

# Secret Trails of the Tribal Heartland

Trip Code: VNT

Version: VNT Secret Trails of the Tribal Heartland



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



MODERATE



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Trek in a quiet and unspoilt region of rural North Vietnam
- Meet the people of the Tay, Red Dao, White Hmong, Black Lolo, Flower Lolo and Nung tribes
- Discover the forests, lakes and limestone peaks of the Ba Be National Park
- Explore Hanoi, cruise Halong Bay, Lan Ha Bay and overnight on Cat Ba island

## AT A GLANCE

- 9 days trekking
- 5 days touring/sightseeing
- Join at Hanoi

## ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- All meals included
- 4 nights Hotel
- 6 nights Homestay
- 2 nights Guesthouse
- 1 nights Bungalow

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

# Introduction

This two week trekking holiday takes us on a journey through remote north-east Vietnam, near the border with China, right through the heart of hill-tribe land. In this region you will find some of the most remarkable mountain scenery in the whole of Vietnam and some of the friendliest people. This area is home to a diverse array of ethnic minorities (Tay, Hmong, Dao, Lolo and Nung); their villages nestled on the forested hill slopes or hidden in the lush valleys. We spend our days hiking and trekking through an outstanding landscape, from plunging highland valleys and soaring limestone peaks to primeval forests and spectacularly tiered rice paddies, including trekking in the foothills of Phu Ta Ca (2276m) the second highest point in the province of Ha Giang. Our nights will be spent as guests of different hill tribe villages where we can learn all about each tribe's unique customs and culture, sleeping in traditional homestays, socialising with the villagers and eating delicious home prepared Vietnamese food; the highlight of this will be a full day spent with a remote Black Lolo tribe. Before our holiday draws to a close, we'll also visit the Ba Be National Park, where we will enjoy a lesson in traditional fishing methods on Ba Be Lake. Our adventure ends with time sightseeing in Hanoi, one of the most historic and atmospheric cities in South East Asia, a cruise on Ha Long and Lan Ha Bay, and a night on Cat Ba island. This holiday offers you the chance to discover authentic North Vietnam, with some unforgettable walking and unique cultural experiences.

## Is this holiday for you?

The walking times given should be taken as a general indication. This holiday earns its grade because of the amount of ascent and descent on several of the days, but also because of the nature of the terrain, which can be muddy and slippery after rain showers, especially in summer (this period is however when the rice fields are the most active – so a great time to visit if cultural interactions are your main attraction!). Trekking poles are highly recommended. In general we will be walking for around 5 to 6 hours per day, with an average elevation gain of around 500 to 800 meters. You should be in good physical condition and prepared for hiking reasonable distances for several days in a row. On a couple of the walking days, as we will be staying in remote villages that are not easily accessed by our vehicles, we will be required to pack a smaller bag containing just our overnight essentials. This bag, along with our sleeping bags, will be transported to the homestay by motorbike. During the trekking section of the itinerary we will be sleeping in rural homestays, with basic facilities. It is these homestays in traditional villages that really give this holiday its unique charm, but you will need to be prepared for communal sleeping arrangements, shared facilities and early morning wake up calls from an orchestra of farm animals!

# Itinerary

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## DAY 1

**Meet at the group hotel in Hanoi. A single timed transfer from Hanoi Airport is provided. Afternoon walking tour of Hanoi.**

Meet at the group hotel in the Old Quarter of Hanoi. A single timed group transfer from the airport to our well located hotel, right in the heart of this charming capital city, will be provided. In the afternoon we will head out with our guide on a walking tour of the Old Quarter. The Old Quarter, a maze of 35 streets, is essentially the original pre-20th century Hanoi. The names of the streets tell a fascinating story about the history of the city, prior to the modern age each street was named for the particular trade for which it was (and sometimes still is) known; look out for Hang Gai (Silk Street) and Hang Bac (Silver Street). We'll also make a stop at Hoan Kiem Lake (Lake of the Restored Sword), the epicentre of old Hanoi, and at the Ngoc Son Pagoda, located on the shores of the lake. We will also stop at a shop where we can learn about traditional medicine and at an authentic Hanoian house, where we can enjoy a cup of local tea. Afterwards we head to a local restaurant where we can enjoy a welcome dinner to celebrate the start of our holiday. Our first chance to sample the deliciously fragrant Vietnamese cuisine and test out our chopstick skills!

