

“Open up the boozer - we’re coming back”

TUNNEL RATS TOUR BACK TO VIETNAM

If you haven't been on one of our tours before, this is the one you must be on. If you have been on our tours before, you know you can't miss this one

Now we also visit the FSB Coral and FSB Balmoral sites on this, the 50th anniversary year.

Nui Dat base camp - home of the Australian Task Force 1966 - 1972

SIGN UP FOR THE TOUR AND START LOBBYING FOR YOUR LEAVE PASS

Focused on Tunnel Rats, our tour will visit key battle and operational areas, including the infamous barrier minefield and the caves and tunnels of the enemy's base in the Long Hai Mountains. We'll visit mine incident sites with the men involved in those incidents. We'll hold a memorial service for our 36 fallen comrades, at the memorial rock which still sits in our 1 Field Squadron HQ area at Nui Dat - followed by a traditional Troop BBQ (piss-up). And on this, the 50th anniversary year we will visit the FSB Coral and FSB Balmoral sites, plus the knoll near FSB Andersen where four Sappers lost their lives during Tet 1968. We'll do a unique tour of Saigon visiting sites of special interest to Tunnel rats. You'll get the chance to do a nostalgia tour of Vungers, visiting The Flags area, the old Badcoe Club area, the old R&C leave centre, plus of course the Grand Hotel where you can have a beer, just for old time's sake.

The trip is for ten days and nine nights in Vietnam, (two nights in Saigon, then five nights in Vung Tau followed by two more nights in Saigon). If you wish to stay extra nights in Saigon either before or after the tour (or both), simply let us know and we'll extend your booking at the same low rate we have negotiated at the Grand Hotel Saigon.

Getting there: Rather than adding to the costs and travel time by forcing everyone to depart from one city in Australia, each person will book and pay



for their own return air ticket to Saigon, enabling them to find the best air ticket deal from their city. The plan is for us all to meet in Saigon on Thursday 15th March and from there the Tour begins.

The first event is on the 15th March – welcome drinks at 6pm followed by dinner. Book your air travel carefully to ensure you arrive in Saigon in time to get to the hotel, check-in and make it to the 6pm function. If the airline you choose arrives too late, book your flight to arrive the day prior and we'll book an extra night in the hotel for you.

Shop around for the best airfare. There are plenty of airlines flying into Saigon, so don't grab the first airfare you find. Direct, non-stop flights take less

time and there is no danger of missing a connecting flight, but it may be cheaper to fly on a non-direct flight via another city.

Vietnam Airlines, Jetstar and Qantas fly direct non-stop to Saigon, and there are regular flights out of Australia to Saigon via Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok or Brunei.

The planned return date for leaving Saigon to head back home is Saturday 24 March.

Current serving Combat Engineers - both male and female are invited to join the tour. For all other tour participants it's a blokes only tour.

The Tunnel Rats are welcome to have their sons (minimum age 18) come along on the trip, and Tunnel Rats are also welcome to ask a best mate along to share the experience. Any mates accompanying Tunnel Rats on the tour will collectively be known as "worthless civilians" and may be asked to perform menial tasks from time to time.

Our Welcome and Farewell dinners will again be held at the five star Caravelle Hotel in Saigon. This hotel was home to the Australian Embassy during the war. We will again be inviting the Australian Consul General in Saigon to join us for the dinner.

At our welcome drinks in Saigon you'll receive an overall briefing on the tour. Then each morning of the tour you'll receive a detailed briefing on that day's activity, often with associated documents and maps.

We'll return to our hotel each day in time to enjoy drinks together at the Designated Boozer before people go their own way for the evening. The comradeship of these drink sessions are a highlight of the tour.

The cost of the tour is detailed in the panel opposite, and again we've made the tour incredibly good value and Tunnel Rat focussed.

Book now using the booking form on page 27.



TOTAL COST FOR THE TOUR

The full cost for the 10 day, 9 night tour is \$1,480 per person if you are sharing a room (twin share). If you prefer a room on your own, the extra cost is \$400 to cover the hotel room costs for the nine nights. Our costs are up about 15% on our previous tour due to us adding an extra day to the tour and an extra night in the grand Hotel Saigon, plus some general cost increases we have to cover. We'd appreciate receiving your booking and deposit payment ASAP so we can lock down all the rooms and tours. If for any reason you need to pull out later, you'll receive a full refund.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Each guest will be met at the airport and transported to the hotel.
4 nights in The Grand hotel Saigon

with buffet breakfast each morning.
5 nights in The Rex Hotel Vung Tau with Buffet breakfast each morning.
Welcome dinner and Farewell dinner at the 5 Star Caravelle Hotel.
Dinner with former NVA and VC soldiers in Vung Tau.
All wreaths for our ceremonies.
BBQ lunch at Nui Dat.
All specified land tours.
All permits to visit restricted zones.
Entry costs to scheduled tour venues.
All bus and driver costs.
Cost of tour guides and interpreters.
2 tour shirts embroidered with your name and the Tunnel Rats tour logo.
At the end of the tour each guest will be picked up at the hotel and transported to the airport.
All other lunches, dinners and drinks will be at our own expense.

