

Adventure in Northern Vietnam: An Ecological Paradise | 13 Days



This 13-day adventure veers off the beaten path and into the wild and unspoiled beauty of Northern Vietnam. During the trip, you will trek through mountains, valleys and villages to discover the landscapes and cultures of Sapa and the frontier region of Ha Giang before winding up in the sublime setting of Ba Be National Park. Enjoy 2-day experiencing the stunning scenery of Lan Ha Bay. This tour encapsulates the aspects which make Vietnam a unique and unmissable destination.

Trip Highlights

- Explore the wild and untouched beauty of Northern Vietnam
- Experience trekking through rice paddy fields Ý Linh Hồ, flower valleys and Black Hmong villages
- Enjoy home-cooked dinner with a local family in Ha Giang
- Ride the longest cable car system of Southeast Asia to the highest mountain top of Southeast Asia, Fansipan – also known as Roof of Indochina
- Visit (trek up) to Pu Lo fortress which was built in 1890
- Witness the natural wonder of Northern Vietnam – Ban Gioc Waterfall
- Visit Ba Be National Park and explore the lake, the caves of Puong Grotto, the rapids of Dau Dang Waterfall and tiny Widow Island
- Spend a night in a traditional Tay stilt house with a local host family

- This is set to be a wonderful day of trekking! Your tour guide will take you to Coc Toc
- Picnic lunch in a H'mong ethnic village
- Explore 4 km deep river Lo Mo Cave which is yet to be documented by geologists
- Experience the wonders of Hua Ma Cave, famous for its thousands of stalactites and stalagmites

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Hanoi

Welcome to Vietnam! Upon arrival in Hanoi, Vietnam's bustling colonial capital, meet by *travel-to-nature Asia* representative/guide outside the baggage claim of Noi Bai Airport and take you to your hotel. Please look out for your name-card once you exit out of arrival area.

In the afternoon, take a walk around the centre, visiting some of Hanoi's main attractions: the Opera House, Old Quarter, Hoan Kiem Lake and Ngoc Son Temple. In the evening enjoy a traditional Water Puppet Performance – a unique Vietnamese art form hailing from Southeast Asia's wet-rice culture – followed by a welcome dinner at one of Hanoi's finest restaurants.

Accommodation: La Siesta Ma May Hotel

Meal: Dinner

Day 2: Drive Hanoi - Sapa (315 km | 5.15 hrs)

Our guide and driver will pick you up around 7:30am for your 5 hour drive to Sapa. Simply sit back, relax, and enjoy as the scenery transforms from bustling metropolis to rolling hills and endless rice paddies.

Around midday you will arrive in Sapa, at which time you'll get to enjoy a local lunch. Then for your first trip use the longest cable car system in Asia, departing from Sapa Town to the highest mountain top of Southeast Asia, Fansipan, once known as the 'Roof of Indochina'. The highest point of the mountain culminates at 3,143m above sea level.

Adventure in Northern Vietnam: An Ecological Paradise | 13 Days

The ascension by cable car takes about 30 minutes, offering you on the way a stunning view of terraced rice fields as far as the eye can see. Once arrived, you will be able to visit the temples and finish the climb by foot, just 600 stairs, or by funicular before you head back to Sapa Town by car for an overnight stay in a hotel.

It is recommended to bring a jacket as the temperature drops and the wind blows at this altitude.

Accommodation: Pao's Sapa Leisure Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 3: Sapa Trekking

Today you will trek to rice paddy fields **Ý Linh Hồ**, flower valleys and Black Hmong villages, located in the mountains with amazing panoramic views. You will visit a local house to meet the villagers and discover their daily life. After lunch in a local restaurant, you will continue through the rice terrace fields to **Lao Chai and Ta Van Village** of Zay people to discover their culture. This is the biggest valley and features the most impressive rice terrace fields in the whole of Sapa. You will have dinner and spend the night in a homestay in Ta Van Village.

Accommodation: Ta Van Homestay

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4: Drive Sapa - Ha Giang (235 km | 5.30 hrs)

Today we'll leave Sapa in favour of Vietnam's final frontier, Ha Giang. On the way we'll make a stop at Pho Rang for lunch before we have a walking tour to Vinh Yen inhabited by Tay communities.

