



Ninh Binh – Cuc Phuong – Mai Chau

3 days

highlights

- . Ancient capital of Ninh Binh and the natural beauty of Tam Coc
- . Cuc Phuong national park
- . Mai Chau homestay
- . Boat cruise on Da river

itinerary disclaimer

The itinerary attached is correct at time of printing. It may differ slightly to the one in reality. Occasionally our itineraries change as we make improvements that stem from past travellers, comments and our own research. Please note that our brochure is usually released by the end of each year. If you have booked from the previous brochure you may find there have been some changes to improve the itinerary. It is very important that you print a final copy of your Trip Dossier to review a couple of days prior to travel, in case there have been changes that affect your plans

DETAIL ITINERARY

Day1 : Hanoi – Ninh Binh

Early this morning you are be picked up at your hotel to leave for Hoa Lu (Ninh Binh), It takes a couple of hours to drive to the southeast of Hanoi, enjoying the rural scenery along the road with stopovers for photography of the peaceful Viet Nam countryside. Arrive in Hoa Lu which is the former capital of Vietnam (968 – 1009) under Dinh and Le dynasties, there are not much to see in this place besides two remaining temples, each one nearly a thousand years old, the first one is dedicated to Dinh Tien Hoang Emperor, the second commemorates the rulers of the Le Dynasty. Keep driving to Bich Dong pagodas, a complex of pagodas built into limestone mountain cliffs from 15th century with unreal scenery around. After some walk to the top pagoda, we have lunch in a local restaurant before visiting Tam Coc (Three grottos) recognized as “Ha long bay without

water“, rowing boat trip would take 2 hours to see all three caves and crossing beautiful rice paddy. This is an ideal place for natural lovers.

We head back to Ninh Binh for the night

Overnight: Thuy Anh hotel or similar

Meals included: none

Day1 : Ninh Binh – Cuc Phuong national park – Mai Chau

Leaving Ninh Binh behind, we head for Cuc Phuong, driving further into the middle of the national park where we take a walk around the Centre of Endangered Rescue. In here, precious animals, such as white short monkeys, snakes, foxes, etc.can still be encountered, we go trekking around 7km through the variety of fauna and flora of the forest in a fresh atmosphere to see the 1000 year old “Cho trees”; the huge ones would take ten arm’s length to contain their circumference and the “primitive man cave”. After picnic lunch right in the middle of the rain forest we keep driving to Mai Chau. Our hosts for this evening will be the White Thai minority people. In sampling these peoples hospitality, we find out a little more of their lives and cultures with a cultural exchange following the evening meal, you are welcome to take part in their traditional festival held on travellers s' requests to enjoy folk songs, dancing with Thai people - Mua Xap, pine wine-RuouCan.

We spend the night in a stilt house of the Lac Village

Overnight: simple homestay

Meals included: breakfast and picnic lunch

Day 3: Mai Chau – Boat Cruise on Da river - Ha Noi

Following breakfast we embark on a lovely walk to nearby villages. We have the opportunity to spend some more time strolling around the hamlets and witnessing the beginnings of another day in rural Vietnam before going to Ben Sang dock for the 3-hour boat cruise on the Da River, exploring part of the biggest reservoir in North Vietnam, having lunch in Hoa Binh with a visit to the immense power station before driving back to HaNoi.

Meals included: breakfast

Your adventure ends upon arrival in Hanoi. If you do not have other arrangements in Vietnam, Vietnam Spirit Travel can book additional nights for you at the starting point hotel

travel style: Independent

If you're looking for something different (perhaps group travel isn't for you) or you want an extension to your trip, an Independent adventure could be just the thing. These private itineraries will take you to a new level of personal experience and self discovery. Transport and accommodation are provided and to give you maximum flexibility, sightseeing and entrance fees are not included except those specified in the itinerary.

