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

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

Experience the diverse beauty of Northern Vietnam on a 6-day adventure, featuring a serene cruise through Halong and Lan Ha Bays, trekking through Sapa's terraced rice fields, and exploring the ancient landscapes of Ninh Binh.

DESTINATIONS & ROUTE

Hanoi → Ha Long → Sapa → Ninh Binh → Lao Cai

TOUR OVERVIEW

Overview of Your Northern Vietnam Journey

Embark on a captivating 6-day, 5-night exploration of Northern Vietnam's most iconic landscapes and cultural gems. This meticulously planned itinerary takes you from the bustling streets of Hanoi to the tranquil waters of Halong and Lan Ha Bays, the majestic mountains and rice terraces of Sapa, and the ancient capital region of Ninh Binh. Prepare for an adventure filled with breathtaking scenery, authentic cultural encounters, and comfortable travel.

Tour Highlights

Overnight cruise on the emerald waters of Lan Ha Bay, including kayaking and a sunset gathering.

Trekking through the terraced fields and ethnic minority villages of Sapa, meeting local communities.

Exploring the dramatic limestone karsts and river systems of Trang An Grottoes by traditional boat.

Visiting Vietnam's spiritual heart at Bai Dinh Pagoda, home to impressive Buddhist architecture.

Discovering the ancient capital of Hoa Lu and the scenic "Halong Bay on Land" in Tam Coc.

Ascending Mua Cave for panoramic views over the Ngo Dong River and Ninh Binh's landscape.

Route Summary

This journey begins and ends in Hanoi, connecting you to the natural wonders of the north. The route progresses from Hanoi to an overnight cruise in Halong Bay and Lan Ha Bay. Following this, you'll travel by overnight train to Sapa for two days of mountain exploration. The return overnight train brings you back to Hanoi, from where you'll transfer to Ninh Binh for further discovery before concluding your trip back in Hanoi.

Who This Tour Suits

This tour is ideal for travelers who appreciate diverse natural beauty, from coastal karsts to mountainous rice paddies, and seek cultural engagement with local communities. It combines active exploration with comfortable accommodations and includes opportunities for relaxation. Those interested in photography, soft adventure, and a comprehensive experience of Northern Vietnam will find this itinerary particularly appealing.

Practical Information

Travel is facilitated by comfortable limousine buses, overnight sleeper trains, and private transfers. Accommodations include a deluxe cruise, a 3-star hotel, and a local homestay, offering a varied experience. Most meals are included, ensuring you savor local flavors throughout your journey. Local English-speaking guides will accompany you during excursions, providing insights into the regions visited.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

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* Overnight cruise on the serene waters of Lan Ha Bay with kayaking and swimming.
* Participate in a cooking class and enjoy a sunset party aboard your luxury vessel.
* Begin your day with a peaceful Tai Chi session on the sundeck of your cruise.
* Trek through the stunning terraced rice fields to Cat Cat and Sin Chai villages in Sapa.
* Discover the traditional life of the Black Hmong and Giay people in Lao Chai and Ta Van.
* Explore the vast Bai Dinh Pagoda complex, home to significant Buddhist relics.
* Experience a boat journey through the mystical cave system of Trang An Grottoes.
* Visit Hoa Lu, Vietnam's ancient capital, and its historic Dinh and Le King temples.
* Take a scenic sampan ride through Tam Coc, often called "Halong Bay on Land."
* Conquer the 500 steps to Mua Cave for unparalleled panoramic vistas of Ninh Binh.

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Day 1 — Hanoi Departure & Lan Ha Bay Cruise Exploration

Meals: Lunch, Dinner | Stay: Deluxe Cruise | Transport: Limousine bus, Tender boat, Cruise ship

After morning pick-up from Hanoi Old Quarter hotels, travelers embark on a scenic journey towards Tuan Chau Harbor. Upon arrival, a tender transfers guests to their main cruise vessel, where a warm welcome awaits. A cruise manager provides a safety briefing and introduction while guests enjoy a refreshing drink before settling into their cabins. Lunch is served as the boat begins its serene navigation through the less crowded waters of Lan Ha Bay, an extension of the famous Halong Bay. The route passes iconic formations like Finger Islet and Candle Islet, surrounded by countless limestone karsts.

In the afternoon, the adventure continues with an exploration of Tra Bau Area, renowned as a filming location for "Kong Skull Island." Here, guests can enjoy kayaking and swimming in the pristine waters. As evening approaches, return to the cruise for a relaxing "Sunset Party" and "Happy Hour," offering a magical atmosphere as the sun dips below the horizon. A luxurious Gala Dinner is served on the sundeck, featuring fresh ingredients and a blend of French neo-classical and traditional Asian culinary styles. The evening concludes with various activities such as a herbal foot bath, bamboo dance, an ethnic fashion show, or squid fishing under the peaceful night sky.