We continue our drive deeper into Ha Giang, enjoying the spectacular scenery along the way, before finally reaching the Tay village for another walk where we will spend the night around 6pm, just in time for a home-cooked dinner. You'll stay overnight in this traditional Tay stilt house.

(6-8 km walk).

Accommodation: Mr Doan Homestay

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5: Drive Ha Giang - Dong Van (129 km | 3.70 hrs)

Once we have purchased the mandatory permit at the Immigration Office, you will begin the journey to Dong Van following a spectacular series of passes which wind through the mountains and valleys. En route you enjoy exceptional views of the rolling landscape and interesting flora and fauna. After that, we will have Lunch in the small mountain town of Tam Son visiting the villages of the H'mong Lung Cam B. You will have the chance to see the former palace of the H'mong King, Vương Chinh Duc who was an ally of the French. You will arrive in Dong Van around 18:00 where you will have dinner at a local restaurant and spend the night in a hotel.

Accommodation: Hoa Cuong Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6: Drive Dong Van - Meo Vac - Cao Bang (224 km | 7 hrs)

You'll start the day off with breakfast and a visit to the Dong Van Market, where locals come from all the surrounding villages to purchase and trade for essentials they cannot produce themselves. Then you will be making the trek up to Pu Lo fortress

Adventure in Northern Vietnam: An Ecological Paradise | 13 Days

which was built in 1890 and evacuated in 1945. From here you can enjoy spectacular views of the entire region, before climbing 8 km to the top of Ma Pi Leng Pass, through a gigantic maze of limestone peaks, stone forests, and canyons (the Sky Path at the Nho Qué River Viewpoint) before descending into the valley of Meo Vac. Winding our way through the valley, we'll eventually reach Bao Lac village, where we'll rest for a bit and have lunch before being driven to Cao Bang where you'll spend the night in a hotel.

- A 8-10 km trek

Accommodation: Thanh Loan Hotel/ Mr Kim Homestay

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7: Drive Cao Bang - Ban Gioc Waterfall (246 km | 7 hrs)

This day is likely to be your highlight of the tour, as we take you to one of the most incredible natural wonders in Northern Vietnam; Ban Gioc Waterfall. The drive here from Cao Bang is roughly two hours, and this breath-taking 300-metre wide cascade sits right on the border between China and Vietnam, amidst a beautiful mountainous landscape.

While you're here you can spend your time relaxing in the glow of the natural beauty, take some amazing photos, and board a bamboo boat that will take you so close to the falls you'll feel the spray on your face, practically sitting at the very edge of Vietnam, so close to China that you can actually touch it.

After enjoying the waterfall, you will venture deep underground into the magical Nguom Ngao Cave to discover the rock formations which have been carved by erosion over millennia.

After visiting the waterfall and cave, you will travel down a beautiful road which is unknown to many, which winds through the mountains before reaching the Nung village of Quang Uyen.

You will be welcomed by Mr. Hung Dao, an amazingly friendly blacksmith, before having dinner at his house and settling in for the night in this cosy traditional Nung house.

Accommodation: Thanh Loan Hotel/ Mr Kim Homestay

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8: Drive Cao Bang - Ba Be Lake (206 km | 5 hrs)

Today we leave Quang Yen behind and drive through Ma Phuc pass on our way to Ba Be National Park. Once in the park, you'll have time to explore the many wonders located here, such as the lake itself, the caves of Puong Grotto, the rapids of Dau Dang Waterfall and finally the tiny Widow Island located on the lake.

We'll be staying in a traditional Tay stilt house overnight, staying with a local host family.

Accommodation: Mr Linh's Homestay

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 9: Trekking in Ba Be Jungle

This is set to be a wonderful day of trekking! Your tour guide will take you to Coc Toc Village where you can meet the Tay community. After you have seen the lovely stilt houses and seen this idyllic way of life, you will set out to cross the Pe Lu Stream, before hitting some rough, steep terrain that will give you a little bit of a workout. As you gain height, though, you will be rewarded for your efforts with spectacular views of the verdant rolling countryside. Pressing on to the uplands we will stop for a picnic lunch in a H'mong ethnic village. During the afternoon, your guide will take you through mountains and valleys and to see the houses of the Dzao ethnic people, before moving back to homestay.