We're again inviting young Combat Engineers to join us on the tour

Sharing Sapper experiences

We're excited on multiple levels about the aspect of sharing this trip with current serving Sappers. The similarities of our tasks in Vietnam and their tasks in the Middle East are striking.

The young Sappers will get an understanding of how we operated in terms of combat engineer tasks, particularly when attached to Infantry and Armoured units.

They'll gain an insight into the casualties we suffered, and why, plus how we coped with it. They'll see first-hand the similarities between our tasks in Vietnam and theirs in Afghanistan, and how much better trained and equipped they are than we were.

There will be the unique experience of melding together the incredible comradeship the old and the young Sappers enjoy as a result of our service.

We have great respect for



Sappers performing the same roles in different wars 40 years apart and empathy with serving Sappers in Combat Engineer roles today. It will be a privilege for us to share time with these current serving soldiers, and hear their experiences in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere over a few beers.

And of course it's an incredible experience for us old Sappers too, to be around these brave and bright young soldiers.

Serving Sappers (male

and female of all ranks are welcome - as long as they currently serve, or have served in a Combat Engineer unit.

If you're a serving Sapper and you wish to join us on the tour, simply fill in the form.

If you are a serving Sapper and have any questions about the tour, contact Jim Marett on: 0403 041 962 or by email on: tunnelrats.vietnam@gmail.com

Our hotels in Saigon and Vung Tau

The Grand Hotel Saigon

Our first two nights and our last two nights of the tour are spent at the historic five star Grand Hotel in Saigon. It's a place rich in history and boasting some superb French art deco architecture. There are lots of shops and restaurants nearby and plenty of taxis available out front all the time. They provide a superb buffet breakfast which is included in our tour price. Conveniently our Designated Boozer is just across the road from the hotel.

The Rex Hotel Vung Tau

We'll be staying in the new wing of the Rex Hotel which faces the Front Beach in Vung Tau. It's a great base for our tours to the old operational areas of Phuoc Tuy Province. It is also close to popular bars and restaurants and just up the road from our Designated Boozer. It has a great pool and a good area for us to enjoy the buffet breakfast included in the tour.



Our itinerary at a glance

DAY 1 - THURSDAY 15 MARCH

Australia to Saigon: People will be arriving at the hotel from the airport at different times throughout the day. Every guest on the tour is met at the airport by our travel company and transferred to our hotel. After check-in you are free to roam, but be back in time for the 6pm start of our Dinner function.

DAY 2 SAIGON – FRIDAY 16 MARCH

Cu Chi Tunnels tour and ceremony at Bob Bowtell site: Meet in the lobby at 0815h for our bus to the Ho Bo Woods and Cu Chi Tunnels. At the Ho Bo Woods we will hold a ceremony for Bob Bowtell, with Bob's sons Michael and Peter placing a wreath in remembrance of their father. At the Cu Chi Tunnels we'll have a guided tour just for our group. You'll have the chance to fire AK47, M60 and M16 Armalite weapons at their rifle range (cost US\$2 to \$4 per bullet). Then we head back to Saigon, where the rest of the afternoon and the evening are free.

DAY 3 - SATURDAY 17 MARCH

Saigon to Vung Tau by bus via FSB Andersen and Baria: Pack, check out, then meet in the lobby at 0815h for an 0830h departure by bus to the Rex hotel in Vung Tau. This being the 50th anniversary year of the battle of FSB Andersen, we'll hold a remembrance ceremony at 'The Knoll' near FSB Andersen, honouring the four Sappers killed in action there in 1968. We then head to Baria where we'll visit the memorial cemetery for the NVA and VC killed in our area of operations. On arrival in Vung Tau the rest of the afternoon and the evening is free for you to check out the town.

DAY 4 – SUNDAY 18 MARCH

Long Phuoc Tunnels, the orphanage at Baria and mine incident sites: Meet in the lobby at 0815h to depart by bus for Long Phuoc to visit the former enemy tunnels and watch a presentation. We'll then visit the Orphanage at Baria which has been supported by Australian veterans for many years. We will donate rice and milk products for the children. Then we'll visit the sites of several of the many mine incidents which took place in the area, with commentary by men who were there at the time. We then head back to Vung Tau. The rest of the afternoon and evening is free.

DAY 5 – MONDAY 19 MARCH

Long Tan and Nui Dat: Meet in the lobby at 0815h for our bus to Long Tan memorial where we'll place a wreath in remembrance of all Australians KIA in Vietnam. We'll then tour our old base camp at Nui Dat, including Luscombe Field and our old Troop Lines. We'll then hold a memorial service for our fallen Tunnel Rat comrades at the site of our former Squadron HQ at Nui Dat. This will be followed by a traditional Troop BBQ (piss-up) amongst the rubber trees.

