

Walking & Sightseeing in Vietnam (2024 departures)

Tour Style: Worldwide walking holidays

Destination: Vietnam

Trip code: VNWHW-15

Trip Walking Grade: 2



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

The green peaks around Ninh Binh and rice paddy-covered valleys of Mai Chau form the backdrop for this northern Vietnam tour. Embark on a lesser-travelled route that celebrates the area's eye-catching natural beauty and heritage. Not only will you cruise the emerald waters and limestone outcrops of Hạ Long Bay to discover caves, kayak around inlets, and swim, but you'll take in the city sights of Hanoi, explore imperial Huế, and marvel at riverside architecture in delightful Hoi An. And then there's the food. Eat your way around the evening markets for a taste of what's quickly becoming Asia's foodie capital and get hands on with a Vietnamese cooking lesson.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Outbound flights from London Heathrow including baggage and transfers (flights available from other airports - price may vary)
- Return flights from Da Nang including baggage and transfers
- Guided walks and sightseeing with local leaders

- 11 nights' touring accommodation across Vietnam
- Two nights en-suite cabin on a deluxe boat and one night aboard sleeper train
- 14 breakfasts, 10 lunches & 9 dinners
- All sightseeing and entrance fees (as per itinerary)
- Vietnamese cooking demonstration
- All in-destination transport

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Discovering the sights of Hanoi on a walking tour
- Exploring the rural north of Vietnam on foot, by boat, and gentle cycling
- Cruising through Hả Long and Lan Ha bays
- Uncovering historic Hoi An and the imperial city of Huế
- Tasting Vietnamese cuisine and a chance to cook some yourself

TRIP SUITABILITY

This holiday is walking grade 2. Walks are between 2.5 - 7.5 miles (4 - 12km) with some gradual ascent and descent on some days.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Depart The UK

Our with-flight guests depart the UK on an overnight flight to Hanoi

Day 2: Arrive Hanoi

We arrive in Hanoi and are joined by our without flight guests at our hotel in Hanoi's old quarter, where we have a chance to relax and freshen up before heading out for dinner - and our first experience of the area's narrow streets and alleys.

Day 3: Hanoi Sightseeing

Distance: approx. 4.5 miles (7 km)

Today we'll explore the sights and sounds of Hanoi on a walking tour, beginning with a walk along the famous Hanoi railway and a visit to the Temple of Literature. After lunch, we continue to the Ho Chi Minh Complex before taking tree-lined avenues past the citadel and back to the old town.

Day 4: Mai Chau Valley

Distance: approx. 7.5 miles (12 km)

Leaving Hanoi, our journey takes around four hours and brings us to Mai Chau valley, surrounded by high limestone mountains and filled with rice fields. This area is home to the White Thais, and we'll pass many hamlets of wooden houses on stilts, stopping to meet a local family for a traditional lunch and a chance to learn more of their way of life.

Spend the afternoon walking on backroads and paths between rice fields, villages, and vegetable plots, observing the farmers and their buffaloes at work. Our walk finishes at our lodge accommodation for the next two nights, nestled in the remote Mai Hich valley.

Day 5: Hang Kia

Distance: approx. 7 miles (11 km)

There's an hour's drive into Hoa Binh province and the rocky plateau of Hang Kia, land of the Hmong. We'll meet a local family in the village and take part in a batik workshop, learning more about techniques passed down through generations of how their traditional, colourful clothing is made.

After lunch in a local home, the afternoon sees us stretching our legs on a downhill walk from the mountains on a mix of pathways and trails through wild scenery. Meeting our bus at the road, we return to Mai Hich valley.

Day 6: Pu Luong Nature Reserve

Distance: approx. 4 miles (6 km)

This morning we visit Pu Luong nature reserve with its jungle-covered limestone mountains and deep valleys, where we explore Ban Don village on foot to see the terraced rice fields.

Our journey continues by bus to Ninh Binh province, known as Halong Bay on land. We'll reach Tam Coc, our base for the next two nights, in time to soak up the sunset from the tiers of the Bich Dong Pagoda.

Day 7: Ninh Binh By Bike And Boat

Distance: approx. 6.5 miles (10 km)

There's time to enjoy a leisurely breakfast today before we collect our bicycles and set off on a gentle ride along small, scenic roads passing temples and lush rice fields surrounded by towering limestone mountains.

