

Cultural Trails: Vietnam and Cambodia Trekking Journey 12 days

Trip overview

Experience the soul of Southeast Asia on this immersive 12-day journey that takes you from Vietnam's terraced mountains and emerald valleys to Cambodia's mystical Angkor temples and floating villages. You will trek through hidden ethnic villages in Sapa and Pu Luong, cruise the legendary Halong Bay, and explore ancient wonders of Angkor Wat on foot and by ox cart. This cultural adventure blends nature, history, and local life for a truly unforgettable cross-border expedition.

- **Durations:** 12 days
- **Trip outline:** Hanoi - Sapa - Mai Chau - Pu Luong Nature Reserve - Ninh Binh - Halong Bay - Siem Reap
- **Price from:** US \$1639/person
- **Tour inquiry:** <https://bestratetours.com/vietnam-tours/cultural-trails-vietnam-and-cambodia-trekking-journey-12-days.html>

Trip outline

day	Activities	Accommodations	Meals
Day 1	Hanoi Pick Up in The Airport	Hotel in Ha Noi	Breakfast
Day 2	Hanoi Transfer to Sapa - Trekking Cat Cat - Sin Chai Village	Hotel in Sapa	Breakfast, Lunch
Day 3	Trekking Y Linh Ho - Lao Chai - Ta Van - Transfer to Hanoi	Hotel in Hanoi	Breakfast, Lunch
Day 4	Hanoi - Mai Chau - Pu Luong	Hotel in Pu Luong	Breakfast, Lunch
Day 5	Pu Luong trekking full day tour (SIC)	Hotel in Pu Luong	Breakfast, Lunch
Day 6	Pu Luong road transfer to Ninh Binh	Hotel in Ninh Binh	Breakfast
Day 7	Ninh Binh - Hoa Lu - Tam Coc - Dap Xe	Hotel in Ninh Binh	Breakfast, Lunch
Day 8	Ninh Binh - Ha Long Bay Cruise	Halong Bay Cruise	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Day 9	Halong Bay - Hanoi & Fly to Siem Reap	Hotel in Siem Reap	Breakfast, Brunch
Day 10	Full Day Trekking Tours to Angkor Sights	Hotel in Siem Reap	Breakfast, Lunch
Day 11	Ta Prak Village - Kampong Phluk Floating Village	Hotel in Siem Reap	Breakfast, Lunch

Day 12	Siem Reap Departure	NA	Breakfast
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Itinerary

Day 1: Hanoi Pick Up in The Airport

Welcome to **Hanoi**, Vietnam's captivating capital where centuries-old traditions meet vibrant modern life. Known for its shaded boulevards, French colonial architecture, and soulful street food, the city offers an inviting gateway to your journey across Vietnam and Cambodia.

Upon arrival at Noi Bai International Airport, you'll be warmly greeted and transferred to your hotel in the heart of the city. After check-in, take time to rest and recharge after your flight. Whether you're looking out onto the Old Quarter's buzz or enjoying the calm of a quiet courtyard hotel, your Hanoi adventure has officially begun.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Hotel in Ha Noi

Day 2: Hanoi Transfer to Sapa - Trekking Cat Cat - Sin Chai Village

Morning

Leave behind the bustling pace of Hanoi as you embark on a scenic road journey to **Sapa**, a picturesque mountain town nestled in the misty highlands of northern Vietnam. Known for its cool climate, terraced rice fields, and vibrant ethnic cultures, Sapa promises a refreshing change of pace and scenery.

Afternoon

Upon arrival, check in to your hotel and enjoy a brief rest before the afternoon adventure begins. Lace up your hiking shoes for an invigorating trek through the rolling hills and lush valleys of [Cat Cat Village](#) and **Sin Chai Village**, home to the H'mong ethnic minority.

Walk along winding paths and emerald rice terraces while engaging with local families and witnessing traditional handicrafts. The tranquil rhythms of village life and breathtaking mountain views offer an unforgettable introduction to Sapa's natural and cultural richness.



Return to your hotel in Sapa for an overnight stay, with the crisp mountain air and peaceful surroundings setting the perfect tone for the days ahead.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Hotel in Sapa

Day 3: Trekking Y Linh Ho - Lao Chai - Ta Van - Transfer to Hanoi

Morning

Awaken to the fresh mountain air of Sapa and prepare for an inspiring day of cultural immersion and natural discovery. Today's trek winds through some of the most stunning and culturally rich valleys of the region, connecting you with the vibrant heritage of the ethnic communities who call this land home.