Meals: D



### Accommodation

Hotel

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## DAY 2

**Transfer north from Hanoi to the Tay village of Ha Thanh.**

After breakfast we depart Hanoi and begin our drive towards Ha Thanh in the province of Ha Giang in the far north. The drive will take around 6hrs, but there will be plenty to look at out of the window during the journey. As we head further northwards we will watch the landscape transform from the sweeping flats of the Red River Delta to a panorama of dramatic mountains, banded by deep cut and verdant river valleys. By mid-afternoon we will have arrived at our destination, Ha Thanh; a traditional Tay village, not far from Ha Giang City. We will stay here tonight as guests of the village. Ha Thanh is a stunningly located and picturesque village with its small collection of wooden stilted houses, with palm leaf roofs, surrounded by rice paddies and the dramatic Tay Col Linh massif as a back drop. We have some time to meet our hosts and settle in at our homestay before taking a short walking tour of valley, which is carpeted with vegetable gardens, small ponds and tiny hamlets surrounded by rice fields and karst peaks. Drive Time: 6hrs.

### The Tay

Tay villages are usually found at lower elevations and in the valleys. They are the largest and oldest of the ethnic groups and have generally adopted Vietnamese beliefs, such as Buddhism and Taoism. The Tay usually wear more modest clothing than the other hill tribes.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Homestay

## DAY 3

### Exploring the Tay Con Linh Massif. Transfer to Seo Lung.

This morning we will walk out from the village and up into the Tay Con Linh massif, which is dominated by Tay Con Linh (2429m) itself, the highest peak of Northeast Vietnam. Our pathway winds upwards through the shade of the palm trees on a forest path. As we gain height the landscape changes around us as we climb up amongst the high ridges towards the Red Dao village of Lung Vai. Here the Red Dao mainly grow corn and rice, cultivating the steep mountain slopes using a slash and burn technique. The rice fields are generally sown in May, creating a multi-coloured tapestry of crops through to around early October when the harvesting begins; between November and April, the land is rested ready to begin the process again. Leaving the village behind, we follow a path down into the valley and down to where we will meet our vehicle. We will enjoy a picnic lunch or drive the short distance back to Ha Thanh to take lunch at our homestay before setting off on the drive north towards Seo Lung (3hrs). Tonight we will be welcome guests in the home of Mr So, who is the former chief of the village. In the evening, he will join us and we can learn about the history of the village and White Hmong traditions.

#### The Red Dao

The villages of the Dao (or Dzou) people are often to be found in the foothills and they usually build their houses on the ground, rather than on stilts. The Dao practise ancestor worship and traditionally dress in black, decorated with red stripes or bands of intricate weaving. In some areas the Dao women shave their eyebrow and the hair above their foreheads, wrapping their long hair in a large red or black turban.

#### The White Hmong

The Hmong people migrated to Vietnam from China in the 19th century. The tribe is divided into many smaller subgroups.... black, white, red, green and flower; each with their own subtly different dress. Hmong villages are usually found at higher altitudes, often clinging magically to the side of mountains. Traditionally White Hmong women would wear white skirts, but most now opt for the black trousers worn under a black apron, with black shirts and lots of silver jewelry.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Homestay



