Northern Vietnam: Ninh Binh, Bai Tu Long Bay & Sapa – 6 Days

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

Explore the diverse landscapes and rich cultural heritage of Northern Vietnam over six days. This journey takes you from the ancient capital of Hoa Lu and the stunning karst formations of Ninh Binh, through the tranquil waters of Bai Tu Long Bay on an overnight cruise, to the majestic mountains and ethnic villages of Sapa, including an ascent to Fansipan Peak.

DESTINATIONS & ROUTE

Hanoi → Ninh Binh → Sapa

TOUR OVERVIEW

This six-day adventure through Northern Vietnam offers a comprehensive exploration of its most iconic natural wonders and cultural sites. Starting from the bustling capital of Hanoi, the tour quickly transitions to the serene beauty of Ninh Binh, often referred to as 'Halong Bay on land'. Here, you'll delve into Vietnam's ancient history and glide through breathtaking riverine landscapes.

The journey continues to the less-traveled Bai Tu Long Bay, providing an intimate overnight cruise experience amidst thousands of limestone islets. Activities like kayaking and visiting a floating fishing village offer unique perspectives on local life and the bay's pristine environment. Following this, the tour ascends to the cooler climate of Sapa, a region renowned for its dramatic terraced rice fields and vibrant ethnic minority communities.

In Sapa, you will undertake invigorating treks through picturesque valleys, visit traditional H'mong villages, and have the opportunity to conquer Fansipan, the highest peak in Indochina, via cable car. This itinerary is thoughtfully designed for travelers seeking a blend of cultural immersion, active exploration, and stunning natural scenery, culminating with a return to Hanoi.

Tour Highlights

Experience the historical grandeur of Hoa Lu, Vietnam's ancient capital.

Navigate the scenic waterways of Tam Coc or Trang An by traditional boat amidst towering karsts.

Ascend Mua Cave for unparalleled panoramic views of Ninh Binh's countryside.

Enjoy an overnight cruise through the serene and less-crowded Bai Tu Long Bay.

Participate in a Vietnamese cooking class and try squid fishing on board your cruise.

Trek through the stunning terraced rice fields and ethnic minority villages of Sapa.

Ride a cable car and hike to the summit of Fansipan, the 'Roof of Indochina'.

Engage with local H'mong communities in villages like Y Linh Ho, Lao Chai, and Cat Cat.

Route Summary

The tour begins in Hanoi, with a transfer to Ninh Binh for historical and scenic exploration. From Ninh Binh, travel to Bai Tu Long Bay for an overnight cruise, then return to Hanoi. The journey then proceeds to Sapa for mountain trekking and cultural visits, concluding with a return transfer to Hanoi.

Who This Tour Suits

This tour is ideal for individuals who appreciate natural beauty, seek cultural encounters, and enjoy active exploration. It caters to those interested in history, outdoor activities like trekking and kayaking, and experiencing local life in rural Vietnam.

Practical Information

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Accommodation includes a homestay in Ninh Binh, an overnight cruise in Bai Tu Long Bay, a homestay in Sapa, and a hotel in Sapa town. Meals are provided as specified in the itinerary (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner). Transportation varies, including luxury limousine, air-conditioned buses, boats, and a cable car. Travelers should be prepared for moderate physical activity, particularly during treks in Sapa and the climb at Mua Cave.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

* Explore Hoa Lu, the ancient capital of Vietnam, visiting Dinh and Le King temples.
* Take a scenic boat trip through the stunning karst landscapes of Tam Coc or Trang An.
* Climb Mua Cave's 500 steps for a breathtaking panoramic view of Ninh Binh's countryside.
* Enjoy an overnight cruise experience on the tranquil waters of Bai Tu Long Bay.
* Participate in a traditional Vietnamese cooking class aboard your cruise ship.
* Trek through the picturesque terraced rice fields and ethnic villages of Sapa.
* Ascend Fansipan Peak, the 'Roof of Indochina', via a modern cable car.
* Discover the daily life and culture of the Black H'mong people in Cat Cat Village.

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Day 1 — Ninh Binh Ancient Capital & Karst Landscape Exploration

Meals: B,L | Stay: Homestay in Tam Coc Ninh Binh Province | Transport: Luxury Limousine, tourist bus/car

Begin your journey with an early morning pickup from your Hanoi Old Quarter hotel or a designated office. A comfortable luxury limousine will transport you south to Ninh Binh Province, a scenic drive lasting approximately two and a half hours. Upon arrival, the first stop is Hoa Lu, Vietnam's ancient capital. Here, you will explore the historic Dinh King Temple and Le King Temple, learning about the heroic struggles of these 10th-century rulers against Chinese invasions.

After soaking in the history, a buffet lunch featuring authentic Vietnamese cuisine awaits. The afternoon offers a choice between two iconic natural attractions. Option one is Tam Coc, often called 'Halong Bay on land'. This involves a 1.5-hour boat ride on the Ngo Dong River, winding through picturesque paddy fields, past dramatic limestone karsts, and into a series of stunning caves including Hang Ca, Hang Hai, and Hang Ba.

Alternatively, you can choose Trang An, a UNESCO World Heritage Site renowned for its beautiful tunnel cave system and its appearance in the movie 'Kong: Skull Island'. A 1.5-hour boat excursion here reveals the site's unique geological beauty. The day culminates with a visit to Mua Cave, or 'Dancing Cave'. A climb of 500 stone steps rewards you with a breathtaking panoramic vista of the surrounding countryside, including Tam Coc and the Ngo Dong River. In the late afternoon, a tourist bus or private car will transfer you to a homestay in Tam Coc, where you can relax and enjoy the evening at your leisure, with dinner available at local restaurants.

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Day 2 Journey to Bai Tu Long Bay & Overnight Cruise Experience

Meals: B,L,D | Stay: Overnight on boat | Transport: shuttle bus with air-conditioned, tender, Cruise

Your second day begins with an early morning pickup from your Tam Coc homestay in Ninh Binh. An air-conditioned shuttle bus will transfer you to Halong Bay, a journey of approximately four hours. Upon arrival at Sunworld International Harbor, you'll have a brief period to relax before being transferred by tender to your awaiting cruise ship.

Once aboard, you'll receive a warm welcome with drinks and a safety briefing, followed by checking into your private cabin. A delicious Vietnamese set menu lunch will be served as the boat gently cruises into the heart of Bai Tu Long Bay, heading towards the tranquil Cap La area. The afternoon is dedicated to exploring the bay's breathtaking natural scenery. You'll have the opportunity to kayak among the majestic limestone islands and islets, swim in the emerald waters, and simply relax on deck, soaking in the serene environment.

As evening approaches, enjoy a 'Happy Hour' on the sundeck while the cruise sails to the Cong Do area, where it will anchor for the night. Before dinner, participate in a hands-on cooking class, learning to prepare traditional Vietnamese dishes. A sumptuous BBQ dinner is then served on the sundeck (seasonal availability). The evening concludes with free time to relax on the sundeck, engage in board games, or try your luck with squid fishing under the stars.

Day 3 Bai Tu Long Bay Morning & Return to Hanoi

Meals: B,L | Transport: Cruise, tender, rowing boat, bus

Wake up early to the peaceful ambiance of Bai Tu Long Bay and start your day with a Tai Chi exercise on the sundeck as the sun rises. A light Western-style breakfast is served while the boat cruises towards one of Halong Bay's most beautiful fishing villages. You will then transfer by tender to Vung Vieng Fishing Village.

At Vung Vieng, you'll board a traditional rowing boat, expertly guided by a local fisherman, to explore the village. This experience offers a unique insight into the daily life and traditions of the local fishing communities. After this cultural immersion, you'll return to the main boat, which will begin its scenic journey back to the harbor, taking a different route to showcase more of the bay's hidden gems.

A fusion-style lunch is served onboard as you make your way back. Upon disembarking at Sunworld Harbor, you'll transfer to a bus for the return trip to Hanoi. The bus journey back typically takes a few hours, and you will be dropped off at your hotel in Hanoi in the late afternoon, concluding your Bai Tu Long Bay experience.

Day 4 Sapa Mountain Journey & Fansipan Peak Ascent

Meals: L,D | Stay: homestay in Sapa | Transport: sleeping bus, bus, cable car

Your fourth day begins early with a pickup from a bus station in Hanoi, where you'll board a comfortable sleeping bus bound for Sapa. The journey follows the highway to Lao Cai city, with a comfort break along the way, before transitioning to winding mountain roads. As you approach Sapa Town, you'll be treated to increasingly spectacular views of valleys carved with terraced rice fields.

