

VIETNAM - LAOS MOUNTAIN DISCOVERY



10 days - 09 nights



Hanoi | Ha long | Lao Cai | Sapa | Villages | Lai Chau | Dien Bien Phu | Tay Trang | Muong Khua | Oudomxay | Luang Prabang

OVERVIEW

Tour code	IN04
Duration	10 days / 09 nights
Features	Deeply enjoy a trip in Northwest Vietnam, the most magnificent and picturesque mountain area of the country before passing over famous Tay Trang bordergate near Dien Bien Phu to Laos and venture into the region of hill tribes, rugged mountains and scenic river landscape.
Extension	Easy to connect with Bangkok, Yunnan and Northern Myanmar.
Note	Not recommended in rainy season of Laos, from June to September. Strongly recommended in March, April, October and November for the photogenic planting and harvest times.

ITINERARY IN BRIEF

Day 1	: Arrival in Hanoi (D)
Day 2	: Hanoi - Halong Bay - Train to Lao Cai (B/L/D)
Day 3	: Lao Cai - Sapa (B/L)
Day 4	: Sapa (B/L)
Day 5	: Sapa - Dien Bien Phu (B/L)
Day 6	: Dien Bien Phu - Tay Trang - Muong Khua (B/-/D)
Day 7	: Muong Khua - Oudomxay - Luang Prabang (B/L)
Day 8	: Luang Prabang - Pakou Cave - Khouangsi Waterfall - Luang Prabang (B/L)
Day 9	: Luang Prabang - Lao Spirit Adventure - Luang Prabang (Elephant Ride + Rafting)
Day 10	: Luang Prabang Departure (B)

ITINERARY IN DETAIL

DAY 1: ARRIVAL IN HANOI (D)

Welcomed by THREELAND tour guide at Hanoi airport, transfer to the city and have a city tour - an essential preparation for your next

excursions. Have a look at the Ethnology Museum, where we can learn much about the hill tribal culture of Vietnam before our upcoming visit to Sapa. A cyclo visit is probably the best way to experience the Old Quarter of Hanoi, stop at Ngoc Son Temple located on the Hoan Kiem Lake (the "Sword" Lake) and at the Temple of Literature, the very 1st high school of Vietnam since 11th century. Late afternoon we will enjoy a unique fascinating show of Water Puppetry, a traditional stage art of Northern Vietnam. Dinner and overnight in Hanoi. (lunch at your own arrangement for flexibility)

DAY 2: HANOI - HALONG BAY - TRAIN TO LAO CAI (B/L/D)

Early depart for Halong Bay, a World Heritage as designated by UNESCO in 1994, with thousands limestone islets with stopovers en route to visit the rural life of the Red River Delta's farmers (esp. in transplanting and harvest times), or the ceramic town at Dong Trieu. Upon arrival, take a boat trip for about 5 hours to cruise Halong bay (width 1,500 sq. km) to enjoy its splendid seascape of thousands odd-shaped rocky islands, visit the inside-island grottoes and / or swimming. Lunch of fresh seafood served on board by the crew. Late afternoon back to Hanoi for dinner before transfer to the Railway Station to take a night train to Lao Cai. Overnight on the Train.

DAY 3: LAO CAI - SAPA (B/L)

Around 06.00am, we'll arrive at Lao Cai Station, a borderland city that looks over China and that is closest to Sapa Hill Resort. Transferred to Sapa. The road is 40km long and very sight-worthy with terraced paddy fields, small waterfalls and pinewoods. Have breakfast in Sapa and leave our luggage at hotel here before hanging around with our tour guide to Sapa market, then climb up the Dragon Peak to have the panorama of Sapa with pine trees, old colonial-styled villas and numerous hill tribal people. Afternoon walk downhill from Sapa to Cat Cat village of the Hmong people (4km) to visit the daily life of the Hmong ethnic group and enjoy the landscape in Cat Cat.

Optional: If today is Saturday, Sunday or Tuesday, we could have another option with a memorable trip to a weekly market of the hill tribes living surrounding Sapa. Alternatives are Can Cau market on Saturday, Bac Ha market on Sunday and Coc Ly market on Tuesday. To reach any of them, from Lao Cai Station we will drive about 2 hours to the marketplace, where hundreds of people from tribes Hmong, Tay, Dzay, Dzao, Kinh gather for meeting, hanging around, shopping and exchanging their goods, especially fabrics and handicrafts weekly. Back to Sapa for Lunch and visit the Sapa church, Cat Cat village in the afternoon. Dinner at your own account. Overnight in Sapa.

DAY 4: SAPA (B/L)

After breakfast we have full day easy hiking in Muong Hoa valley. In the morning going down to the end of the valley to hike along the river and terrace rice field to visit Lao Chai, a small villages of Hmong people. From Lao Chai we continue with small trails to Ta Van, a villages of Zay people, where you could have stunning panorama of whole valley. During the cultivation time you have great chance to join with ordinary traditional activities of farmers. Return to Sapa in the afternoon. At leisure and overnight in Sapa.

DAY 5: SAPA - DIEN BIEN PHU (B/L)

It would be a long day today. Head West to Dien Bien, you will be cross over Hoang Lien Son, the highest mountain range of Vietnam. After the first 40kms along the winding road you will reach on the top of O Quy Ho pass, where you could have magnificent view of Northwest mountain with sea of clouds under your foot and the zigzag roads stretched to the end of the horizon, as the lines of drawing on the splendid picture of nature. You will get over the reservoir of Son La hydropower station, the biggest one in Southeast Asia. The visit and communication with the people from tribal groups living surrounding Lai Chau like Black Thai, White Thai, Muong and Dzao people will sweep away your tiredness of the long trip. Overnight in Dien Bien.

