

Vietnam Itinerary: 19 Days from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City

Episode 106 | Tracy Collins with Doug Collins | globaltravelplanning.com/episode-106

Transcript lightly edited for readability. Show notes, hotels, tours and transport links for this episode can be found at globaltravelplanning.com/episode-106.

Introduction

Tracy: Before we'd even set foot in Vietnam, I promised on this podcast that I would report back on the two-berth sleeper train we'd booked out of Hanoi. In this episode, Doug and I are going to share our full 19 days in Vietnam, the train, the hotels, a hospital visit I had not planned on, and what we would do differently next time.

Tracy: Hi everybody, and welcome to this week's edition of the Global Travel Planning Podcast. I have Doug with me again this week.

Doug: Hello there.

Tracy: This episode, we thought we would share our Vietnam itinerary. Vietnam is one of the most listened to destination episodes on this podcast, and we've been asked quite a few times if we could share our itinerary. So we've sat down and gone through everything that we did. I'll also mention that if you are planning to go to Vietnam, episode 4 with Ros and Alan of Step into Vietnam is where I would start, because they gave us all their advice before we went and we used that to help us plan our trip. So this is what happened when we put it all to the test, and we ended up in Vietnam for three weeks.

Tracy: I will say, just to be honest, that I was ill for quite a lot of this trip, so I probably didn't get the most out of Vietnam that I wanted to. I think it just means we'll have to go back.

Doug: Oh yes, I'd go for that.

Tracy: This part of the trip was part of a seven-week Asia trip. We had three weeks in Japan, which we've already shared on the podcast, five days in South Korea, Vietnam, which is the bit we're doing in this episode, and Cambodia, which we'll put out in about a month's time. The Vietnam and Cambodia parts of the trip actually fit together really well, so if you're planning to do both, these are the two episodes to listen to. Then we ended up with two days in Thailand before we flew to the UK to spend Christmas.

Setting the scene: how I came to be ill

Tracy: I want to set the scene a little bit about how come I was ill. It got very, very cold in South Korea.

Doug: In the demilitarised zone.

Tracy: It was bitterly cold. We'd been in Japan, which was warmer than I expected, then we went to South Korea, which was colder than I expected, in November. And it was even colder when we went up to the border, because it's not far, I think it's about 80 kilometres from Seoul to the border with North Korea. It's a lot closer than you expect. But it was just freezing. It was like this cold wind coming down from North Korea.

Tracy: So I got really, really cold. And the hotel wasn't brilliant.

Doug: No, we couldn't get warm there either. The air conditioning was centrally controlled from reception, so we couldn't change it.

Tracy: They had the air con set on freezing, so I was not feeling great. We had to fly to Hanoi because we'd booked the flight, so that couldn't be changed. What I did change was some of the things we did when we were actually in Vietnam, just to make things a little bit easier. There are probably three lessons in that. One is having some flexibility.

Doug: Most definitely. No matter where you're travelling in the world, you've got to have a bit of flexibility.

Tracy: The other is having travel insurance. And the third is the ability to cancel some things as well.

Doug: And something else that's important, although it might not sound it, is when you're not 100 per cent, having those transfers already arranged to and from the airports.

Tracy: I talk about that a lot. As you get older, and I know a lot of people are travelling on a budget and want to take public transport from the airport to the hotel, we never do that. Never. Because honestly, the least stressful thing is knowing you're arriving and somebody is going to take you to your hotel.

Our Vietnam itinerary at a glance

Tracy: What we included in our trip to Vietnam was Hanoi for six nights, with an excursion for one of those nights, which I ended up doing on my own because Doug ended up sick as well.

Doug: I was only sick for the one night, but I was sick.

Tracy: So that meant Doug did not go to Ha Long Bay. From Hanoi we went down to Da Nang. We spent one night on the Laman Express in a private two-berth cabin, which was amazing.

Doug: It was fantastic.

Tracy: Thanks again for the tip from Ros and Alan to get that booked way ahead of time, because we were very lucky to get the berth that we did. We spent two nights at the Vanda Hotel in Da Nang, and this is when I changed things around. I changed the hotel we were going to stay at in Hoi An, and I changed part of our itinerary to spend longer there, so we had five nights so I could try to recuperate. After that we headed back to Da Nang for one night, then flew down to Ho Chi Minh City for four nights. And after that we headed to Phnom Penh, which we'll talk about in next month's episode.

