

# THE NORTHWEST LOOP

06 days / 05 nights

Best to enjoy the magnificent and picturesque landscape whilst discovering the Hoang Lien Son Mt., nicknamed by the French "The Tonkin Alps", where inhabit dozens of Vietnamese hill tribes: Black H'Mong, Flower H'Mong, Black Thai, White Thai, Red Dzao, Dzao, Laos, Muong, Xa Pho etc. with their distinct traditional cultures.

**Tour Code** : VNM01

**Connection** : Easy to combine with other trips in the North and South of Vietnam and Northern Laos.

#### Itinerary in Brief:

DAY 01: HANOI - MAI CHAU (-/L/D)

DAY 02: MAI CHAU - MOC CHAU - SONLA - TUAN GIAO - DIEN BIEN PHU (B/L/D)

DAY 03: DIEN BIEN PHU – SAPA (B/L)

DAY 04: SAPA (B/L)

DAY 05: SAPA – HILL TRIBAL MARKET – BAC HA (B/L)

DAY 06: BAC HA - HANOI (B/L)

DAY 06: BAC HA - HANOI (B/L)



## Mai Chau - Moc Chau - Son La - Dien Bien - Lai Chau - Tam Duong - Sapa – Hill Tribal Market - Bac Ha

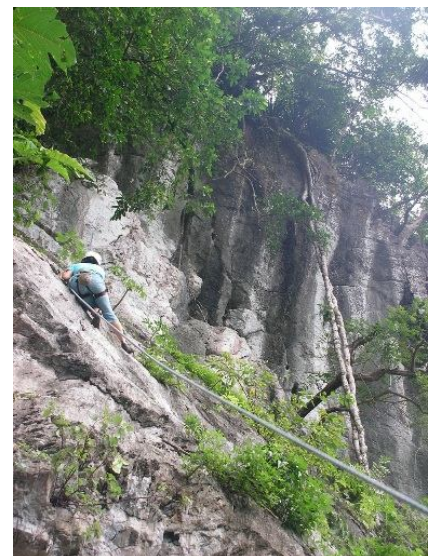
### DAY 1: HANOI - MAI CHAU (-/L/D)

Morning pick-up at your accommodation or rendezvous in Hanoi and drive to Mai Chau, a beautiful valley inhabited by the "Thai" people in Hoa Binh province. As soon as we get out of Hanoi, the limestone mountain ranges rush up and give the scenery an imposing view. Arrive in Mai Chau late noon, have lunch in Mai Chau and hike around the villages full of house-on-stilts, pretty handmade textile products and vast paddyfields to enjoy the routine life of the Thai people. Dinner and overnight in a house-on-stilt in Mai Chau.

### DAY 2: MAI CHAU - MOC CHAU - SONLA - TUAN GIAO - DIEN BIEN PHU (B/L/D)

It's a long day today since the mountain roads do not allow the car's highest speed exceed 45km per hour. In return, we are crossing the most magnificent part of the Hoang Lien Son range – the Tonkin Alps, the home of most colourful-dressed montagnards, who still maintain lots of their long-term culture and traditions. From Mai Chau, we will drive to Son La via Moc Chau, where located hundreds of immense farms of dairy cows and where the best tea of Vietnam is produced.

Surrounding Moc Chau is the inhabitation of various tribes including the H'mong, Thai, Muong and Dzao. Let's stop en route to visit villages and orchard / tea farm in Moc chau before reach Sonla (200km from Mai Chau) for a late lunch. Afternoon head to Dien Bien via Tuan Giao. The most picturesque scenery here belongs to Pha Din Pass, which is well-known as a historical site during the 1st Indochina War ended in 1954, and a charming and dangerous pass at elevation 1,300m with breathtaking view. Arrive Dien Bien in the evening for dinner and overnight.



### **DAY 3: DIEN BIEN PHU - LAI CHAU - TAM DUONG – SAPA (B/L)**

Dien Bien is only 35km from the border with Laos and used to be the last battlefield of the French and Vietnamese during the first Indochinese War. Not so long after 1954, Dien Bien Phu turned to be a green valley inhabited by dozens of the ethnic groups. Visiting the historical sites in Dien Bien will make our trip more memorable, to name a few, they are Dien Bien Museum, A1 Hill, the shelter of the French General De Castries and the memorials of the Vietnamese and French soldiers died during the fierce battle in 1954. Head Northwest to Sapa via Tam Duong with stopover to communicate with the people from tribal groups living surrounding Lai Chau like Black Thai, White Thai, Muong and Dzao people. After stopover at O Quy Ho Pass for a magnificent view of Northwest mountains, we'll reach Sapa. Overnight in Sapa.

### **DAY 4: SAPA (B/L)**

Have a climb to the "Dragon Peak" of Sapa to have a panoramic view of the town with pinewoods and gardens looming in the mist.

Visit Sapa market and the church before heading to Taphin valley to reach the villages of the H'mong and Red Dzao people, who are skillful in dyeing and making clothes and embroidery by traditional, old silk thread. Go on to Lao Chai (10km from Sapa) and walk thru 5km to Tavan with stops at the villages of the tribal people H'mong, Tay and Dzay en route. Back to Sapa for overnight.

### **DAY 5: SAPA – HILL TRIBAL MARKET – BAC HA (B/L)**

If today is Saturday, Sunday or Tuesday, nothing will be better than driving overland to a market of the hill tribal people, mainly from Flower H'Mong ethnical group. Depending on the day, you can choose either Can Cau (Sat), Bac Ha (Sun) or Coc Ly (Tue). Out from this list Bac Ha is the biggest in terms of scale and area, but beside these markets, a lot of other mountain weekly market are also held on Wednesday and Thursday in the neighbourhood.

Early morning we'll drive toward Bac Ha, about 110km from Sapa. With a dozen of tribes living in the surroundings, including Flower H'Mong, Chinese, Nhang, Dzao, Nung, Phu La, Thai and

King (or Viet), the market is extremely exciting esp. in the early morning. The winding road to Bac Ha helps maintain the colours (in both literal and figurative sense) of the area. The distance to Can Cau and Coc Ly from Bac Ha is 30–50km. In all these markets we can meet hundreds of beautiful women from Flower H'Mong tribe, who are famous for their wonderful craft and hand-made flowering clothes and textile fabrics, or intermingle with people from Black H'Mong, Dzay, Dzao and other ethnic groups coming to the market not for purchasing stuffs, but for meeting and chatting – just once a week - like in a real cultural center. After lunchtime, we will go trekking to further hamlets in Ban Pho, Trieu Cai, or Na Hoi. Back to Bac Ha in the afternoon for overnight.

### **DAY 6: BAC HA - HANOI (B/L)**

Back to Hanoi (350km) via Yen Bai with lunch en route.

Arrive at your accommodation in Hanoi late evening.

*End of services.*

