Northern Vietnam Culture & Scenery: Halong Bay, Sapa, Ninh Binh – 6 Days

6D / 5N	Moderate	Private	USD 450 / pax
Duration	Difficulty	Tour Type	Starting From

Discover the diverse beauty of Northern Vietnam on a 6-day journey. Experience an overnight cruise in Lan Ha Bay, trek through Sapa's terraced rice fields and ethnic villages, conquer Fansipan Peak, and explore the ancient capital and karsts of Ninh Binh. This tour combines natural wonders with rich cultural encounters.

DESTINATIONS & ROUTE

Hanoi -> Ha Long -> Sapa -> Ninh Binh -> Lao Cai

TOUR OVERVIEW

This comprehensive 6-day, 5-night tour invites you to uncover the captivating landscapes and vibrant cultures of Northern Vietnam. From the iconic limestone karsts of Lan Ha Bay to the majestic peaks of Sapa and the tranquil waterways of Ninh Binh, this journey offers an unparalleled exploration of the region's most celebrated destinations. Designed for those seeking a blend of adventure, natural beauty, and cultural immersion, the itinerary promises a truly memorable experience.

Your adventure begins with a luxurious overnight cruise through the serene waters of Lan Ha Bay, a quieter extension of Ha Long Bay. Enjoy kayaking, a sunset party, and a gourmet dinner under the stars. Next, travel by overnight train to Sapa, where you'll trek through picturesque villages like Cat Cat and Sin Chai, meeting local Black H'mong communities and ascending Fansipan Mountain, the "Roof of Indochina."

The final leg of your journey takes you to Ninh Binh, often called "Ha Long Bay on land." Here, you'll explore the grand Bai Dinh Pagoda, embark on a traditional boat trip through the Trang An Grottoes, visit the historic Hoa Lu ancient capital, and climb Mua Cave for breathtaking panoramic views. This tour is perfectly crafted for nature enthusiasts and culture seekers eager to discover the heart of Northern Vietnam.

Throughout the trip, comfortable transportation, including limousine bus transfers and deluxe overnight train cabins, ensures a smooth and enjoyable travel experience. All major meals and entrance fees are included, allowing you to focus entirely on the wonders unfolding around you. Prepare for an enriching exploration of Vietnam's northern gems.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

* Overnight cruise through the tranquil, less-traveled waters of Lan Ha Bay.
* Kayaking and swimming amidst the stunning limestone formations of Tra Bau Area.
* Experience a traditional cooking class and sunset party on your cruise.
* Trek through the scenic Cat Cat and Sin Chai villages, home to Black H'mong communities.
* Ascend Fansipan Mountain by cable car, reaching the "Roof of Indochina" for panoramic views.
* Explore the vast Bai Dinh Pagoda, a significant spiritual complex in Vietnam.
* Enjoy a serene boat trip through the Trang An Grottoes, navigating mysterious caves.
* Visit Hoa Lu, the ancient capital, and learn about Vietnam's dynastic history.
* Hike to the summit of Mua Cave for a spectacular vista of Ninh Binh's karst landscape.

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DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Day 1 Hanoi Departure & Overnight Lan Ha Bay Cruise

Meals: Lunch, Dinner | Stay: Deluxe cruise | Transport: Limousine bus, tender boat, cruise ship

Your journey begins with an early morning pick-up from your hotel in Hanoi's Old Quarter, if you've arranged transfer services. You'll travel by comfortable vehicle towards Tuan Chau Harbor, the gateway to the stunning Halong Bay and its quieter extension, Lan Ha Bay. Upon arrival, you'll be transferred by tender boat to your luxurious cruise ship, where a warm welcome awaits. After a brief safety introduction and check-in to your private cabin, a delectable lunch will be served as the vessel gracefully glides through the emerald waters.

The cruise navigates past iconic limestone formations, including Finger Islet and Candle Islet, offering breathtaking views of the unique karst landscape. In the afternoon, the adventure continues with an exploration of the picturesque Tra Bau Area. Here, you'll have the opportunity to kayak through calm waters or swim, discovering the pristine beauty of a location famously featured in the movie "Kong Skull Island."