Hanoi

Tracy: I wasn't very well when we arrived in Hanoi, but as Doug says, we had a pickup at the airport, and I'll put a link to that in the show notes. We stayed at the West Hotel and Spa, which was fine and in a great location in the Old Quarter.

Doug: A bit noisy and crazy and busy. That's what struck us, wasn't it? The noise and the motorbikes and the heat.

Tracy: The difference from Japan to South Korea and then to Vietnam was quite marked. It's more chaos, more noise, motorbikes and mopeds absolutely everywhere. It was really loud. The hotel was fine, the staff were lovely, and the rooms were absolutely fine.

Doug: We had a room above the hotel reception, so it looked onto the street. It was a back street, not the busiest, but loud enough.

Tracy: I managed to sleep fine. The only thing I'd say is that the breakfast was a little bit limited. Otherwise it was fine.

Tracy: We had six nights there, effectively five for me. Obviously you can go off and explore the markets and the streets and the sights yourself, but we always like to book tours, because with a tour you find things out that you would never have found out wandering the streets on your own. You learn a lot more about a destination, and that is exactly what happened.

Tracy: The first tour we did was an army jeep tour that had been recommended by friends, called Hanoi Food, Culture, Sightseeing and Fun Army Jeep Tour. We really enjoyed it.

Doug: There were two other English lads on it as well, so it was just the four of us. We met up and had some lunch before we started out in the jeeps, and that was like an icebreaker.

Tracy: We sat down, had something to eat and had a bit of a chat. We tried some egg coffee, which neither of us liked.

Doug: We don't drink coffee anyway, so that was never going to work for us.

Tracy: Then we went on the jeep all around Hanoi, so it was a great introduction to some of the areas, exploring places you probably wouldn't get to unless you went on this sort of tour. We also went to Train Street on this tour, but there was no train that day, and that was one of the things we really wanted to experience in Hanoi.

Tracy: The second tour was a Hanoi food tour that also had a Train Street visit, and on that day the train was coming, which was the advantage of having the guide. I struggle a lot when I travel with what I eat, and I don't like coriander. What was amazing is that our guide didn't like coriander either. He was Vietnamese and he didn't like coriander, and I was thinking, surely not, because coriander is in everything. But everywhere we went to try something, he was just saying, no coriander, no coriander. So we learned that you could say you don't want any coriander in the food, which really helped. If you do love coriander, that's great, but to us it tastes like soap.

Tracy: We tried some food we liked and some food we didn't like, and then we went on to Train Street. I don't really like trains going too close to me. I don't like the noise and I don't like the speed. So our guide put me in a cafe on the first-floor balcony.

Doug: I sat actually on the street. Back from our railway days, testing trains, I'm used to sitting there, and trust me, the train doesn't go through there very fast at all.

Tracy: It felt fast to me on that balcony. It also fills that entire street.

Doug: That's why the sound is so loud. They make sure that the people seated are back far enough, because they know exactly how far the train will come. The last thing you want is to get clipped by it.

Tracy: I turned away when it came. I took some video and thought, that's just too loud. But we got the iconic photos that everybody wants at Train Street, and it was amazing to see it.

Doug: It was definitely worth it.

Tracy: We also did something that had been recommended by Ros and Alan, and that was the water puppets.

Doug: I loved it. It was so different. I've been to puppet shows before, years ago, but never one that involves water.

Tracy: It was incredible. I've never seen anything like it, and you just can't figure out how they do it. I'd highly recommend it. Do not miss the water puppet show if you go to Hanoi.

Tracy: In terms of food, obviously there's lots of fantastic Vietnamese food and street food. But I'm also a sucker for French food. I lived in France for a few years, and I love French onion soup, and Doug loves it as well. So I was straight on having a look at reviews to find a good French restaurant, and we did.

Doug: We didn't just go there once either, to be fair.

Tracy: It was Colette French Bistro and Wine Bar, and it was fantastic. I think I had French onion soup both nights.

Doug: And snails.

Tracy: And snails. It was absolutely delicious. You are spoilt for choice with wonderful restaurants, but bear in mind we'd been in Japan and South Korea, and at that point I wanted something less Asian, so having that French food was really good. We did have some fantastic Vietnamese food as well, lots of banh mi. But over time my health was getting worse.