Begin your journey with a 6-kilometer trek to [Y Linh Ho Village](#), a serene hamlet nestled along the mountainside. Surrounded by terraced fields and majestic hills, this peaceful spot offers an intimate look into H'mong customs, traditional attire, and rural mountain life. Let the whispers of folklore and the scent of cultivated land guide your way deeper into the valley.



Continue on foot through the captivating countryside to reach **Lao Chai Village**, where more of the Black H'mong community welcomes you with warm smiles and dramatic landscapes. Here, you'll pause for a hearty local lunch shared with a village family, offering a rare and meaningful opportunity to engage with daily life while dining amidst panoramic views of the rice terraces.

Afternoon

Your adventure presses onward to [Ta Van Village](#), home to the Giay ethnic minority, known for their tranquil lifestyle and harmonious relationship with nature. As you walk through the village paths, observe the blending of ethnic cultures, stilt houses, and verdant fields, all set against a breathtaking backdrop of misty peaks and the murmuring Muong Hoa River.

After soaking in the last sweeping views from Ta Van, hop in a local jeep for the short ride back to your hotel.



Evening

Take a well-deserved rest before boarding your comfortable **limousine car** for the journey back to Hanoi, bringing with you vivid memories of the mountains, the warmth of village life, and the quiet magic of northern Vietnam.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Hotel in Hanoi

Day 4: Hanoi - Mai Chau - Pu Luong

Morning

Leave behind the vibrant energy of Hanoi as your journey begins with a comfortable hotel pickup and a scenic drive into the tranquil countryside. Rolling hills, quiet villages, and fields of green gradually replace the city's rhythm, offering a refreshing window into rural Vietnam.

Upon arriving in the lush valley of [Mai Chau](#), you'll be welcomed with a traditional lunch that balances flavor and harmony, reflecting the yin-yang philosophy of Vietnamese cuisine. The meal not only delights the palate but also introduces you to the region's thoughtful culinary customs.



Afternoon

Continue your adventure deeper into nature as you head toward [Pu Luong Nature Reserve](#). Tucked away in a quiet mountain setting, Pu Luong is a peaceful escape known for its terraced hills, hidden waterfalls, and vibrant ethnic cultures.



Check in to your accommodation and let the serenity of this remote landscape wash over you. Stay overnight in Pu Luong, surrounded by the soft whispers of forest and wind.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Hotel in Pu Luong

Day 5: Pu Luong trekking full day tour (SIC)

Escape into the heart of northern Vietnam's countryside with this immersive one-day tour in Pu Luong, where stunning natural landscapes and rich cultural traditions await.

Around **8:30**, your day begins with a visit to a **120-year-old traditional house**, where you'll step back in time and experience authentic local life. Try your hand at traditional activities such as:

- Weaving fabric on a loom
- Pounding rice and grinding grains
- Brewing rice wine using age-old methods
- Feeding buffalo and interacting with farm life
- Join locals in folk games like Nem Con (throwing sacred balls), walking on stilts, crossbow shooting, and spinning wooden tops — fun for all ages!

Next, drift along the crystal-clear Cham Stream on a **bamboo raft**, surrounded by the majestic mountains of Pu Luong. Immerse yourself in the serene atmosphere of this untouched natural paradise.

Enjoy a unique “survival-style” **cooking experience** on the raft, where you'll prepare a rustic meal over an open fire - a true test of your wilderness skills!

Hop onto a **buffalo-drawn cart** and enjoy a leisurely ride through the charming villages. Breathe in the fresh mountain air and take in the peaceful rhythm of rural life amid rice paddies and towering limestone peaks.

If the weather allows, take a refreshing dip in the cool waters of Cham Stream. Let nature rejuvenate you as you swim in this hidden gem of Pu Luong.

Continue your journey to **Surprising Cave** (Hang Sung Sot), a spectacular 20-kilometer-long cave filled with majestic stalactites and stalagmites. Still largely untouched by tourism, this cave offers an adventurous, off-the-beaten-path experience.

Marvel at the **massive wooden water wheels** — a symbol of the region's traditional wet rice farming culture. Learn how locals harness the power of water for irrigation, using age-old engineering techniques.

