

VIETNAM & LAOS MOUNTAIN BIKE HOLIDAYS

Trip Code

Version: HPB Peaks of the Balkans



WALK & TREK



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Highlights:

- Challenge yourself on this amazing cycle tour through a distinctive corner of two northwestern regions of Vietnam and Laos
- Meet the colourful people of the Dao, Hmong, Thai and Nu hill tribes
- Experience the 'real' Northern Vietnam with terraced fields landscape with majestic Fansipan mountain range
- Conquering the Heaven Gate Sapa Tram Ton Pass
- From Hanoi's Old Quarter to the stunning Luangprabang (Laos) and tranquil

This 13 day Southeast Asian bicycle tour explores the mountainous regions of two magical countries: Vietnam and Laos. Our adventure begins in Vietnam, a land of shimmering rice fields, lush jungles, and

radiant beaches. Beginning in Hanoi, we spend our trip exploring the lesser known northwestern region of Vietnam, home to spectacular mountains and valleys. We ride amidst the crests of Indochina's highest peak, Mount Fansipan, and along the fascinating hill station of Sapa, a colonial retreat created by the French. Crossing into Laos, we cycle riverside where we venture into remote villages far from the tourist track.

This mountain bike journey from Hanoi city to Luang Prabang presents stunning views and rare cultural encounters. Challenging inclines and scintillating descents make our trail, which winds through Sapa's grooved hillsides, up Vietnam's highest mountain pass and through enchanting tribe villages.

Cycle into the picturesque Na River gorge, through the surrounding hills and valleys to Dien Bien Phu, the historic site of the Viet Minh's decisive victory over the French. Bike into Laos to witness agrarian local life and untamed topography as we overnight at riverside guest houses. We'll finish our bicycle trip in atmospheric Luang Prabang.

HA LONG BAY - EXTENSION

If you're keen to extend your adventure in Vietnam, we're thrilled to present an appealing option for a trip extension to the enchanting Ha Long Bay.

After two weeks of thrilling cycling, a visit to Ha Long Bay offers a serene and unforgettable way to conclude your redspokes Vietnam cycling holiday. Often referred to as the 'eighth wonder of the world' and designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Ha Long Bay, meaning 'Descending Dragon Bay,' is a place of extraordinary natural beauty and ecological significance. The bay boasts a breathtaking seascape adorned with innumerable limestone karsts and islets, crowned with lush rainforests, emerging from emerald-green waters. The formation of these karsts has unfolded over 20 million years of tropical climate, and research has revealed evidence of prehistoric human presence tens of thousands of years ago. Most of these islands remain uninhabited, offering a haven for a diverse range of flora and fauna.

You can enjoy your stay aboard a wooden junk, designed after traditional Vietnamese court sailing boats, as you embark on a leisurely cruise through the bay. This allows you ample time for kayaking, swimming, and exploring the captivating surroundings.

What's Included

- An experienced local English-speaking cycling guide
- All land transport as described
- Single group Hanoi Airport transfer on arrival and departure
- One or more support vehicles and drivers
- All accommodation as described
- All meals
- Cold drinking water and cold towel
- Temple and other site fees
- Local fruit and snacks and water
- Bike hire, pump, bike tools, spares tubes, spare bikes

- First aid kit

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Visas (if applicable)
- Miscellaneous expenses - Alcoholic beverages and soft drinks in meals and souvenirs
- Mineral water beyond that supplied
- Optional excursions
- Additional transport required due to any emergency situation
- Personal expenses such as telephone, laundry bills, etc

BIKING FROM HANOI TO LUANGPRABANG 12 DAYS

Destinations Vietnam, Laos (Hanoi, Sapa, Lai Chau, Muong Lay, Dien Bien Phu, Muang Khoua - Muang Ngoy, Nong Kiau - Luang Prabang)

- At a Glance
- Group Size 2 max to 22 pp
- 9 days biking
- 645 kilometres
- 80% surfaced road - 95% vehicle supported
- Max altitude - 2051 metres
- Join In Hanoi
- Average Distance Per Day: 71km – 110km
- Average Climbing Per Day: 1313 – 2250m
- Accommodation & Meals
- All meals included
- 8 nights Hotel
- 3 nights Homestay
- 1 nights Guesthouse
- 2 nights Boutique Resort
- 1 Overnight Train

- Bike Hire: Mountain Bike: US\$ 275
- Single Supplement US\$ 500
- Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the hotel in Hanoi and of Luangprabang

The tour starts in Hanoi. You will need to arrive on Day 1 of your itinerary. Your flight departure at the end of the trip should be booked for the final day of the itinerary. We appreciate that people join tours from all over the world. Whatever time you arrive at the airport on the trip start date you and your luggage will be transferred to the joining hotel. Please bear in mind that if you arrive before midday you may have to wait for your room to be made available. If you decide to arrive early or stay on after the tour, we can assist you in booking your extra accommodation and airport transfers at additional cost.

