

# INDOCHINA ITINERARY

## Highlights of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam



### DAY 1 ARRIVE SIEM REAP

Upon your arrival Siem Reap you will be welcomed by your English speaking local guide and transferred to the hotel for an immediate check-in. Remainder of the morning at leisure. Siem Reap is the base for exploring the fabled temples of Angkor, the ancient capital of the Khmer empire.

This afternoon, visit magnificent Angkor Wat. Built during the reign of King Suryavarman II in the early 12th century, Angkor Wat is constructed following the model of the temple mountain symbolizing Mount Meru, the home of the gods. Inside the temple, the walls are covered with stone carvings and bas-reliefs depicting Hindu mythology and the wars Suryavarman II fought during his reign. Angkor Wat is well known for the more than 2,000 Apsara dancers decorating the temple. Construction is thought to have taken around thirty years of intensive labor. Today, Angkor Wat is figured on Cambodia's national flag as the temple symbolizes the soul of the Khmer people. You will be there during sunset when Angkor Wat is less visited and the Apsaras will shine in the most beautiful light. Afterwards return to Siem Reap.

**Overnight: Victoria Angkor, deluxe room, 2 nights**



This afternoon visit the weaving village of Ban Phanom. This village, populated by Thai Lue (a tribe with its origins in Southern China), is well known for cotton and silk hand-weaving. You have the opportunity to check out how to make the traditional Lao Cotton on a weaving loom, and return to Luang Prabang.

Then visit Wat Visoun, where you will see the famous Watermelon Stupa, shaped like the fruit it takes its name from. This temple was destroyed in 1887 by the invading Black Flags from China, and was restored in 1930 by Buddhist monks and local people. We will also visit Wat Aham where you can see the altar of the two geniuses of Luang Prabang. Finish your day by climbing the 328 steps to the top of Mount Phousi to enjoy a panoramic view of the city and the surrounding countryside. Stop at the evening hill tribe market on your way home.

### Overnight in Luang Prabang

<b>DAY 5</b>	<b>E-BIKE TOUR</b>	<b>(B)</b>
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After breakfast, meet your guide in lobby of your hotel, then take a short transfer by tuk tuk to the electric powered bike station.

After a short briefing to explain you the use of your new vehicle, it will be time to start your discovery of our “responsible Luang Prabang”... in a quiet way! These electric bikes are an emissions-free mode of transportation and allow the user to either pedal the bike by their own power or to coast along using the bike’s battery-powered, rechargeable motor. Start your tour with a visit to the **Phosy Market** where you can join the locals and support vendors by buying fresh products or fruit. Your guide will be here to encourage you to taste some of the exotic flavors of the local fruits, helping to identify new items not found in your grocery store back home!

Continue your ride to **Ock Pop Tock**. This non-profit organization seeks to preserve traditional weaving techniques, a trade which was once an important source of income for many Lao families but is slowly fading out as modern technology has evolved. We will spend some time learning about the process of silk weaving from the initial stages of creating the dyes to the final process of loom weaving.

Continue your ride to the **Traditional Art & Ethnology Centre**, your final stop of the day. The Traditional Arts & Ethnology Centre is dedicated to exploring the rich diversity of Laos’ ethnic minorities. Traditional costumes, tools, and artifacts are on display alongside in-depth descriptions and written histories. It is a great opportunity to gain insight in to the Lao people (note: closed on Monday). Return the bikes and transfer to your hotel.

The afternoon is free to shop and explore the city.

### Overnight in Luang Prabang

**DAY 6 LUANG PRABANG - ZIPLINE - ELEPHANT VILLAGE (B,L)**

After breakfast, depart from Luang Prabang for a twenty minute drive to Ban An village. Upon arrival you will receive a briefing which outlines the course as well as reviews the safety precautions. You will be fitted with a helmet and harness and then it's time for the adventure to begin!

Over the next 30-60 minutes, you will travel between a series of 20 platforms high in the trees. The distances vary in length and each one provides spectacular views of the trees, valley below and surrounding flora and fauna. Keep your eyes open for monkeys and birds hiding in the trees! (Note: Each station is manned with a local staff who will help transfer you safely from line to line; the higher the number of participants, the longer the program time. After the zip line experience you can swim in the Tad Sae waterfalls which features several pools of turquoise water. This trip can also be extended with a short trek, elephant ride or picnic by the falls.

**Overnight: Laos Spirit Resort, 1 night**

**DAY 7 LUANG PRABANG - HANOI - NIGHT TRAIN TO LAO CAI (B)**

After breakfast, meet your guide and driver and return to Luang Prabang for lunch. The afternoon is free at leisure until your transfer to the airport for your flight to Hanoi. Upon arrival you will be greeted by your guide and transferred to Hanoi Train station for the overnight train to Lao Cai, the gateway to Sapa.