Upon arrival, you'll enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. After your meal, a driver and tour guide will take you to the cable car

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station. Prepare for a breathtaking 20-minute cable car ride, ascending to an altitude of 2800 meters. From this vantage point, you'll have ample time to capture stunning photos and visit the serene pagodas, which are spiritual destinations high in the mountains.

For the adventurous, the opportunity to hike the remaining 600 stone steps to the very peak of Fansipan, famously known as the 'Roof of Indochina', awaits. This challenging but rewarding ascent offers unparalleled views from the summit. After approximately 1.5 hours of hiking and photography at the top, you will descend and check into a local homestay in Sapa. The evening is free for you to relax, interact with fellow travelers from around the world, and learn more about the local culture and way of life.

Day 5 Trekking Through H'mong Villages & Muong Hoa Valley

Meals: B,L,D | Stay: hotel in Sapa

Start your day with breakfast at your Sapa homestay. Today is dedicated to an immersive trekking experience through the heart of Sapa's cultural landscape. You'll begin a moderate 6-kilometer trek heading southeast from Sapa, following the gentle slopes of the picturesque Muong Hoa valley. Your first destination is Y Linh Ho village, home to the Black H'mong ethnic community, where you can observe their traditional way of life.

Continuing your journey, you will walk another 3 kilometers to Lao Chai village, another prominent H'mong settlement. To reach the village, you'll navigate through a small tunnel or cross a quaint bridge, leading you deeper into the enchanting Muong Hoa valley. This part of the trek offers continuous views of the iconic terraced rice fields that define the region.

Around midday, you'll arrive in Ta Van village, where a well-deserved lunch will be served, allowing for a restful break. The afternoon is spent further exploring the local villages, observing the intricate terraced fields up close, and enjoying the tranquility of the streams. As the afternoon draws to a close, you will return to Sapa Town and check into a hotel for the night. Dinner will be served at a local restaurant, providing a chance to reflect on the day's trekking and cultural discoveries.

Day 6 Cat Cat Village Exploration & Return to Hanoi

Meals: B,L | Transport: bus

Enjoy breakfast at your Sapa hotel before embarking on the final day of your Northern Vietnam adventure. A short walk will take you to Cat Cat village, a traditional settlement of the Black H'mong ethnic people. This village is nestled at the bottom of a deep valley, at the foot of the majestic Fansipan Peak, offering stunning natural surroundings.

Your local guide will lead you through the village, providing insights into the daily activities and customs of the H'mong community. You'll trek down to the valley floor, where you'll discover a beautiful waterfall and the remnants of a Hydraulic Power Station built by the French. This spot provides excellent opportunities for photography, capturing the scenic bridge and cascading water.

After exploring the valley, you will trek uphill back to Sapa, enjoying more beautiful scenery along the way. This trek covers approximately 2.5 kilometers and takes about two hours. Upon returning to Sapa, you'll have lunch and complete check-out procedures. The afternoon offers free time to visit and shop at Sapa market, where you can find local handicrafts and produce. In the late afternoon, you'll board a bus for your return journey to Hanoi, arriving in the capital city in the evening, marking the

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end of your tour.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

INCLUDED

- v All transfers by limousine, bus, and boat
- v English-speaking tour guide
- v Entrance fees and tickets
- v 4 nights accommodation (1 Ninh Binh, 1 on cruise, 1 Sapa homestay, 1 Sapa hotel)
- v All meals as mentioned (B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner)
- v Boat trip in Tam Coc or Trang An
- v Kayaking, cooking class, Tai Chi on cruise
- v Cable car ticket to Fansipan
- v Trekking in Sapa villages
- v Daily water

NOT INCLUDED

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

PRICE INCLUDES

- v All transfers by limousine, bus, and boat
- v English-speaking tour guide
- v Entrance fees and tickets
- v 4 nights accommodation (1 Ninh Binh, 1 on cruise, 1 Sapa homestay, 1 Sapa hotel)
- v All meals as mentioned (B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner)
- v Boat trip in Tam Coc or Trang An
- v Kayaking, cooking class, Tai Chi on cruise
- v Cable car ticket to Fansipan
- v Trekking in Sapa villages
- v Daily water

CANCELLATION POLICY

Tour Code: IMP-AD73FAC5AF50