- Our tour price does not include your international flight.
- The group will meet at the hotel in Hanoi and off trip in Hanoi
- Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

- Cost is US \$, 3% surcharge if paying by credit card. Other surcharges may apply such as holidays.

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(Booking Terms & Conditions) Tour itinerary and tour prices are subject to change Notice required before departure. Please click [here](#) for more information.

A single group transfer is provided from/to Hanoi Airport on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary and on the final day of the Land Only itinerary.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Meal Plan

All meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 12 are included in the holiday price.

Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. If you are on a trekking or cycling holiday, water is supplied to fill up your individual bottles. This will be boiled, filtered or provided in large jerry cans or 5 litre bottles. Additionally you should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a Water-To-Go bottle) to treat your water when in towns or where water is not supplied. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

You can expect to feast on an A to Z of delicious Vietnamese cuisine during the course of your holiday. Start practising your chopstick technique now, as there may be no knives and forks for parts of this holiday! Vietnamese cuisine is fresh, fragrant and flavoursome. Typically, for included meals, a selection of dishes or varying flavours will be served together and each person takes a little of each dish – so there will usually be something to please everyone (vegetarians included!) at every meal. Whilst at the homestays breakfasts might be pancakes with banana, eggs and bread or (more traditionally) ‘Pho’ a noodle soup. Lunches will sometimes be taken at a wayside eatery and other times will be a picnic, usually rice with steamed chicken/pork, stir-fried vegetable and spring rolls. A typical evening meal will also include Pho, a choice of

pork or chicken dishes, a selection of stir fried or boiled vegetables with rice, and usually fresh fruit for dessert. Whilst cruising on Bai Tu Long we will certainly be treated to a variety of fresh and delicious sea food.

Solo Travelers

We do not require you to pay a surcharge for travelling alone. We will arrange for you to share accommodation with another traveller of the same gender and if we can not match you up we will provide a single room at no extra charge. If you prefer not to share a single supplement is payable to guarantee your own room. The cost of the single supplement is listed above.

The Nitty Gritty Laos

Food

Meals are included as per the itinerary where B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner. Most meals are local Laos food and feature noodles, curries and soups. Lao cuisine is very similar to Thai food and we make sure you sample as much variety as possible. Any special dietary requirements can also be catered for as well. Please let us know at the time of booking.

Drink

Keeping you completely hydrated is a job we take very seriously. Cold water, some energy-restoring local fruit and soft drinks are included in the tour price while riding. Soft drinks and other beverages during meals are not included. Beer is freely available everywhere, but is NOT included in the price.

Extra Expenses

We recommend that you tuck away a few extra dollars, perhaps US\$10, for incidentals. It is customary to tip local tour guides and drivers, however, the amount you give should be dependent on the level of service you receive. As a general guide we suggest US\$3-4 per person per day is appropriate.

Money

The official national currency in Laos is the kip, however, Thai baht and US dollars are also used, especially in larger cities and towns. In smaller towns and villages, kip is usually preferred. There are now a few ATMs in Laos, but they are not widespread and are operational only sporadically. The best overall exchange rates are those offered at the BCEL (Banque pour le Commerce Extérieur Lao). Licensed moneychangers rates are similar to banks. Spend all your kip before you leave as no one will exchange it for you once you leave the country!

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Group Leader & Support Staff

The trip will be led by an experienced local English-speaking cycling guide and there will also be one or more support vehicles and drivers.

Altitude

This holiday does not involve any significant ascent to altitude and we would not expect any altitude issues with this trip.