**Ascent**  
700M



**Descent**  
700M



**Time**  
5 hrs trekking



**Distance**  
16KM

**DAY 4****Explore the central valley of the Phu Ta Ca massif. Transfer to Meo Vac.**

Today we walk from the village, accompanied by one of Mr So's sons, up through the forests of the Phu Ta Ca massif. Mount Phu Ta Ca (2276m), or Three Fairies Mountain, is a karstic formation made up of irregular limestone, dotted with sinkholes, underground streams, and caverns. It is the second highest point in the Ha Giang province and is surrounded by numerous smaller summits covered with dense jungle. This is one of the region's last real mountain forests and is home to an abundance of wildlife (peafowl, pheasants, pangolin and even tigers can be found in this area!) and flora, including cardamom, which grows in abundance in the undergrowth. As we walk through the valley, bordered by this primeval forest, we will also see how the White Hmong have survived here, taming this wilderness into terraced rice fields. We follow the valley on a level path all the way to its eastern corner. As we walk along, depending on the season, we might witness farmers harvesting their cardamom or uncovering the Cardamom ovens (Aug - Oct), where they dry the precious spice to preserve it. We arrive into Mr So's own Cardamom plantation, where we can learn about how the cardamom is harvested. From here we follow a steep trail down and then follow the stream back through the central valley to Seo Lung where we will enjoy a lunch of local specialities. In the afternoon we transfer to Meo Vac. The scenic 3hr drive takes us up the Du Gia valley and the last part of the drive, along the magnificent Ma Pi Leng pass, will be a real highlight. This meandering road is cut directly into the side of the cliff, high above the Nho Que river. We arrive into Meo Vac where we will spend the night at a simple hotel. Dinner will be taken in a local restaurant.

Meals: **B L D**

	<b>Accommodation</b> Hotel		<b>Ascent</b> 460M		<b>Descent</b> 460M		<b>Time</b> 4 hrs trekking		<b>Distance</b> 7KM
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**DAY 5****Trekking the slopes of Pa Vi Mountain. Transfer to the Black Lolo village of Khuoi Khon.**

Today's circular trek will take us across the Pa Vi Mountains, another breath-taking limestone karst peak. We walk north up and along the massif on a superb trail overlooking the Nho Que gorge and the Tu San Canyon; with distant views of the misty summits that mark the Chinese border. We arrive at the village of Si Cu Ti, which is home to around 100 White Hmong families. The village is nestled in a small valley, completely encircled by karstic peaks. We visit the village and meet some of the residents before continuing our walk out towards the East of the massif where our vehicle will be waiting to meet us. In the afternoon we make the 4hr drive to Khuoi Kohn, a village inhabited by the Black Lolo tribe. Here we can learn all about the local traditions and customs from our hosts as we settle into our homestay where we will stay for the next two nights. Drive Time: 4hrs

Meals: **B L D**



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	<b>Accommodation</b> Homestay		<b>Ascent</b> 850M		<b>Descent</b> 500M		<b>Time</b> 4 hrs trekking		<b>Distance</b> 9KM
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## DAY 6

### A day at the Black Lolo Village of Khuoi Khon.

Today we spend time with the villagers and our host family! In the morning we can make ourselves useful lighting the fire, collecting water or gathering wood. Later we can join one of the villagers on a hike into the upper valleys, where we can meet the local shepherds and discover some long abandoned Hmong villages. Depending on the season, if you wish, it may also be possible to help assist with various agricultural activities, weeding, hoeing, harvesting or learn about traditional handicrafts, such as weaving, spinning and textile dying techniques with some of the local artisans. This is an incredible and unique opportunity to learn about real life in rural North Vietnam.

Meals: **B L D**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Homestay		<b>Ascent</b> 750M		<b>Descent</b> 750M		<b>Time</b> 4 hrs trekking		<b>Distance</b> 8KM
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## DAY 7

### Transfer to Lung Sao. Trek through the Lung Peng Valley to the Red Dao village of Va Tai.

This morning we say goodbye to our hosts and drive towards Lung Sao and the start of our next trekking trail. We won't have access to our main bags again tonight, so we will pack our essentials into our packs before heading off on today's linear hike. In the morning we wind our way through an almost lunar landscape of limestone pinnacles and granite outcrops before stopping for lunch in a village inhabited by the Dao. In the afternoon we will pass through Mi Loun, a Hmong hamlet, from here we follow an undulating path on through the Lung Peng Valley, a long and narrow valley dominated on either side by craggy reliefs, before traversing up and around a limestone cirque surrounded by narrow cols. In the late afternoon we ultimately arrive in Va Tai, a Red Dao village nestled amongst the forest covered limestone peaks. Tonight we will stay in a very simple Dao house. The Dao are known for living in high and remote areas and this this will be the most basic accommodation of our tour. Drive Time: 1hr

Meals: **B L D**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Homestay		<b>Ascent</b> 410M		<b>Descent</b> 460M		<b>Time</b> 4.5 hrs trekking		<b>Distance</b> 10.5KM
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## DAY 8