Ha Long Bay

Tracy: I went away for two days to Ha Long Bay, because we'd booked a really beautiful cabin. It was a two-day, one-night tour, but Doug then took ill.

Doug: I was gutted not to be able to get there, but you're made of tougher stuff than me, so you still went.

Tracy: I was determined to go, because it was \$500 I wasn't going to waste. But actually that was my big mistake, because I was not well and I did not enjoy the tour at all. I'm sure Ha Long Bay is absolutely beautiful, but honestly I was in my room feeling ill. The staff were lovely, they kept coming and saying, you're in this beautiful room. I didn't want to take part in any of the activities, I think there was canoeing, and I just didn't want to do anything. I really struggled with the meal, and nobody really spoke to me, although I was probably coughing and spluttering and not looking very well. So it just wasn't a good experience, and that's the one thing I wish I hadn't done. When we go back to Hanoi, we'll do it again.

Doug: Most definitely.

Tracy: And you can come with me next time.

The hospital in Hanoi

Tracy: I went to Ha Long Bay on the Saturday and came back on the Sunday, and the following day, the Monday, we were catching the Laman Express down to Da Nang. When I got back from that tour I was just beyond it, and I said, I need to go to hospital. This is where having travel insurance is an absolute lifeline. We never travel without it, so we didn't have to worry.

Tracy: We went to the international hospital and I had the best care possible. I had my own nurse. Within about an hour I'd had all the tests, blood tests, a CT scan and x-rays, so they knew at that point that I had bronchitis and pneumonia. You had to pay a deposit before the treatment.

Doug: That's right. I just went to reception with the staff and paid it all up front.

Tracy: It was something like 10 million dong. I wasn't kept in overnight, I was there for a few hours, and then I left with antibiotics. They subtracted the actual cost from the deposit, I got the receipts and put them straight into our travel insurance, and I got the entire amount back bar a couple of hundred dollars, which was the excess on our policy. One hundred per cent worth it. We didn't have to worry about it, and we wouldn't have had to worry if I'd been kept in. Of course you think, a lot of this is in Vietnamese, how will that work? But I sent it all to the travel insurance and it wasn't a problem.

Doug: Straight away.

Tracy: I honestly don't travel without travel insurance. You never know what's going to happen. I've heard of people being knocked over by mopeds and all sorts of things, because the roads are crazy.

Tracy: When I think about those first impressions of Hanoi, I think about the noise, the motorbikes, and just trying to cross the road.

Doug: Yes, that was initially difficult. Confidence grows when you've been there a few days.

Tracy: Absolutely, and we needed it even more in Ho Chi Minh City, because the roads are wider and it seems like you've got a hundred mopeds travelling at you all at once.

The Laman Express sleeper train

Tracy: What I did do was extend the hotel for a night so that we didn't have to check out early, because we were catching the train in the evening. I booked the train on 12Go Asia well ahead of time so that we could get the two berths.

Doug: It was incredibly special. It was an experience I don't think I'll ever forget, and it was straightforward. We took a taxi from our hotel to the hotel next to the station, which is the meeting point, where you're met by a host for the sleeper berths. We had some dinner there, and then you're taken across. You don't actually go into the main station, you're taken across the platform ends, which was a bit tricky because you're literally walking over the train lines. There was no raised level to make it easier, and then up a slope to the platform, which is at train level.

Tracy: And you've got to take your baggage over all of that as well.

Doug: You have. And then we got some green faces from people, because we'd managed to get a two-berth, so we lay there on our berths with the door open, looking very smug.

Tracy: You get food and drink provided in your berth as well. Everybody was walking past and peering in, and I took the mickey and made a little reel of it, because it was so funny. We were so lucky to get it, and that came down to the tip about booking early. It's a rocky train, I think I got rocked to sleep, but it was so enjoyable. It was 17 hours, and it also gave me a chance to rest, because I was taking antibiotics.

Doug: More rest.

Tracy: And you loved lying there with the lights off, just watching the countryside go past.

Doug: I'm a train fan, so being on board a train is my happy place.

Tracy: It was great. I would honestly do it again, and I'd recommend it one hundred per cent. If you're going from Hanoi down to Da Nang, take the train.

Doug: And the other thing was that when we left the station, we went down Train Street as well, from inside the train.

