

## Trekking Hidden Trails of Vietnam

(Hanoi – Lao Cai – Sapa – Bac Ha – Ha Giang – Ba Be – Cao Bang – Lang Son – Halong Bay)

(Issued date: 17 Jan 2023)

### Itinerary Overview

Day	Destinations/Activities	Meals
Day 1	SAPA TREK	B/L/D
Day 2	GIANG TA CHAI	B/L
Day 3	SAPA – BATXAT – LAO CAI	B/L
Day 4	MUONG KHUONG – BAC HA	B/L/D
Day 5	BAC HA – HOANG SU PHU – HA GIANG	B/L/D
Day 6	HA GIANG – DONG VAN	B/L
Day 7	DONG VAN – MEO VAC – HA GIANG	B/L
Day 8	HA GIANG – BA BE NATIONAL PARK	B/L/D
Day 9	BA BE LAKE	B/L/D
Day 10	BA BE LAKE – CAO BANG	B/L
Day 11	CAO BANG – BAN GIOC WATERFALL – LANG SON	B/L
Day 12	LANG SON – HA LONG BAY	B/L
Day 13	HALONG BAY – HANOI	B/L

**Note\*:** B: Breakfast / L: Lunch / D: Dinner

## Detailed Itinerary

### Day 1

### SAPA TREK

You'll arrive early in the morning (roughly 5:30am) at the railway station in Lao Cai, a border town between Vietnam and Yunnan, China. From here we set out on a 38km drive along the winding roads through the mountains of Sapa, located at 1500m above sea level. If you're lucky enough to be here on a clear day, you may even see the highest mountain in Vietnam, the Fansipan, while driving this route.

We'll reach our hotel in Sapa in time for breakfast at 8am, before we start walking to Lao Chai village. Views of Muong Hoa Valley and its magnificent surroundings are great here, featuring stunning mountains and sprawling rice terraces.

After a picnic lunch on the way, you will continue through the valley to Ta Van Village to visit Dzay people, who are known to be some of the friendliest people in the region. The next village is Giang Ta Chai which belongs to the Red Dzao tribe where you will see some amazing scenery. Tonight you will stay overnight in a local house of a Dzay family.

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Local Dzay house

### Day 2

### GIANG TA CHAI

After enjoying breakfast with your hosts, you will begin the trek from Giang Ta Chai to Su Pan taking in more incredible views along the way. This really is an unbeatable way to start the day, surrounded by wild and beautiful natural landscapes and clean, fresh air.

In Su Pan, you will be able to meet local people who belong to the Red Dao and Black Hmong ethnic groups. After having time to meet with them and explore their village, you will begin the trek back to Sapa. This gives you one last chance to take in the breathtaking views of the mountain ranges and rice paddies. Dinner on your own and overnight in Sapa town.

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodation:** Overnight in Sapa town

### Day 3

### SAPA – BATXAT – LAO CAI

(Note, title change for day 5, old one didn't fit the content of the day)

Today is the most challenging in terms of trekking but also the most rewarding. After 2 hours of following a flat path, you will begin the dizzying climb up the mountain. You will follow a small track through a thick primary rain forest which can be quite challenging if it has been raining, but this is the only route for local villagers going to Xin Man. You will have the opportunity to see many wild giant butterflies in a rainbow of colours, flitting through the fresh mountain air.

Once we reach an altitude of about 2000m, an incredible vista of terraced paddies appears, decorating the rolling mountainsides. Weather permitting you will stop for a picnic lunch next to a waterfall and then continue on to Coc Dong Village, belonging to the Nung hill tribe, arriving in the mid-afternoon. You will stay overnight in the stilt house of a local family.

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodation:** Local stilt house

### Day 4

### MUONG KHUONG – BAC HA

We set out for the weekend market of Muong Khuong in the morning, which attracts a wide variety of minority groups such as the H'mong, Dao, Thu Lao, Pa Di, Tu Di and Phu La. The drive to Muong Khuong is about 2 hours, and then in the early afternoon we continue on to Bac Ha. Here we'll stop for an overnight break, and we'll enjoy a walk to visit the H'mong Kings Palace after checking in. Dinner on your own and overnight in Bac Ha.

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Overnight in Bac Ha

### Day 5

### BAC HA – HOANG SU PHU – HA GIANG

Upon leaving Bac Ha we set off on a full day journey through Sin Man and Hoang Su Phi to Ha Giang Town.