**Trek to the Nung Village of Nam Ngu. Overnight Nam Ngu.**

We make an early start today and we climb up through the jungle and over a small pass before traversing around to the narrow Va Tai Pen valley, inhabited by Hmong. We follow the valley up towards the hamlet of Lo Lung Xitung, before descending through another impressive limestone cirque. We follow a trail through the jungle for around an hour before arriving at our lunch spot. In the afternoon we continue on to Coc Phat, a Hmong village where the French settled a military post in the 1950s, and from here we descend southwards beneath a range of limestone mountains. We wind our way down through the forest and limestone labyrinth and follow the river through the valley to Nam Ngu. Nam Ngu is a small Nung village and home to just seven families. Tonight we will stay as guests at the home of Mr Ke.

**The Nung**

The Nung people are only found in far north east of Vietnam, living in small villages. Spiritually the Nung are most similar to the Tay, though most Nung villages still have a resident Shaman. The Nung are renowned for their handicrafts, which are generally made from bamboo and rattan.

Meals: **B L D**

	<b>Accommodation</b> Homestay		<b>Ascent</b> 170M		<b>Descent</b> 600M		<b>Time</b> 7 hrs trekking		<b>Distance</b> 17KM
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## DAY 9

**Transfer to Ba Be. Explore the Ba Be Lakes National Park.**

This morning those keen to continue walking have the option to take a walk from the village out into the Thong Nong range. We follow the Na River, and cross it on a bamboo bridge, pass-by more Dao hamlets, like Sac Xay in the upper Nam Ngu Valley where we will pause to take tea at a local house. We ascend and cross a small pass to Lung Lich village where our vehicles will meet us. We then transfer to the Ba Be National Park, stopping to pick up anyone who has chosen to remain in Nam Ngu en route. Ba Be is a haven of towering limestone mountains, waterfalls, caves and lakes; it is also home to numerous different ethnic minorities; there are villages of Tay, Hmong and Dao here. It is around a 5hr drive to the park and we will arrive in the mid afternoon. Located in the middle of the national park is the lake of Ba Be, which is the biggest natural lake in Vietnam extending over a surface of 5000 square metres! The combination of the lake, the limestone peaks and jungle creates a stunning panorama. We take a boat across the lake to the southern end and the Tay village of Coc Toc, where we will stay of the night with a Tay family. We have some time to stroll around and discover the village before returning to the homestay we can also help prepare dinner this evening if we wish. Drive Time: 5hrs

Meals: **B L D**

	<b>Accommodation</b> Guesthouse		<b>Ascent</b> 370M		<b>Descent</b> 530M		<b>Time</b> 4 hrs trekking		<b>Distance</b> 9KM
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## DAY 10

### A full day to explore the Ba Be Lakes National Park.

This morning's circular walk begins from directly from our accommodation. We hike towards the northwest part of the highest massif overlooking Ba Be Lake. Along the way we will trek through various plantations (corn, cassava, sweet potato...) and through Hmong and Dao hamlets, nestled in the thick jungle, surrounded by giant ferns and liana vines that twist like the thousand arms of a Hindu god. Eventually, we reach the Hmong village of Khau Qua surrounded by several rice fields and bordered by a winding river. We will spend a little time exploring the village before taking a different route back to our guesthouse. After lunch at the guesthouse we have the option of joining a kayaking tour, gliding along the tranquil flow of Ba Be Lake in the direction of Nang River. As we paddle across the calm waters, we can really immerse yourself into the resplendence of nature. We return to Coc Toc village and our accommodation in the mid-afternoon and the rest of the afternoon and evening is free for us to relax and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere.

Meals: **B L D**


	<b>Accommodation</b> Guesthouse		<b>Ascent</b> 500M		<b>Descent</b> 500M		<b>Time</b> 4 hrs trekking		<b>Distance</b> 12KM
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## DAY 11

### Return to Hanoi. Sightseeing in Hanoi. Evening street food tour.

Today marks the end of our time with the hill tribes as we bid goodbye to our hosts at our final homestay and make the journey back to Hanoi. If possible we will stop at a local market, though this will differ from departure to departure as the markets take place on different days of the lunar month. We will arrive into Hanoi in the early afternoon and check in to our hotel. In the mid-afternoon we can head out to explore some of Hanoi's main tourist attractions: Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, and grounds of the old governor's palace (now a Presidential Palace), the unique One Pillar Pagoda and the modest stilt house used by Ho Chi Minh himself. We can also visit the Temple of Literature, the first national university of Vietnam in the original architecture. Built in 11th century, the temple is dedicated to the worship of Confucius and the Scholars. It has become a symbol of not only Hanoi, but of Vietnamese Culture. This evening we will head out into Hanoi's Old Quarter to sample some of Vietnam's delicious street-food. The rest of the evening free. Drive Time: 5hrs