Adventure in Northern Vietnam: An Ecological Paradise | 13 Days

Accommodation: Mr Linh's Homestay

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10: Caving | Tham Phay Expedition

You'll be picked up at the homestay after breakfast for the main event of your tour. After a quick drive you'll reach Lo Mo Cave, where you'll spend about three hours exploring this 4km deep river cave, so far uncharted by geologists. We will of course provide you with the necessary gear, like hardhats and strong headlamps. The cave dramatically widens once you pass the initial entrance, and presents some great opportunities for excellent photographs. During your three hours of exploration you'll get to enjoy the beautiful rock formations, enormous passages and even an underground river. Leaving Lo Mo, you will have lunch in the campsite then travel back to the homestay where you will have dinner and stay the night.

Accommodation: Mr Linh's Homestay

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 11: Drive Ba Be - Hanoi (240 km | 4.67 hrs)

After breakfast, we'll take you on a stroll along the riverfront to visit some surrounding villages, followed by a hike up one of the higher points around the lake, providing you with some impressive views surrounded by limestone formations and mountain peaks.

Following this we enter Hua Ma Cave, famous for its thousands of stalactites and stalagmites, and also known for being the biggest dry cave in Northeastern Vietnam. After lunch in a local restaurant, it's sadly

time to head back to Hanoi and say our goodbyes, arriving at your hotel around 5 pm.

Accommodation: La Siesta Ma May Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12: Drive Hanoi - Lan Ha Bay

07:15 – 8:15 AM: Pick up at hotel for three and a half hours road trip with short refreshment on half way to Cat Ba.

12:00 Welcome by our staff at the Cai Beo Cruise Port
12.30 – 13.00: Check-in the boat, enjoy a welcome drink & cruise briefing

13.15 – 14.30: Have lunch while cruising to charming Lan Ha bay; admire the fascinating formations on the way

15.00 – 17.00: Explore the magnificent quiet bay by kayaking or just relaxing on wild beach on the island

17.30 – 19.15: Back to junk for refreshing and enjoying your relaxing time on the sundeck and experience our Vietnamese authentic cooking demonstration before having BBQ dinner on board.

After dinner: Relaxing on the sundeck or enjoying some drinks at the bar.

Overnight on board

Accommodation: Cosy Boutique Cruise

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 18: Drive Lan Ha Bay - Hanoi | Depart

06.15 – 07.00: Say hello to the Bay with a pleasant stretching Taichi

07.00 – 07.50: Morning view of Bay's landscape with a cup of tea or coffee. Have breakfast in our cozy Vietnamese decorated dining area while heading to Viet Hai fishing Village on the Bay

08.00 – 09.30: Cycling or electric car, visiting the local life of a fishing village on the island and melting yourself in the fresh air of lush and evergreen trees and little local life in the village of Viet Hai

10.00: Check out of the cabin. Start cruising towards the port while a set lunch is served

11.45 – 12.00: Disembark

Transfer by tender to the pier and relax inside our waiting lounge while waiting for the return

Adventure in Northern Vietnam: An Ecological Paradise | 13 Days

transportation - Drop-off at hotel in Hanoi. Hanoi Departure.

