

## Trek Vietnam



Duration: 12 days

This magnificent trek in northeast Vietnam offers the perfect combination of spectacular scenery and fascinating culture. Karst limestone and granite mountains rise dramatically from the remote, lush jungle, where waterfalls tumble into hidden steep-sided valleys and abundant nature reserves. From serene lakes and valleys cultivated with corn and rice, we traverse steep jungle-covered hills onto high ridges. The views over the towering limestone pillars are every bit as impressive as their more famous sea-based counterparts in Halong Bay. This trek promises spectacular off-the-beaten-trail trekking.

Isolated villages of thatched, stilted houses dot the landscape, home to little-known ethnic groups. Staying overnight as guests of these traditional communities allows us a rare and privileged insight into their way of life.

### DETAILED ITINERARY

#### Day 1: Depart London

**Day 2: Arrive Hanoi** On arrival we transfer to our hotel, where we can relax. Later we'll have time to explore the atmospheric streets of the vibrant Old Quarter, as well taking in the views over the Red River from Banana Island and its floating communities. If possible, we'll watch the sunset from Long Bien Bridge, the oldest bridge in the city, before heading out for dinner, where we'll have a detailed trek briefing. Night hotel

#### Day 3: Hanoi – Ba Be – Coc Toc

After breakfast at the hotel, we leave the city behind as we drive north through farmland and tea plantations. It's a

long drive, but very scenic, and a great introduction to rural Vietnam which whets our appetite for tomorrow! We break our journey in Thai Nguyen, known for its tea, where we make time to visit the Ethnological Museum. This provides an insight into the cultures of Vietnam's 54 ethnic minority groups, some of which will be hosting us on our adventurous trek. Continuing our drive, we come to Ba Be National Park, also known as 'Halong Bay in the mountains.' Here the views over Vietnam's largest lake, surrounded by lush jungle and limestone peaks, are unforgettable. We finish our journey by boat, with a diversion into the impressive Puong Cave, an atmospheric way to take in the dramatic views. Our home for tonight is a traditional stilt house in a small Tay hamlet. We have time to explore the area around the village, and witness some of the local customs, before dinner. Night village homestay.

**Drive approx. 5-6 hours; boat 1.5 hours**

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### Day 4: Ba Be Hike

Today we get to immerse ourselves in this extraordinary scenery! Our first day of trekking is wonderfully varied, passing through plantations of corn, cassava and sweet potato before our path takes us into dense jungle. Giant ferns and twisting lianas adorn the undergrowth, as we ascend to the high massif overlooking the vast Ba Be Lake. We pass some small villages, home to Hmong and Dao people, and after lunch return by boat along the lake. En route we stop to admire the scenic Dau Dang waterfall plunging into a rocky gorge. We'll have time to learn more about the customs and lifestyles of our Tay hosts before dinner. Night village homestay.

**Trek approx 5-6 hours**

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### Day 5: Ba Be – Khuoi Khon

After breakfast, we embark on an early transfer towards Bao Lao. Our scenic route passes through Ban Na and Na Phax villages and the Pia Oac mountain range, an exceptionally beautiful area of virgin rainforest which is home to many rare species of flora and fauna. As we continue onwards, the road provides great views of the karst peaks rising from the jungle. We leave the vehicle and set off on our uphill trek heading uphill to the village. Here we meet the Black Lolo people, who migrated south from China after being displaced in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Once we've had a chance to settle in, we hike up to a pass overlooking the village and surrounding area. Any remaining time can be spent discovering local lifestyles and customs. Night village homestay.

**Drive approx 5 hours; trek approx 1-2 hours**

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### Day 6: Khuoi Khon

Today's trek will be tailored to group pace, but the rest of the day provides a privileged insight into the way of life in this very remote village. One of the joys – and, for some, challenges – of this trek is seeing first-hand how the locals live, and this doesn't always mean observing. After gathering wood, collecting water and lighting fires, we enjoy breakfast! We then trek deep into the mountains, joining a local villager; our route is flexible, but we are likely to see Lolo shepherds and discover Hmong villages even more remote than our hosts'. After crossing paddy fields and cornfields, we take in the splendid views of the region's vast wild massifs. Along the way, we have the opportunity to learn about the local flora and fauna and their place in traditional medicine and bushcraft. Back at the village, we'll have the opportunity to help further, and have a try at traditional handicrafts such as weaving and

spinning. Night village homestay.