Tracy: So we did it both ways, watching the train go through and then sitting in the train as it went through.

Da Nang

Tracy: We stayed in Da Nang really as a jumping-off place for Hoi An, and then came back to Da Nang because we were catching a flight down to Ho Chi Minh City. But actually we thoroughly enjoyed Da Nang.

Doug: We did. And the hotel was great as well. We left some luggage there too, we didn't take everything with us.

Tracy: We had two nights there and then one night when we returned from Hoi An. The staff were amazing.

Doug: All of them. The welcoming staff inside the lobby were just so lovely, and then you think, is it just them? No, the reception staff, the floor staff, everybody was so lovely.

Tracy: I cannot recommend the Hotel Vanda enough. We will stay there again. You overlook the Dragon Bridge as well. We weren't there on a Friday night, which I think is when the fire comes out of the dragon. And you get a complimentary spa treatment included at the hotel.

Doug: You had it twice.

Tracy: I think I did, and I had another spa treatment when we stayed for the one night.

Doug: I did manage to get to the spa, on the second night.

Tracy: A lovely, lovely hotel. We ate locally as well, because there are lots of places to eat, and we found Da Nang cheaper than a lot of the other places we went to. Vietnam isn't massively expensive, that's for sure, but Da Nang was cheaper for food than Hoi An.

Hoi An

Tracy: We had five nights in Hoi An. We didn't do a lot there, because this was my main recuperation phase. I changed our hotel booking to a five-star hotel, just because I felt I needed a little bit of luxury and to be able to rest beside a pool. The original hotel we'd booked didn't have a pool, and I wanted that. So we stayed at the Anantara in Hoi An, which was lovely.

Tracy: I lay by the pool a bit. We had a full day of torrential rain, so we stayed in and I did some work. You went out walking a lot more than I did.

Doug: I went out a few times, a lot of walking down the riverbanks. It was really nice, and into the old town as well, because there are some nice streets.

Tracy: When I started feeling a bit better, I went in. It was about a 10 to 15 minute walk into the old town. I have to say, Hoi An slightly disappointed me compared with what I expected. I think I'd built it up, because we hear so much about Hoi An, and maybe that was because I wasn't feeling great, and I think that tainted it. I didn't get to do a lot of the things I wanted to do. I wanted to make one of the lanterns. We didn't go out on a boat. And the Japanese Bridge at that point was partly closed. I would go back to Hoi An again, but it is very touristy.

Doug: Very touristy, but also quite atmospheric. It was nice walking through, and nice walking around the market. I enjoyed it.

Tracy: It's a definite place we would return to. We did have a lovely dinner at the Shamballa Vegetarian Bistro, which was really delicious. I'm really picky with food, but it was a really good meal, and I was starting to feel better by that time as well.

Tracy: We also took the opportunity, because people always ask us what we do about washing when we're travelling, and Vietnam is very easy. We found a little shop and the lady there did the washing.

Doug: She was very charismatic. There are quite a few laundries near the hotel, to be fair.

Tracy: I think they weighed it and we paid a certain amount. The hotel was a little bit pricier, so we went and found people round about who did it. The Hotel Vanda organised our transfer to Hoi An, and in Hoi An I think it was the lady at the shop who did the washing who organised our transfer back. Very easy, not a problem. It's not very far between Hoi An and Da Nang. A lot of digital nomads live in Da Nang, so maybe it's somewhere we need to go and base ourselves and explore a bit more.

Ho Chi Minh City

Tracy: Then we flew from Da Nang down to Ho Chi Minh City. What were your impressions, Doug?

Doug: I enjoyed it, but I like Vietnam generally. I found the people lovely everywhere we went, really nice and friendly and engaging. But Ho Chi Minh is different.

Tracy: It is different. When I think about Ho Chi Minh City, I think about the wide streets and a hundred motorbikes bearing down on me.

Doug: Generally in the same direction. Generally.

Tracy: You soon learn that you just put your hand out and they will go around you. It's a bit daunting to start with.

Doug: We were joking that you can always tell the people who have just arrived from the ones who have been there a few days.

Tracy: Because they're standing there thinking, how am I going to cross this road? Nobody stops at those crossings. You have to walk and put your hand out, and they will literally swerve around you. It is an incredible experience and it has to be done.

