

# sapa hill tribe and trek, q&a



## how big is the group?

Each group is intended to be a minimum of 16 people in order to run and a maximum of approximately 25 people due to the wilderness environment in which the expedition is taking place.

## how long is the flight?

You will be flying with from London to Hanoi, and returning from Hanoi to London. Your flight tickets will be issued to you at the airport on departure. The flying time is approximately 15 hours. If you choose to book your own flights you must confirm with the Charity Challenge office before paying otherwise you may be liable for your included group flights (please contact [flights@charitychallenge.com](mailto:flights@charitychallenge.com) for further assistance).

## what is the luggage allowance and will I be carrying my own luggage?

As no formal clothes are needed, luggage should be kept to the absolute minimum – details on what to pack are provided in your kit list. Your rucksack/soft bag (suitcases are not appropriate) must not exceed 15kgs in weight. Each day when you begin to trek, your personal kit will be transported

## what will the accommodation be like?

The hotels are all basic but clean and comfortable. You will be sharing in rooms of two or possibly three. Camping will be in 6-8 people single-sex tents and local home-stays will be 3-4 people in 1 room with shared facilities. The highlight of the trip is at the eco-lodge in 2 person rooms. If you are travelling with a friend or partner who you wish to share with, please let Charity Challenge know in advance.

## do we need to take our own sleeping bags and mats, etc?

Sleeping mats and bags are provided however if you wish to bring your own sleeping mat, bag, or liner you may - a 2 season sleeping bag should be sufficient and a thermarest, please see the kit list for further details.

## will my valuables be safe?

While we will do everything to provide adequate safety for the group and security for your possessions, the general rule is that if you don't need it, don't bring it. This includes jewellery, necklaces, rings and even watches. Your passport and money should be kept on you at all times. You should take a photocopy of your passport, visa, and any vaccination certificates and leave a copy at home with a friend/relative in case of loss or damage to the originals.

## what is the food and drink like?

Food in Vietnam is a delight. It is a blend of Thai and Chinese food and is always freshly cooked with plenty of vegetables. Food is usually prepared with a minimum of oil and served with ubiquitous fish sauce called *nuoc mam*. Typical Vietnamese dishes include *pho*, a type of rice noodle soup eaten for breakfast, *cha gio*, deep fried spring rolls and *goi ngo sen*, a delicious salad made with lotus stems, shrimps and peanuts. Hanoi Beer are the local

brews. Wines are very expensive unless you want to sample locally made rice wine – 'Roau' (pronounced zeeo). Please let Charity Challenge know prior to departure if you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies.

## who will be leading the group?

We employ a number of first aid qualified trekking leaders, all of whom speak fluent English. They will be ultimately responsible for the running of the itinerary and the safety of your group.

## what is a typical day?

During the trekking days you will trek for 5-7 hours. Your support vehicles will back up the group wherever possible and be on call in event of assistance. We find shady stops for regular breaks. Here you will be able to re-energise with fruit, snacks and fill water bottles. At lunch you will re-group at a local beauty spot for a picnic lunch. In the evening there is usually an hour or so free time before we meet to discuss the next day's adventure. Dinner follows the briefing.

## how fit do I need to be?

Training and fitness is definitely required. It is important that you work specifically on your stamina, leg and joint strength, and balance in order to get as much out of the challenge as possible. Don't forget that the temperature and climate is different to the UK and that you will be exercising constantly for a number of days. Also see Fitness Training Advice.

## what if I can't keep up?

The event is not run as a race and there is always a large discrepancy in people's trekking abilities. We allow for this. There will always be a staff member at the back of the group to ensure you are not left behind and can take things at your own pace. If we find somebody is unable to trek at all, then we can transport him or her from one location to the next.

