

NORTHERN VIETNAM, LUANG PRABANG AND BANGKOK 26TH FEBRUARY – 16TH MARCH 2022 (19 DAYS / 18 NIGHTS)

Day 1: 26th February 2022 - Arrive Hanoi

Upon arrival at Hanoi – Noi Bai airport, you will be met by our local guide and transferred by private vehicle to your hotel for check-in and the remainder of the day is at your leisure.

6 pm: group meeting at the hotel Moonlight Sky Bar.

Meal included: None

Overnight: La Siesta Trendy hotel in Hanoi – Deluxe room

Day 2: 27th February 2022 - Hanoi

Visit Ba Dinh Square where silent sentries guard the marble mausoleum in which Ho Chi Minh lies in state. Subject to opening hours, the interior of the mausoleum may be visited. Continue to the modest stilted wooden bungalow where Uncle Ho lived and worked, before visiting Ho Chi Minh Museum. Dedicated to the 'father of the country', the museum chronicles the evolution of Vietnamese independence.

French architecture features prominently in Hanoi and the nearby former Governor's Residence is a fine example. Continue to the One Pillar Pagoda, a Buddhist pagoda with a history steeped in folklore. The final stop is the Thang Long Royal Citadel, a UNESCO World Heritage Site built in the 11th century during the Ly Viet Dynasty. This important historical site served as the capital of Vietnam for eight centuries. Continue to the Temple of Literature, a serene retreat from the busy streets outside. Built in 1070 and dedicated to Confucius, it became Vietnam's first university.

Return to your hotel and the afternoon is at your leisure.

Optional activities with payable surcharge (£10 per person included transportation and ticket)

Vietnamese water puppetry is a tradition that dates to the 11th century when villagers would wade into the flooded rice fields and entertain one another with puppet play. This evening you will travel by *cyclo* (pedicab) to a theatre where this ancient and unique art form of water puppetry is re-enacted. The 'stage' is a pool of water in which the puppeteers stand waist deep, hidden by a screen from behind which they skillfully manoeuvre the lacquered wooden puppets. Attached to a bamboo pole, the puppets appear to dance and play on the water's surface.

Reception at the British Ambassador Residence (to be confirmed)

Dinner at.....(to be confirmed)

Meal included: Breakfast, Dinner

Overnight: La Siesta Trendy hotel in Hanoi – Deluxe room

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Day 3: 28th February 2022 - Hanoi – Overnight train to Lao Cai

This morning continues your exploration of the city, resplendent with French colonial architecture including the exquisite, Opera House. Pass Hoan Kiem Lake, also known as the 'Lake of the Restored Sword' after the legend that surrounds it, en-route to one of the city's many fascinating museums: choose from ancient history, military history or fine arts, depending on your personal interests. The best way to experience Hanoi's Old Quarter is on foot and next we take a walking tour through an area of the city known as '36 Streets'. The oldest continuously developed area of Vietnam, this densely populated section of Hanoi was once an important centre of commerce where goods were sold on the street name of a particular guild. The labyrinthine alleyways are perfect for exploring on foot with names such as Sugar Street, Tin Street and Paper Street.

Return to your hotel for lunch on your own and the afternoon is at your leisure. Late check out at 6pm is included. Transfer to Hanoi railway station for the overnight train to Lao Cai. Departure time is scheduled for 21.15PM (subject to change). (*We suggest having dinner before joining the train - as only snacks and drinks are available on the train*).

Overnight on board.

Meal included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Victoria Train - Sharing 4-berth Superior cabin

Supplement for 2 people sharing 4 berth cabin on Victoria train: £,85 per person per way

Day 4: 1st March 2022 - Lao Cai - Sapa - Lao Chai - Tavan - Giang Ta Chai

Arrive Lao Cai train station at about 5am. Then take a morning drive through the clouds by coach to Sapa. Transfer 6 km by coach then walk on 2 Km down to Lao Chai village and 2 more Km to Ta Van village of the Dzay minority. Lunch with a local family in Ta Van, to discover their daily life, work and special customs, and enjoy the landscapes. Continue after through bamboo forest to Giang Ta Chai village of the red Dzao (6Km), visit a wonderful waterfall & a suspension rattan bridge on the way to the main road for a coach to return to Sapa.

(Alternative transport (Tuk-Tuk) could be arranged for non-walkers).

Overnight in Sapa.

Meal included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Amazing Sapa hotel – Superior room

Day 5: 2nd March 2022 - Sapa – Fansipan the highest mountain in the Indochinese Peninsula

Morning visit to Sapa market. Afterward take a 6km cable car journey to the top of Mount Fansipan in the 3,143m summit. Return to the hotel & the rest of the day is free at leisure.

Dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight in Sapa.