Meal: Breakfast

Includes

- Airport (pick up/drop off) transfers by private A/C vehicle
- Twin-Sharing accommodation in all Hotel/Resort/Lodge as mentioned or similar
- Daily breakfast throughout the trip, other meals as mentioned in the itinerary
- All sightseeing and long-distance transportation in a private air-conditioned vehicle (cars/SUVs or mini/micro-van etc. depending on group size). This includes toll taxes, parking, allowance for the driver, outstation overnight charges for the driver
- Cruise on Lan Ha Bay
- Professional & Licensed English Speaking Guide
- Government taxes

Excludes

- International flight tickets
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance & vaccinations
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Personal clothing and equipment
- Tips for trip leader/guide, driver, hotel staff, and porters
- Items of personal nature such as alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, laundry, telephone calls and other unforeseen expenses
- Items/services not listed in the "included"
- Compulsory gala dinner on Christmas or New Year (if applicable)
- Extra expenses/payment for 'Optional' activities/programs if participated

Accommodation

La Siesta Classic Ma May, Hanoi

With its imposing white exterior and warm Asian-inspired interior, La Siesta Classic Ma May is situated in the heart of the Old Quarter, close to Hoan Kiem Lake providing a luxuriously quiet oasis within the busy maze of streets. The property has 75 bespoke-designed guestrooms and suites, the Moonlight Sky Bar on the rooftop, La Spa and gym on the 2nd level.



Pao's Sapa Leisure Hotel, Sapa

Nestled on a hillside amongst spectacular mountains, overlooking the poetic Muong Hoa valley and the marvelous Hoang Lien Son mountain range, Pao's Sapa Leisure Hotel prides itself on being the first luxury 5-star hotel in Sapa. Pao's Sapa Leisure Hotel offers 223 rooms featuring the cultural identity of Sapa, subtly blended with high-class rooms and impeccable facilities.

Hoa Cuong Hotel, Dong Van

Hoa Cuong Hotel is located in the center of the old town of Dong Van district - Ha Giang, where the center of the Stone Plateau Complex has been recognized by UNESCO. The hotel was inaugurated and put into operation at the beginning of 2015. It is the largest and most modern hotel in Ha Giang up to this point.

Cozy Boutique Cruise, Lan Ha Bay

Cozy Boutique has focused on developing comfortable and traditional boats to bring guests to the remote areas in the bay, and our staff show their highest attitude of sincere, honest and enthusiasm of local Vietnamese. We have built 2

Adventure in Northern Vietnam: An Ecological Paradise | 13 Days

types of high quality boats – Ocean Cruise, and the newest 2019 built Cozy Boutique Cruise.



Group/Individual

On this trip you will be traveling privately with your family & friends. Our representative/tour partner will look after your transfers to and from the airport and will be around to answer other questions you may have about your trip.

Accommodation – Hotel, Resort

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a fine heritage hotel in another or a family-run guesthouse or lodges in a smaller town. Accommodation in remote areas tend to be basic and may not have western amenities.

Single Accommodation

Single (room) supplements are provided on request (single supplement charge applies) and are subject to availability.

Food & Transport

All breakfasts, 11 lunches and 12 dinners are included.

Thanks to the tropical climate, the long coast and the gigantic range of mountains, Vietnam is blessed with numerous varieties of culinary offerings and consequently maintains its reputation as one of the

healthiest cuisines in the world that still packs a punch with delicious, fresh and fiery flavours.

Food is cheap in Vietnam and you can generally avoid the spicier food if you wish. Western food is readily available almost everywhere, with the exception of the night in the Mekong Delta.

Vegetarian food is widely available; however, the offering will be fairly similar in most places. Please advise at time of booking if you have any dietary requirements.

For airport, sightseeing transfers, and for long drives we use a private air-con car, jeep, van depending upon group size.

Weather

The weather will be hot and humid throughout with temperatures during the day usually 28C-34C (82F-93F). It is only a little cooler at nights.

There is quite a range of seasons between the north and the south: the south up to Hue has a distinct dry season between December to April and then a rainy season from May to November when it tends to come in short heavy bursts with bright sunshine in between. Hanoi is cool in autumn, and even gets chilly between November and February (with drizzly rain).

There is no ideal time to visit Vietnam; it is quite pleasant any time of year, though due to the shape of the country it is unlikely the weather will ever be perfect for the entire duration of any trip.

The dry season is as it sounds, with hot days and generally clear skies, though you can expect the odd shower. The monsoon is characterised by short, sharp bursts of rain and is generally overcast all day though this does not detract from the enjoyment of the place; you just need to take an umbrella or buy a cheap local poncho.