Meals: **B L D**

	<b>Accommodation</b> Hotel
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## DAY 12



## Cruise along Ha Long Bay and into Lan Ha Bay. Visit the fishing village of Viet Hai and explore Cat Ba Island.

After breakfast, we drive towards Lan Ha and Ha Long Bay. The drive takes us through the colourful rice fields of the Red River Delta. Arriving at Tuan Chau pier in the late morning, we have lunch at a local restaurant before boarding our boat, where we will receive a warm welcome from our captain and crew, and setting sail into the bay and around the edge of Ha Long Bay. After one hour we will reach Gia Luan Pier on Cat Ba Island, where we take a transfer across the island to Beo Pier from here we setting sail into Lan Ha bay in the direction of the fishing village of Viet Hai. Lan Ha Bay is a geographical extension of Ha Long Bay, but belongs to a different region of Vietnam. Its collection of limestone peaks, caves and islands are every bit as beautiful as Ha Long Bay but have the advantage of beautiful white sand beaches and also being much quieter! As we cruise along we will have plenty of time to enjoy the landscape, explore hidden lagoons and discover the fascinating floating houses of the bay's inhabitants. We will visit Viet Ha, a village set in the midst of vast jungles and stunning scenery, in the late afternoon. Later, we enjoy a leisurely bicycle ride (optional) to reach the village where our lodge is located. As we cycle we will observe farmers working the fields with the help of their water buffalos. Arriving at our accommodation, we receive a warm welcome and check into our bungalows. The rest of the evening is free to relax and soak up the enigmatic atmosphere. Dinner is taken at the lodge. Drive Time: 4hrs

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Bungalow

### DAY 13

## Morning exploring Cat Ba Island. Return to Hanoi.

Early morning we can take a hike to Hai Quan Hill near Viet Hai for a beautiful panoramic view over Lan Ha Bay, which looks its best in the morning light. We then head down to Viet Hai Pier and return to Lan Ha Bay. We can visit an impressive cave, which has thousands of stalactites and stalagmites shaping a stunning natural palace; or take another opportunity to swim in the crystal waters. After a delicious lunch on board we disembark on Beo Pier on Cat Ba Island and take a transfer to Cat Hai from where we take the public ferry to the mainland, where cars will be waiting to take us back to Hanoi where we will have some free time to hunt for last minute souvenirs. In the evening we can head out for a celebratory farewell meal to mark the end of our adventure. Drive Time: 3.5hrs

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel



**Time**  
2 hrs walking

### DAY 14

**Departure Day.**

The holiday ends after breakfast. A single timed group transfer to Hanoi International Airport is provided. If you would like to extend your stay in Hanoi additional hotel nights can be arranged, or you may want to consider adding an extension to visit neighbouring Cambodia, and the magnificent temples at Angkor Wat. Contact the KE Office for details

Meals: **B**

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# Extensions

When booking your holiday, you will be able to 'add an extension option'. Once we have received your booking we will contact you to discuss additional services required for the extension and to take any additional deposit.



## Highlights of Angkor Extension

Angkor, in northern Cambodia, is one of the most important archaeological sites in South-east Asia. Stretching over some 400 square km, the park contains the magnificent remains of several capitals of the Khmer Empire from the 9th to the 15th centuries, including the largest pre-industrial city in the world. The most famous are the Temple of Angkor Wat and, at Angkor Thom, the Bayon Temple with its countless sculptural decorations.

**4 days from**  
**US\$535** per person

# Holiday Information

## What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader
- Single timed airport transfers on arrival and departure
- All accommodation as described
- All Meals
- All transport required by the itinerary
- All ferries and water transport required by the itinerary

## What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Visas
- Tips for local staff
- Miscellaneous expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc...

## Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the group hotel in Hanoi. A single timed transfer from the airport to the group hotel is provided. This transfer will be timed to meet the arrival of the Thai Airways flight from Heathrow.

On the last day of the holiday a single timed transfer from the hotel in Hanoi to the airport will be provided. This transfer will be timed to meet the check in of the Thai Airways flight to Heathrow.

Anyone may join the group transfers by prior arrangement. Travelling as a group or on public transport saves energy. If this is not practical, we can provide private transfers at an additional cost. Taxis are also available.

Hotel contact details and an emergency phone number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

## Meal Plan

All meals are included in the price of the holiday.

## Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. You should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) to treat your water. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

You can expect to feast on an A to Z of delicious Vietnamese cuisine during the course of your holiday. Start practising your chopstick technique now, as there may be no knives and forks for parts of this holiday! Vietnamese cuisine is fresh, fragrant and flavoursome. Typically, for included meals, a selection of dishes or varying flavours will be served together and each person takes a little of each dish – so there will usually be something to please everyone (vegetarians included!) at every meal. Whilst at the homestays breakfasts might be pancakes with banana, eggs and bread or (more traditionally) 'Pho' a noodle soup. Lunches will be picnic style, usually rice with steamed chicken/pork, stir-fried vegetable and spring rolls. A typical evening meal will also include Pho, a choice of pork or chicken dishes, a selection of stir fried or boiled vegetables with rice, and usually fresh fruit for dessert. Whilst on Cat Ba Island and when cruising Ha long and Lan Ha Bay we will certainly be treated to a variety of fresh and delicious sea food.

## Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your diet with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

## Accommodation

We will spend 3 nights in a comfortable and well-located hotel in the Old Quarter of Hanoi, 1 night in a simple hotel in Meo Vac, and 1 night in bungalows at the lodge on Cat Ba island. All hotel rooms and bungalows are en suite.

There will be a total of 6 nights in simple village homestays, where you will require a light sleeping bag or a sleeping bag liner. At the homestay sleeping arrangements will be communal with everybody sharing one large communal room and all footwear left outside; in some villages it is possible that males and females will be asked to sleep separately (same room, but not next to each other).

Each person will have their own mattress (sometimes on the floor, sometimes on a raised bed), with bedding and mosquito net provided - there will be plenty of colourful blankets should the temperature fall in the evenings.

The bathroom facilities will be basic, with a mix of western and squat toilets. Many of the homestays also offer basic shower facilities.

Though not all home stays will have electricity or hot water, there will always be somewhere to wash. Charging phones or cameras will also be possible at some of the homestays.

Whilst the facilities are basic, the unique experience of staying with the villagers in their homes, in stunning and remote locations, will more than make up for the lack of modern amenities.

For our 2 nights in the Ba Be National Park we will stay at a simple guesthouse/homestay with twin rooms and shared bathroom facilities.

Whilst in Hanoi, Meo Vac and on Cat Ba Island accommodation will be twin share. If you are travelling by yourself, you will be paired with someone of the same sex. Single rooms are available for a supplementary cost. If you are planning to extend your holiday, additional nights at the group hotel are available on request.

## Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be led by a professional and qualified tour leader. During the walking section of the holiday the guide will be assisted by baggage porters, a cook, and sometimes additional guides from the local villages.

## Spending Money

Approximately £150 (or equivalent in \$/€) should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses. This amount should be enough to cover the non-included meals, tips to local staff, homestay hosts, guides, drivers, boatmen etc. It is not necessary to obtain local currency (Vietnamese Dong) prior to travelling. Money can be changed most easily at the airport or at banks in Hanoi or there will be ATMs in Hanoi and at the airport where you can withdraw funds. For ease of exchange we recommend that you carry your travel money in US dollars. US dollars are acceptable for exchange in Hanoi and in and can also sometimes be used to pay directly for goods and services.

## Guidance on Tipping

Tips are the accepted way of saying 'thank you' to your local guides and to your support crews and drivers. They do not form part of their wages. KE always pays local staff the best rates of pay, no matter what country they are in and any tips they receive are seen as a personal thank you from group members. For our part, we advise local teams that tips are not a duty or a prerequisite but are a bonus and entirely dependent on the service that was given. For your support crews we recommend that you give a tip if you feel that their services have met your satisfaction. It is best to tip as a group and it is useful to have a group pool for this. As a rough guide we suggest you allow a total of £80-100 for tipping. Note that you will have a guide, a driver, local walking guides and baggage porters. It is also not unusual to tip the families at homestays if you feel that they have provided a great service; around \$1-2 per group member, per homestay is reasonable.