**The Fanxipan Train departs Hanoi at 21:10 - arrives Fanxipan at 05:25 the following morning.**

**Overnight onboard the Fanxipan train/Private cabin (2 persons per cabin)**

**DAY 8 LAO CAI - COCLY - SAPA (B,L)**

Upon arrival, meet with your guide and transfer for breakfast at local Restaurant. Travel along national road 70, passing through the lush farm land of Lao Cai province for 42 km to Phong Nien Commune. Turn left and follow provincial road 154 which snakes through the country side along the Chay River for 17 km to Coc Ly which offers up beautiful scenery of high mountains, narrow valleys and terraced rice paddies. Enjoy several photo stops along the way, especially the beautiful tear farms near Phong Hai.

Arrive in the market place at about 09.00am. Join local ethnic peoples for about 2 hours to enjoy the exciting atmosphere as well as activities of this weekly market. Wander among the different sections, inhaling the aromas of strange local products and spices. Purchase handicrafts and some medicinal herbs and interact with the ever smiling locals. Coc Ly is also a famous cattle market where local farmers sell and buy cows, horses, water buffaloes and pigs. There is a large ground just beside the main market place for this activity. The market remains crowded for the whole morning and over after lunch time.

Leave the market at noon, boarding a motor boat and cruising downstream the Chay River for 1.5 hours to the Trung Do village of the Tay which is beautifully set on the banks of the river. Spend about an hour exploring this charming village before continuing the boat trip briefly to Bao Nhai. Enjoy a late lunch in a local restaurant and then transfer back to Lao Cai station.

**Overnight: Victoria Sapa hotel, deluxe room, 2 nights**

**DAY 9            SAPA - BAN KHOANG - TA GIANG PHINH - SAPA            (B,L)**

Leave Sapa at about 08.30am by car, head northwards of Sapa along national road 4C for 8 km to O Quy Ho with several stops enroute to view the magnificent landscape of Fanxipan, the Mt, Sin Chai valley and especially amazing flower and vegetable farms. Then turn right to follow a narrow tarmac road for half an hour, passing through a wild region with thick rain forest covering steep walled mountainsides, and passing a beautiful waterfall before arriving at the Ban Khoang commune. The commune is home to the Black Hmong & Red Zao ethnic peoples who maintain their unique way of life and traditional values. The villages here are prosperous thanks to the combination of wet rice cultivation on the terraced fields with cardamom farming under the shade of thick rain forest. Spend an hour or so walking around this remote village, meeting the villagers to get a brief understanding of local life.

Leaving Ban Khoang, we continue along the road for about 10 km to Ta Giang Phin valley inhabited by the Black Hmong living in several hamlets scattered along a peaceful stream. Stop here for a lunch break.

A further 2 hours walking along a village path which connects the hamlets, witnessing daily activities of local life which will most likely be ploughing and harrowing or harvesting doing. In the leisure months men often gather to build new houses or repair parts of old ones while women stay home making their traditional costumes. The walk ends in the mid afternoon, when you will be picked up for the road trip back to Sapa.

**Overnight Victoria Sapa hotel, deluxe room**

**DAY 10            SAPA - HANG DA - SAU CHUA - LAO CAI            (B,L)**

Situated on the side of the mountain, just about 8km east of Sapa, Hang Da and Sau Chua Villages are home to the Black Hmong peoples who have been living their traditional and unique way of life in spite of effects of development and massive tourism in Sapa.

To visit these peoples, we set out from Sapa at 08.30am or 1.30pm. Lasting nearly 4 hours, this trip is a perfect combination car trip along a beautiful country road with many stops to admire the breathtaking scenery and short walks to explore small and isolated hamlets of the Black Hmong peoples in the Hang Da and Sau Chua Villages. The remainder of the day is at leisure until your transfer to Lao Cai Station for the overnight train back to Hanoi.

The Fanxipan train departs Lao Cai at 20:10 and arrives in Hanoi at 04:50 the next morning

**Overnight onboard the train/Private cabin (2 persons per cabin)**

**DAY 11 HANOI - FULL DAY CITY TOUR****(B,L,D)**

Upon arrival in Hanoi, you will meet your guide and transfer to flower market for a traditional Noodle breakfast. After breakfast, start full day city tour. Firstly, visit the Temple of Literature. In 1076 *Quoc Tu Giam* - Vietnam's first university, also referred to as *Van Mieu*, was established within a temple to educate Vietnam's royalty, mandarins and members of the elite. The university functioned for an incredible 700 years and its gardens and well-preserved architecture offer a fascinating glimpse into Vietnam's past.

The One Pillar Pagoda, founded by King Ly Thai To in 1049 will be visited next. This structure is one of Vietnam's most iconic temples. Close by is the mausoleum of the historic figure and father of modern Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh (viewed from outside; closed Mon and Fri and from Oct-Nov) and the former president's house on stilts where he lived from 1958 to 1969, his former home illustrates the modesty of this Vietnamese revolutionary.

Continue to picturesque West Lake and the sixth century Tran Quoc Buddhist Pagoda. From here transfer (or stroll along the lakeside) 700m to the nearby Taoist temple of Quan Thanh which is dedicated to *Tran Vu*, one of the principal deities in Taoism.

