Secret Trails of the Tribal Heartland

Trip Code: VNT

Version:

WALK & TREK	GUIDED GROUP	5 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

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

Version:

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$200 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 Singapore 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 Singapore 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.

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide for 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 meals 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.

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.

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 secition of the holiday the guide will be assisted by baggage porters, a cook, and sometimes additional guides from the local villages.

Altitude

This holiday does not involve any significant ascent to altitude and we would not expect any altitude issues with this trip.

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 with draw fund. 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 duffle 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 the ‘Dates and Prices’ table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

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.

For other nationalities, please refer to your own Government website for the latest information.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates *(see Health & Vaccinations below),* **and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check the FCDO for the latest advice for **each country visited** before travel.

Visa Vietnam

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

NB. Irish and US and some EU country passport holders do need a visa to enter Vietnam.

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.

PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION - IMPORTANT

The Vietnamese authorities now require travellers to submit Passenger Information online **within 3 days** preceding the arrival in Vietnam.

Go to this link https://prearrival.immigration.gov.vn/ to enter your personal information and travel details.

UK citizens should choose 'Default visa exemption by country' when asked to provide visa details.

Receive a confirmation email with a QR code.

Show the QR code to the immigration officer upon arrival.

If you are booking an extension to Cambodia you will also need to check Cambodia's visa requirements.

Visa Cambodia

UK and USA passport holders do require a visa. The visa fee is $30 and we recommend that you pick up your visa on arrival at the international airport or at the land border if crossing into Cambodia from Vietnam. Payment must be made in cash (good condition USD), your passport must have 6 months remaining validity and you need 2 passport photographs.

e-ARRIVAL REGISTRATION - PRE-DEPARTURE - IMPORTANT

The Cambodian authorities now require travellers to go through this e-Arrival procedure **within 7 days** preceding the arrival in Cambodia.

Download the official E-arrival app: https://arrival.gov.kh/

Enter your personal information and travel details.

Receive a confirmation email with a QR code.

Show the QR code to the immigration officer upon arrival.

You can also apply for an e-visa prior to departure online at https://www.evisa.gov.kh/.

This e-visa may not be valid if crossing into Cambodia at a land border.

We do keep our information up to date but be advised that visa requirements are subject to change. It is recommended that you contact the relevant commission in case of recent alterations.

Health & Vaccinations

Vaccinations:

You should be up to date with the routine vaccinations recommended in the UK for overseas travel.

You must also contact your doctor or travel clinic to check if there are specific vaccinations or other preventive measures that you need for the area you are visiting, in good time before you are due to depart.

Please ensure you are looking at the recommendations for all countries visited on your holiday plus recommendations for any borders you cross.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dental check-up.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates.

Please check the FCDO and Travel Health Pro. For all of your intended destinations for up-to-date advice.

Severe Allergies:

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.

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 before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. All other nationalities should check their government websites for relevant information.

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 directly 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.

Private Groups Information

Make this KE Adventure holiday your own!

- Do our normal group departure dates not fit?
- Would you prefer to travel with just friends and/or family?
- Are you looking to organise a trip for your local walking, biking or mountaineering club?

It's really easy to make a trip your own. Simply select from our full range of adventure holidays and choose the dates that work for you and your group.

We are experts in creating holidays for groups of friends, families, charities and clubs. Our personal service means you'll be fully involved as we make the arrangements for your perfect adventure holiday.

Independence with Security

Travelling as a KE Private Group allows you more flexibility and choice, but still with the peace of mind that everything is pre-planned and arranged for your group by a reputable adventure travel company.

To take your first step to an amazing adventure with your friends and family complete the private group enquiry form, or call our **Sales Experts on: 017687 73966**

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
- 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 water bottles) (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.

Land Only Information

Please refer to the 'Joining Arrangements & Transfers' within Holiday Information for further details.

Flights and other transport to your destination should not be booked until you have received your booking confirmation and the departure is showing 'Guaranteed to Run' or 'Limited'.

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

Limited seats are available at the advertised flight price, please book as early as you can. If we are unable to secure seats at the price shown, or you have requested regional departures and/or upgrades, we will provide you with an alternative quote. It is likely that flight payment will be in advance of your final holiday balance. Booking a flight inclusive package means you will benefit from full financial protection, eases your holiday planning, and leaves us to deal with airlines and schedule changes. If you book flights through KE Adventure Travel we will offset the carbon of your flight.

Regional departures and/or alternative carriers are available on request.

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 11/11/2026 and the trip is subject to change