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

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Day 2 Lan Ha Bay Caves & Overnight Train to Sapa

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch | Stay: Overnight Sleeper Train | Transport: Cruise ship, Transfer boat, Limousine bus, Overnight train

The day begins early with an optional Tai Chi session on the sundeck, offering a tranquil start amidst the stunning bay scenery. A light breakfast of tea, coffee, and other refreshments is served as the cruise continues its journey past impressive karst formations. Shortly after, guests prepare for an excursion to the Dark and Bright Cave, an area celebrated for its untouched natural beauty and picturesque seascape. Visitors will navigate these caves by bamboo boat, providing an intimate experience of the limestone mountains and the clear blue waters of Lan Ha Bay, perfect for photography.

After returning to the main vessel, check-out procedures are completed. A well-prepared brunch is served as the cruise slowly makes its way back towards Tuan Chau Harbor, offering final views of the emerald waters and thousands of karst peaks. Upon disembarking at Tuan Chau Marina, a transfer bus awaits to take guests back to Hanoi. The afternoon allows for free time in Hanoi to relax, explore the Old Quarter, or do some shopping. In the evening, a transfer will take travelers to the train station for an overnight journey to Sapa, traveling in a deluxe air-conditioned cabin with four soft berths, arriving at Lao Cai Train Station the following morning.

Activities:
Participating in a morning Tai Chi class.
Enjoying a light breakfast on the cruise.
Kayaking or taking a bamboo boat to explore Dark and Bright Cave.
Having brunch on the cruise.
Transferring from Halong Bay back to Hanoi.
Free time for relaxation or exploring Hanoi Old Quarter.
Transferring to Hanoi train station.
Overnight train journey from Hanoi to Sapa.

Day 3 Sapa Arrival & Trekking Cat Cat and Sin Chai Villages

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch | Stay: 3-star Hotel | Transport: Shuttle bus/16-seater Ford Transit, Walking, Car

Early morning marks the arrival at Lao Cai Train Station, where a local representative will meet and transfer travelers to Sapa Town. The scenic drive to Sapa takes approximately one hour, offering initial glimpses of the mountainous terrain. Upon reaching Sapa, guests can enjoy breakfast at a local restaurant and freshen up before the day's trekking adventure begins. An English-speaking tour guide will then lead the group on a trek down into the valley towards Cat Cat Village, a settlement of the Black Hmong people, about 4 km from Sapa.

During the walk, participants will observe an old French hydro-electric power station and witness local villagers working in the paddy fields, with children playing and various farm animals roaming freely. After crossing a village, the trail leads to a beautiful waterfall, providing a perfect spot for rest and photos. Later in the afternoon, the hike continues to Sin Chai Village, nestled at the base of Mount Fansipan. A picnic lunch is enjoyed in Sin Chai, surrounded by peaceful natural scenery. Afterwards, a car will transport the group back to Sapa town, allowing for free time in the evening to explore, shop, and dine independently before spending the night in a Sapa hotel.

Activities:
Arrival at Lao Cai Train Station and transfer to Sapa.
Breakfast and refreshment in Sapa.
Trekking to Cat Cat Village.

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Visiting an old French hydro-electric power station.
Observing local life and paddy fields.
Visiting a waterfall in Cat Cat Village.
Hiking to Sin Chai Village.
Enjoying a picnic lunch in Sin Chai Village.
Returning to Sapa town by car.
Free time in Sapa for exploration and dinner.

Day 4 Sapa Valley Trek: Lao Chai, Ta Van & Return Overnight Train

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch | Stay: Overnight Sleeper Train | Transport: Walking, Car, Overnight train

Wake up to the fresh Sapa air and enjoy breakfast at the hotel, savoring the morning tranquility. An English-speaking guide will then pick up guests to commence another day of trekking through the stunning Sapa valleys. The trek leads through a bamboo forest, eventually reaching Ta Van Village, home to the Giay ethnic minority. Here, travelers can explore the village and gain insight into the local way of life.

Lunch is served at a local house situated near the picturesque Muong Hoa River. In the afternoon, the journey continues to Lao Chai Village, a vibrant community of the Black Hmong people. This area offers spectacular views of Sapa's extensive terraced rice fields, providing ample photo opportunities. The trek then proceeds to Y Linh Ho Village before ascending to the main road, where a car awaits to transfer the group back to their Sapa hotel. The late afternoon is free for personal activities such as freshening up, last-minute shopping, or enjoying an early dinner. In the early evening, a transfer takes travelers downhill to Lao Cai station to board the overnight sleeper train back to Hanoi, sharing a deluxe cabin with four soft berths.

Activities: Breakfast at the hotel.
Trekking through bamboo forest to Ta Van Village.
Exploring Ta Van Village.
Having lunch at a local house by Muong Hoa River.
Continuing trek to Lao Chai Village.
Enjoying views of Sapa's largest rice terraces.
Walking to Y Linh Ho Village.
Returning to Sapa town by car.
Free time in Sapa for relaxation and dinner.
Transferring to Lao Cai train station.
Overnight train journey from Sapa to Hanoi.

