

## CHALLENGE TOUR 11 Days 10 Nights

### Day 1: Hanoi Arrive

On arrival at Noi Bai Airport, you are met and transferred to hotel. Ha Noi, Vietnam's capital, is a stylish and gracious city that retains an unique old world charm and some Asia 's most striking colonial architecture. The many lakes and parks make for relaxing atmosphere. (If time permit) we enjoy a short cyclo excursion through the bustling old quarter streets named after the specific goods once offered for sale at these places. Overnight in Ha Noi

### Day 2: Hanoi – Lao Cai (B)



This morning we enjoy a half day city tour, seeing the the Ho Chi Minh Complex, containing the mausoleum of the nation's founder Ho Chi Minh, the Presidential Palace, and the Ho Chi Minh's house on stilts. The complex also comprises the One Pillar Pagoda, whose origins date back to the foundation of Hanoi. The next stop of our trip is the impressive Ethnologic Museum, dedicated to Vietnam's 54 ethnic minorities,

some of which we will see on our forthcoming days. We also visit the Temple of Literature and the peaceful lake of Hoan Kiem with its sacred temple. The reminder of the day is free for your own exploration of Ha Noi until transferring to the railway station for a night train to Lao Cai. The train conditions are extremely basic however we will travel in soft sleeper class which is compartment for 4 passengers. Overnight on board.

### Day 3: Lao Cai – Sapa (B)

The train journey arrives in Laocai this morning. We embark on a scenic drive uphill to SaPa. At an elevation of 1,500 meters, Sa Pa is the former hill retreat for French administrators when the heat in plain became unbearable. The remoteness and simple lifestyle of ethnic minorities are a highlight of Sa Pa although conditions are very basic. After checking into hotel we can soak up the fresh climate as much as we want by spending time to wander around. The ethnic people are frequently seen in this hill town and small vendors along the street sell local textiles and handicraft. Overnight in Sa Pa



### Day 4: Sapa – Ta Van (B, L, D)

Today we get well and truly off the beaten track as we trek into this beautiful mountain region. On the way we pass by the hill villages of San Sa Ho and Lao Chai which are

home of the Black Hmong hill-tribe people. They still retain their age-old cultural traditions and are recognisably distinct from each other by their dress. We finish our walking day on arrival at Ta Van village where we are guest of a Zay family. The accommodation is very simple and dormitory style, no western facilities. Overnight at Ta Van village.

#### **Day 5: Ta Van – Den Thang (B,L,D)**

The majority of local trails follows undulating mountainsides therefore our trek will involve some uphill and downhill walking, but it is still an unforgettable experience. A part of the pleasure of our adventure is the simple joy of seeing the verdant and rugged mountain scenery and the lifestyle of local people. We ascend a very steep slope before arriving at Den Thang. This remote village is conquered by the Hmong hill tribe people who are very poor but have an interesting history and a colorful culture. Overnight at Den Thang Village.



#### **Day 6: Den Thang – Ban Ho (B,L,D)**

Upon leaving the village of our previous night we set off on a full day walk towards Ban Ho. The trekking of today is also challenging; however, some physical preparation will allow you to maximize enjoyment from the walk. Along the way we pass through several hamlets and are sure to attraction attention as this part of the country receives very few visitors. On arrival at Ban Ho village by mid afternoon we will have time to walk around this charming village, enabling us to understand a little more about their culture and lifestyle. Overnight at Ban Ho village.

#### **Day 7: Ban Ho – Thanh Phu (B,L,D)**

The extremely beautiful mountain region around Sapa is ideal for anyone seeking a true adventure and trekking expedition. We continue venturing into the lowland with stopover at the Xa Pho, Tay hill tribe villages, just some of Vietnam's most colorful ethnic minority groups. After a full walking day, we reach our destination, the Tay hill tribe village of Thanh Phu which is situated in a picturesque valley. Here we will be toasted as honored guests and will be sample some of their homemade rice wine. Overnight at Thanh Phu village.



#### **Day 8: Thanh Phu – Ben Den (B,L)**

The impressive way to complete our trekking expeditions is a few hours walk along the local path. On arrival at the small village of Ben Den, we meet up with our local

transport and take a short drive to Pho Lu for a night train back to Ha Noi. The train conditions are basic; however this journey is in keeping with the adventurous nature of our trips and allows you to experience a taste of the 'real Vietnam'. The food on board is not the best you will have in Vietnam, so we recommend you prepare some foods, water, snack. Overnight on board.



### **Day 9: Hanoi – Halong (B)**

An early morning arrival in Hanoi. We enjoy a shower before travelling by roads to Halong Bay. We make stop en route in Hai Phong, the biggest port town of northern Vietnam. This charming town has plenty of interesting sights, some of which are the Hang Kenh Communal House, the Du Hang Pagoda, the Hang Kenh Carpet Factory,

and the vibrant Sat Market. A drive through tree lined boulevards punctuated with many striking French colonial architecture, will deliver us to some of these landmarks. We continue our journey Halong Bay and spend the remainder of the day for a well - earned rest on Bai Chay Beach. Overnight in Ha Long.

### **Day 10: Halong – Hanoi (B,L)**

The legendary Ha Long Bay is truly one of Vietnam's most impressive scenic sights. Today we embark on a sailing boat for an exploration of this wondrous bay, which is dotted with some 3,000 limestone islands rising amazingly from the clear and emerald water. The limestone karst formations are littered with beaches, grottoes and beautiful caves. Along the way we will anchor for a leisurely swim in a secluded cove and an enjoyable visit to one of the many hidden grottoes beneath towering cliffs. After a seafood lunch on board we make our way back to Ha Noi, arriving in time to see an evening performance of Hanoi's famous water puppets. Overnight in Ha Noi.



### **Day 11: Hanoi – Departure (B)**

There is a free time for you to relax or further explore Ha Noi. The trip ends after your transfer to Noi Bai Airport for departure.