Meal included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Amazing Sapa hotel – Superior room

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Day 6: 3rd March 2022 – Sapa - Tam Duong - Lai Chau Town (180km – driving time 5 hrs)

After breakfast, depart to Lai Chau. The drive from Sapa to Phong Tho (Paso) is on one of the most beautiful mountainous stretches of road in the whole of Vietnam with magnificent scenery. From Sapa Town, drive uphill to the "Heaven Gate Pass" which is 2000 meters in height. From here you have bird-eye view of the enormous picturesque Muong Hoa valley and Fansipan Mountain. Travelling 30 kms to the other side of the pass, you will arrive in Tam Duong where you have time to visit a small market and some surrounding villages. The run then takes you along the Binh Lu valley and you will arrive in Lai Chau town at lunch time.

Dinner at a local restaurant
Overnight in Lai Chau.

Meal included: Breakfast, Dinner
Accommodation: Muong Thanh hotel in Lai Chau – Deluxe room

Day 7: 4th March 2022 – Lai Chau - Sin Ho - Muong Lay - Dien Bien Phu (280km – driving time 8-9 hrs)

Today's run is also on spectacular roads through the mountains and small zigzag road, which runs precipitously up to Sin Ho. Sin Ho is home to many different minorities people such as the Nung, White Thai, Black Dao, and Dao Tien, who will gather in the town's market every Sunday for purchasing and socializing. The run downhill from Sin Ho to Muong Lay is one of the nicest, although some parts of the road might be under-construction. From Muong Lay it takes around 2 hours to Dien Bien Phu on a much easier road, in compared with the previous ones.

Note: from Lai Chau to Dien Bien Phu via Sin Ho - Muong Lay the road conditions are not great with zigzag winding roads through mountains and hills, some parts could be under construction, some parts are plumbing roads, therefore the driving time could take longer than normal.

Overnight in Dien Bien Phu.

Meal included: Breakfast
Accommodation: Muong Thanh Grand hotel in Dien Bien Phu – Deluxe room

Day 8: 5th March 2022 – Dien Bien Phu - Indochina Prison Ruins and Old Battle Sites

Tucked away in the Muong Thanh valley, deep in the highlands of northwest Vietnam, Dien Bien Phu has earned its place in history books as the turning point of colonial rule.

Visit the historical sites such as De Castries's bunker, the Dien Bien Phu museum, the A1 hill, D1 War memorial, the cemetery of Vietminh troops and so on.

Dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight in Dien Bien Phu.

Meal included: Breakfast, Dinner
Accommodation: Muong Thanh Grand hotel in Dien Bien Phu – Deluxe room

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**Day 9: 6th March 2022 – Dien Bien Phu – Son La
(200km – driving time 6 hrs)**

Characterised by a rugged, yet breath taking, mountainous landscape, the steep slopes of Son La's valleys are layered in hundreds of stepped rice terraces, while the lush valley bases are home to small and isolated villages. With a substantial population of minority groups, you'll not need to look far to find people living a traditional lifestyle well away from the hustle and bustle of Vietnam's larger, more urbanised centres.

Son La is set at the halfway point between Dien Bien Phu and Hanoi. It was once the site of a sizeable French garrison during the French war, but today, aside from the ruins of the prison, the only evidence the French ever made it here is the baguettes and rich strong coffee.

Overnight in Son La.

Meal included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Muong Thanh Luxury hotel in Son La – Deluxe room

Day 10: 7th March 2022 - Son La – Moc Chau (120km – driving time 3 hrs)

This morning, we depart to Moc Chau Plateau. Enjoy the beautiful along the road of tea plantation, corn fields and villages, visit Tea Hills and Doi Cave, a tea factory where you can see the procedure to have excellent Vietnam tea. Taste the tea or take part in the steps of making tea. In the afternoon, visit a local house, and a traditional handcrafted forge corn mill.

Overnight in Moc Chau

Meal included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Muong Thanh Luxury hotel in Moc Chau – Deluxe room

Day 11: 8th March 2022 - Moc Chau – Mai Chau (80km – driving time 2 hrs)

This morning take a short ride to Mai Chau, located in Hoa Binh Province. Mai Chau is known for its stunning backdrop of mountains and idyllic valleys filled with picturesque rice paddies. The rustic villages and traditional wooden stilt houses that constitute Mai Chau are inhabited mainly by the White Thai ethnic group. At the heart of Mai Chau, walk around Kha Lake, en-route passing several White Thai villages, which emanate a timeless quality. During the day, most of the White Thai residents are invariably away from home engaged in rural activities. During our trek, we get a rare opportunity to engage with the locals. Later, at a forest village, we meet an ethnic Thai family, where we can see first-hand local minority culture and traditions.

Dinner at Mai Chau Homestay.