Tracy: We were staying at the Orchids Saigon Hotel, and again we had a transfer from the airport to the hotel, because I just don't faff. We ate a lot in the food court down at the Saigon Centre, which was a short walk down in District 1.

Doug: We found it easy. There was a good variety of different foods, and different budgets as well.

Tracy: I was still resting because I was still not feeling great. If you've had pneumonia, you know it's not much fun. So I spent a bit of time by the pool, and it was a nice hotel with a pool, so I could relax a bit.

The Cu Chi Tunnels and the Mekong Delta

Tracy: Doug went on a full-day trip to the Cu Chi Tunnels and the Mekong Delta. How was that tour, Doug?

Doug: I loved it, it was really, really good. The guide was a guy called Lam, and he was really talented and really passionate about his own country and his home city. He talked about the history and the Vietnam War without dwelling on it. He portrayed it from a neutral point of view, telling the story from both sides of the fence, and then how they coped with it and recovered afterwards. He engaged everybody in the group in

conversation without any judgment, just about people's preconceived ideas of the conflict and of that time. It was quite intense, but after that the mood changed and it got lighter and lighter through the day, and it was just good fun. The driver, a guy called Mr T, was really charismatic and entertaining.

Tracy: You came back and told me all about it. I get claustrophobic, so I couldn't have dealt with those tunnels. There's a picture of you down one of the tunnels with the trapdoor on top.

Doug: That was one for the photo shoots, but some of the tunnels there were originals. They start from a wide point and they get narrower as you go down them, and that was quite scary. I went about three quarters of the way along, and then I just couldn't. It wasn't claustrophobia, it's that I couldn't bend low enough. You're crouching, and for the last part you really need to be almost lying down to shuffle along, and I couldn't get that far.

Tracy: That doesn't sound like something I would have enjoyed. I think I made the right decision staying by the pool that day.

Doug: Probably about a quarter of the group actually did it, and I don't think anybody got to the end. And there's no pressure. That's the beauty of a good tour guide. These tunnels are from a serious point in history, but he wasn't putting any pressure on anybody to do anything they didn't want to do. Later on we went out on the Mekong on a little boat, which was really good, and the honey farm, and there's a little road train, and the show. The day had a bit of everything.

Doug: It's a tour I'd recommend. In fact, I know a few people who have also done it.

Meeting Kim Ho and her family with LikeLocal

Tracy: The other thing we did, because we were there for four nights, was that we were invited by LikeLocal to visit a local family, to experience the local life of a Vietnamese family and their neighbourhood. So we went to meet Kim Ho. Hi, Kim. She was amazing, as were her parents, her sister and her grandmother, and we got to explore a little bit of her neighbourhood. The whole point was then to cook a dinner that we would sit down and eat with Kim and her parents. Now, I don't cook, so that was a bit of a surprise for Kim's mum, because she expected me to go into the kitchen.

Doug: It was all directed towards you to start with, until you had to go through Kim and say, actually, I don't do any of the cooking, Doug does it. And there was that momentary silence.

Tracy: It was really funny. And then you and Kim's mum were in the kitchen doing all this cooking, and she was videoing you and sending messages to her sisters and her aunts and all the family saying, look, I've got this guy in my kitchen.

Doug: This man in my kitchen. Which obviously doesn't happen. But the good thing was that this was off the touristy tracks. We also went into the little community centre next door, and they were all very proud of their local treasures, the signs and murals in there. It was really, really good.

Tracy: It was a privilege. That's the thing about LikeLocal, because you have the privilege of actually meeting local people. When you're in Vietnam, or any country, you meet local people in the hotel, in the restaurants, maybe driving you, maybe on a tour, but you don't know what happens when they finish their shift. They go home. What is their life like at home? Where do they live? What do they cook? What's happening with their family? That was the unique insight we got.

Doug: What does their day look like? The one thing that struck me was that we didn't speak the same language, but boy did we have a laugh.

Tracy: We did. After Doug and Kim's mum had made the food, we sat down on the floor with Kim and her parents and ate most of what they'd cooked. I can't tell you how privileged we felt to be able to do this. In Cambodia we did some other things with LikeLocal, which were again amazing, and we'll talk about those in next month's episode.

Leaving Vietnam by bus

Tracy: After Ho Chi Minh City we went on to Phnom Penh, and we're going to talk about that in next month's episode. But I will just say that we took the bus, which was amazing.