Wrap up your day with a visit to **Lan Ngoai Village**, where you'll observe the intricate process of weaving brocade fabrics. Watch skilled artisans transform thread into vibrant patterns, preserving the rich textile heritage of the region.

Around **15:30** - After a day filled with culture, nature, and hands-on experiences, return with lasting memories of authentic Pu Luong.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Hotel in Pu Luong

Day 6: Pu Luong road transfer to Ninh Binh

After breakfast, say goodbye to the peaceful landscapes of Pu Luong as you begin your journey to the picturesque province of Ninh Binh. The scenic drive takes you through rural villages, lush valleys, and limestone mountains, offering countless photo opportunities along the way.

Upon arrival in Ninh Binh, check in to your accommodation and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure. You may choose to relax at your hotel or explore the surroundings independently, preparing for the adventures that await in this region known as “the Halong Bay on land.”

Overnight in Ninh Binh

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Hotel in Ninh Binh

Day 7: Ninh Binh - Hoa Lu - Tam Coc - Dap Xe

Morning

At **07:30 - 08:00**, leave the city pace behind as you journey 120 kilometers south from Hanoi to the peaceful countryside of **Ninh Binh**, often dubbed “Ha Long Bay on land.” As the Limousine bus winds through emerald fields and rustic villages, the scenery begins to unfold into a tapestry of limestone karsts, shimmering rivers, and ancient relics. A short rest stop along the way offers a refreshing pause before your cultural immersion begins.



Your first destination is the sacred [Hoa Lu Ancient Capital](#), a former imperial seat nestled between dramatic mountains and rice paddies. Once the political and cultural heart of Vietnam in the 10th and 11th centuries, this storied citadel whispers tales of bravery, unification, and dynastic power.

Step into **Dinh King Temple**, a 17th-century sanctuary that blends natural surroundings with elegant wooden architecture, intricate stone carvings, and quiet reverence. Feel the spirit of Vietnam's early nation-builders lingering in the air as you explore the temple grounds, framed by mossy hills and lotus ponds.

After exploring this cultural treasure, savor a flavorful local lunch featuring rustic Vietnamese dishes in a garden-view restaurant, where fresh ingredients and simple preparation highlight the essence of the region.

Afternoon

The afternoon reveals the stunning aquatic charm of **Tam Coc**, where a local rower awaits to guide your sampan boat through the tranquil waters of the **Ngo Dong River**. Glide between towering limestone cliffs and golden rice fields that mirror the sky, entering the enchanting caves of **Hang Ca, Hang Hai, and Hang Ba**. These ancient river tunnels, formed over millennia, dazzle with hanging stalactites shaped like dragons, lotus petals, and mythical beasts.



End your day with a leisurely bicycle ride through the countryside, pedaling along narrow lanes that wind past quiet village homes. The air is fragrant with wildflowers, and the rhythm of rural life creates a soothing close to your Ninh Binh adventure.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Hotel in Ninh Binh

Day 8: Ninh Binh - Ha Long Bay Cruise

Morning

Trade the tranquil landscapes of Ninh Binh for the legendary seascape of **Ha Long Bay**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site famed for its emerald waters and thousands of towering limestone islets. After a scenic road transfer, arrive at the cruise port where your next adventure begins.



Upon boarding your elegant Ha Long Bay cruise, you're welcomed with a refreshing drink and a brief orientation on cruise amenities and safety. As the vessel glides gently into the bay, indulge in a delectable lunch at the onboard restaurant. Outside, a surreal panorama of limestone karsts and lush green peaks unfolds - each rock formation rising like a mystical sculpture from the water, beckoning you into Vietnam's natural treasure.

Afternoon

Let your senses relax further with rejuvenating massage or spa treatments offered onboard. Whether it's a soothing facial or a full-body massage, this is the perfect way to unwind amid the bay's gentle waves.

NOTE: Please make a reservation with cruise manager to guarantee there is space for you.

Your next stop is the magnificent [Surprise Cave \(Sung Sot\)](#), hidden within Bo Hon Island. Climb more than 50 stone steps to the cave entrance and be greeted by an awe-inspiring display of stalactites and stalagmites illuminated in dreamlike hues. As you wander through its vast chambers, the cool air and surreal rock formations evoke a sense of stepping into another realm - one carved by nature over millennia.