**Trek approx. 4-5 hours (flexible)**

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### Day 7: Khuoi Khon – Va Tai

A short transfer takes us to our trekking trail, on the edge of the Thong Nong mountain range. Our trail follows the western arm of the mountains, with a long ascent into the heart of the range, and takes us across a scenic and unforgettable lunar-like landscape of limestone pinnacles and granite outcrops. We'll pass by remote hamlets inhabited by the Dao people, which just adds to the beauty and uniqueness of our surroundings. After a village lunch stop we continue, passing through a Hmong hamlet and following an undulating path through a long, narrow valley dominated by craggy outcrops. After traversing a limestone cirque surrounded by narrow cols, we reach the Red Dao village of Va Tai, surrounded by forest-covered limestone peaks. Once more, we're welcomed in to our village homestay, where we have a unique insight into the traditions and customs of the local villagers. Night village homestay.

**Trek approx 6-7 hours; drive approx 1.5 hours**

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### Day 8: Va Tai – Nam Ngu

We depart at dawn this morning, trekking through the jungle and over a small pass, before traversing around to a narrow valley inhabited by the Hmong people. We follow a trail up through the valley towards the hamlet of Lo Lung Xitun, before descending through another impressive limestone cirque. Trekking on narrow paths through pristine primary forest, we break for lunch and continue to Co Phat, a Hmong hamlet which saw a French military post in the 1950s. From here, it's not far to Nam Ngu, an ethnic Nung hamlet of only a handful of families. Surrounded by limestone peaks and rice fields, it's a stunning location which in rainy season looks over a series of waterfalls. Night village homestay.

**Trek approx 7-8 hours**

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### Day 9: Nam Ngu – Cao Bang

After breakfast, we continue our trek from the village out into the mountains, surrounded by yet more spectacular landscapes. Following the Na River, we cross a bamboo bridge and pass more Dao hamlets as we ascend to the upper valley and cross a small pass to the picturesque village of Sac Xay. The next pass rewards us with a spectacular view towards the Chinese border and yet more mountains. From here, we descend through Tay hamlets until we reach the road, and our waiting vehicles take us to Cao Bang. We break our scenic journey with a lunch stop at a local restaurant. On arrival we have free time to settle in to our hotel and enjoy a refreshing shower, before meeting for dinner. Night hotel.

**Trek approx 4 – 5 hours; drive approx 1 hour**

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### Day 10: Cao Bang – Hanoi

Transfer back to Hanoi, Bac Kan Province, one of the least-populated regions in Vietnam. Our drive is incredibly

scenic through forested mountains and remote villages. We arrive in Hanoi in the late afternoon and check-in to our hotel. In the evening we enjoy a slap-up dinner to celebrate our achievements this week. Night hotel.

**Drive approx 7-8 hours**

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### Day 11: Fly Hanoi to London

Transfer to the airport in time for our flight home.

*(Lunch not included)*

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### Day 12: Arrive London

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## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All return transport from London to Hanoi
- All meals except where specified, and accommodation
- Discover Adventure leaders; doctor with a group of 15 or more participants; local guides, porters and cooks
- Local support and back-up equipment
- Entrance to any other sites visited as part of the itinerary

## WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Any meals specified 'not included' in the itinerary
- Travel insurance
- Personal spending money, souvenirs and drinks
- Tips for local guides and support crew
- Inbound airport departure tax (no tax applied at time of writing)
- Vietnam entry visa (not currently required)
- Fees for optional sites, attractions or activities
- Airline taxes: we cap these so £250.00 is the maximum you will pay
- Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions

## GRADE | YELLOW

Trips are graded Yellow, Orange or Red, in increasing level of challenge. This trip lies within the **YELLOW** range.



The grade is determined by factors such as terrain, distance, climate, altitude, etc. Each colour grade has a **spectrum** which reflects the difficulty of these factors; trip duration, accommodation and living conditions (see icon) are also taken into account.

[Trip grading explained](#)

## TREK TRAINING WEEKEND

**£170 Special Offer - Only when you book at the same time as registering for your main challenge**

Discover Adventure Trek Training Weekends take place in Snowdonia National Park, Wales. This training weekend is designed to put you through your paces to enable you to gauge fitness levels and gain advice from our experienced leaders.



Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 19 Jan 2021, and the challenge is subject to change.