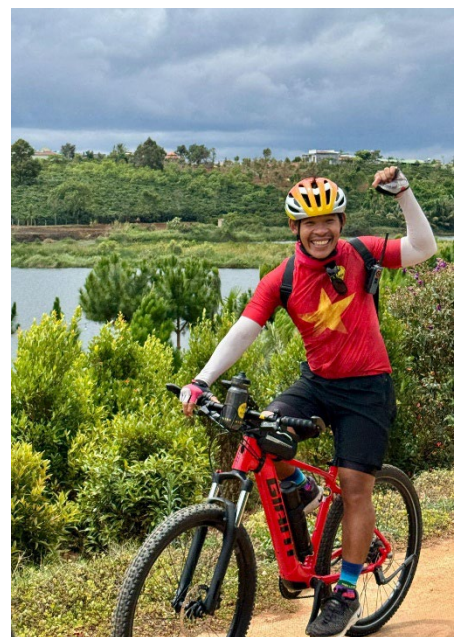
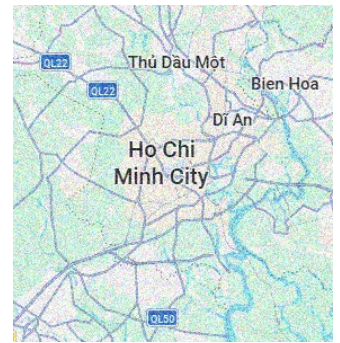


into a 30-km descent. Halfway down, the skies opened up with a steady rain. We scrambled into rain ponchos and navigated a "sketchy" but exhilarating 15 km wet descent to lunch. After another delicious lunch, we finished our 70-km day on mostly flat roads before we transferred to Nha Trang.

Day 5: February 28 – Nha Trang

Today we took a break from riding, with time for the beach, pool, and exploring the bustling city of Nha Trang.





Day 6: March 1 – Nha Trang to Phu Yen

We started the day with a visit to ancient Po Nagar Cham Towers and the Long Son Pagoda. Trong and Tien shared more about the different cultures of Vietnam, as well as the Cham, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions. We made our way through small villages and farmers' fields along the coast and stopped at a local market where we were introduced to some locals and delicious Vietnamese coconut candies. We enjoyed a cool swim and lunch at a beautiful sandy beach before continuing with a few more climbs and beautiful views of the coast and nearby islands. We finished our ride on smooth and flat roads near the coast and then cooled off on the beach and at the pool at our hotel.



Day 7: March 2 – Phu Yen to Quy Nhon

Today we had a beautiful ride up the coast to the hometown of one of our guides, Tien. We enjoyed a relatively flat ride where we experienced the daily life of the locals. We learned about the basket boats that were created to avoid French taxes on boats—they were baskets after all, not boats. We also learned how creative fishermen used metal from artillery shells to create fishing boats. A highlight was watching the men on a shrimp boat offload shrimp to the women on shore, who took it to roadsides, paths, and parking lots to dry. We experienced a delicious lunch on a bluff overlooking the ocean before completing our journey to Quy Nhon.

Day 8: March 3 – Quy Nhon to Quang Ngai

Today's ride started off with a smile for our group. Our morning coffee was interrupted by dozens of schoolchildren lining a fence to wave to and high-five our peloton as we rolled out. This set the tone for a wonderful day. We rode partly along the coast, partly inland, weaving through farms and towns. During the morning ride, we visited the home that Tien was building in the middle



of a peanut field. He was so proud to share it with us. We enjoyed the rooftop view of the ocean and mountains while members of our group did yoga on the rooftop. We rode to a local fishing village where his father worked and were warmly welcomed with smiles by many of the locals. The day's ride finished on a smooth coastal road.





Day 9: March 4 – Quang Ngai to My Lai to Hoi An

This was a day of profound contrasts. We rode our bikes directly through a bustling local market—a sensory overload of sights, smells, and smiles—before a somber, silent visit to the My Lai Sanctuary. It was a reminder of the resilience and forgiveness that defines modern Vietnam. After further riding along the coast and lunch by the beach, we were transferred to the spectacular city of Hoi An, a UNESCO Heritage site.



Day 10: March 5 – Rest Day in Hoi An

The group enjoyed a rest day in Hoi An, where we explored this beautiful and vibrant historical city and local beach.

Day 11: March 6 – Hoi An to Hai Van Pass to Hue

We left the hotel in the morning, greeted by buckets of rain for our journey to Hue. Today's Hai Van Pass was the most challenging climb of the trip, grinding up to 480 m. This is one of Vietnam's most famous stretches of road due to its history as a military stronghold and a kingdom border. For us, it was a physical gauntlet, rewarded by sweeping views of the coastline to the north and south. Once down off the pass, we rode along the coast to lunch and then continued towards Hue, passing through areas of elaborate family tombs and fields worked by



local farmers.