As the sun begins to dip behind the karsts, join in a unique Vietnamese cooking demonstration or learn the intricate art of fruit and vegetable carving on the sundeck. Watch the sky turn shades of gold and lavender while the crew shares the secrets behind local dishes.

Evening

Evening arrives with a sumptuous dinner on board, featuring fresh seafood and regional flavors prepared with flair. Later, choose your style of relaxation - try your luck at night squid fishing, join fellow travelers for a few rounds of board games or cards, sip cocktails at the bar, or simply stargaze from the deck in total serenity.

Fall asleep cradled by the gentle waves, with the silhouettes of limestone cliffs guarding your peaceful night on Ha Long Bay.

NOTE: The itinerary may change depending on the cruise you choose

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Halong Bay Cruise

Day 9: Halong Bay - Hanoi & Fly to Siem Reap

Morning

Greet your final morning in Ha Long Bay with serenity and awe. Wake early at **06:30 - 07:00** to witness the sunrise casting golden hues over the misty limestone karsts - an ethereal view best appreciated from the cruise's deck as the bay slowly stirs to life.

Savor a light breakfast with tea and coffee in the dining room before recharging your body and mind in a graceful **Tai Chi session** under the open sky. The slow, flowing movements set a calm rhythm for your day and leave you energized for the journey ahead.

Your cruise continues to [Titop Island](#), a crescent-shaped gem known for its peaceful beach and breathtaking panoramic views. Hike up to the summit where a 360-degree lookout unveils a sweeping view of Ha Long Bay's jade waters dotted with towering karsts. Afterward, dip your feet or take a refreshing swim in the crystal-clear sea, or simply unwind on the white sand shore.



Back aboard the cruise, enjoy a flavorful brunch as the boat gently glides back toward the harbor. This is a perfect moment to relax on the sundeck, soak up the final views, or begin packing your belongings.

Afternoon

Upon disembarking at the cruise port, you'll have some time to unwind and then be transferred back to Hanoi in comfort. At the airport, catch your flight to your next destination - Siem Reap, Cambodia, the gateway to the ancient wonders of Angkor.

Arrive in Siem Reap and transfer to your hotel, where you'll check in and relax. After the day's transitions, enjoy a well-earned rest as you prepare for the mystical temples and vibrant culture awaiting you in the days ahead.

Meals: Breakfast, Brunch

Accommodation: Hotel in Siem Reap

Day 10: Full Day Trekking Tours to Angkor Sights

Morning

Around **08:00**, your day begins with pickup by your expert guide and driver at your hotel. From here, transfer to the starting point of your temple trekking experience.

Walking from temple to temple offers a unique and immersive way to experience Angkor — with jungle paths, hidden sanctuaries, and sudden views of towering temples emerging from the forest.



Your journey begins at **Angkor Wat**, the world's largest religious monument. Built in the early 12th century by King Suryavarman II, it symbolizes **Mount Meru**, the mythical home of the gods. Marvel at the grand towers, galleries, and intricate bas-reliefs that depict epic tales from Hindu mythology.

Pause for a relaxing lunch at a nearby local restaurant, offering Cambodian dishes to refuel you for the afternoon adventure.

Afternoon

After lunch, continue trekking through the jungle to the ancient city of **Angkor Thom**, the last great capital of the Khmer Empire under King Jayavarman VII. Surrounded by an 8-meter-high wall in a perfect square, Angkor Thom holds some of the most iconic structures in the region.

At its center stands **Bayon Temple**, renowned for its 54 towers adorned with over 200 enigmatic smiling faces — a stunning representation of the empire's spiritual and political power.

Explore the Terrace of the Elephants, once used for royal audiences and public ceremonies, and the Terrace of the Leper King, famed for its beautifully detailed carvings and mysterious history.

As your trek continues, pass over the ancient causeway to **Angkor Thom's South Gate**, a towering stone entrance flanked by 54 stone figures depicting gods and demons pulling the sacred Naga serpent — a dramatic sight at golden hour.

End your day at **Prasat Chrung**, a peaceful temple set near the city walls, offering breathtaking sunset views over the moat. Take time to absorb the serene surroundings and capture the moment with memorable photos.

After sunset, walk back to the South Gate where your driver will be waiting to transfer you back to your hotel, concluding your unforgettable day of exploration.



Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Hotel in Siem Reap

Day 11: Ta Prak Village - Kampong Phluk Floating Village

Morning

After breakfast at your hotel, you'll be picked up at **8:00** by your local guide and driven to **Ta Prak Village**, located about 25 minutes outside of Siem Reap. Bring along a packed breakfast from your hotel — upon arrival, you'll share this meal with a welcoming local family, providing a rare glimpse into early morning village life when the community is most active.

Next, enjoy a 30-minute **ox cart ride** through the village lanes to reach a bustling local market. Here, you'll explore a colorful variety of Cambodian vegetables, herbs, fruits, and traditional produce, gaining firsthand insight into everyday food culture.

Continue your journey with a **1-kilometer countryside walk** through scenic rice paddies and rural homes. Along the way, stop to interact with villagers and witness seasonal farming and craft activities such as rice planting, thatch weaving, vegetable harvesting, or fish trap making. Each visit is unique, reflecting the natural rhythm of rural Cambodian life.

Conclude your countryside exploration at a serene **local pagoda**, where you'll receive a traditional water blessing by Buddhist monks — a peaceful and meaningful cultural experience. Before departing, refresh yourself with a fresh coconut juice under the shade of palm trees.

Afternoon

After your countryside immersion, head further out to the tranquil and less-visited **Kampong Phluk**, a stilted fishing village nestled in the flooded mangrove forest. Far from the tourist crowds, this is one of the best places to witness authentic life on the Tonlé Sap Lake.

Board a local wooden boat and cruise through the waterways, passing by towering stilt houses, floating homes, and the breathtaking flooded forest. Observe the daily lives of fishing families and appreciate the unique harmony between community and nature. The serenity of the lake, with its wide-open horizon and gentle ripples, offers a calming and photogenic backdrop.

Enjoy a traditional lunch at a local restaurant during the tour, featuring local flavors and ingredients from the region.

After your lake adventure, transfer back to your hotel in Siem Reap by late afternoon. Overnight at your hotel.



Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Hotel in Siem Reap

Day 12: Siem Reap Departure

Your final day in **Siem Reap** marks the end of an unforgettable journey through culture, nature, and history. Take this morning to savor the last glimpses of the town's charm - whether it's a quiet walk past colonial shopfronts, a final sip of strong Cambodian coffee, or a reflective moment beside the lotus ponds.

Depending on your flight schedule, you may have time to browse local markets for handmade crafts or indulge in a leisurely breakfast before checking out of your hotel. A private transfer will take you to Siem Reap International Airport, where your journey concludes.

As you depart, carry with you the echoes of ancient temples, the warmth of village smiles, and the serenity of timeless landscapes - memories that will stay with you long after you've left the Kingdom of Wonder.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: NA

Booking Policy

Inclusion

- Overnight in shared Twin/ Double room with Air-condition (AC) at hotel.
- All transport during tour on air - conditioned vehicle as per itinerary (including airport pick up & see off)

- All in-tour stationed local English speaking guide.
- Meals as indicated in the program
- Entrance fees as per itinerary
- 01 flight Hanoi - Siem Reap

Exclusion

- **Hotel EARLY check in & LATE check out**
- Peak season surcharge & compulsory dinner at the accommodation (if any)
- International flights and taxes
- Vietnam/ Cambodia / Thailand Visa (above 6 months passport Valid & 3 clear-page require)
- Passport Fees
- Travel Insurance
- Tips, laundry and gratuities
- Meals not marked on itinerary, and water during meals

Cancellation Policy

- Cancellation received before 60 days: FREE of charge
- Cancellation received from 30 days to 59 days prior arrival date: 10% of total rate
- Cancellation received from 15 days to 29 days prior arrival date: 30% of total rate
- Cancellation received from 7 days to 14 days prior arrival date: 50% of total rate
- Cancellation received less than 7 days prior arrival date or No show: 100% of total rate

Children Policy

- The rate for children applicable for one child sharing a twin or double cabin with two adults.
- For infants (<04 years old): FOC except for domestic flight tickets.
- 04 - under 11 years old without bed: 50% adult rate.
- 04 - under 11 years old with extra bed: 75% adult rate.
- 04 - under 11 years old in twin share: 90% adult rate.
- From 11 years old: count as an adult.

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