We then take to the water in a traditional sampan to navigate Thung Nang, one of the many waterways of the region. The final stretch on our bikes takes us through peaceful countryside to enjoy lunch in the gardens of a local house.

Enjoy some free time to relax by the pool at our accommodation before heading to Hang Mua mountain to climb the 500 steps to its summit, an effort that rewards with stunning views over the surrounding countryside.

Day 8 - 9: Overnight Cruise Ha Long And Lan Ha Bays

Departing early, we drive across the Red River Delta to the coast and embark on a two-night cruise aboard a deluxe boat.

Over the next two days we'll relax on deck, tuck into delicious meals, and take in the ever-changing landscape as we explore the lesser-known channels of Ha Long and Lan Ha bays.

There's the opportunity to visit limestone caves, kayak in coves, and swim in the emerald waters. Early risers can enjoy a sunrise Tai Chi session, or you could take part in a cooking demonstration.

Day 10: Return To Hanoi - Overnight Train

Cruising through the bay this morning, we visit Sung Sot cave before enjoying brunch on deck as we return to the harbour. We drive back to Hanoi and have day rooms available in the afternoon to freshen up before our transfer to the station to board an overnight train to Hué.

Day 11: Hué's Imperial Heritage

Distance: approx. 4.5 miles (7km)

Arriving in Hué in the morning, we transfer to our hotel for breakfast. Then we'll set off on a walking tour of the citadel, entering the Imperial City by the Northern Gate to learn about the former imperial residence.

Our walk continues along the Perfume River to reach the pier where we board our private boat. Lunch will be served as we cruise down the river to visit Emperor Tu Duc's royal tomb.

Day 12: Bach Ma National Park

Distance: approx. 2.5 miles (4km)

Leaving Hué, we drive south to Bach Ma National Park where the road climbs into the hills as we ascend Bach Ma peak, a former hill station which became a strategic observation post during the American War.

We'll walk the last 2km up to the summit for stop-and-stare views towards the sea and to enjoy lunch in a restaurant beside a former French villa. We'll then continue our journey past Lang Co Bay and over Hai Van Pass before boarding a boat for the final leg through palm mangrove into the ancient town of Hoi An.

Day 13: Hoi An

Distance: approx. 3 miles (5km)

A walk around the old town kicks off our day before we delve into the local market to meet our chef for today's cooking lesson. We'll wander past colourful stalls laden with spices and herbs used in Vietnamese cuisine and pick up some ingredients.

Travel by boat to a small farm tucked away on an island in the Thu Bon River, where it's time for a hands-on cooking lesson and tasting. We return to Hoi An on foot through the farmlands and then the remainder of the day is free to relax or explore further.

Day 14: Free Day In Hoi An

Today you're free to explore the delightful port town of Hoi An at your own pace, or perhaps take the opportunity to do some shopping – it's famous for its excellent tailors. You could also head to a nearby beach - An Bang beach is a popular choice for locals and visitors alike. This evening we'll meet up for our final dinner together and a chance to reflect on our adventures in Vietnam.

Day 15: Departure Day

Our tour finishes here and we bid farewell to our without flight guests. After breakfast, with flight guests transfer to Danang Airport for our overnight flights back to the UK.

ACCOMMODATION

Bespoke Trendy Hotel Hanoi, Hanoi - Vietnam

Located in the atmospheric old quarter of Hanoi, the Bespoke Trendy Hotel combines modern and traditional. Contemporary design with stylish décor, the air-conditioned rooms boast comfortable beds and thoughtful storage features. All mod-cons are provided, including TV, Wi-Fi, hairdryer, and tea and coffee-making facilities.

Mai Chau Villas, Mai Chau - Vietnam

Run as a social enterprise, Mai Chau Villas is located in a small village in the Mai Chau valley. Its bungalows are traditionally built with bamboo roofs and wooden floors, and rooms have either a balcony or terrace. Practical touches include a mosquito net, fridge, and Wi-Fi. The restaurant overlooks Cha Lang Lake, offering local and European cuisine. Cool off with a dip in the outdoor pool, or relax with simple spa services.