Day 12: March 7 – Rest Day in Hue

In the morning of this rest day, we toured the Hue Historic Citadel, which was constructed in 1804 by the first ruler of the Nguyen Dynasty. The Citadel was the political and cultural center of Vietnam for over a century. The remainder of the day was dedicated to our flight to Hanoi and bus ride to Hoa Binh City, where we shifted our riding to Vietnam's northern mountainous region.

Day 13: March 8 – Hoa Binh to Mai Chau



Today was the hardest climb of the trip, but it offered spectacular scenery of karsts, hydrangea, waterfalls, rice terraces, and small farms. This area had a very different architectural style, with many homes built on stilts. In honor of International Women's Day, our guides handed out roses to the women on our ride, who then passed them on to local women we met on the road. A highlight was running into a ladies dance group at a rest stop adjacent to a gas station that were practicing for a performance later in the evening. The ladies from our group joined the dance, which was very fun for the locals and our riders alike.

Day 14: March 9 – Mai Chau to Pu Luong Nature

This was another big climb day with 1000 m of vertical. The climbs were difficult, but throughout the ride, we were rewarded with scenery of steep, tree-covered karsts, Vietnam's largest reservoir, and vibrant green rice fields. Cows and water buffalo greeted us along the way, including a small herd of cows that surrounded one of our riders and slowed his progress. Along the way, we stopped at a remote sawmill to watch bamboo being turned into chopsticks.







Day 15: March 10 – Pu Luong to Ninh Binh

Sadly, today was our last day of riding. Yesterday's climbing effort rewarded us with a long, steady downhill through more rice terraces, bamboo forests, karsts, and small villages. We timed our coffee stop perfectly with the local school bell; suddenly, we were surrounded by a sea of high-fives and "hellos" from kids on bikes and scooters. After a short transfer, we enjoyed a flat ride to Ninh Binh, a UNESCO World Heritage Site with stunning scenery of karsts and the Ancient Capital of Hoa Lu. We finished the bike trip with a harried ride through traffic and tourists to our hotel.

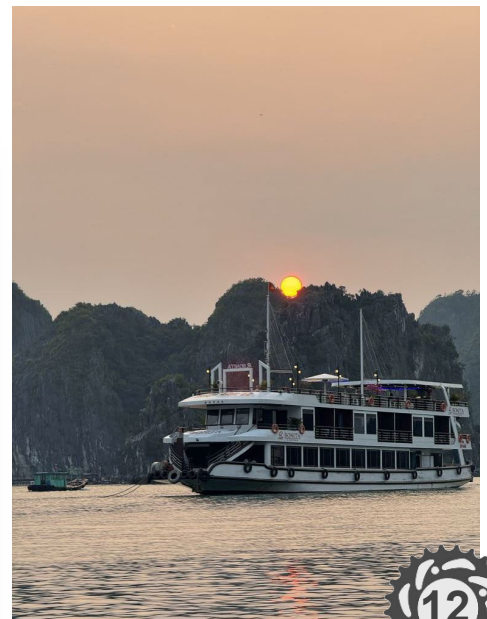
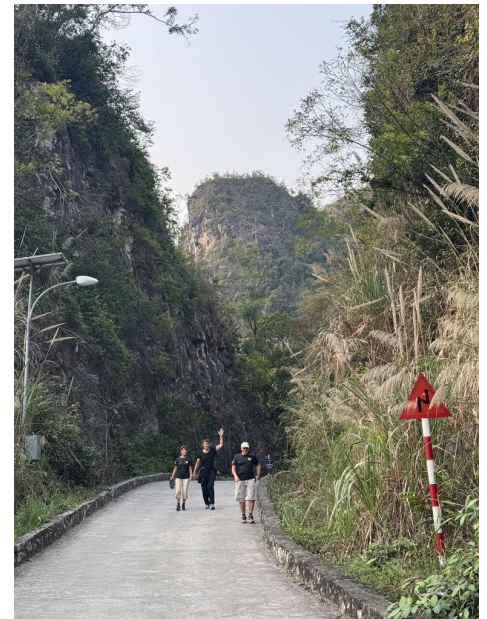
Day 16: March 11 – Ninh Binh to Ha Long Bay