Day 5 Ninh Binh's Spiritual & Natural Wonders: Bai Dinh & Trang An

Meals: Lunch, Dinner | Stay: Homestay | Transport: Transfer bus, Boat

After an early morning arrival back in Hanoi by train, travelers will be picked up from their hotel in the Old Quarter for a transfer to Ninh Binh. A short break is scheduled en route for stretching and refreshments. The first major destination in Ninh Binh is Bai Dinh Pagoda, a renowned spiritual complex famous for its extensive collection of Buddhist statues and impressive architecture. Visitors can admire the 500 stone Arhat statues, a massive 27-ton bell tower, and a golden statue of the Goddess of Mercy, among other significant features.

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Lunch features local Ninh Binh specialties, served in a private area at the Trang An Eco Holiday Retreat, with vegetarian options available. In the afternoon, the journey continues to the Trang An Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage site celebrated for its majestic limestone cliffs, mysterious caves, and serene waterways. A boat trip of approximately 2.5 hours allows exploration of the cave complex, including Sang Cave, Toi Cave, Ba Giot Cave, and Nau Ruou Cave, offering breathtaking natural beauty. Following the boat trip, guests check into their bungalow or hotel for some personal relaxation or a swim before enjoying dinner. The evening is free, with no tour guide services until the next morning.

Activities:
Transfer from Hanoi Old Quarter to Ninh Binh.
Visiting Bai Dinh Pagoda.
Exploring the pagoda's statues, bell tower, and golden Goddess of Mercy.
Enjoying lunch with Ninh Binh specialties.
Taking a boat trip through Trang An Grottoes.
Exploring various caves like Sang, Toi, Ba Giot, and Nau Ruou.
Checking into accommodation in Ninh Binh.
Free time for relaxation or swimming.
Dinner at the homestay/hotel.

Day 6 Hoa Lu, Tam Coc & Mua Cave Panorama, Return to Hanoi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch | Stay: null | Transport: Transfer bus, Boat

Start the final day with breakfast at the homestay or hotel, followed by some free time to explore the immediate surroundings of Ninh Binh. Around late morning, the tour begins with a visit to Hoa Lu, the ancient capital of Vietnam during the Dinh and Le dynasties. Here, travelers can explore the historic temples dedicated to these kings, gaining insights into the region's rich history and cultural heritage.
Lunch is served at a local restaurant, featuring delicious regional cuisine. In the afternoon, the journey continues to Tam Coc, famously known as "Halong Bay on Land" due to its striking limestone karst formations and intricate waterways. A boat ride through Tam Coc offers a chance to admire the stunning natural scenery and observe the daily life of local residents along the river. The adventure culminates with a hike up Mua Cave, involving over 500 steps to the summit of Ngoa Long Mountain. From this vantage point, visitors are rewarded with a spectacular panoramic view of Ninh Binh City and the winding Ngo Dong River below. After soaking in the views, guests board the bus for the return trip to Hanoi, arriving at their hotel in the early evening, marking the conclusion of the tour.

Activities:
Breakfast at accommodation.
Free time to explore the neighborhood.
Visiting Hoa Lu ancient capital and its temples.
Enjoying lunch with local cuisine.
Taking a boat trip through Tam Coc.
Hiking up Mua Cave (Ngoa Long Mountain) for panoramic views.
Transferring back to Hanoi.
Arrival at hotel in Hanoi.

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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 mentioned.
- v Transfers within Sapa and Ninh Binh.
- v All meals as stated in the itinerary: Day 1: Lunch, Dinner; Day 2: Breakfast, Lunch; Day 3: Breakfast, Lunch; Day 4: Breakfast, Lunch; Day 5: Lunch, Dinner; Day 6: Breakfast, Lunch.
- v Kayaking & swimming in Lan Ha Bay.
- v Sunset party, cooking class, evening activities on the cruise.
- v Tai Chi on cruise sundeck.
- v Visits to Cat Cat, Sin Chai, Lao Chai, Ta Van, Y Linh Ho villages in Sapa.
- v Visits to Bai Dinh Pagoda, Trang An Grottoes, Hoa Lu ancient capital, Tam Coc & Mua Cave in Ninh Binh.
- v All entrance fees as per itinerary.
- v English-speaking local tour guides during excursions.

NOT INCLUDED

- x Personal expenses.
- x Beverages.
- x Any additional services not mentioned in the itinerary.

PRICE INCLUDES

- 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.
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- Kayaking & swimming in Lan Ha Bay.
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- Visits to Cat Cat, Sin Chai, Lao Chai, Ta Van, Y Linh Ho villages in Sapa.
- Visits to Bai Dinh Pagoda, Trang An Grottoes, Hoa Lu ancient capital, Tam Coc & Mua Cave in Ninh Binh.
- All entrance fees as per itinerary.
- English-speaking local tour guides during excursions.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Tour Code: IMP-E44DA42CC815