

NORTHERN VIETNAM MULTI-ACTIVITY

10 Days/ 9 Nights

Day 1: Arrive Hanoi

Depart Australia on Vietnam Airlines. On arrival at the airport you will be met and transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is at your leisure. Overnight in Hanoi. (Meals on flight)

Day 2: Cookery and half day cycling

After breakfast, join a special cooking class at Hoa Sua Cooking School for disadvantaged students where many leading cooks have studied. The course starts with an optional walk to the local market where participants get a chance to learn all about Northern Vietnamese ingredients compared with the South. A cooking demonstration follows in the kitchen and everyone has the opportunity to play an active part. After the class, lunch is served in the school Restaurant allowing you to sample all the different dishes prepared during the demonstration.

In the afternoon cycle a half day in the countryside surrounding Hanoi. Cycle to ancient villages along backroads and footpaths.

In the evening watch a traditional Vietnamese water puppet show. Enjoy dinner at the traditional Cha Ca restaurant. After dinner transfer to the train station for the overnight train to Lao Cai. Overnight on board the train. (B,L)

Day 3: Lao Cai - Sapa - Thanh Phu - Sin Chai



Arrive Lao Cai and meet your trekking guide. Transfer by road (approx. 1 hr) into the mountains and to the former French hill station of Sapa, home to some of Vietnam's most colourful ethnic groups. Have breakfast in Hoa Sua (a restaurant teaching local ethnic minority children the restaurant trade and skills for life). After checking into your hotel, start exploring the region. Today's trek will pass through many minority villages. Leaving Sapa by jeep, continue to the end of the dirt track at Su Pan. The jeeps are left behind, and with a beautiful view of the valley below walk down to the river and the village of Ban Ho. Cross the river by a suspended bridge and move slowly eastwards. Here scenic mountaintops and rice-terraces climbing up the slopes dominate the landscape.

Day 3: Lao Cai - Sapa - Thanh Phu - Sin Chai cont.....

Meet different tribes-people along the path and gradually learn to recognize them by their colorful dresses. One more river has to be crossed in order to reach the village of Thanh Phu, a lively Tay-village with rice-mills scattered all around between the small streams. Enjoy lunch in a local house, eagerly watched by curious children, before we again leave the village and head up a smaller side-valley. The path rises gradually to an altitude of 1040 m, and on the other side of this small pass descend to the rather isolated village of Sin Chai (960 m). In 1998 the village had hardly been visited before so don't expect any luxury. Enjoy instead the rustic surroundings and the beauty of these people's solutions to a life of - and in harmony with - nature.

Stay in a local house, or tent (your choice) and get settled in while the cook prepares an evening meal. (B,L,D)

5-6 Hour trekking

Day 4: Sin Chai - Nam Nhiu - Thanh Phu



The day starts early with the cocks crowing, the sounds of grunting pigs freely roaming, and the creaking of water-mills grinding rice. In some places rice-paper is produced on a suspended piece of cloth. Set out after breakfast on a 2-hour walk to another Red Dao-village, Nam Nhiu. The walking is rather easy and there is a magnificent view over the valley to the opposite mountain range, before reaching the Blue Hmong village of Nam Than. After lunch here, return and descend to Nam Sai village then continue to Thanh Phu. The rest of the day is free for relaxing, or exploring the village. (B,L,D)

5-6 hours trekking

Day 5: Thanh Phu - Mi Son - Ban Ho - Sapa

The Hmong-porters pack your gear then start heading towards My Son village which is inhabited by the Xa pho minority. The Xa pho Hill tribe is one of the smallest minorities in Vietnam. Continue towards another Dao village the village of Nam Toong where lunch is served. After lunch walk down hill to Ban Ho village before heading up the escarpment towards Su Pan and the jeeps, waiting to take you back to Sapa. Overnight in Victoria Sapa. (B,L)

Day 6: Biking Sapa- Heaven Gate- Binh Lu (Bike 40km)

Today is a full day cycle from Sapa to the famous Silver waterfall and beyond to Binh Lu. Cycle the first 10km uphill on a fairly graded road. Take a break to enjoy the scenery and to rest weary legs. There is only a short distance to cycle before reaching the highest pass in Viet Nam - the Tram Tom pass, also called Heavens Gate.