Adventure in Northern Vietnam: An Ecological Paradise | 13 Days

Baggage Allowance

The standard baggage weight limit on international flights (generally from Europe) is one checked baggage of 25kg (55lb) and hand baggage 7kg (15lbs). However, if your journey involves domestic connecting flights weight limit can be limited/restricted. We recommend packing only one piece of checked baggage. Luggage allowances for both hand and checked luggage are subject to change, we suggest you check the airline's website for the latest information prior to your departure or purchasing your flight tickets.

ESSENTIAL/PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Passport & Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information below is primarily for EU passport holders, and other nationalities should check with the relevant embassies. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Visas are not required to enter Vietnam for German nationals for up to 15 days. However, some other European nationals still need to obtain a visa.

An electronic visa (e-Visa) is also available and you can find further information on this link: <https://www.evisagov.vn/official/en-us/>. Please note, e-Visas are not accepted at all border checkpoints when travelling overland.

Please note: Visa regulations can change without notice, therefore please check the current regulations or contact us.

Vaccination & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad and enjoy holidays to the fullest.

There are no required vaccinations. However, recommended vaccinations include hepatitis A, tetanus, typhoid, cholera, hepatitis B, Japanese encephalitis, rabies and tuberculosis. You will also need a yellow fever vaccination certificate if you're arriving from a country with risk of yellow fever transmission or transiting for more than 12 hours through a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. Please confirm your vaccine recommendations and requirements with your doctor or travel clinic.

Dengue fever, a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes, is a known risk in places visited. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available, so take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

Local Time

GMT/UTC + 7 hours.

Electricity

220 volts AC, 50 Hz. There are three plug types in Vietnam - A, C, & F. Plug type A is the plug which has two flat parallel pins, type C & F plug has two round pins.

ATM | Credit Cards

ATMs are a common sight in Vietnamese cities, and you should have no trouble locating one in most destinations. International cards such as Visa are accepted at more than 20,000 ATMs nationwide. Withdrawal limits per transaction range between 2 million VND (just under 100 dollars) and 3 million VND with local bank ATMs; and between 5 million VND to 10 million VND with international bank ATMs.

Adventure in Northern Vietnam: An Ecological Paradise | 13 Days

While using ATM please be mindful of your surroundings.

Credit cards are not widely accepted, but some hotels and businesses in larger cities will accept them.

To get the best exchange rates for Dong, bigger denominations Euro/US\$ that are in pristine conditions (no fold, no mark, no tear, no stain) are required.

Extra Expenses & Spending Money

You will need to bring some extra money to cover drinks, laundry, souvenirs and any other personal expense, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Though it totally depends on individual but generally an approximate (rough estimate) amount of Euro 150 (US\$165) per person, per week should be sufficient (more if you enjoy a few beers); however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount. Or if you are the one frugal with money probably allocating less would also be suffice.

Optional Tours may be offered in some city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available. Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each optional tour/activity will be arranged locally by our local partner/guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

Tipping

Tipping isn't mandatory or customary in Vietnam, but it is always appreciated. If you're happy with the services provided by waiters, drivers and other service workers, leaving a small tip is a good way to show your appreciation.

Itinerary Change

In case of some unusual events/incidents the order of programs (sightseeing, excursions etc.) might have to

change in order to accommodate the local situations. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements while maintaining the overall integrity of your trip.

The domestic airlines (if your program includes) may change their schedule frequently and, in such cases, our local partner/guide will inform you about the changes.

Travel Insurance

We highly recommend to choose/get an insurance plan/policy that covers your requirements/needs. And please make sure to keep/carry a hard-copy of your travel insurance documents on your person while on tour. It's prudent to check thoroughly the inclusions and procedure to file claims prior to purchasing insurance coverage. *travel-to-nature Asia* will not be responsible for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to purchase appropriate travel insurance from the date of booking.

Important Information

On all guided trips although our guides (leaders) are well trained to deal with different capabilities, if they have any concerns about someone's ability to safely partake in an activity, or their impact on other people's enjoyment, we authorize them to take necessary action which, in some circumstances, may involve asking someone to miss that activity.