

## 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 in Vietnam.

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**

### Day 11: Fly Hanoi to London

Transfer to the airport in time for our flight home.

*(Lunch not included)*

### Day 12: Arrive London

## 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](#)

## CHALLENGE INFORMATION

### DETAILED INFORMATION

#### Leaders & Trip Support

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. They are also trained in expedition first aid. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader. Usually leaders are based in the UK or other English-speaking countries and lead for us regularly throughout the year in many different countries. In some instances, trips are led by in-country guides with a wealth of knowledge about the region; they have been trained by us to provide the level of support expected on a Discover Adventure trip.

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#### Trip Doctor

An expedition doctor or medic accompanies the group (dependent on group size.) Their role is to look after the well-being of the whole group and deal with any medical incidents. They help the crew to ensure the trip runs smoothly, and encourage you when things get tough. The total number of crew looking after you will depend on the final size of your group.

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#### Local Support Crew

Our local support crew is made up of local guides, assisted by drivers, porters, cooks and other support staff, depending on the type of trip. Local guides know the area well, and are a great source of knowledge about local customs and lifestyles. Not all support crew will speak English well, but are very friendly and approachable. The Discover Adventure crew work closely with the local crew to ensure your trip runs smoothly and safely.

Your leader will arrange a collection of tips for the local support crew at the end of your trek, and you will be provided with a guideline amount in advance. Tipping is not obligatory, but once you see how hard they work on your behalf you will be happy to donate something! All our local crew are paid wages, but bear in mind that the average wage in many countries may be less than you would spend on an average night out.

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#### Trip Safety

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with communication devices (eg phones, radios and/or emergency satellite phones),



medical kit and other safety apparatus appropriate to the destination. Our leaders always have access to our 24-hour emergency UK back-up. They are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary, should local conditions dictate. Pre-trip administration - such as medical questionnaires and travel insurance as appropriate - is all done with your safety in mind.

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## Foreign Travel Advice

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).

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## Flight Information

Group flights usually leave from London Heathrow or Gatwick on scheduled airlines and are booked through Discover Adventure Ltd under ATOL licence 5636. By travelling with Discover Adventure you are protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Your journey may involve a transit en route; details of route and flight times will be confirmed several months before departure. We do not always use the same airline for each destination; if you wish to know the probable carrier and flight times, please call for details. You will usually receive confirmed flight details several months before departure. Our itineraries are always based on current flight schedules and are therefore subject to change by the airline. If you prefer to book your own flights please ask us for a land-only cost.

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## Accommodation

While trekking we stay in traditional-style village homestays which allow a wonderful insight to local culture. They are relatively rustic, though they are designed or adapted for tourists so not as basic as some family homes. We bed down on sleeping mats on the floor in large communal rooms, usually in large groups. We stay in hotels (of a 2-3\* standard or equivalent) at the start and end of the trip; standards may vary between different hotels, but they are generally clean and comfortable with good facilities.

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## Roomshare Arrangements

Some accommodation will be twin-share. Please tell us if you know somebody else on the trip that you would like to share with and we will try our best to accommodate your request. If you don't know anyone else in the group don't worry, we always pair you up with someone of the same gender, and a similar age where possible. We do not charge a single supplement if you are a solo traveller in a shared room.

On some nights we are likely to sleep in more communal accommodation such as dormitories/hostels, huts, local homestays or monasteries, depending on the trip, and you may be sharing with a larger number of participants or the whole group; this type of accommodation cannot always be single-sex.

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## Group Size

Your booking is part of a group challenge, and the tour costs and fundraising targets listed on our website are based on a

minimum number of participants which is shown on the challenge. Our typical groups run with approximately 15-25 participants; however you may find your group is smaller or larger than this.

We will confirm at least 12 weeks prior to departure that your challenge is guaranteed to run. Occasionally it may be possible to still run the challenge with less than the minimum numbers, subject to a small group supplement. If we think a small group supplement may be necessary, we will discuss this with you as soon as possible, usually 5 months before your departure date.

**Minimum numbers and groups sizes may vary on Bespoke Charity challenges. If you are booked onto a bespoke challenge please contact your charity for full details.**

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## Food & Dietary Requirements

The food provided is plentiful, often local in style and freshly-cooked, and will give you plenty of energy. Sometimes we enjoy a buffet-style lunch-stop, other times we might have packed lunches. On some trips we stop at small local restaurants. Dinners are generally eaten at our accommodation each evening. In some regions there may be less variety than you are used to, and in others fresh meat or produce can be harder to come by. Any meals not included are listed in the itinerary and are generally on travel / free days, giving you the opportunity to explore and try other culinary experiences! There is always something to suit different budgets.