As evening approaches, return to the cruise for a relaxing "Sunset Party" and "Happy Hour" on the sundeck, enjoying the magical colors of the sunset over Lan Ha Bay. This is followed by an engaging cooking class. The day culminates with a lavish Gala Dinner served on the sundeck, featuring a fusion of fresh local ingredients and sophisticated culinary styles. After dinner, unwind on deck, partake in a complimentary herbal foot bath, or try your hand at squid fishing under the starry sky. Optional activities like a bamboo dance or ethnic fashion show may also be available.

Activities:
Transfer from Hanoi to Tuan Chau Harbor.
Boarding the cruise and cabin check-in.
Enjoying lunch while cruising through Halong Bay and Lan Ha Bay.
Kayaking and swimming in Tra Bau Area.
Participating in a sunset party and happy hour.
Attending a cooking class.
Having a gala dinner on the sundeck.
Engaging in evening activities like herbal foot bath or squid fishing.

Day 2 Lan Ha Bay Caves & Journey to Sapa by Overnight Train

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch | Stay: Overnight train from Hanoi to Sapa | Transport: Cruise ship, bamboo boat, limousine bus, overnight deluxe sleeper train

Begin your second day with a revitalizing Tai Chi session on the sundeck, greeting the sunrise over Lan Ha Bay. A light breakfast of tea, coffee, and pastries will be served as the cruise continues its scenic journey past more stunning karst towers. The morning's highlight is a visit to the Bright and Dark Cave area. Here, you'll transfer to a traditional bamboo boat to gently explore the serene grottoes, admiring the untouched natural beauty and capturing memorable photographs of the tranquil seascape.

After returning to the main boat, it's time for check-out. A well-prepared brunch will be served as the cruise slowly makes its way back towards Tuan Chau Harbor, offering final views of the spectacular landscape. Upon disembarkation, you'll be transferred back to Hanoi. If time and arrangements permit, some guests might opt for cycling around Tuan Chau island before the transfer.

You'll arrive back in Hanoi in the mid-afternoon, with some free time to relax at your hotel or explore the charming Old Quarter

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independently. In the evening, a transfer will take you from your Hanoi accommodation to the train station. You'll board an overnight deluxe sleeper train bound for Sapa, featuring air-conditioned cabins with four soft berths. This scenic overnight journey will bring you to Lao Cai Train Station early the following morning, ready for your Sapa adventure.

Activities: Participating in a Tai Chi class.
Enjoying a light breakfast on the cruise.
Exploring Bright - Dark Cave by bamboo boat.
Having brunch on the cruise.
Transferring from Halong Bay back to Hanoi.
Free time in Hanoi.
Transferring to Hanoi train station.
Boarding an overnight deluxe sleeper train to Sapa.

Day 3 Sapa Arrival & Cultural Trek to Cat Cat and Sin Chai

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner | Stay: 3-star hotel in Sapa | Transport: Car/Bus transfer

Your overnight train arrives at Lao Cai Train Station early in the morning. Our local representative will be waiting to greet you with a pick-up sign. You will then be transferred by vehicle to Sapa town. Upon arrival at your hotel, an early check-in will be arranged if rooms are available; otherwise, a basic room will be provided for refreshment before breakfast. After a hearty breakfast, your Sapa exploration begins.

The morning features a scenic walk to Cat Cat village, a traditional settlement of the Black H'mong ethnic group, nestled in a deep valley at the base of Fansipan Peak. Your local guide will lead you through the village, offering insights into the daily lives and customs of the residents. You'll trek down to a beautiful waterfall, site of a former French-built hydraulic power station, and capture memorable photos of the picturesque bridge and cascading water.

The trek continues uphill, revealing stunning natural scenery, as you make your way to Sin Chai village, also situated on the slopes of Fansipan. This provides further opportunities to observe local life and enjoy the serene mountainous environment. By early afternoon, you'll return to Sapa town, where you can admire the vibrant traditional costumes of the H'mong, Dzao, and Tay ethnic people. A delicious lunch featuring local Vietnamese dishes will be served, followed by hotel check-in. The remainder of the afternoon is free for you to explore Sapa town at your leisure, perhaps browsing the local market. Dinner will be served at your hotel, followed by an overnight stay in Sapa.

Activities: Arrival at Lao Cai Train Station and transfer to Sapa.
Early check-in or refreshment at hotel.
Breakfast at hotel.
Guided walk to Cat Cat village, observing local life.
Visiting the waterfall and hydraulic power station.
Trekking to Sin Chai village.
Lunch with local Vietnamese dishes.
Hotel check-in and free time to explore Sapa town.
Dinner at the hotel.