## what happens if I fall ill or there is an emergency?

Throughout the expedition, your H'mong support team will be close by, and we maintain phone contact with the back up vehicles. The team carry water & snacks and the first aid kit at all times. The local guides have walkie talkies with them too. If for any reason any injury should occur, or continuation is not possible, a relief vehicle will be made available. The relief vehicle will be a private air-conditioned bus, minibus or jeep that will support the trekking throughout the tour. The support vehicle is there for clients who need to rest for medical reasons, and will often contain refreshments such as water, snacks and soft drinks to make trekking more enjoyable.

### what is included in the cost of the expedition?

Your international flights to and from Vietnam, all meals and drinking water unless otherwise stated in the itinerary, all transfers, all accommodation, group first aid supplies, an English-speaking expedition leader and full local support team, a Charity Challenge T-Shirt, US\$20 to the local community project, and discount from Nomad Travellers Stores for personal equipment. We also make a contribution through Climate Care to offset the equivalent CO2 emissions of your international flight.

### what is not included in the cost of the expedition?

The following items are not included in your expedition and will be at your own expense - tips for the local support team, activities not mentioned in the itinerary, visa, departure tax (approx US\$12), personal spending money and travel to and from UK airports.

### what shall I do about spending money?

You will not need large amounts of money during this trip and other than at the start and end of the trip, you may well be in the countryside away from any foreign exchanges or banks. We recommend that you take sufficient amount of cash in small denominations. Travellers' cheques or credit cards will be accepted only in major towns – Hanoi. Bring a small supply of US\$ cash in US\$20 denominations. Typically US\$300 is an average ball park figure. Bring more if you wish to buy souvenirs!

### how much would you recommend for tips?

Tipping is personal and at your sole discretion. You should only tip if you feel that you have received good service. We recommend approx. US\$6-7 per person per day and this should be given to the expedition leader at the end of the expedition who will distribute it evenly among the lead guides and the porter team.

### should I take gifts or clothes for the locals?

We advise against giving small gifts to children as it can encourage begging. However, if you have any small items or clothing that you would like to donate, your expedition leader will collect it from you at the end of the expedition and make sure that it is distributed where it is needed most.

### what sort of weather should we expect?

Vietnam is generally hot and sunny. But it is a tropical climate and you may therefore experience tropical rain and very occasionally, storms. During the wet season it may be very humid.

In Sapa you will experience hot days cool nights. From September to late October the weather should be high 20C, hotter than an English summer with lovely clear days and cool nights. It cools down throughout November and December and from January – March it can be drizzly with misty rain but not usually too cold. Hanoi can be cool and cloudy from December to early March.

### what do you do to protect the environment?

We are keeping to a relatively small group so that we limit the impact we have on the surrounding environment. We follow the local guidelines on cultural respect and environmental protection. We will also be donating US\$20 per participant towards a local Vietnamese project. Also see Responsible Tourism notes.

### can you recommend any literature about the region?

- ? *Catfish and Mandala* by Andrew X. Pham. A cycle journey through Vietnam made by a young American Vietnamese man. Great read. Published by Picador Books
- ? *The Quiet American* Graham Greene's 1954 novel set during the last days of French rule
- ? *The Sorrow of War* – one of the finest books about the war written by Bao Ninh, who fought for North Vietnam.
- ? *The Rough Guide to Vietnam*.

### english

Hello  
Goodbye  
Please  
Thank you  
How are you?  
I'm fine  
You're welcome  
Excuse me/I'm sorry  
I understand  
I don't understand  
Yes  
No  
How much?  
Too expensive  
What is your name?  
One  
Two  
Three  
Four  
Five  
Six  
Seven  
Eight  
Nine  
Ten

### vietnamese

Xin Chao  
Tam biet  
Xin  
Cam un  
Co khue khong?  
Toi Khue  
Khong co gi  
Xin loi  
Toi hieu  
Toi Khong hieu  
Vang  
Khong  
Bao nhieu tien?  
Dat qua!  
Ten la gi?  
Mot  
Hai  
Ba  
Bon  
Nam  
Sau  
Bay  
Tam  
Chin  
Muoi

NB: The information provided above was correct at the time of going to print.