Lunch will be arranged at local restaurant to suit your taste – perhaps French or Italian.

In the afternoon visit the fascinating Ethnology Museum, which is both a research centre and a public museum showcasing the diverse ethnic groups of Vietnam.

At the end of the afternoon visit Dong Xuan market and Hanoi's Old Quarter also known as the '36 streets'. Take a cyclo tour through charming Hang Be Market and around Hoan Kiem Lake. This bustling area of narrow streets and alleys is home to literally thousands of small businesses and shopkeepers. It's a great place to explore with plenty of photo opportunities all around you.

Have dinner at Press Club restaurant (<http://www.hanoi-pressclub.com>)

**Overnight: Maison D'Hanoi Hanova hotel, deluxe double room**

**DAY 11 HANOI - DUONG LAM VILLAGE & TAY PHUONG PAGODA - DA NANG (B, L)**

An 08.30am departure for the 1.5-hour drive west of Hanoi to Duong Lam village, a typical agricultural village of the Northern Red River delta which still preserves its many hundred-year-old houses. Visit Mong Phu temple in Mong Phu commune - the only hamlet whose original village entrance remains intact. Continue on through the narrow alleys to see the old laterite houses which make up this charming village. For lunch enjoy a local style meal in a 100-year old house. After lunch, continue driving to Mia Pagoda (another hamlet of Duong Lam), built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, some 287 statues of all sizes can be seen here, among with are famous sculptures such as the statue of Buddha and the statues of the 'Eight Vajra Deities'. Then, visit the Ngo Quyen temple and Phung Hung temple, places dedicated to two national heroes - Ngo Quyen and Phung Hung.

On the way back to Hanoi, stop at the Tay Phuong Pagoda. The pagoda offers beautiful architecture and ancient and unique sculptures. It was one of the first pagodas built in Vietnam. Note the dragons and demons carved into the wooden roof. From here it's a 45-minute drive back to Hanoi airport for flight to Da Nang.

Upon arrival in Da Nang, meet your guide and drive for approximately 40 minutes to Hoi An a former Chinese fishing port on the coast. Check into your hotel on famous China Beach.

**Overnight: The Nam Hai Resort- 1 Bedroom Beach villa, 3 nights**

**DAY 12                      HOI-AN - HALF DAY COOKING CLASS                      (B, L)**

An 08.30am start with a transfer from the hotel. It begins with a 1 hour tour of the Hoi An market. Learn how to select the freshest ingredients. Return to Morning Glory, where a lovely air-conditioned room with individual cooking stations will be used for the cooking class. Here each dish is made step by step as you follow along. Additional assistance is offered by staff, for beginners or those that might need some extra help. The class not only covers cooking techniques, but also herbal remedies, and tricks to using Vietnamese vegetable graters and knives. All efforts are rewarded with the lunch that you have made for yourself! After lunch time, transfer to the town to visit tailors if you wish. The rest of the day is at leisure. You may wish to take this opportunity to visit the tailors of Hoi An and have faithful copies made of your favourite clothes.

**Overnight: The Nam Hai Resort- 1 Bedroom Beach villa**

**DAY 13                      HOI-AN BICYCLE TOUR - CITY TOUR                      (B, L)**

Departure from your hotel at 07.45am for the transfer to the centre of Hoi An. Hop onto your bicycle and head to Hoi An's main boat pier for the 10-minute journey across the Thu Bon River aboard a local ferry. Once on dry land and in the countryside cycle through picturesque villages, alongside rice paddies, water coconut forests and waterways – the riding is easy and flat and plenty of water will be supplied, which is essential in the hotter months. En-route visit local cottage industries such as boat building yards, wood carving workshops where everything from furniture to ornate statues are made, traditional brickworks (between March and September only), basket boat makers and an ice works. A Vietnamese lunch will be served in the family home of a traditional mat weaving family. Following the meal head back to Hoi-An town by taking a 45-minute boat cruise (arrival between 2-3pm).

In the late afternoon, take a walking tour of the ancient town centre to visit former merchants' houses, the 400 year-old Japanese Covered Bridge, a Chinese communal hall, the colourful market and the tailor to pick up your purchases.

**Overnight: The Nam Hai Resort - 1 Bedroom Beach villa**





**Exclusions:**

- Alcoholic drinks & drinks at mealtime + Optional visits + Personal expenses
- Visa for Cambodia (Visa issued on arrival, USD20/PP, please bring 1 passport photo)
- Visa stamping fee for Laos (visa on arrival, valid 30 days: 30 to 42usd upon client's nationality + 1 photo. Passport has to be valid at least 6 months after departure date of the country). Subject to change without prior notice
- Visa for Vietnam (***compulsory and has to be arranged in advance***)
- Personal travel insurance (must include helicopter evacuation for Cambodia).
- Tips for guide, driver, boat crew & hotels' porters.
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary.