Northern Vietnam Culture & Nature Discovery – 9 Days

9D / 8N	Easy	Private	USD 725 / pax
Duration	Difficulty	Tour Type	Starting From

This 9-day tour through Northern Vietnam combines vibrant city life, serene mountain landscapes, and the iconic beauty of Ha Long Bay. Experience cultural encounters, outdoor adventures, and an overnight cruise.

DESTINATIONS & ROUTE

Hanoi → Mai Chau → Ninh Binh → Ha Long

TOUR OVERVIEW

Overview of Your Northern Vietnam Adventure

Embark on a captivating 9-day, 8-night journey through the diverse landscapes and rich cultural heritage of Northern Vietnam. This meticulously crafted itinerary takes you from the bustling streets of Hanoi to the tranquil valleys of Mai Chau and the dramatic karst scenery of Pu Luong Nature Reserve. Discover the unique charm of Ninh Binh's waterways before concluding with an unforgettable overnight cruise amidst the limestone karsts of Ha Long Bay.

Tour Highlights

Culinary walk through Hanoi's Old Quarter, sampling diverse street foods.

Explore Hanoi's historical landmarks, including Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum and the Temple of Literature.

Bike through Mai Chau's tranquil valley, encountering local hill tribe communities.

Trek through Pu Luong Nature Reserve, enjoying panoramic mountain views.

Discover Ninh Binh's "Inland Ha Long Bay" by bicycle and traditional sampan boat.

Overnight cruise on Bai Tu Long Bay, including kayaking and a cooking class.

Visit a floating fishing village by bamboo boat in Ha Long Bay.

Route Summary

Your adventure begins in Vietnam's capital, Hanoi, where you'll spend three nights exploring its historical sites and culinary scene. From there, journey west to the mountainous regions of Mai Chau and Pu Luong, immersing yourself in rural life and natural beauty for two nights. The tour then heads south to Ninh Binh for a night, renowned for its stunning limestone formations and waterways. The penultimate stop is an overnight cruise on the majestic Ha Long Bay, specifically the less-traveled Bai Tu Long Bay, before returning to Hanoi for your final night and departure.

Who This Tour Suits

This tour is ideal for all travelers seeking a comprehensive experience of Northern Vietnam. It perfectly balances cultural exploration in cities and villages with active adventures like biking and trekking in scenic natural reserves. Food enthusiasts will delight in the street food experiences, while nature lovers will appreciate the stunning landscapes of Mai Chau, Pu Luong, Ninh Binh, and Ha Long Bay.

Practical Information

The tour spans 9 days and 8 nights, encompassing various modes of transport including private car transfers, cycling, and boat trips. The trekking in Pu Luong is considered an intermediate level activity, requiring good walking shoes. Accommodations range from city hotels to a charming retreat and an overnight cruise. Daily meals are included as specified in the itinerary, ensuring you're well-fueled for your explorations.

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DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Day 1 Hanoi Arrival & Leisure Time

Stay: Apricot Hotel Hanoi | Transport: Private car transfer

Upon your arrival at Hanoi's airport, a dedicated driver will be waiting to provide a comfortable transfer directly to your hotel. After checking in, the remainder of your day is free for personal leisure. This initial period allows you to settle in, unwind from your journey, and begin to acclimate to the local time and surroundings at your own pace.
You might choose to relax at the hotel, explore the immediate vicinity, or simply prepare for the exciting adventures awaiting you in the days to come. This flexible start ensures a smooth transition into your Vietnamese experience.

Activities: Airport transfer, hotel check-in, free time

Day 2 Hanoi Culinary Exploration & Old Quarter Delights

Meals: B,D | Stay: Apricot Hotel Hanoi | Transport: Walking

The morning is reserved for personal relaxation, allowing you to recharge or explore Hanoi independently. As evening approaches, prepare for an engaging culinary journey through the Old Quarter with your knowledgeable guide. This experience offers a fantastic chance to sample a variety of local street foods, demystifying the many intriguing dishes you might encounter.
The street food tour commences at Bia Hoi Corner, where you'll taste the distinctive local draft beer, a beverage with roots tracing back to Eastern Europe. Following the local custom, find a stool, enjoy your drink, and observe the vibrant street life.
Your exploration continues through the Old Quarter's narrow lanes, with your guide highlighting an array of delectable noodles, breads, and snacks from various vendors.
As night falls, the sidewalks transform into lively dining areas, bustling with locals seated on small stools amidst sizzling woks and bubbling pots. These temporary eateries are a nightly fixture, disappearing almost entirely during daylight hours. You'll pause to savor a flame-grilled Vietnamese barbecue, featuring skewers of beef, chicken, tofu, and assorted vegetables. The evening concludes with a visit to Hanoi's most renowned ice-cream parlor for a delightful dessert, before returning to your hotel for the night.

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Activities: Relaxing morning, evening street food tour, sampling local brew, trying Vietnamese BBQ, enjoying dessert

Day 3 Hanoi Historical & Cultural Immersion

Meals: B,L | Stay: Apricot Hotel Hanoi | Transport: Private car

Today features a full-day exploration of Hanoi, a city celebrated for its unique blend of tree-lined boulevards, elegant French colonial architecture, serene lakes, and ancient pagodas. Your morning itinerary includes a visit to the Ho Chi Minh Complex, encompassing Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, his traditional Stilts House, the Presidential Palace, and the nearby One Pillar Pagoda. Following this, you'll delve into the rich cultural tapestry of Vietnam at the Museum of Ethnology, gaining insights into the country's diverse ethnic groups.

Lunch will be provided during your sightseeing. The afternoon continues with a visit to the Temple of Literature, Vietnam's first national university, a site of profound historical and educational significance. Afterwards, experience the peaceful ambiance of Hoan Kiem Lake, admiring the Ngoc Son Temple and the iconic Huc Bridge. The day culminates with a traditional Water Puppet Show, a captivating art form unique to Vietnam. After the show, you'll be driven back to your hotel, or you may choose to enjoy some free time walking around the city center.

Activities: Visiting Ho Chi Minh Complex, exploring Museum of Ethnology, lunch, visiting Temple of Literature, seeing Hoan Kiem Lake, enjoying Water Puppet Show

Day 4 Journey to Mai Chau & Valley Biking

Meals: B,L | Stay: Sol Bungalow | Transport: Private car, bicycle

This morning, depart from Hanoi for a scenic three-and-a-half-hour drive to Mai Chau. As you leave the urban environment behind, the landscape gradually transforms into a rugged, mountainous terrain. The journey includes ascending a significant mountain pass, which offers stunning views before descending into the picturesque Mai Chau valley, a natural amphitheater nestled amidst the peaks.

In the afternoon, embark on an invigorating biking tour through the valley. This activity provides an excellent opportunity to connect with the local hill tribe communities and gain a deeper understanding of their culture. You'll cycle through charming villages, past vibrant green rice paddies, and into the serene countryside. This unique experience allows you to observe traditional farming methods firsthand and glimpse into the daily lives of the local inhabitants, offering a truly authentic cultural encounter.

Activities: Scenic drive to Mai Chau, valley biking tour, interacting with local hill tribes, observing traditional farming

Day 5 Pu Luong Nature Reserve Trekking Adventure

Meals: B,L,D | Stay: Pu Luong Retreat | Transport: Private car, walking

Today's journey takes you into the heart of Pu Luong Nature Reserve. The drive itself is spectacular, traversing a breathtaking mountain pass that provides expansive panoramic views across the entire valley. You will arrive at your accommodation, a

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beautiful retreat, just in time for a delicious lunch. Afterwards, enjoy some free time to explore the stunning surroundings of the retreat, known for its captivating vistas and peaceful atmosphere.
In the afternoon, prepare for an engaging hike into the wilderness. This trek follows trails across the latter half of the reserve, leading you towards its western boundary. The hike is moderately challenging, lasting approximately three to four hours, making it suitable for those with an intermediate fitness level. It is advisable to wear sturdy walking shoes and ensure your camera batteries are fully charged to capture the magnificent scenery. Following your adventure, you will be transferred back to the Pu Luong Retreat, where a satisfying dinner awaits you, concluding your day amidst nature's tranquility.

Activities: Scenic drive to Pu Luong, enjoying retreat views, intermediate trekking in Pu Luong Nature Reserve, dinner

Day 6 Village Life & Ninh Binh's "Inland Ha Long Bay"

Meals: B,L | Stay: Hidden Charm Hotel & Resort Ninh Binh | Transport: Private car, bicycle/walking, sampan boat

This morning offers a chance to engage with the local community, experiencing daily village life among the hills above the retreat. You'll observe farming practices, walk through rice fields, and learn about traditional crafts such as rice wine production and colorful textile weaving, gaining insight into the authentic culture of the region.
Following these cultural interactions, you will journey to Tam Coc, a region often referred to as "Inland Ha Long Bay" due to its striking limestone karsts and waterways. Arriving around midday, you'll have the option to explore the Halong-like landscapes of Tam Coc by walking or cycling. This provides an excellent opportunity to understand the unique characteristics of this part of the Red River Delta.
Later in the afternoon, as the majority of tourists depart and the sun casts an orange glow, you will embark on a tranquil sampan boat ride. A local rower will guide you through the scenic waterways, allowing you to discover the serene beauty and dramatic scenery of the area from a unique perspective. The day concludes with an overnight stay in Ninh Binh.

Activities: Interacting with local villagers, learning about traditional crafts, traveling to Tam Coc, cycling/walking in Tam Coc, sampan boat trip

Day 7 Ha Long Bay Cruise & Bai Tu Long Exploration

Meals: B,L,D | Stay: V'spirit Cruise | Transport: Private car, deluxe junk boat, kayak

Begin your day with a four-hour drive to Ha Long Bay, where you will embark on an overnight deluxe junk cruise. Between 11:45 AM and 12:15 PM, you will arrive at Hon Gai International Harbor, followed by embarkation on your vessel between 12:30 PM and 1:00 PM. A welcome drink will be served as the Cruise Manager provides an overview of the itinerary and essential safety guidelines. After checking into your private cabin, lunch will be served as you begin cruising into the magnificent Bai Tu Long Bay, renowned for its wild beauty and panoramic natural vistas, sailing past famous islets like Indochina Studio and Am Islet.
From 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM, you will visit and explore the secluded Co Cave, also known as Thien Canh Son Cave. Here, a hike to the middle of the mountain reveals a mysterious and beautiful cave adorned with numerous sparkling stalactites resembling 'hanging lamps.' (Note: Swimming is not permitted here). Upon returning to the boat, enjoy a happy hour with discounted special menu drinks from 4:30 PM to 7:00 PM. Between 4:30 PM and 5:30 PM, you can enjoy kayaking and relaxing in the

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Cong Do Area. At 5:30 PM, participate in a flower carving activity on the sundeck. From 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM, attend a cooking demonstration by the chef, where you can try your hand at preparing traditional Vietnamese spring rolls. Dinner is served in the restaurant from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM, allowing you to appreciate the charm of Bai Tu Long Bay by night. Conclude your day with evening activities such as squid fishing, movie night, board games, or spa services, before spending the night in your private cabin in the Cong Do area.

Activities: Transfer to Ha Long Bay, embarking on deluxe junk, cruising Bai Tu Long Bay, exploring Co Cave, kayaking, attending cooking demonstration, enjoying dinner, evening activities (squid fishing, movie night)

Day 8 Ha Long Bay Sunrise & Return to Hanoi

Meals: Brunch | Stay: Apricot Hotel Hanoi | Transport: Deluxe junk boat, bamboo boat, private car

Awaken to a breathtaking dawn over Bai Tu Long Bay. Between 6:30 AM and 7:00 AM, refresh your body and mind with a Tai Chi session on the sundeck, embracing the serene morning atmosphere. From 7:00 AM to 7:30 AM, enjoy breakfast with cookies, tea, and coffee in the restaurant while taking in the morning seascape views.
Between 7:30 AM and 8:30 AM, you will visit Vung Vieng fishing village, a renowned floating community. Explore this traditional fishing farm by bamboo boat, gaining insight into the daily lives of the local people who reside on the waters of Ha Long Bay (Note: Swimming is not permitted here). Following this cultural experience, from 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM, you will pack your luggage and check out of your cabin. A delightful brunch will be served in the restaurant from 9:30 AM to 10:40 AM as the cruise makes its way back to Vinashin tourist harbor. Disembarkation from the boat is scheduled for 11:00 AM. Your driver will then transfer you back to Hanoi, arriving in the capital city around 4:00 PM, where you will spend your final overnight stay.

Activities: Tai Chi session, breakfast, visiting Vung Vieng fishing village by bamboo boat, brunch on board, disembarkation, transfer to Hanoi

Day 9 Hanoi Departure

Meals: B | Transport: Private car transfer

Enjoy your final hours in Hanoi with some free time, allowing for last-minute souvenir shopping, a leisurely breakfast, or simply relaxing before your journey home. At the appropriate time, a private transfer will be arranged to take you from your hotel to the airport, ensuring a smooth and timely departure for your international flight.

Activities: Free time, airport transfer

WHAT'S INCLUDED

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
v All private car transfers as specified in the program.	x Internal flight tickets (quoted separately).

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- v Hotel accommodation in a double room at listed hotels or similar, with daily breakfast.
- v Local English-speaking tour guides.
- v All entrance fees for planned activities.
- v Ha Long Bay cruise with kayaking.
- v Boat trips in Ninh Binh and biking in Mai Chau.
- v Meals as indicated in the itinerary (B: Breakfast; L: Lunch; D: Dinner).
- v Approval letter for Vietnam Visa Upon Arrival.
- v Service charges and government tax.
- v 24/7 hotline support.

- x Personal expenses.
- x Other meals not specified in the itinerary.
- x Tips and gratuities.
- x Travel insurance.
- x Vietnam visa stamp fee (US$25 & 01 passport photo per person).

PRICE INCLUDES

- v All private car transfers as specified in the program.
- v Hotel accommodation in a double room at listed hotels or similar, with daily breakfast.
- v Local English-speaking tour guides.
- v All entrance fees for planned activities.
- v Ha Long Bay cruise with kayaking.
- v Boat trips in Ninh Binh and biking in Mai Chau.
- v Meals as indicated in the itinerary (B: Breakfast; L: Lunch; D: Dinner).
- v Approval letter for Vietnam Visa Upon Arrival.
- v Service charges and government tax.
- v 24/7 hotline support.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Tour Code: IMP-9BD30DC4DCD1