Day 4 Fansipan Summit Ascent & Overnight Journey to Hanoi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch | Stay: Overnight train from Sapa to Hanoi | Transport: Car/Bus transfer, cable car, overnight deluxe sleeper train

After breakfast at your hotel, you will be transferred with your guide to the Fansipan Cable Car Station. Prepare for a

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spectacular 20-minute cable car ride, offering breathtaking panoramic views as you ascend towards the "Roof of Indochina." At an altitude of 2800 meters, you'll have ample time to admire the majestic scenery, capture stunning photographs, and visit the spiritual pagodas. For those seeking to reach the absolute summit, a hike of approximately 600 steps leads to the peak of Fansipan, standing proudly as the highest mountain in Indochina.

You'll spend about 1.5 hours at the summit area, soaking in the views and exploring. Afterwards, you'll descend by cable car and return to Sapa town for lunch. Following lunch, you'll have some free time for check-out procedures and an opportunity to visit and shop at Sapa market, perhaps picking up some local handicrafts or souvenirs. The late afternoon offers a chance to freshen up, relax, or enjoy an early dinner on your own.

In the evening, you will be picked up and transferred downhill to Lao Cai station. Your guide will assist you with tickets before you board the overnight deluxe sleeper train back to Hanoi. Similar to your journey to Sapa, this train features air-conditioned cabins with four soft berths, ensuring a comfortable night's rest as you travel back to the capital.

Activities: Breakfast at the hotel.
Transfer to Fansipan Cable Car Station.
Cable car ride to Fansipan (2800m altitude).
Visiting pagodas and hiking 600 steps to Fansipan peak.
Lunch in Sapa.
Free time for check-out and shopping at Sapa market.
Transfer to Lao Cai station.
Boarding an overnight deluxe sleeper train to Hanoi.

Day 5 Ninh Binh: Sacred Pagoda & Grottoes Exploration

Meals: Lunch, Dinner | Stay: Homestay in Ninh Binh | Transport: Car/Bus transfer, rowing boat

Early this morning, your guide and driver will pick you up from your hotel in Hanoi's Old Quarter for the transfer to Ninh Binh province. A short break of 15-20 minutes will be made en route for you to stretch your legs and refresh. Your first destination in Ninh Binh is the impressive Bai Dinh Pagoda, renowned as one of Vietnam's largest and most famous pagodas, holding several Asian and Vietnamese records. You'll explore its vast complex, marveling at the 500 stone statues of Arhats, the massive 27-ton and 36-ton bronze bells, and the magnificent Golden statue of the Goddess of Mercy.

After your spiritual exploration, you'll enjoy a delicious lunch featuring Ninh Binh specialties in a private dining area, with vegetarian options available. In the afternoon, the journey continues to the breathtaking Trang An Grottoes. This UNESCO World Heritage site is characterized by majestic limestone cliffs, mysterious caves, and serene green fields. You'll embark on a captivating 2.5-hour boat trip, gliding through the waterways to visit a complex of caves including Sang Cave, Toi Cave, Ba Giot Cave, and Nau Ruou Cave, experiencing the tranquil beauty of this "Ha Long Bay on land."

Following the immersive boat trip, you will check into your bungalow or hotel accommodation in Ninh Binh. The evening is yours to relax, perhaps take a swim, and enjoy the peaceful surroundings. Dinner will be served at your accommodation, marking the end of your guided activities for the day, with your tour guide rejoining you the following morning.

Activities: Transfer from Hanoi to Ninh Binh.
Visiting Bai Dinh Pagoda, including statues of Arhats, belltowers, and the Goddess of Mercy statue.
Enjoying lunch with Ninh Binh specialties.
Boat trip through Trang An Grottoes (Sang Cave, Toi Cave, Ba Giot Cave, Nau Ruou Cave).
Check-in to accommodation and free time.
Dinner at accommodation.

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Day 6 Ancient Capital, Tam Coc Boat Ride & Mua Cave Panorama

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch | Transport: Car/Bus transfer, rowing boat

Start your final day with breakfast at your homestay or hotel in Ninh Binh, followed by some free time to explore the local neighborhood at your leisure. Around late morning, you'll begin your historical exploration at Hoa Lu, the ancient capital of Vietnam during the Dinh and Le dynasties. Here, you'll have the opportunity to visit the temples dedicated to these revered kings, gaining insight into the rich history and cultural heritage of the region.

