



## LIFESTYLE HOLIDAYS – VIETNAM

### Vietnam Mountain Biking Tour – 9 days ex Hanoi



This 9 day fully supported mountain bike tour is designed to capture the very best that northern Vietnam offers the adventurous traveller – great cycling and a diverse cultural experience.

Your journey starts in the charming ancient city of Hanoi, which is soon left far behind as we enter the completely different world of rural Vietnam. We cross the fertile expanse of the Red River and cycle amongst massive limestone mountains adorned with ancient forest, jungle and steep rice terraces, traditionally farmed by hill tribes for thousands of years.

This trip will take you to places where a tourist is still a stranger and a curiosity. The slow unhurried pace of life will seem light years away from the stresses of the modern world. A rejuvenating and enriching adventure into this beautiful, unspoilt corner of Asia awaits you.

**Explore Vietnam by bike** - Great biking and a diverse cultural experience for people of all abilities. Visit the far north that is seldom seen by regular tourists, explore the charming city of Hanoi, experience the sights of the Sunday market in Bac Ha and the incredibly picturesque village of Sapa that lies on the Hoang Lien Son mountain range.

**Great riding catering for all levels** - Our Vietnam mountain biking tours cater for riders of all levels. Most riding days offer a choice of tracks. Whether you're a serious mountain biker looking to tackle serious trails or looking for an easy-going tour, we've got it covered.

**Supported every step of the way** - All our Vietnam tours are fully supported with air-conditioned support vehicles offering relief from the heat and tired muscles as well as carrying essentials such as drinks, spares, tools and first aid kit! Our guides are locals who are enthusiastic about biking and extremely knowledgeable about the culture, history and geography of their country.

## Tour Itinerary

### Day 1. Hanoi

Please arrive at Hanoi Airport before 12 noon. After we transfer you to the city (45min) and check you in to the tour hotel, we take you on a City Tour. Among the various places of interest, we show you the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum (closed on Mondays) and the Temple of Literature. We have the opportunity to enjoy a traditional water puppet show and in the evening we have our first group dinner together.

**Accommodation: Hotel**

**Meals: Dinner**

**No biking**

### Day 2. Hanoi to Suoi Giang (near Nghia Lo)

After breakfast at the hotel, we drive north from Hanoi heading to Thu Cuc. At Thanh Son, we stop for a refreshment break before getting on our bikes for our first ride. It is a reasonably easy 40-50 km and a good warm up. We stop for lunch in Thu Cuc and in the afternoon we have the option of cycling up to another 60km towards Nghia Lo - a small town in a big valley inhabited by ethnic Thai people. There are no single trail options today, but the guide can take you on quiet dirt roads through some small villages. Overnight in a simple guesthouse in Suoi Giang, a few km before Nghia Lo (room with ensuite).

**Accommodation: Guesthouse**

**Meals: B,L,D,**

**Dinner Biking: 55km+/4hrs+riding approx**



### Day 3. Suoi Giang (near Nghia Lo) to Than Uyen

There are several riding options today which the guide will discuss with you in advance. After breakfast we suggest you start cycling on the winding dirt roads through the villages, before travelling in the backup vehicle to Tu Le. From here, it is 80km to Than Uyen – you can choose to cycle some of the way or ride in the vehicle. This is one of the most beautiful stretches of mountain road in the North of Vietnam with imposing mountains and rice terraces. This area is also the home of the colourful Hmong, Dzao and Tay hill tribes. We will be meeting them all along the way. Overnight in simple guesthouse in Than Uyen (room with ensuite).

**Accommodation: Guesthouse**

**Meals: B,L,D**

**Biking: 30-50km+ / approx 4 hrs+ riding**

### Day 4. Than Uyen to Sapa

We warm up this morning on a single trail around Than Uyen before hopping in the vehicle to ride to Than Thuoc for lunch. As we get closer to the Hoang Lien Son peak, we cycle (or you can choose to ride in the support vehicle) between 1000m-3000m mountains, to finally reach the highest pass in Vietnam (at 1900m). We then descend to Sapa (at 1600m). The deeper into the mountains we go, the more hill tribes we will see, wearing amazingly elaborate and colourful costumes with huge earrings. These people have been living in the hills for a thousand years and their way of life has hardly changed from generation to generation.