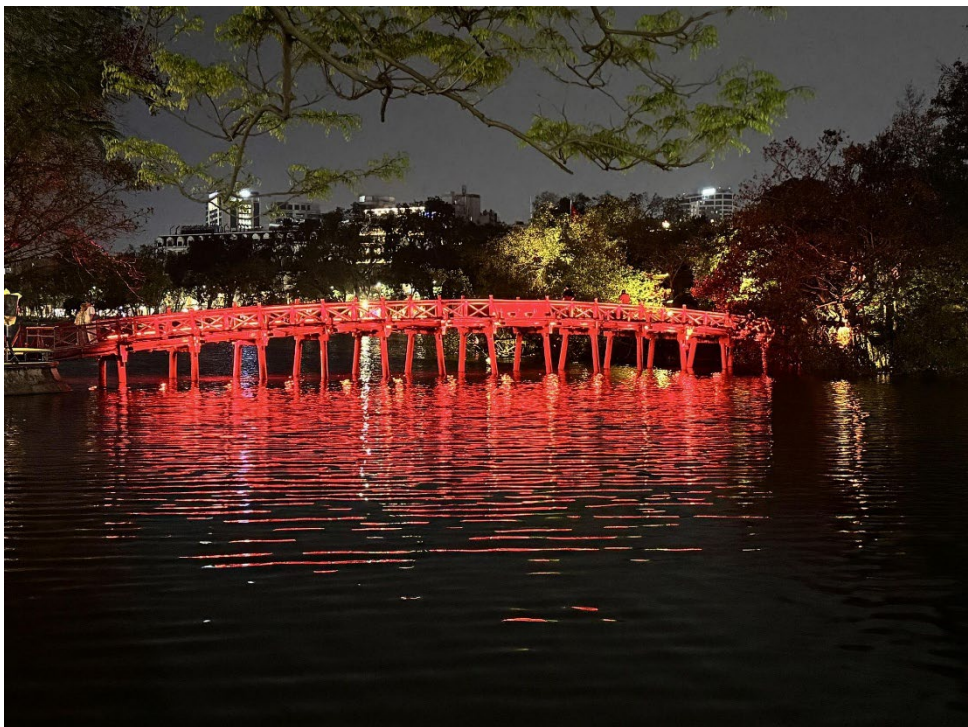
Today, our primary mode of transportation shifted from bike to boat. We transferred to the city of Ha Long Bay to board our cruise boat that we would enjoy for the night. After days of riding through remote villages where Westerners are a rare sight, the sheer number of tourists here was a bit of a culture shock. However, once we boarded the boat,

our attention shifted to the thousands of towering limestone islands topped by rainforests and the colorful junk boats in the bay. We spent the afternoon hiking and biking on a remote island, where we visited an indigenous village.

Day 17: March 12 – Ha Long Bay to Hanoi

There's no recovery quite like Tai Chi on a boat deck at sunrise. After a morning on the water exploring a floating village—where the locals' entire lives are built on the ebb and flow of the tide—we traded the quiet bay for the high energy of Hanoi. Our final night on tour was filled with the hum of the city and the shared realization of how far we've come.





On our last evening together, our fearless leader, Tom, presented unique mementos to each of us to commemorate a specific characteristic or event as a remembrance of a truly unique adventure.

- Alexey was given a Vietnamese carved wooden tiger to commemorate the tiger that “attacked” him and caused him to fall during one of the rides.
- Svetlana went home with a set of chopsticks in honor of her new mastery of the utensils.
- Beth and Clare got handmade Vietnamese water bottle holders for their continuing travels to Japan.
- Ed and Julie were rewarded with health tea and a candle to aid in their recovery from illness.
- Lee, our movie whisperer, got a Good Morning Vietnam t-shirt, as he was often reciting old movie quotes.
- Peter, who consumed massive amounts of fish at every meal, was awarded a Vietnamese crafted wooden fish puzzle.
- Annette, who discovered on her way to Vietnam that her earphones were incompatible with her iPhone, got wireless headphones for her trip home.
- Deb, who never missed an opportunity to interact with the locals, got an I Love Vietnam hat as a reminder of how much she loved the country and people.
- Ann, who made sure that no one was ever without access to a snack, was provided a woven Vietnam tote bag to help her carry snacks wherever she goes.
- Jeff, who left us early for a family emergency, was our coffee connoisseur and got Vietnamese coffee supplies to take home with him.
- Karen got a Buddhist flag for her home. She was moved by the Buddhist shrines that we visited.
- And Rob got hand-painted chopstick rests to accent his home in Seattle.



Day 18: March 12 – Hanoi

One last breakfast together. The conversation was a highlight reel of the miles covered, the hills conquered, and the inevitable "remember when" moments that only a bike tour can create.

This wasn't just a bike trip; it was an immersion in Vietnamese culture, geography, and people. From the grit of the climbs to the warmth of the people who cheered us on from their doorsteps, Vietnam challenged us and left an indelible impression. We headed home with tired legs, full hearts, and a new understanding of the word "Hello."