A delightful lunch featuring local cuisine will be served at a restaurant. In the early afternoon, you'll depart for Tam Coc, famously known as "Ha Long Bay on land" due to its spectacular limestone karst formations and intricate waterways. You'll embark on a traditional rowing boat trip, navigating through the serene Ngo Dong River. During this picturesque ride, you'll admire the stunning natural scenery and observe the unique local way of life along the riverbanks.

The final highlight of your Ninh Binh adventure is a hike up Mua Cave (meaning "Dance Cave"). This involves ascending over 500 steps to the top of Ngoa Long Mountain. The effort is richly rewarded with a breathtaking panoramic view of Ninh Binh City, the meandering Ngo Dong River, and the surrounding rice paddies and limestone karsts. After soaking in the magnificent vista, you'll descend and board the bus for your return journey to Hanoi. The tour concludes upon your arrival back at your hotel in Hanoi in the early evening.

Activities:
Breakfast at homestay/hotel.
Free time to explore the neighborhood.
Visiting Hoa Lu ancient capital and temples of Dinh and Le Kings.
Enjoying lunch with local cuisine.
Boat trip through Tam Coc.
Hiking up Mua Cave for panoramic views.
Transfer back to Hanoi.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

INCLUDED

- v One night on a deluxe cruise in Lan Ha Bay.
- v Two nights on an overnight sleeper train (4 soft berths per cabin with air-conditioning).
- v One night at a 3-star hotel in Sapa.
- v One night in a homestay in Ninh Binh.
- v Two-way limousine bus transfers between Hanoi - Halong Bay - Hanoi.
- v Round-trip overnight train tickets between Hanoi and Sapa.
- v Pick-up and drop-off services at hotels/train stations as specified.
- v Transfers within Sapa.

NOT INCLUDED

- x Personal expenses.
- x Beverages.
- x Any additional services not explicitly mentioned in the itinerary.
- x Dinner on Day 2 and Day 4 (overnight train journeys).
- x Private cabin on the train (available at extra cost upon request).

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- Cable car tickets for Fansipan Mountain (round trip).
- All meals as listed in the itinerary: Day 1 (Lunch, Dinner); Day 2 (Breakfast, Lunch); Day 3 (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner); Day 4 (Breakfast, Lunch); Day 5 (Lunch, Dinner); Day 6 (Breakfast, Lunch).
- Kayaking and swimming in Lan Ha Bay.
- Sunset party, cooking class, and evening activities on the cruise.
- Tai Chi session on the cruise sundeck.
- Visits to Cat Cat and Sin Chai villages in Sapa.
- Visits to Bai Dinh Pagoda, Trang An Grottoes, Hoa Lu ancient capital, Tam Coc, and Mua Cave in Ninh Binh.
- All entrance fees as per the itinerary.
- English-speaking local tour guides during excursions.

PRICE INCLUDES

- One night on a deluxe cruise in Lan Ha Bay.
- Two nights on an overnight sleeper train (4 soft berths per cabin with air-conditioning).
- One night at a 3-star hotel in Sapa.
- One night in a homestay in Ninh Binh.
- Two-way limousine bus transfers between Hanoi - Halong Bay - Hanoi.
- Round-trip overnight train tickets between Hanoi and Sapa.
- Pick-up and drop-off services at hotels/train stations as specified.
- Transfers within Sapa.
- Cable car tickets for Fansipan Mountain (round trip).
- All meals as listed in the itinerary: Day 1 (Lunch, Dinner); Day 2 (Breakfast, Lunch); Day 3 (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner); Day 4 (Breakfast, Lunch); Day 5 (Lunch, Dinner); Day 6 (Breakfast, Lunch).
- Kayaking and swimming in Lan Ha Bay.
- Sunset party, cooking class, and evening activities on the cruise.
- Tai Chi session on the cruise sundeck.
- Visits to Cat Cat and Sin Chai villages in Sapa.
- Visits to Bai Dinh Pagoda, Trang An Grottoes, Hoa Lu ancient capital, Tam Coc, and Mua Cave in Ninh Binh.
- All entrance fees as per the itinerary.
- English-speaking local tour guides during excursions.

CANCELLATION POLICY

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Tour Code: IMP-8CD3555E4FCB