Doug: That was definitely worth doing. It was a good idea of yours to do that instead of flying. The bus took longer than we thought because it had a flat tyre.

Tracy: But it was all fun.

Doug: It was all part of the day. And there's obviously a lot more scenery you can see on the way than you can from an aeroplane. It was definitely worth doing.

Tracy: If we can, we'll travel by train. If we can't, we'll travel by bus. If we can't, we'll travel by car. And if we can't, then we'll fly.

Doug: I'm not a great traveller on coaches, to be truthful, and I have to try to get towards the front wherever I possibly can.

Tracy: It was fine, we had no problems. We've taken the coach between Malaysia and Singapore a number of times and I highly recommend it. It's so much easier, you can relax and enjoy the scenery, and it's often a lot cheaper than other modes of transport. I'll talk a lot more about the logistics in next month's episode.

Practical information

Tracy: It was warm to hot most of the time. The weather did change slightly as we went from north to south Vietnam, which is normal, because they have different seasons.

Doug: And because this was part of a longer trip, we also had to have some cold weather clothing for South Korea.

Tracy: We were going from warm, to very cold, to hot, and then to very cold in Europe, so you have to think very carefully about what you pack. Honestly, compression cubes are the best. And think about mix and match, and things you can wash and dry quickly.

Tracy: We did use a lot of cash in Vietnam. It's a cash-happy country, they want cash. But we used the Wise card as well to pay for some restaurants and hotels, and that was accepted without any problem. If you want to do the train, booking ahead is really important. If you want the two-berth cabin we had, which I think was Golden Class, you need to book ahead. Ha Long Bay cruises book out well in advance too. Just try not to be ill when you've booked it. That was the one thing that wasn't cancellable, which is why I was determined to go, but I probably wouldn't do that again.

Tracy: We booked all our tours through GetYourGuide, all our tickets and transfers through 12Go, and our hotels through booking.com, all with free cancellation. That's what I always do, because things happen, like getting sick. And make sure you have travel insurance. We never travel without it.

Tracy: Just a little bit about mobility. Things like lifting your luggage onto the train and crossing the tracks, that's something we had to do. It's so tempting to take too much luggage and then think you're going to manage it.

Doug: We had a small pull-along each and a backpack.

Tracy: And we did some walks, for example from the Anantara into Hoi An, but you could take that easy, about 10 to 15 minutes, and it's flat.

What we'd change next time

Tracy: I want to put you on the spot here, Doug. If there was one thing you could change about that itinerary, is there anything you'd change? Anywhere you'd spend longer, or less time?

Doug: Other than not getting sick? Probably Da Nang. I don't feel like we did that total justice, really. I'd like to see a bit more there. And probably try a few more French restaurants as well. But for a first visit I think we had a good taste. And because we were flexible, and because of the way you book with free cancellation, we were able to do more than my getting ill might have allowed.

Tracy: Next time I think we'll do a lot of the things we've already done, but add in Ha Long Bay, because you missed it. For me, just not feeling ill would be an advantage, and I probably wouldn't have gone on the Ha Long Bay tour, because I wasn't up for it, and on my own it wasn't a lot of fun.

Doug: I'd do the jeep tour again as well, because some of the places we went to, you wouldn't be able to find if you were making your own way.

Tracy: Which is again why I always recommend booking tours.

Closing

Tracy: That's the end of our Vietnam itinerary episode. Everything we've talked about, including the hotels, the train, the tours and the bus to Cambodia, can be found at globaltravelplanning.com/episode-106. If you know anybody who's planning a trip to Vietnam, please share this episode with them. You'll also find our free Vietnam cheatsheet on our Vietnam travel guide on the website, globaltravelplanning.com. If you haven't heard the previous episodes about Vietnam, do take a listen. That's episode 4 with Ros and Alan of Step into Vietnam, and episode 12, which is all about our LikeLocal experiences.

Tracy: If you enjoyed the episode, come back and listen to the next part, which is all about Cambodia next month. We had an absolutely wonderful time.

Doug: We did.

Tracy: That just leaves Doug and me to say, until next episode. Happy global travel planning.

Global Travel Planning Podcast, Episode 106. Hosted by Tracy Collins with Doug Collins. globaltravelplanning.com