Day 6: Biking Sapa- Heaven Gate- Binh Lu (Bike 40km) cont...

Enjoy the breathtaking panorama from the top of Heavens Gate and gear up for the 20km freewheeling decent! The views are spectacular. Explore Binh Lu market (if it is market day). Encounter the local black H'Mong and Red Dzao hill tribes. Transfer back to Sapa in time to freshen up before transferring to Lao Cai station for the overnight train to Hanoi. Overnight on board the train. (B,L)

• Day 7 : Hanoi- Halong Bay cruise and kayak.



Arrive Hanoi in the early morning, transfer to a local restaurant for breakfast before departing to Halong bay. On arrival transfer to a traditional deluxe junk for a cruise among the 3, 000 spectacular limestone islands that rise from the emerald green waters of Halong Bay. A natural wonder of the world and one of Vietnam's five UNESCO World Heritage Sites, magnificent Halong Bay lies 160km to the east of Hanoi. Over three thousand jagged

limestone islands emerge from the emerald green waters of Halong Bay. While some islands are no more than large rocks others are much more substantial and contain huge cathedral-like caves of stalactites and stalagmites. Most of the islands are clothed in thick green vegetation and ring with the sound of bird song in the early morning. Secluded sandy coves are everywhere and in the summer months the warm waters of the bay are ideal for swimming. Halong's largest island, and one of the few that are inhabited, is Cat Ba, a large 'karst' limestone island full of small mountains covered in verdant forest home to one of the most endangered species of primate in the world, the Cat Ba Langur. The best way to appreciate the delights of Halong Bay is to cruise among the islands on a wooden junk. The boat is one of the more traditional varieties that sail through the magnificent UNESCO World Heritage Site. Enjoy a fresh seafood lunch on board while the captain heads out for the horizon. Cruise to discover Halong bay and its breathtaking scenery of thousands of limestone outcrops. There will be time to enjoy kayaking in the afternoon. Dinner and overnight on the junk. (B,L,D)

• Day 8 : Halong Bay kayak

After breakfast, following the boat cruise to Man's Head Island and Tortoise Island. Paddling to explore Luon Cave (Tunnel cave), a beautiful crater like lagoon encircled by towering cliff which is only accessed by a half submerged 30m long tunnel cave. Paddle to visit Cua Van fishing village. Enjoy a scrumptious lunch then cruise to unusual Ba Ham Lake (Three Tunnel Lake), which may be entered at low tide through a narrow passage, made more treacherous since it is encrusted with sharp stalactites.

- **Day 8 : Halong Bay Kayak cont.....**

It's all worth it, however, as you emerge to find a beautiful, seclude lake, with another crater like lagoon in two sections.

The afternoon will be spent at Three Peach Beach, a stunning swimming spot. Dinner and overnight on board the boat. (Optional night paddle). (B,L,D)

- **Day 9 : Halong Bay - Hanoi**



After breakfast, continue kayaking to explore the wonder of Halong bay. Paddle to Duck Islet and Ba Hang area. Cruise back to Halong city passing Bai Tho Mountain and Chopstick Islet. Enjoy a last delicious lunch on board. Arrive Halong around 12 p.m then transfer back to Hanoi. Celebratory meal at the Emperor - Hanoi's top restaurant. Overnight in Hanoi. (B,L,D)

- **Day 10 : Hanoi/Australia**

At your leisure until transferring to the airport for your onward flight. (B Meals on Flights)

- **Day 11 : Arrival in Australia**

WELCOME HOME!