The rough but scenic route traverses a dense jungle before crossing over a pass and descending down to Sin Man. This day is a real challenge for our driver as we travel by winding roads with many uphill and down hill sections. Along the way we may encounter the Nung Ing, Tay, Red Dao, Dao Ao Dai, La

Chi and Co Lao, which are just some of the many hill tribe groups who have settled here. Dinner on your own, then overnight in Ha Giang.

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Overnight in Ha Giang

## Day 6

### HA GIANG – DONG VAN

The remote region of Dong Van and Meo Vac is a land of rugged mountains and beautiful hill villages which have stood unchanged for centuries.

Today we head north-west out of Ha Giang Town towards this northernmost tip of Vietnam. The former H'mong royal house at Sa Phin is a primary attraction of the region but the blend of hill tribe people's colourful costumes and the majestic mountainous scenery make this long and bumpy trip an unforgettable experience. Dinner on your own, then overnight in Dong Van.

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodation:** Overnight in Dong Van

## Day 7

### DONG VAN – MEO VAC – HA GIANG

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, who have become very skilled at fishing in the lake and live on a diet that is very much centred on fish.

Next you will set out to cross Pe Lu Stream, before hitting some rough, steep terrain that will give you a little bit of a workout. As you gain altitude, though, you will be rewarded for your efforts with spectacular views of the verdant rolling countryside. Pressing on ever higher we will stop for a picnic lunch in a H'mong ethnic village, where your guide may introduce you to some of the local H'mong people.

We have time to visit Dong Van Town before continuing to Meo Vac which is inhabited by the Lo Lo and Pu Peo ethnic minority people.

They still retain their age old cultural traditions and are recognisably distinct from each other by their dress. The remoteness and the simple lifestyle of local people are a highlight of Meo Vac, although conditions can be very basic. We return to Ha Giang via Yen Minh using a shortcut, then dinner on your own, and an overnight stay in Ha Giang.

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodation:** Overnight in Ha Giang

## Day 8

### HA GIANG – BA BE NATIONAL PARK

An early morning start with a drive through the rolling hills and the picturesque scenery to Ba Be National Park. The roads are very bumpy and windy, however we will get a chance to meet the Hmong, Dao, Tay and Nung ethnic minorities who make up the main population of this region. We are sure to attract their attention as this part of the country receives very few visitors.

Depending on road and traffic conditions we arrive in Ba Be by late afternoon or early evening for dinner with a Tay family at their homestay in Coc Toc village.

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Overnight in Ba Be

## Day 9

### BA BE LAKE

Today we embark on a boat cruising down the Nang River which is the main water source of Ba Be Lake. This exciting river trip will give us a taste of the tranquil countryside and offers an enjoyable exploration of Ba Be National Park. We traverse the Puong Grotto before stopping at some nearby hill tribe villages and getting off the beaten track to the scenic Dau Dang Waterfalls. Again we'll have dinner with a Tay family at their homestay in Coc Toc village.

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Overnight in Ba Be

## Day 10

### BA BE LAKE – CAO BANG

The next destination on our trip is Cao Bang Town. After breakfast we set off on our half day journey past spectacular mountainous landscapes, with a mixture of steep terraced rice field and hill villages. Along the way, we can make stops at our leisure, to stretch our legs and take some wonderful photographs. The remainder of the day will be free to explore the town or simply relax. Dinner on your own, then overnight in Cao Bang.

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodation:** Overnight in Cao Bang

## Day 11

### CAO BANG – BAN GIOC WATERFALL – LANG SON

Today we set out for one of Northern Vietnam's most incredible natural wonders; Ban Gioc Waterfall. This breath-taking 300-meter wide cascade forms part of the Chinese-Vietnamese border, and here you can relax in this natural wonder with plenty of time to snap some photos. You'll also get to board a bamboo boat and get right up close to the raging waterfall.

Next we'll visit a local market where you get to experience the diverse cultures of the area, before hiking to Phat Tich Temple which aside from being a great cultural experience, offers some of the best views of Ban Gioc with China in the background. Next up with pass through several hill tribe villages before reaching the tranquil town of Dong Khe and That Khe. By late afternoon we'll arrive in Lang Son, a border town all but destroyed in the recent Sino-Vietnamese war, but rebuilt into a thriving trade hub in the years since. Dinner on your own then an overnight stay in Lang Son.