group size

N/A as this trip is on a private basis

transport

private Air-conditioned vehicles, boat

accommodation

1 night in village homestay and 1 night in hotel

This trip operates on a twin share basis (two single beds in one room) except when we are in a home-stay where we are one big happy family. Single supplements are only applicable to single travellers who wish to have their own room

physical rating:moderate**

You are required to carry your pack on and off and buses, up hotel steps, etc. Your itinerary may include easy paced walks or trekking of several hours in hilly terrain, in conditions that are likely to be hot and muggy. You may raise your heart rate a little bit

travel insurance

Travel insurance is highly recommended on these trips. When selecting a travel insurance policy we recommend that at a minimum you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We also recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects

money exchange

Currency exchange rates often fluctuate. For the most up to date rates please refer to the following website: <http://www.oanda.com/>.

The official currency in Vietnam is Dong(VND). The Dong at the time of writing trades at approximately 16,000 VND to USD1. The US dollar, preferably crisp clean bills, can be used to directly purchase goods and services along with the local currency,. Travelers checks can be cashed at authorized foreign exchange outlets and banks and require presentation of passport. There is normally a 2 to 5 percent transaction fee for cashing, however it can be difficult to change traveller's checks outside the big cities. Other major international currencies may be exchanged in the main cities, where Visa and MasterCard may also be used for cash advances. ATMs are available in most large towns throughout Vietnam. Most hotels offer exchange services at a reasonable rate. It is not possible to exchange Vietnamese Dong outside the country so convert or spend all your Dong before leaving. Black markets are reemerging in Vietnam but are considered a danger and best avoided

Make sure that the Vietnamese notes you receive are not torn, this because many shops and restaurants will not accept them. Also try not to change too much money at one time, as you will end up with a large wad of notes.

spending money

Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Some travellers may drink more than others while other travellers like to purchase more souvenirs than most. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping and tipping. Please also remember the following specific recommendations when planning your trip.

final payment

Your final payment needs to be paid in US\$ cash to our representative on day 1 of the tour. We recommend that you organise before arriving at your destination. If this is not possible, money exchanges and banks can be found at the Airport upon arrival, or close to the starting point hotel, where its possible to obtain US dollars. Charges or commissions may apply.

meal inclusions

2 breakfasts and 1 lunch

While travelling with us you will experience the vast array of wonderful food available in Vietnam. Generally, to give you the maximum flexibility in deciding where and what to eat, not all meals are included in the trip price. Your group leader/guide will be able to suggest favourite restaurants during your trip.

meal budget

please allow USD10 each day for meals not included

You will also need to allow enough money for the following:

Money for drinks and shopping.

Tipping is very much appreciated by local guides, hotel staff, drivers and restaurant staff.

As a guide, allow US\$5-8 per day

emergency fund

Please also make sure you have access to an additional USD400 as an 'emergency' fund, to be used when circumstances outside our control (eg. A natural disaster) necessitate a change to our planned route or unforeseen incidents such as an outbreak of Avian Influenza. This is a rare occurrence!

For comparability, all prices in this dossier are quoted in one currency. We use the US Dollar since that is familiar to most. However, once on tour you will need to pay for all goods and services in the local currency.

SUPPLEMENTARY TOUR INFORMATION**arrival complications**

We don't expect any problems, and nor should you, but if for any reason you are unable to commence your trip as scheduled, as soon as possible please contact our management, requesting that you speak to or leave a message for us. To do this, please refer to our Emergency Contact.

If you have pre-booked an airport transfer you will be met on arrival at Hanoi Airport. Our representative will be holding a sign with your name when you exit the airport terminal. If for any reason you cannot locate the person please call our management and if you have not made contact with our representative within 30 minutes of clearing customs and immigration, we recommend that you make your own way to the starting point hotel. If you take a taxi directly from the airport expect to pay around 150,000 Dong (approx. US\$10). Use a metered taxi and avoid taxi touts. Providing you were eligible for a transfer you will then be reimbursed for this cost on arrival.