Spending Money

Approximately \$150 (or equivalent in \$/€) should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses including tips for local staff, homestay hosts, guides, drivers, boatmen etc. It is not necessary to obtain local currency (Vietnamese Dong) prior to travelling. Money can be changed at one of the banks in Hanoi or you can withdraw funds from an ATM, either at the airport or in the city. For ease of exchange we recommend that you carry your travel money in US dollars. US dollars are acceptable for exchange in Hanoi and can also sometimes be used to pay directly for goods and services,

Guidance on Tipping

Tips are the accepted way of saying 'thank you' to your local guides and to your support crews and drivers. They do not form part of their wages. We always pays local staff the best rates of pay, no matter what country they are in and any tips they receive are seen as a personal thank you from group members. For our part, we advise local teams that tips are not a duty or a prerequisite but are a bonus and entirely dependent on the service that was given. For your support crews we recommend that you give a tip if you feel that their services have met your satisfaction. It is best to tip as a group and it is useful to have a group pool for this. As a rough guide we suggest you allow a total of £80-100 for tipping. Note that you will have a guide and one or more drivers and other staff. It is also not unusual to tip the families at homestays if you feel that they have provided a great service; around \$1-2 per group member, per homestay is reasonable.

Bike Hire

Bikes are provided locally within the cost of the holiday. These bikes are Trek Excaliber and E-bikes in a full range of sizes. They are good quality and well maintained bikes with Shimano components, triple chainsets (27 gears), 100mm Suntour front suspension, Shimano hydraulic disc brakes and fast-rolling all-round tyres. Spare parts (tubes, tyre, chains etc.) will be available in the support vehicle along with a tool kit and track pump. The guide will also carry some spares and tools for fixing punctures etc. The bikes are equipped with flat pedals. If you prefer to use spd or clip-in pedals, you will need to bring these with you, along with your regular cycling shoes and cleats. Another item which you might choose to take with you on the holiday is your saddle. The hire bikes have standard saddles and anyone requiring more comfort, or a women-specific saddle, should consider taking their own. Helmets can also be provided free of charge if you request one.

Vehicle Support

Throughout this trip we have the back up of one or more support vehicles. Each morning our main baggage will be loaded onto the support vehicle which will follow the group on the day's ride. The local biking leader and the support vehicle driver will watch over the group and will carry mobile phones, allowing you to contact them in the case of a breakdown or other incident. We want everyone to enjoy their cycling experience on this trip and we recognise the importance of group members being allowed to cycle at their own pace. At times there can be a fair distance between the front and rear cyclists in the group, with the support vehicle and cycling leader out of sight. The support vehicle will pick up any group members who wish to take a break from cycling at any time. There will be local fruit and snacks and drinking water available from the support vehicle at all times.

Baggage Allowance

You should travel with one main item of luggage, such as a robust holdall, as well as a small day pack or mountain bike-specific hydration pack. The day pack can be used to carry valuable items such as cameras

and GPS devices whilst travelling and will also carry your day-ride essentials during the rides.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number 4 required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

Passport & Visa Vietnam

Vietnam e-Visa is available to 80 nationalities. Please check this [link](#) to determine if your country is on the list. To apply for an e-visa please visit the official government website [here](#) and follow the required steps and make payment. You can apply for a single entry visa up to 30 days. Multiple entry e-visas are not currently available. For peace of mind, we suggest applying for your e-visa as early as possible, and no later than 2 weeks before your expected arrival in Vietnam. While processing time is generally no more than 1-3 working days (not including weekends and Vietnamese holidays), it is wise to give yourself some buffer time in case there are any issues.

If your nationality is not on the list for e-visa eligibility, or you need options for longer stays or multiple entries, then you may consider Visa on Arrival. The process for this is more complicated than e-visa and requires the acquisition of a visa letter prior to arrival. Please see [here](#) for a detailed overview.

If you are joining our "Saigon to Bangkok" or "Saigon to Siem Reap" tour, when you are applying for your e-visa, please select Song Tien Landport as the exit point. This refers to the river crossing at Chao Doc.

For information about multiple entry visas, longer stays or different nationalities please contact the relevant embassy. The Vietnamese Embassy in your country..

Passports and Visas in Laos

All nationalities require a visa for Laos. You have two options to get a single-entry tourist visa (max 30 days): 1) E-Visa or 2) Visa on Arrival. Both are very straightforward processes, though we suggest procuring an E-Visa in advance as it will save you time on arrival in Laos. Apply via this [website](#). If you prefer to do a Visa On Arrival, make sure you have the required documents prepared (including 2 passport-sized photographs and the exact amount for the visa fee in USD). See for more information.

Please Note: While E-Visa and Visa on Arrival are available for all international airports and major land borders, some border posts do not yet accept them. Therefore, if your tour crosses into Laos from Vietnam through a more remote border post, obtaining your visa through a Laotian Embassy or Consulate in advance may be required. If that is the case, we will let you know at the time of booking.

Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the our office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you specific require any vaccinations or other preventive measures. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella), along with hepatitis A and typhoid. Malarial prophylaxis are required. A certificate of yellow fever vaccination is required if travelling from countries with risk of yellow

fever transmission and for travellers having transited for more than 12 hrs through an airport of a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dentist check up. A good online resource is Travel Health Pro.

Preparing for your Holiday

The better shape you are in, the more you will enjoy your holiday. You should adopt a sensible weekly exercise regime and fit in a number of long cycle rides in hilly country ahead of the trip. As well as cycling, running and swimming are also good for developing aerobic fitness and stamina.

Vietnam Travel Memories. treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office Vietnam Travel Memories

Hotline/ WhatsApp: [+84 373089668](tel:+84373089668)

Email: kienbikingtour@gmail.com

Website: vietnamcycling-tours.com

Single Use Plastic

Vietnam Travel Memories. do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our by reducing our plastic use.

Country Profile

- Socialist Republic of Vietnam - Capital: Hanoi
- Population 99.617.458 people
- Area 329,247 sq km (127,123 sq miles)
- Major language Vietnamese
- Major religion Buddhism
- Life expectancy 73 years (men), 81 years (women)
- Currency: Vietnam dong (Vnd)

Books Consult

- Lonely Planet. Vietnam
- Rough Guide. Vietnam
- Vietnam Pocket Guide. Insight Guides
- Vietnamese Phrasebook. Rough Guides
- Hill Tribes Phrasebook. Lonely Planet

- Vietnam: A History. Stanley Karnow

Four seasons of travel:

Viet Nam

Seasonal Preparation: The best time to travel in Vietnam is between September and May.

- In Northern of Vietnam, the wet season is hot, stuffy and covered in clouds and the dry season is comfortable and almost clear. As the year progresses, temperatures usually vary from 11°C to 31°C and rarely below 6°C or above 34°C.

Based on tourist destination, the best times of year to visit HANOI, SAPA, LAI CHAU, MUONG LAY, DIEN BIEN PHU Province, for warm weather activities are from early March to Oct. and cold season from early October to late Feb.

The hot season lasts for 3 months, from June to September, with average daily high temperatures above 29°C. The hottest month of the year in North is July, with an average high temperature of 34°C and an average low temperature of 25°C.

The cold season lasts for 2–4 months, from December 11 to February 22, with average high temperatures below 20°C. The coldest month of the year in Cao Bang City is January, with an average low temperature of 11°C and an average high temperature of 18°C.

- In North of Laos weather

Climate and Average Weather Throughout the Year in Luangprabang Laos

Laos

Laos has a tropical climate with fairly high humidity. There are three seasons: from March to June it is hot and dry, with temperatures between 27°C and 40°C (80-104°F), with night temperatures in the 20°C/75°F). The rainy season is from June to October. The cooler season, is from November to February, with average temperatures between 20°C and 30°C (70- 86°F). It can get a little cold at night at higher elevations year round so bring a light fleece for the evenings.

In Luangprabang, the wet season is hot, stuffy and cloudy and the dry season is warm, humid and mostly clear. As the year progresses, temperatures typically range from 14°C to 34°C and rarely fall below 10°C or above 38°C.

Depending on the destination, the best times of year to visit Luangprabang for warm weather activities are from early November to mid March.

The hot season lasts for 2.5 months, from 3 March to 18 May, with average daily high temperatures above 32°C. The hottest month of the year in Luangprabang is June, with an average high of 31°C and an average low of 24°C.

The cool season lasts for 1.9 months, from 22 November to 20 January, with an average high temperature below 27°C. The coldest month of the year in Luang Prabang is December, with an average low temperature of 15°C and an average high temperature of 26°C.

The wetter season lasts for 5.1 months, from 25 April to 28 September, with a greater than 32% chance of a given day being a wet day. The month with the most wet days in Luang Prabang is August, with an average of 18.6 days and the least rainfall of about 1 millimeter.

The drier season lasts for 6.9 months, from 28 September to 25 April. The month with the fewest wet days in Luang Prabang is January, with an average of 0.8 days and the least rainfall of about 1 millimeter.

Among wet days, we distinguish between days that experience rain alone, snow alone, or a mixture of both. The month with the most days with only rain in Luang Prabang is August, with an average of 18.6 days. Based on this type, the most common form of precipitation throughout the year is rain alone, with a 62% chance peaking on August 4.