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodation:** Overnight in Lang Son

## Day 12

### LANG SON – HA LONG BAY

The lively central market of Lang Son, we depart for Halong, truly one of Vietnam's most impressive scenic sights. The drive is difficult at times as we travel through many mountainous areas.

The breath-taking scenery here is some of the best in Asia, and we'll have some opportunities en route to visit the Tay, Nung and San Diu hill tribe people.

On arrival in Halong, the cruise leaves the harbor, you will enjoy lunch and be impressed by the beauty of the hundreds of karst islands on your way passing Halong Bay to Lanha Bay. Visit Light and Dark Water Cave, where you can do kayaking or bamboo boat rowed by local people. Dinner on your own, then overnight on cruises.

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodation:** Night on board

## Day 13

## HALONG BAY – HANOI

Today we embark on a sailing boat for an exploration of Lanha Bay to Cat Ba Island. This exciting five hour cruise provides a fantastic view of the bay which is dotted with some 3,000 limestone islands rising amazingly from the clear and emerald water. The limestone karst formations are littered with beaches, grottoes and beautiful caves, and using our small boat cruising through the multiple islands & islets, hidden beaches... also a short visit on bicycles to Viet Hai village, an isolated village in the very heart of Cat Ba National Park.

Along the way we will anchor for a leisurely swim in a secluded cove and an enjoyable visit to one of the many hidden grottoes beneath towering cliffs. After a seafood lunch on board we return to Hanoi.

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodation:** N/A

## Inclusions & Exclusions

INCLUSIONS	EXCLUSIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Private door-to-door pick-up-off services</li> <li>➤ All private transfer and transportation</li> <li>➤ English speaking guide as per program</li> <li>➤ Breakfast (B) Lunch (L) &amp; Dinners as mentioned (L/D)</li> <li>➤ All sightseeing tickets and travel permits</li> <li>➤ Accommodation at hotels/ homestays/ junk boat as mentioned</li> <li>➤ Train tickets: Lao Cai -&gt; Ha Noi</li> <li>➤ 24/7 hotline support guaranteed</li> <li>➤ No extra charge after confirmation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Personal expenses</li> <li>➤ Tips and Gratuities</li> <li>➤ Travel insurance</li> <li>➤ International flight and taxes</li> <li>➤ Beverage</li> <li>➤ Early check-in, late check-out surcharge</li> </ul>

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## Important Information

### Emergency Contact

Should you need to contact us during a situation of dire need, it is best to first call the travel consultant whom you deal with and then our hot line contacts. If for any reason you do not receive an immediate answer, please send us a detailed message and contact information by email to the agent and to [info@indochinatreks.com](mailto:info@indochinatreks.com), we may check and return your call and assist you as soon as possible.

Our all travel consultants use WhatApps. Please ensure that you have the contact number. It's best to buy a local sim-card upon arrival. Most hotels offer free wifi. So it's very easy to contact in urgent case.

Emergency contact numbers

Mr. Kelvin Do: +84 986759655

Ms. Thuy Pham: +84 984654964

### Combo Trip

If you book small group tour option, please note that the tour combines with our other tours. As such, some travel companions on your tour may have previously been travelling together with us. Likewise, some travel companions may be continuing together on another tour after your trip concludes. You can start the tour on any date (please contact our consultant in advance to avoid peak dates or holidays) and customize itinerary with extra days/activities at any destination.

### Internal Flights

For all internal flights, we would use Vietnamairlines, Vietjesair, Jestar, Cambodia Angkorair or Laos Airlines. Most domestic flights in Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, airlines would use small 70 seat ATR72 for short distances. Most airlines in Vietnam use the Airbus A321. 20kg for checkin luggage and 7kg for hand-bag is included in the price.

International flights before/after the tour must be booked by yourself before travelling date.

### Accommodation

We would use different hotel categories and you can select any basing on your budget. So your travel companions would not stay at your hotel. A Hotel Voucher will be provided once your tour is confirmed with all hotel details.

### Packing List

Conservative Dress

- Modest clothing that covers knees and shoulders (Long pants, long skirts, shirts that cover shoulders)



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- Shawl or scarf (for temple visits)

Note\*: Please pack clothing for the season in which you will be travelling. From Dec-Feb weather can be cold, so please pack warm clothing. From May-Nov it is the wet season, so please bring waterproof clothing.