Overnight in Mai Chau

Meal included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Mai Chau Homestay

Remark: Mai Chau region is fantastic for homestay nights in charming houses on stilts. You are settled in a house on stilts which is in the middle of a small village of the White Thai minority. Vegetable gardens, rice paddies and lush surround this cozy village. This setting is very quiet, natural and scenic. You will sleep on thin

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mattresses separated by curtains on the first floor in a bamboo house on stilts. The homestay is clean and equipped with basic facilities including public bathroom and toilet. The common dining area is on the ground floor. The host will cook food in the traditional kitchen at the back of the house on the first floor.

Day 12: 9th March 2022 - Mai Chau – Ninh Binh (150km – driving time 3.5 hrs)

Travel from Mai Chau to Ninh Binh by road, spend a day exploring the region. Exploring the glorious landscape of rice fields and lakes surrounded by towering, craggy limestone outcrops and the meandering waterways of Trang An Ecosystem.

Overnight in Ninh Binh

Meal included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Ninh Binh Legend hotel – Superior room

Day 13: 10th March 2022 - Ninh Binh

This morning you'll cycle (optional on local transport if you prefer not to cycle) on a quiet and peaceful trail devoid of any tourists through the magnificent beauty of the surrounding limestone mountains. At Dancing Cave a short hike will take you to the top of Hang Mua for an aerial view of the Tam Coc area. You will stop at a local house in a peaceful village with an amazingly beautiful setting then after lunch there will be time to visit a couple of the region's temples and pagodas. Bai Dinh Temple is Vietnam's largest Buddhist temple complex and an important pilgrimage site. Bich Dong is quiet and small in comparison but has a stone path leading to an aerial viewpoint.

Dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight in Ninh Binh

Meal included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Ninh Binh Legend hotel – Superior room

Day 14: 11th March 2022 - Ninh Binh - Halong Bay (200km – driving time 4 hrs)

Start early this morning for a transfer to Halong. On arrival, transfer to a boat for your cruise around Halong Bay, sailing through emerald waters and past rocky islets and lush islands. Lunch will be served on board.

Halong Bay is blessed with numerous grottoes, hidden pools and mystical islands and this afternoon, there will be the opportunity to disembark the boat and explore the region further. Off-boat excursions are usually by ship's tender although often there is the opportunity to discover the beautiful landscapes of the bay by kayak or bamboo rowing boat. Visits to nearby caves or sandy beaches may also be on the agenda and of course, there is always the option to remain on board and take in the glorious vista from the spacious sundeck.

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As night falls, the boat will drop anchor in a peaceful spot. Enjoy a refreshing drink and the view from the sundeck before sitting down to a leisurely dinner which will either be served on deck or inside the dining room, depending on the vessel and local weather conditions.

11:30 - 12:15	Arrival at Hon Gai international harbour.
12:30 - 13:00	Transfer by tender to boat, enjoy Welcome Drink. Depart to Bai Tu long Bay.
13:00 - 14:30	Enjoy Lunch while cruising through to fascinating formations to magnificent Bai Tu Long Bay.
15:30 - 16:30	Transfer to rowing boat to visit Vung Vieng Fishing Village. Rowers are local people wearing traditional costume. It's an opportunity to see the fisherman's daily life in natural surroundings.
17:30	Relax on a white sandy beach at Hon Co Island.
18:30	Anchor for the night at Cong Do area.
19:30 - 21:00	Set Dinner on deck or in the dining room.

Meal included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Bai Tho cruise

Day 15: 12th March 2022 – Halong Bay – Hanoi airport (200km – driving time 4 hrs) - Fly to Luang Prabang (Laos)

Early risers may have the opportunity to witness the sunrise over the bay. Then enjoy a light breakfast, before disembarking the boat once more for further discovery. On the return journey to port, there is the opportunity to savour the glorious scenery of Halong Bay one final time.

06:45 - 07:45	Coffee, tea and breakfast pastries served in the dining room
08:00 - 08:30	Explore the well-hidden Thien Canh Son cave.
09:00 - 09:30	Check-out cabins and settle bills – Luggage collection
09:30 - 10:30	International brunch served in the dining room.
10:30 - 11:00	Arrival at the pier.

After disembarking, we head to Noi Bai airport for an evening flight to Luang Prabang. *Kindly note that normal and check-in time for international flights is minimum two hours prior to departure.*

Welcome to Luang Prabang!

Upon arrival to Luang Prabang Airport – after customs & immigration formalities, you will be met by a local guide and transferred to your hotel for check-in.