Le Clos Du Fil Boutique Hotel, Ninh Binh - Vietnam

Le Clos du Fil is situated in a small village known for its crafts and embroidery, surrounded by gardens and centred around an open-air swimming pool. Stylish rooms come with a balcony and are furnished using natural materials. All have air-conditioning, minibar, and Wi-Fi. The restaurant offers traditional meals using fresh, seasonal, and locally-grown ingredients. Plus there's a well-stocked bar.

Deluxe Cruise, Ha Long Bay - Vietnam

Our deluxe boat offers traditional ambience for cruising the waters of Ha Long Bay. The boat features a restaurant and bar area along with a generous sundeck, and cabins reflect contemporary Asian décor with hardwood floors, panoramic windows, and spacious bathrooms.

Spatel D'Annam Boutique Hotel, Hue - Vietnam

Centrally located within the citadel area, the Spatel d'Annam Boutique Hotel is set in lush gardens with an outdoor pool and restaurant. Rooms are designed with traditional dark wood furnishings and benefit from air-conditioning, tea and coffee-making facilities, and TV.

Vinh Hung Riverside Resort, Hoi An - Vietnam

Set on the banks of the Thu Bon River, the Vinh Hung Riverside Resort is just a short walk from the ancient town of Hoi An. Spacious rooms are dotted around coconut tree-shaded gardens and feature a private balcony, air-conditioning, TV, minibar, and tea and coffee-making facilities. The Riverside Restaurant offers indoor and outdoor seating, and there are two outdoor pools to enjoy.

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Weather & Seasonality

Vietnam's climate varies from south to north, and from lowland and coastal areas to highland and mountain regions. There are also distinct seasons in the far north of the country. In general, our holidays are during the

drier season.

Temperatures in the south of the country rarely fall below 20°C, with daytime temperatures in the high 20's. Further north temperatures are lower, but even in Hanoi the average daily temperature is usually in the high teens. There may be some light rainfall in the central coastal area during our visits.

In the higher mountain areas temperatures during the day are ideal for walking, and rarely drop to freezing at night

Joining Instructions (With Flights)

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from a range of UK airports* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

Joining Instructions (Without Flights)

If you prefer to book the holiday without flights and make your own travel arrangements you will still be able to make use of the return group transfers between the airport and hotel, which are included in the cost of your holiday. You must contact us on [+44 \(0\)20 3974 8865](tel:+442039748865) or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk at least 8 weeks before your holiday start date to provide your flight details if you wish to join the transfers. If you do not contact us, we will assume you are making independent travel arrangements.

If you are arriving ahead of the group, and are meeting them at the first hotel, please leave a message at the hotel reception for the HF Holidays' leader or local leader, detailing your room number, and a mobile telephone number if possible. The leader will contact you once the group arrives. If you are arriving after the group, a message will be left for you at the hotel reception, welcoming you and giving details of the time and place to meet the group.

Essential Information

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags
- Rubbish bags
- Insect repellent

Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device

Safety On Your Holiday

Once you have made your booking, you will receive a pre-holiday questionnaire where we ask for details of next of kin and insurance details. **You must complete and return this to us - we need to have this from you at least 10 weeks before travel.**

Please also inform us of any medical situation which may affect your enjoyment of the holiday. This is important because our leaders must consider both group and individual safety at all times.

Whilst out with the group, we respectfully request that you:

- Please listen to any safety instructions and other directions from the leader
- Keep group members in view, especially if weather or visibility is poor
- Please stay where you are if you become separated from the group. The leader will retrace their steps to find you.

Each leader carries a first aid kit but is not allowed to supply any medication including aspirin, paracetamol, antihistamines and antiseptic cream. You may wish to bring these items with you in your own kit (see Suggested Kit List).

In the unlikely event that your leader is incapacitated, please use any emergency kit in their rucksack and call emergency services on 911. Please then call our emergency number (sent in your final dispatch) and let us know there is a problem.

Dietary Requirements

Please contact us as far in advance as possible if you have any specific dietary requirements and we will do our best to meet your needs.

If you require a specific meal on the flight, please let us know as soon as possible, and no later than 96 hours before travel.

Vaccinations & Health

Before booking, you should check with your doctor to see if any health precautions are needed.