DAY 6: DIEN BIEN PHU - TAY TRANG - MUONG KHUA (B/-/D)

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 your 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 Dien Bien Phu battle in 1954. Lunch in Dien Bien Phu. After an hour by car you will say goodbye with your guide and driver in Vietnam at the bordergate of Tay Trang to continue your journey.

Welcomed to Laos! The guide and vehicle of Threeland in Laos will be meeting you upon Tay Trang Bordergate and take you to Muong Khua. Meaning "village" in both Laos and Vietnamese languages, Muong Khua ("village Khua") is actually a small town located by Nam Ou riverbank in the Northeast of Laos but an important stopover en route Vietnam - Laos. Visit many local minority villages of the Hmong, Thai people before reaching Muong Khua. Dinner and overnight in Muong Khua. (lunch not included for flexibility).

Please note! For first class options, the trip will end at Muong La to overnight.

DAY 7: MUONG KHUA - OUDOMXAY - LUANG PRABANG (B/L)

After breakfast, we will begin our expedition, venturing into the mountainous and remote areas in Northern Laos and head to Oudomxay. The verdant and rugged mountain scenery here is combined with the colorfully-dressed montagnards makes the journey a memorable experience. Oudomxay Province now is residence to a mixture of 23 ethnic groups, who are unfailingly friendly, welcoming you with waving hands and smiling faces. We can make a few breaks today to intermingle with the groups of Hmong at Ban Jarong, Ban Songja, or people from the villages of Khmu, Akha and Taidam natives. Continue the journey to Luang Prabang enjoying spectacular landscape en route before arriving Luang Prabang in the evening. Overnight in Luang Prabang.

DAY 8: LUANG PRABANG - PAKOU CAVE - KHOUANGSI WATERFALL - LUANG PRABANG (B/L)

Luang Prabang is perhaps the best-preserved ancient city in Southeast Asia, whose tranquility and charm with splendid natural scenery and cultural sights make it the most popular place to visit in Laos. After

breakfast, we will commence our trip in Luang Prabang by the impressive and most ancient temples of Wat Xieng Thong and Wat Scene, which represent classical Laotian architecture and Buddhist temples' scales. After visiting inside Luang Prabang, we will board a boat upstream on the Mekong River to enjoy the panoramic view of the quiet countryside near the city and reach the mysterious Caves of Pak Ou, where two linked caves crammed with thousands of gold lacquered Buddha statues of various shapes and sizes left by pilgrims. On the way, we can stop at the small village of Ban Xanghai, where the local rice wine is distilled, then go on toward Khouangsi Waterfall. The journey today creates many chances for us to stopover and call at many ethnic minorities' villages like Ban Ouay of the Hmong, Ban Ou of the Laoloum and BanThapene of the Khmu natives. Upon arrival in Khouangsi Waterfall, we can splash around in turquoise pools hereby, or hike along the forest trails to enjoy the nature of this paradise. Back to Luang Prabang late afternoon with a break at Ban Xangkhong, a village renown for silk hand weaving and traditional Saa Paper produce. Enjoy the sunset at Wat Siphouthabath in Luang Prabang. Overnight in Luang Prabang.

DAY 9: LUANG PRABANG - LAO SPIRIT ADVENTURE - LUANG PRABANG (ELEPHANT RIDE + RAFTING) (B/L)

If you wish to deeply understand the Theravada Buddhist spirit in the daily life of Laotians, wake up earlier than usual and walk out onto streets to see a morning scene in Luang Prabang - the monks in saffron frocks collecting offerings of Alms from the Buddhist people, a very popular ritual in Laos.

After breakfast at the hotel, we will have full day today to discover Laos nature with a rafting trip out of town and an exciting elephant ride to or from Tad Sae Waterfall (or an alternative route in the dry season). From the elephant camp located 15km from the town in the middle of the forest, we will cross a small river venturing with our Asian elephants for more than an hour in a scenic route through the forest, plantations, fields and villages . . . toward the Nam Khan River and up to the waterfalls of Tad Sae. Our lunch will be served here before we have a relaxing rafting tour along the river back to the camp. Late afternoon return to Luang Prabang and during your relaxing time at night, you can hang around the daily night market in Luang Prabang, where we can find a lovely collection of handmade textiles made by the local hill tribal people living near Luang Prabang. Overnight in Luang Prabang.

Day 10: LUANG PRABANG DEPARTURE (B)

After breakfast, we'll visit The National Museum at the former Royal Palace, which displays a lovely collection of the artifacts reflecting the richness of Lao culture dating back to the days of the early King. Visit Central Market or Hmong market in Luang Prabang. At your leisure in the rest of the day until transfer to the airport for your departure flight.

SERVICES INCLUDED

- English-speaking tour guides (each area)
- Land transfer by air-con vehicles
- Twin-shared room with daily breakfast
- Meals as quoted in the program
- Bottle of drinking water during transfer
- Admission
- Elephant riding
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SERVICES not INCLUDED

- Low season big discount
- Airfare (international and domestic) and airport tax
- Visa arrangement for Vietnam and Laos
- Early check-in, late check-out surcharge
- Other meals, drinks
- Personal expenses (phone call, laundry, tipping etc.)
- Any services not mentioned in the program