

Hill Tribes of Northern Vietnam Cycling Adventure

Trip Code: HAMB

Version:



CYCLE



GUIDED GROUP



MODERATE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Challenge yourself on this amazing cycle tour through a distinctive corner of SE Asia
- Meet the colourful people of the Dao, Tay, Hmong, Lolo and Nung hill tribes
- Enjoy an overnight cruise on Bai Tu Long, a pristine part of world-renowned Halong Bay

- Experience the 'real' Northern Vietnam with 3 nights' traditional homestay accommodation
- From Hanoi's Old Quarter to the stunning Ma Pi Leng Pass and tranquil Ba Be Lake

AT A GLANCE

- 8 days biking
- 390 kilometres
- 90% surfaced road - 95% vehicle supported
- Max altitude - 1500 metres
- Join at Hanoi

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

Introduction

This unforgettable cycling expedition shows off the best of Northern Vietnam. Starting from Hanoi and the fertile Red River Delta, the cradle of Vietnamese heritage, we have chosen to include an achievable blend of transfers and cycling as we head northwards to the highlands on the border with China. Our bespoke route completes a loop through a magical landscape of endless limestone peaks, rushing rivers and spectacularly terraced farmland where the local hill tribe people grow their rice and maize.

En route, we'll get to meet many different ethnic people and by making use of homestay accommodation on three nights we'll learn a lot more about the Tay, the White Hmong and the Nung. In this remote part of Vietnam we'll find these hill tribes still living in much the same way as they always have, far from the modern world. Beyond Thac Ba Lake, we'll cycle on distinctly undulating roads through the UNESCO listed Dong Van Karst Plateau and onwards into the Thong Nong range where the scenery becomes even more mountainous. We'll see dramatic waterfalls, visit a hill tribe Saturday market at Ma Le and spend time beside the picturesque, jungle-shrouded Ba Be Lake. On the completion of our quite challenging 8-day loop ride, we'll head out to the Gulf of Tonkin and enjoy an overnight cruise in a comfortable, traditional junk on beautiful Bai Tu Long, adjacent to Halong Bay - the perfect way to sign off on one of the best cycling adventures in Vietnam.

Is this holiday for you?

ADVENTURE CYCLING. Riding on a combination of quiet and mostly surfaced roads through a remote and rarely-visited highland region, this is a classic KE loop ride. It is also a reasonably challenging trip that we have moderated by including vehicle transfers to overcome some of the hilliest terrain. The tour will suit regular weekend cyclists. A couple of quite level rides to Tuyen Quang and Tan Yen will get us into the swing of things and then it becomes rather more hilly as we head further north with several more testing days of up to 55 kilometres cycling with 1500 metres of accumulated ascent. It is important to remember that you can opt out of any of the day rides at any time. Ride as much as you want and use the ever-present support vehicle to make each day work as you want it to. Trek mountain bikes with front suspension, disc brakes and fast-rolling all-round tyres are provided locally within the trip price.

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

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
- Temple and other site fees
- 1-hour boat ride on the Nho Que River
- Overnight junk boat cruise on Bai Tu Long Bay
- Local fruit and snacks and water
- Bike hire

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Visas (if applicable)
- Tips for the local crew and drivers
- Miscellaneous expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the hotel in Hanoi.

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.

Accommodation

We will spend 3 nights in a comfortable and well located hotel in the Old Quarter of Hanoi, 1 night in a simple hotel in Tuyen Quang, 2 nights in local inns in Dong Van and Bao Lac and for the night beside Ba Be Lake we will stay at a simple guesthouse/homestay with twin rooms and shared facilities. There will be a total of 3 nights in simple village homestays, where you will require a light sleeping bag or a sleeping bag liner. At these homestays sleeping arrangements will be communal with everybody sharing one large room and all footwear left outside; in some villages it is possible that males and females will be asked to sleep separately (same room, but not next to each other). Each person will have their own mattress (sometimes on the floor, sometimes on a raised bed), with bedding and mosquito net provided - there will be plenty of colourful blankets should the temperature fall in the evenings. The bathroom facilities will be basic, with a mix of western and squat toilets. There will also be basic shower facilities, although electricity and hot water can be intermittent. Charging phones or cameras is also usually possible. Whilst the facilities are basic, the unique experience of staying with the villagers in their homes, in stunning and remote locations, will more than make up for the lack of modern amenities. There is also a single night on the very comfortable Dragon's Pearl Junk. All accommodation is twin share (except for the 3 simple homestay nights). If you are travelling by yourself, you will be paired up with someone of the same sex. Single rooms at all of the accommodation (except the homestays) are available for a supplementary cost. If you are planning on extending your holiday additional nights at the group hotel are available on request.