The following websites provide a wealth of information on travelling and health:
<http://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/> or www.redplanet.travel/mdtravelhealth

Vaccines: Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Typhoid & Tetanus vaccinations are recommended. Malaria and Rabies prevention are sometimes recommended too.

There have been reported cases of Dengue fever, you should use suitable insect repellent and wear appropriate clothing to avoid being bitten.

Passports & Visas

Passports

Your passport should be valid for at least six months after your arrival date to enter Vietnam, and have a minimum of 2 blank pages. Your passport should not be damaged.

Visas

Vietnam has introduced visa waivers for the nationals of 13 countries, including the UK. Visa waivers allow for visits to Vietnam for up to 45 days without the need to apply for a visa.

If you are staying for extra nights then you can either:

1. Book a tour with a travel agent in Vietnam requesting that the agent applies for a visa pre-approval letter for your travel to Vietnam. On receipt of the pre-approval letter by the Vietnamese Embassy, your agent will inform you when to collect your visa from the Embassy;
2. Apply for an e-visa online through the [online portal](#). E-visas are issued for stays of up to 90 days, single entry only. Use of the e-visa is limited to certain entry/exit points which you must select at the time of application. You cannot make any amendments once your application is completed.

Customs Rules

If you're taking prescription medication into Vietnam, carry it in your hand luggage with a copy of the prescription. If it has a total import value greater than 100 US dollars (or equivalent), you must declare it at customs.

If you're taking cash into or out of Vietnam, you must declare amounts over:

- 15 million Vietnamese dong
- 5,000 US dollars (or the same amount in other currencies)

Useful Information

Vietnamese, or tiếng Việt ('dee-uhng veeuht') is the official language of Vietnam. It belongs to the Mon-Khmer language family and has Muong (a hill-tribe language) as its closest relative.

Most Vietnamese sounds also exist in English, so the pronunciation isn't as hard as it might at first appear. Some basics to get you started include:

'Xin chào' ('Sin jòw) – Hello

'Tạm biệt' ('Daam bee-uh') – Goodbye

'Vâng' ('Vuhng) or 'Đạ' (Ya) – Yes, in the North and South

'Không' ('Kawm) – No

'Làm ơn' ('Lààm ern) – Please

'Cám ơn' ('Gáám ern') – Thank you

'Bạn có nói được tiếng Anh không?' ('Baan gó nóy đưhr-erk ding aang kawm?' – Do you speak English?

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so, and advise us of the insurance company and policy number.

We work with Campbell Irvine to provide you with competitive single and annual multi-trip insurance. Please

see our website for more information and details of how to contact them for a quote: <https://www.hfholidays.co.uk/about-us/booking-information/insurance>.

For more information about healthcare abroad and its costs, please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/>.

If you are arranging your own travel insurance, please ensure it is adequate for your specific itinerary. Generally, this should include cover for walking at altitudes over 2,000m - the highest point on the harder walks may go up to 2,700m.

Luggage

Luggage Allowance

1 piece checked-in luggage (max 30kg)

Please check details of your airline's baggage allowance, as shown on your e-ticket. Remember to also check any connecting flights you may have booked.

Lost/Damaged Luggage

If your bag or its contents are damaged or lost while in the airline's care, this should be reported to the baggage service agents at the airport on arrival. They will assess the damage; in some cases, the airline may decide to settle your claim immediately.

You will be given a reference to quote to your insurance company if an immediate settlement is not possible - in many cases, baggage claims can only be accepted in writing. A baggage claim form must be obtained from the airport.

Local Currency

Vietnamese Đồng (VND). Credit cards are increasingly accepted. ATMs can be found in the major tourist locations.

It is easy to exchange foreign currency at banks, hotels and exchange bureaux - US dollars are easily exchanged, but if you are using them in shops etc, they must be clean, and not torn.

Local Time

GMT/UTC +7 hours

Electricity

Electricity supply is 220V with a frequency of 50hz.

Suggested Reading & Maps

Suggested reading

- Lonely Planet, Vietnam (Aug 2023)
- The Rough Guide to Vietnam (Jan 2023)
- Graham Greene, The Quiet American (Oct 2004)
- Bill Hayton, Vietnam Rising Dragon (Sep 2011)

Maps

Although you won't need them, if you'd like any maps of the destination, you can obtain some in advance from The Map Shop: <https://www.themapshop.co.uk/>

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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