Surrounded by thickly forested mountains and situated at the confluence of the Khan and Mekong Rivers, Luang Prabang has a tranquil, old world charm rarely found in Asia today. This fascinating town was the capital of the Lan Xang (million elephants) Kingdom until the mid-sixteenth century. In colonial times it served as the

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provincial headquarters of the north. The legacy of the European presence here - well preserved French architecture and careful street planning – has blended delightfully with more than 30 gilded Buddhist temples to create a town rich in atmosphere and history. Luang Prabang is perhaps the best-preserved traditional city in South East Asia. In 1995 UNESCO declared Luang Prabang a World Heritage City.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Avani Hotel Luang Prabang – Deluxe Room
www.avanihotels.com/en/luang-prabang

Day 16: 13th March 2022 – Luang Prabang

At 6:00 am, there is the opportunity to start the day early with one of the most memorable sights of Luang Prabang – The ‘**Tak Bat**’. At dawn hundreds of saffron-robed monks move silently through the streets to collect alms (offerings of food). Your guide will explain the background behind this ritual which is still very much a part of everyday life in Laos. Take a stroll with your local guide through the colourful, open-air fresh early **Morning Market**. Taste a unique local authentically **Lao Coffee** at **Pasaneyom Coffee Shop** and return to the hotel. It’s early but well worth the wake-up call.

Breakfast at the hotel

At 9:00 am, you will be met by a Destination Asia local guide and transfer to **The Rice Farm** where you will have opportunity to learn about farming methods. The rice farming experience is particularly popular, introducing visitors to the process of planting and harvesting rice in the rice paddies. **The ‘Rice Experience’** is an excellent programme for family to join together under the guidance of a locally trained farmer and work out in the field. Helping to train young members of the community, the project provides many great benefits for the community at large – *this is a **join-in group activity** and all within an idyllic countryside setting framed by rising mountains and ancient rice terraces.*

(Lunch is not included on your own account – pay direct)

At 2:00 pm, continue on an architectural Walking Tour with an expert to discover a fascinating heritage and masterful examples of both colonial and Laotian architecture. **Mr. Francis Engelmann** is your guide on this insightful journey. Born in Paris in 1947, Francis is a writer and an independent consultant living in Luang Prabang and has worked closely with UNESCO over the past 10 years. He also spent two years at the Luang Prabang Conservation Authority and assisted with ‘The Quiet in the Land’ art project in Luang Prabang. Francis has lived in Asia for over 25 years and written many successful books and memoirs on his experiences here. He was deeply involved in the mission to win UNESCO World Heritage status for Luang Prabang in 1995 and will be happy to answer any questions regarding this magnificent town. The walk is oriented towards the lesser known parts of the town including remote, charming lanes that show the traditional atmosphere of Luang Prabang



5:00 pm, return to your hotel to refresh and relax.

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At 7:00 pm, you will be met by your local guide and embark on your **food** and **cocktail tour** to discover Lao-food and go-behind the scenes in the historical town area, including the famous food market and unique restaurants and bars.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner
Accommodation: Avani Hotel Luang Prabang – Deluxe Room

Day 17: 14th March 2022 – Luang Prabang

Breakfast at the hotel
Today is free for resting or exploring on your own.

Dinner at a local restaurant..

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner
Accommodation: Avani Hotel Luang Prabang – Deluxe Room

Day 18: 15th March 2022 – Luang Prabang to Bangkok

Breakfast at your hotel.

At 10:20 am, you will be met by a local guide and transferred to the Airport for a flight to **Bangkok** by.....to be confirmed.

Arrive Bangkok International airport & transfer to your hotel. After check in at the hotel free at leisure.

Evening, farewell dinner at Chakrabongse Villa to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Anglo-Thai Society.

Overnight in Bangkok.

Meals included: Breakfast and farewell dinner
Accommodation: Riva Surya – Deluxe Riva Room

Day 19: 16th March 2022 – Bangkok departure

Breakfast at your hotel. Transfer to Suvarnaphumbi airport for your return flight home.

~ END OF SERVICE ~

Price per person based on 2 people sharing: approx. £3,249
Single supplement: approx. £768

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PRICE INCLUDES:

Flights Hanoi to Luang Prabang//Luang Prabang to Bangkok economy class.

Accommodation as stated in the above itinerary.

Late check out until 6 pm at La Siesta Trendy Hotel Hanoi.

Meals: As stated in above itinerary (note that drinks are not included) .

Farewell dinner at Chakrabongse Villa (excluding drinks) with one welcome drink.

Entrance fees for all included sightseeing as per the above itinerary.

All transfers and tour programme as stated in the above itinerary in private air-conditioned vehicles.

English speaking local guides for all included sightseeing and transfers (note that our guide does not travel on board the Halong cruise).

VAT Government tax and services charge.

Bottled water and cool towel provided in vehicles during sightseeing and transfers.

SERVICES NOT INCLUDED

International airfares and taxes, unless otherwise specified.

Vietnam Visa expenses.

Laos Visa expenses .

Meals other than specified as included.

Travel Insurance or expenses of a personal nature (mini-bar, phone call, laundry, etc.).

Drinks or personal expenses or entrance fees for any extra sightseeing or optional activities.

Tips or Gratuities to guides/drivers/porters/boat crew/hotel or restaurant staff.