#### Documents

- All tickets (required)
- Passport (required) (With photocopies)
- Required visas
- Hotel & Tour Vouchers
- Meeting sign (with your names and flight details that we will use for transfers)

### **Train Travel**

Train travel in Vietnam is very basic and train cleanliness is often not a priority for train staff. Sleeper trains normally have 4 seats per compartment, which convert into sleeping bunks (two upper and two lower). A sheet, pillow and blanket are provided, although many people prefer to bring their own sleeping sheet. At times, passengers of different genders may be required to share a sleeper train berth and/or share a compartment with people not travelling in your group. For short distance - 3 hours (as Hue to Danang or vv), you will do the trip on soft/hard seat carriage.

Simple food is available on the train but many people like to stock up on freshly baked bread, cheese and fruit prior to departure. Water should also be bought before the journey.

Train journeys in Vietnam are an experience and allow you to get a real taste of Vietnam.

### **Airport transfers**

All airport transfers are included in the tour price. You should provide us your arrival/departure flight details and we will arrange things basing on the information. A meeting sign with your name and all flight details will be sent to you. Please be ready at the lobby at pointed time for pickup.

Driver/guide should always be present at the airport before your arrival time. If you could not find the driver, please contact your travel consultant who you deal with. For any reason that airport transfer could not be arranged, please take the taxi to the hotel. We will refund the money then.

### **Travel insurance**

Travel insurance is not included in our tour price. When travelling with us, you are suggested to buy insurance that covers all medical coverage, cancellation, personal liability, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects.

### **Trip Specific Safety**

We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling, for the safe keeping of your passport, air tickets, travellers' cheques, cash and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewellery at home - you won't need it while travelling. Many of the hotels we use have safety deposit boxes which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.

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Be aware that petty theft can be an issue in some towns and cities especially late at night. A common tactic is opportunists on motorbikes that drive by and snatch bags. Please always leave valuables and passports etc in your hotel in safety boxes if available and only carry with you enough cash to spend for the day. Bags should always be carried over the neck and not left to sit on your shoulder.

## **Warning**

Please do not buy gems unless you know what you are doing. Even if genuine you should not expect to be able to sell them at home. If you fall victim to a gem scam, we are unable to assist you.

## **Visas and Entry Requirements**

Please note that visas for Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos are the responsibility of the individual traveller. The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. For the most up to date information please check your Governments Foreign Ministry website or with your travel agent as rules do change.

**CAMBODIA** - Visas can be obtained at the Cambodian border or Siem Reap Airport for approx. \$35 USD very easily. Please have \*at least\* 2 passport photos with you as well.

**VIETNAM** - As of March 2017, a select 80 nationalities are now eligible to enter Vietnam with an E-Visa. Please contact your Foreign Ministry or Vietnamese consulate to see if your nationality is eligible. Please note that you should ONLY apply for a Vietnam E-Visa if you are entering Vietnam by international airport - either Noi Bai International Airport (Hanoi) or Tan Son Nhat International Airport (Ho Chi Minh City). If you are entering Vietnam by land border, please apply for a regular visa for Vietnam. Many of the land borders we travel through do not accept the Vietnam E-Visa. Please view this link to apply E-Visa: <https://evisa.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn/web/guest/trang-chu-ttdt>

**LAOS** - Visas are issued upon arrival in Laos. You will need two passport size photographs and approx \$35. Tourists are generally admitted to Laos for 15 days with a visa on arrival or for 30 days with a visa issued at a Lao embassy. Please bring visa photos with you.

Please be aware that you will require four clean pages (minimum) in your passport and at least six months validity.

## **Tipping**

It is customary in Asia to tip service providers such as waiters, at approximately 10%, depending on the service. Tipping is expected - though not compulsory - and shows an expression of satisfaction with the people who have assisted you on your tour. Although it may not be customary to you, it is of considerable significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels. There are several times during the trip where there is opportunity to tip the local guides or drivers we use. Recommendations for tipping drivers and local guides would range from \$3-\$5 USD per person per day depending on the quality and length of the service.

## **Electricity**

Indochina Countries use 220V, and a mixture of flat 2-pin, round 2-pin or 3 pin plugs. It is recommended to bring a universal plug adapter.