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. KE 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 4300 and 4500 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 of participants 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 the 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday. Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

Visa Vietnam

British Citizen passport holders do not need a visa for durations of stay up to and including 45 days for tourism and transit.

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

Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

VACCINATIONS

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 as recommended in the UK 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](#).

Currency

The unit of currency in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Dong.

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.

Climate

The north of Vietnam has a sub-tropical climate. During the winter months from November to April this region is relatively cool and dry, influenced by the generally northerly winds of the north-east monsoon. The highest daytime temperature during this season in Hanoi will be 20 to 25 degrees centigrade and it will be 5 degrees cooler than this in the highland areas. At the highest points of the journey, it can be cold enough in the winter to need a fleece jacket in the evenings. During the summer, particularly from June to August it is warmer and wetter with temperatures rising above 30 degrees centigrade in Hanoi (cooler in the highlands) and heavy showers.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

KE 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 directly 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.

Single Use Plastic

KE 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 KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

- 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

Maps

Vietnam North. Reise Know-How. 1:600.000 Scale

Indexed, waterproof and tear-resistant road map of Northern Vietnam with topographic and tourist information. Road and rail networks are clearly presented and driving distances on main roads are indicated. Topography is shown by altitude colouring, contours, spot heights, mountain passes and names of mountain ranges. National parks and protected areas are marked and symbols highlight various places of interest, including UNESCO world heritage sites, archaeological remains, temples and museums, viewpoints etc.

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

For this holiday you will need your usual cycling clothing, including shoes, cycling gloves and a helmet (which must be worn at all times when cycling).

Bike Wear

- Cycling helmet
- Cycling shoes
- Daypack or mountain bike-specific hydration pack (e.g. Camelbak)
 - Water bladder - min. 2 litres water capacity (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Padded (baggy) cycling shorts
- Long leg cycling trousers or leg warmers
- Base-layer - short sleeve cycling tops
- Mid-layer - long sleeved cycling tops
- Fleece jacket or jumper
- Lightweight windproof gilet
- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- Regular biking gloves
- Buff
- Sunglasses
- Sun cream (inc. total bloc for lips/nose)
- Camera

Other Stuff

- Travel and off-the-bike clothing and footwear
- Wash bag, towel, toiletries, including anti-bacterial handwash
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Swimwear
- Basic First Aid kit and personal medication
- Insect repellent
- Chamois cream (e.g. Assos/Ozone)
- Water purification tablets
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

Spares and Repairs

You do not need to take any tools or spares. The local guide will take care of any and all issues.

Hydration and Energy Snacks

You should take suitable water bottle(s) (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic) or a hydration pack and you should also consider taking a small supply of the gels, power bars or sports drink mix that you would normally use on a ride at home.

Please contact us if you have any questions about your equipment.

Cotswold Outdoor

Many of the equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive a 12.5% discount with Cotswold Outdoor, Snow+Rock and Runners Need. The discount code can be downloaded from your MyKE account and you can use this code at the checkout, either in store or online.

Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary starting at the hotel in Hanoi. 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.

Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Hanoi. Outbound flights will usually depart from the UK in the morning, arriving in the morning of the following day (Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary). Return flights will depart Hanoi usually in the evening of the final day of the Land Only itinerary, arriving in the UK early the following morning.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

The Best Cycling Holidays With more than 25 years experience of cycling in SE Asia, there is no-one does it better. Offering an unbeatable blend of cultural and natural highlights, along with a 8 rewarding days of cycling, this is the very best of Northern Vietnam.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 23/11/2024 and the trip is subject to change