Being vegetarian or having other dietary requirements is not usually a problem provided you let us know well in advance. Please do not expect as much variety as you would have access to at home – we may be in very rural or remote areas, or among people of a different culture who may not understand your requirements, however willing they are to help. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat we strongly recommend you bring extra snacks from home so you can top up your energy supply. Please feel free to ask us for advice.

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## Luggage

Your luggage, food, water and equipment is transported for you from one night-stop to the next. If there is easy road access this is done by vehicle; if not porters, mules or even camels might carry your bags, depending on the terrain.

Space is limited and hard-sided luggage is not suitable, so it is essential that your kit is packed in a soft bag, rucksack or expedition kitbag. Ask us about our specially-designed low-cost kitbags if you don't have one already. You should also bring a small daypack to carry for items needed during the day as you will not have access to your main luggage until the evening.

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## PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGE

### Fitness Levels

This is designed to be a challenge, and it is vital that you train sufficiently for it. We will supply you with a thorough training guide once you have registered. We expect all participants to train hard in advance, but we respect everyone's limits and do not expect everyone to maintain the same pace. Inadequate training is likely to have an impact not just on your chances of completing the challenge, but enjoying it too – and we want you to have the time of your life!

Our challenges attract people of all levels of experience, fitness and ability as well as all ages and backgrounds. We design our challenges so that everyone can go at their own pace: this is not a race. If you have concerns about your fitness or if you have reduced mobility please do contact us for a confidential chat about whether this challenge is appropriate for you.

For logistical and safety reasons we sometimes need to re-group, so the front-runners may find themselves waiting for the slower ones. Please relax, and remember that this is a team effort that enables people to achieve their personal goals and earn sponsorship.

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## Passport & Visa / Vaccinations

Entry requirements vary depending on your destination and nationality. It is your responsibility to ensure your passport is valid, and any visas are obtained in good time. Check the [FCO's advice](#) on entry requirements for your destination to be sure. Please ensure you allow plenty of time to apply for your visa; we will provide you with all necessary information 6 weeks prior to departure to assist with your application.

Your routine UK schedule of vaccinations should be up-to-date (especially tetanus). We recommend you check [Fit For Travel](#) for further details. You should always check with a GP or travel clinic for up-to-date travel health advice as it does change.

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## Clothing & Kit

We plan our trips around the optimal weather conditions, but could still be exposed to bad weather at any time. It is vital you are prepared for all conditions. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, with plenty of information, and we are always available if you need advice.

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## Travel Insurance

Travel Insurance is compulsory on all of our challenges outside of the UK; we strongly suggest that you arrange insurance cover as soon as your booking with us is confirmed, or as soon as you're able to purchase some, and at least 8 months prior to travel. Should you need to cancel prior to departure, you will need insurance to cover the costs involved (registration fee and any trip costs depending on cancellation date).

We all hope never to need it, and thankfully most of the time we don't, but on those rare occasions when you do, you want it to cover you as best it can. Whilst it's a fairly boring admin task relating to your trip of a lifetime, it is really important you ensure that you have adequate cover for the type of challenge you are taking part in as well as medical emergencies, evacuation and repatriation, so make sure you're happy with the level of cover. There are lots of suppliers out there, with a wide range in levels of cover; generally speaking, you get what you pay for! Get and pay for the right level of cover and then you can go on your adventure not having to worry about the what-if's. For more details click [here](#).

Once your travel insurance is arranged, just remember to let us know the policy number and 24-hr medical emergency phone number provided by your insurers.

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## Cultural Differences

For most people, the main attraction of travelling to a different country is to see new sights and enjoy new experiences. Sometimes those new experiences can make life harder or more inconvenient than you may like, such as toilet hygiene or different food, or simply a different attitude to solving problems. This is all part of the challenge you are signing up for! We are very privileged to live in a country with a high standard of living, and travelling exposes us to different challenges – all of which help broaden our horizons. We can guarantee that coming face-to-face with experiences outside your normal 'comfort zone' will help you bond with your fellow participants and provide you with plenty of things to laugh about! A sense of humour and sense of adventure are two of the most important things to bring with you!

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## Cancelling your booking

In the unfortunate circumstance that you need to cancel your booking, we would ask that you notify us in writing either by post or email. Your cancellation will be considered effective from the date the notice is received. Registration fees and amendment fees are non refundable and, depending on your payment option and how close it is to your challenge departure date, you may be liable for a cancellation charge.

Full details of all cancellation charges may be found in the Terms and Conditions of booking.

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## Passenger Portal

We have a Passenger Portal which will give you more details of the challenge itself. It also enables you to see any outstanding information we need, the countdown to your challenge departure, see your outstanding balance, make payments and update your contact details. You can access this via the following link - [Passenger Portal Log in](#).

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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 May 2024, and the challenge is subject to change.