emergency contact

Vietnam Spirit Travel's Hanoi Office can be reached on Tel: 84 4 7192898

Hotlines 84 1685 734 016 and 84 987 876 013 or alternatively email

emergency@vietnamspirittravel.com

pre and post tour accommodation

If you require extra nights accommodation before or after your tour, we will be happy to organise this for you. The rates for this service are shown in the price section. Our pre and post tour accommodation rates include the cost of a hotel room along with local taxes, booking services and administration expenses. It is therefore likely that hotel rates available locally will be lower than those offered in our brochure. It is not compulsory for you to book your pre/post tour accommodation through Vietnam Spirit Travel. Any extra nights accommodation required should be booked at the same time that you book your tour. We will always try to book extra nights accommodation in the same hotel that has been designated as the Starting Point for your tour, but in certain circumstances, this may not be possible. If your extra accommodation is prior to the start of the tour your voucher should be presented to the hotel reception upon check-in. If the extra accommodation is after the end of your tour, the voucher should be presented when the accommodation included in your tour has ended

keeping in touch-communication while on the road

If you need to be contacted while travelling we recommend that you set up an email address that can be accessed on the road, rather than relying on postal mail. Email cafes are becoming increasingly commonplace and cheap throughout Vietnam, and have quickly become the preferred way for our leaders/guides and travellers to stay in touch. If someone wishes to contact you in an emergency while you are on one of our trips we recommend that they refer to our Emergency Contact at emergency@vietnamspirittravel.com or fax 08 4 7192898 or call our hot lines 84 1685 734 016 or 84 987 876 013

We recommend that family and friends don't try to contact you through phoning hotels en route, as our hotels are subject to change, and our hotel receptions often don't have English speaking staff.

your fellow travellers

As you travel on a trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe also some of the frustrations of travelling in a group. Your fellow travellers will probably come from all corners of the world and are likely to be of a variety of ages too. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part.

your tour guide

All Independent trips are accompanied by an experienced local English speaking guide. The aim of the guide is to take the hassle out of your travels and provide information on the places you are travelling through including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects, offer suggestions for things to do and see, recommend great local eating venues and introduce you to our local friends so as to help you have the best trip possible

what to take

You can leave your main baggage at the hotel in Hanoi and take a small bag on the tour

checklist

Sun block

Insect Repellant

Passport

Camera and Film

Money (there are no banking facilities in the area)

local dress

When packing be aware that dress standards are conservative throughout this region. Loose, lightweight, long clothing is both respectful and cool in the predominantly hot Asian climate. In winter months the extra length will keep you warm! Generally speaking, neat and tidy clothing is also appreciated in Vietnam. Shorts should be knee length and singlets/ tanktops are also not recommended.

a couple of rules

Illegal drugs will not be tolerated on our trips. Possessing or using drugs not only contravenes the laws of the land but also puts the rest of the group at risk. Smoking marijuana and opium is a part of local culture in some parts of the world but is not acceptable for Vietnam Spirit travellers. Vietnam Spirit Travel's philosophy of travel is

one of respect towards everyone we encounter, and in particular the local people who make our destinations such special places. The exploitation of prostitutes is completely contrary to this philosophy. Our group leader/guide has the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession or they use prostitutes.

a word of warning

As Vietnam embraces capitalism with open arms it is also falling victim to some of the problems of the West. Some parts of city centres are now a favourite hangout for pickpockets. If doing some exploring on your own carry only the necessary minimum with you and use a well-hidden money belt. Valuables, including your passport, should be left in the hotel safe - organize this at reception. There is no need to get paranoid, just be cautious.

feedback

After your travels, we want to hear from you! This is so important to us and at the end of the trip we ask you to complete an online survey. Please visit our feedback page on the website.

Before you travel it is essential that you read carefully this dossier which you can download from our website.

We regularly update our dossiers. Please check our website to ensure that you have the most up to date copy

The itinerary and supplementary information has been compiled with care and provided in good faith. However it may be subject to change, and DOES NOT form part of a contract between the client and Vietnam Spirit Travel