DAY 6 – TUESDAY 20 MARCH

The Long Hai Hills and mine incident sites: Meet in the lobby at 0815h our bus to the Long Hai Mountains, which was the VC's big base camp and a place of much grief for the Aussie troops. The VC called it the "Minh Dam Secret Zone" and it now features a beautiful memorial to the NVA and VC killed throughout the province. We will then visit several mine incident sites with commentary by men who were involved at the time, then head back to Vung Tau. In the evening (1800h to 1900h) we will enjoy a music concert performed for us by former NVA and VC veterans. This will be followed by a dinner, with the NVA and VC musicians as our guests.

DAY 7 – WEDNESDAY 21 MARCH

Vung Tau free day: You'll have plenty of time to relax, explore Vung Tau, laze by the hotel pool, go shopping, walk along the beach, go for a nostalgic bar crawl with your mates, or simply stroll the streets and soak up the atmosphere. If there is a particular place out in the Province you wish to visit on this day it can be arranged for you.

DAY 8 - THURSDAY 22 MARCH

Vung Tau to Saigon via FSB Coral and FSB Balmoral: Check out and meet in the Rex Hotel lobby at 0745h for departure by bus at 0800h sharp. This being the 50th Anniversary year of the battles of Coral and Balmoral, we will visit both those FSB sites to hold remembrance ceremonies. 1100: Arrive for service at Balmoral, 1130: Leave Balmoral, 1200 Arrive at Coral for service around 30 mins, 1230: Leave to head back to Saigon, 1430 Arrive Saigon, check-in to the Grand Hotel, then you'll have the rest of the day and evening free.

DAY 9 - FRIDAY 23 MARCH

Subteranean Saigon tour plus optional Saigon Highlights tour plus our Farewell Dinner:

Meet in the Grand Hotel lobby at 0845 for 0900 bus departure. Today we do the fascinating 'Subteranean Saigon' tour where we visit former VC bunkers and tunnels under homes and shops in Saigon. Used by the VC for weapons storage, print shops and hide-outs, these venues are now preserved as historic sites. We return to the hotel in time for lunch. After lunch those who wish to can enjoy the Saigon tour visiting key highlights of the city (cost is included in our tour). And tonight is our big Farewell Drinks and Dinner function at the Caravelle Hotel, commencing at 1800h for drinks followed by a buffet dinner at 1900h.

DAY 10 - SATURDAY 24 MARCH

Time to head home:

For those leaving today, pack, check out and be in the lobby at the time advised by our travel company for pickup and transport to the airport. Some of us will stay on for an extra day or so to chill out.

Just a few of the highlights you can expect on the tour



Saigon's underground secrets
For the first time we'll visit former enemy underground bunkers, storerooms and hideouts right in the heart of Saigon. Many of these played key roles in the 1968 Tet offensive.



Ceremony at The Rock

The original ceremonial rock that was in front of 1FD SQN HQ at Nui Dat is still there. We hold a remembrance ceremony at that rock for the 35 Tunnel Rats killed in action in Vietnam.



Concert by former NVA & VC

We enjoy a concert performed for us by former NVA and VC soldiers. Several of them worked as entertainers in the field during the war, moving dangerously around the province to link up with their comrades. After the concert we join them for a great dinner, and a few beers.



We visit FSB Coral, Balmoral and Andersen

On the 50th Anniversary year we visit each of these historic sites to hold remembrance ceremonies, including the knoll at FSB Andersen where four Tunnel Rats were killed in action on 18 February 1968.



Nui Dat BBQ

After our ceremony at The Rock we hold a fully catered sit-down 'Troop BBQ' amongst the rubber trees near our old 1FD SQN troop lines.



Visits to NVA & VC memorials

We visit memorials created by the former NVA and VC in honour of their fallen comrades to pay our respects as fellow old soldiers. Sites include the cemetery at Baria (above), the temple in the Long Hai Mountains and the 33 NVA memorial at Binh Ba.



Beer at \$1 a stubby

In Saigon and in Vung Tau we nominate a designated boozier where we can gather after each day of touring. The humour, the conversations and the comradeship at these sessions are pure gold - and you can buy a stubby of beer for just US\$1 each.



Our Piper

Our Chief Piper of the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association, Ross Brewer will be on the tour again, greatly enhancing our ceremonies and gatherings.



Welcome and farewell dinners

Held at the 5-star Caravelle Hotel Saigon, these dinners are great nights at the start and end of the tour. Great food and atmosphere, and best of all, incredible comradeship.



You'll be met on arrival

Our travel company staff will pick you up from the airport and transport you to the hotel.