**Accommodation: Hotel**

**Meals: B,L,D,**

**Biking: 1520m up, 590m down, 87km / 5-7 hrs riding**

### Day 5. Sapa to Muong Bo to Sapa

Today offers a half day trip combining dirt roads, single trails, and a steep downhill (1000m). We will be walking and/or cycling from village to village, (meeting Hmong and Tay hill tribes). Our trails sometimes pass through a local's backyard. (Don't worry, they don't mind! If you are the first rider into a village their jaws just drop with amazement, but as the last rider passes, everyone will be outside and showing great excitement).

Our picnic lunch is at a waterfall where there is time for a refreshing swim before being transferred back up the hill to Sapa. The late afternoon and evening is free (although the 3 hour single trail ride can be extended to a 6 hour ride).

**Accommodation: Hotel      Meals: B,L      Biking: 500up, 1100m down, 37km/4 hours riding**

#### **Day 6. Sapa to Ban Khoang to Lao Cai (Chinese border) to Bac Ha**

Today we are normally surrounded by deep blue skies and fluffy white clouds, as we wind our way up higher and higher into the mountains on a country road. We will be cycling HIGH for half a day at 1400-1600m, followed by a long descent to Lao Cai. Then we drive to Bac Ha (1400m), which takes approximately 2 hours.

**Accommodation: Hotel      Meals: B,L,D      Biking: 900up, 2250m down, 79 km / 5.5 hours riding**



#### **Day 7. Bac Ha**

The Sunday market is a great opportunity to view local life-styles - just make sure you bring enough film! From late morning we cycle for up to 4 hrs on trails through villages, admiring stunning scenery of mountains and forest. Wherever we stop we will become a major focus of attention. As we take a break to admire the view, seemingly in the middle of nowhere, people will suddenly appear from the hills. The main tribe we will see today is Flower HMong, the most colourful tribe in Vietnam.

**Accommodation: Hotel      Meals: B,L,D      Biking: 370up, 560m down, 25km/2.5 hours riding**

#### **Day 8. Bac Ha to Lao Cai to Hanoi**

Today is a single trail day – we take a fantastic ride along the ridges through evergreen forests and ancient hill tribes. Lunch is normally en route plus we can have snacks and a cold beer at the end of the ride. We then pack up the bikes and drive to Lao Cai in time for a shower before we board the night train back to Hanoi.

**Accommodation: Overnight train      Meals: B,L,D      Biking: 600up, 1600m down, 54km/5.5hrs riding**

#### **Day 9. Hanoi and Departure Day**

After our early morning arrival in Hanoi (approx 5am) we will have breakfast before being transferred to the Airport for our departure.

**Meals: Breakfast**

**No biking**

## Tour Information



### Included in the tour price:

- Accommodation: Hotels and Guesthouses (2-4 star) for 7 nights
- Overnight train for 1 night (4 bunk beds per compartment)
- Meals as listed in the itinerary
- Support vehicle and support truck
- Airport transfers on days 1 and 9 only
- Experienced English speaking guide
- Admission fees and permits
- Bike Rental

### Not included in the tour price:

- Single Supplement (for solo travellers)
- Drinks & favourite snack bars (except bottled water provided while riding)
- Travel Insurance and personal expenses
- Guide and local tips
- Vietnam visa (to be obtained in advance)

### Tour Grade

This tour is graded 5/6 active (on a scale of 1-10 with 9/10 being extreme).

### Bike Rental:

The rental bikes available in Vietnam are Trek 4500 Mountain Bikes. The bikes have been imported into Vietnam to be used on these trips specifically. We have mostly 2008/2009 models available, but still have some older bikes in use as well. The bikes come with an aluminium frame, are equipped with a 24-gear Shimano drive chain (crank set: 22/32/42; rear cog: 11-32), a 100mm travel front suspension fork, and V-brakes. The bikes come with a standard MTB saddle and standard flat pedals. You are welcome to bring your own saddle and pedals and our guides will mount these on your hire bike.

### Recreational Riders & Sightseeing Passengers:

Whilst this tour is graded moderate, we are happy to cater to a small number of recreational riders who may wish to take part with shorter daily rides. We also welcome limited numbers of non-riders on our tours. If you are keen to experience Vietnam but prefer to do this on four wheels rather than two, please do not hesitate to check our availability on your departure of choice.

### Fitness Required

An average level of fitness is required; you will need to be doing some form of exercise three-four times a week on the build up to this tour.