## Baggage Allowance

There are parts of this holiday where your baggage will be carried for you by local staff, for this reason we recommend that your baggage should not weigh more than 15kg, we would also suggest that a soft duffel bag or a large rucksack will provide the best packing solution for this trip. We would strongly recommend that you pack your belongings inside a series of dry bags within your main baggage; rain showers in this part of the world are short but sharp! When we stay overnight in Vai Tai we will not have access to our main baggage, we will be required to pack a smaller bag, containing our minimal overnight gear/sleeping bags which will be transported to the homestays separately by motor bike. The remainder of our luggage will stay with our vehicle and driver. For international flights please check your baggage allowance with your airline.

## Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.



# General Information

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## Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

**It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

## Visa Vietnam

British Citizen passport holders do not need a visa for durations of stay up to and including 45 days for tourism and transit.

For information about multiple entry visas, longer stays or different nationalities please contact the relevant embassy. The Vietnamese Embassy in the UK is in London.

## Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

## VACCINATIONS

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations or other preventive measures. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters as recommended in the UK e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella, along with hepatitis A and typhoid. A good online resource is [Travel Health Pro](#).

## Currency

The unit of currency in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Dong.

## Preparing for your Holiday

Getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience. You should be aerobically fit and comfortable with walking an average of 5 - 6 hours daily, for consecutive days. Running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing stamina.

## Climate

September to November and March to May are generally the best times for trekking in North Vietnam. Daytime temperatures at this time are in the range 15-30°C. Night-time temperatures range from 10-18°C in the mountains. Our walking will be on village tracks and jungle trails, through rice fields and sub-tropical mountain forest and you should be adequately prepared and equipped for equal measures of sunshine, rain and humidity. As this holiday is about cultural interaction we have also included a summer departure (Aug), though the climate may be wetter at this time, and the trails muddier, this is also when the rice fields and villages are at their most active.

## Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that prior to travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at [travelaware.campaign.gov.uk](http://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk) and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

## Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

## Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

# Equipment Information

## Equipment List

Please try to keep the weight of your baggage to a minimum. See the 'baggage allowance' section for further details.

### You should bring the following items:

- Sheet sleeping bag liner
- Light Sleeping Bag (comfort rating 0°C)
- Hiking boots
- Daypack 30 litres
- Trekking pole
- Dry bags (for keeping luggage dry inside main bag)
- Sandals/Flip flops (for use at homestays)
- Quick drying trekking trousers
- Quick drying trekking shirts and/or T-shirts
- Lightweight waterproof over-trousers
- Lightweight waterproof jacket / poncho
- Underwear
- Socks
- Swimwear
- Fleece jacket or light warm jumper/sweater
- Travel clothes
- Training shoes or similar
- Sunhat
- Buff
- Sunglasses
- Headtorch
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)
- Water bottles 1 Litre x 2 (to be refilled from larger (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Washbag and toiletries
- Antibacterial handwash
- Biodegradable soap
- Small travel towel
- Basic First Aid Kit including: Antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Immodium), painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, Insect repellent, antihistamine cream and tablets, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite). Glucose tablets and multi-vitamin tablets are a good idea.

### THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE OPTIONAL:

- Ear plugs (for use in homestays)
- Eye mask (for use in homestays)
- Spork/fork (if concerned about using chop sticks!)

- Umbrella
- Camera
- Shorts (should not be worn in temples etc)
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

## NOTES

\*Mosquito nets are generally provided throughout the tour, including at the homestay accommodation.

## Cotswold Outdoor



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers.  
[>> Find out more](#)

## Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary joining in Hanoi. A single timed transfers from Hanoi Airport to the group hotel is provided.

## Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Hanoi.

# Why Choose KE

## Why KE

KE are the only UK company offering homestay trekking in this remote part of rural Vietnam. Expect quiet trails, unspoilt vistas and authentic cultural experiences.

**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 09/05/2024 and the trip is subject to change