



## SAPA RETREAT

*(Please note that this is a sample itinerary and can be amended to suit)*

Sapa is a former French hill station situated in the valleys near the Chinese border. At the altitude of 1,600 meters Sapa has a cool climate all year round and a chilly winter. This inspired the French to build villas there as a summer retreat. Today, Sapa still attracts visitors for its stunning scenery, comfortable climate, colorful markets, and a variety of ethnic hill tribes living in nearby villages.



### Briefed Itinerary

Day 1: Hanoi – Train to Sapa  
Day 2: Sapa arrival  
Day 3: Sapa – Nini walk to hill tribe villages  
Day 4: Sapa – Train to Hanoi  
Day 5: Arrival Hanoi – Trip end

### Quick Facts

Tour grade: Easy (customizable)  
Trip code: VA09 (private tour)  
Trip duration: 5 days/ 4 nites

● ● ● ● ● Comfort 3  
● ● ● ● ● Active 3

### Highlights:

- Experience the Russian style train journey, explore the beautiful town of Sapa.
- Commence a trek through rice paddies, mountain passes, meet the H'mong and the Dao hill tribes in their villages.
- Visit the local colorful market of Sapa and have fun bargaining for goods.

### Land Only Itinerary

### Trip Map





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### Day 1: Hanoi - Sapa

Tonight you will be picked up at your hotel and transferred to Hanoi station by your tour guide who will assist with your check - in and escort you during your journey. The train departs approximately at 9:10pm. Enjoy some drinks at on-board restaurant before retiring to your cabin for a good night's sleep.

Overnight on A/C train.

### Day 2: Sapa (B)

After early arrival at Lao Cai, a Chinese border town, we take a short, scenic drive on the winding road to Sapa (approx. 45 mins). Check into the hotel, freshen up and have breakfast. Later we start with a mini trek (app 3 hours) to the hill tribe villages of Cat Cat. As we walk through these villages nestled in the valleys below Sapa, we will meet some of the local ethnic minority people such as Black H'mong and Red Dzao. We also climb the Ham Rong (Dragon Jaw) Mountain for a panoramic view of Sapa town and the magnificent scenery of the surrounding area below. The remainder of the day is free to explore and experience the delights of Sapa or visit the colorful local markets.

Overnight in Sapa town.

### Day 3: Sapa – Walk to hill tribe villages (B, L)

After breakfast we take a short drive to Lao Chai village. From the main road, we commence the long walk down to the village inhabited by the community of Black H'mong minority. Ta Phin is situated in a wide valley and surrounded by rice paddies. During our walk, we will have the opportunity to visit a Black H'mong household and learn a little about their traditional way of life. Continue our trek to another village where we will meet the Zay minority group. These people rely on providing home stay service for tourists however they still retain their unique tradition and practice. Return to Sapa for lunch and have free time in the afternoon. Overnight in Sapa town.

### Day 4: Sapa – Hanoi (B)

Free day in Sapa. An optional market day trip may be available. Depending on the day of the week, Bac Ha, home to the flower H'mong hill tribe minority people is open on Sunday; Can Cau on Saturday or Coc Ly on Tuesday. However you may choose to relax in Sapa town and enjoy the views, the wonderful shopping opportunities and local restaurants. Late afternoon we will drive back to Lao Cai to have dinner in a local restaurant before boarding an overnight train back to Hanoi.

Overnight on A/C train

### Day 5: Hanoi

Arrive back to Hanoi station in the early morning and transfer to our hotel at the end of our amazing adventure.

### Hotels to be used

Hotel Name	Location	Star Rating	Website
Bamboo Hotel Sapa	Sapa	N/A	N/A
Home-stay	Ta Van Village	N/A	N/A

### Price

Policy Applied	Valid from now until 30 Sep 2010 Price per person in USD in party of						
Group Size	1	2	3 - 5	6 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 15	Sgl Sup
Price list	625	369	326	267	253	243	95



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**Note:** Price may be subject to currency fluctuation until deposit is made. Please note that these services have not yet been booked and this proposal is subject to availability.

### Tour includes:

- Accommodation based on twin shared room at selected hotels with daily breakfast  
*Check-in time at all hotels is 14:00 and check-out time at all hotels is 12:00*  
*Early check-in and late check-out is subject to availability with surcharge.*
- Meals, drinks and other those mentioned in the itinerary (B= Breakfast, L= Lunch, D= Dinner)
- English speaking tour guide(s)
- Tours and transfers as mentioned by private air-conditioned vehicle
- Sightseeing fees and permits during guided time
- Train tickets: Hanoi – Sapa – Hanoi (economy class)

### Tour excludes:

- Travel Insurance (Compulsory)
- Other flight tickets
- Visas and airport departure tax
- Meals, drinks and other those mentioned in the itinerary
- Laundry, telephone calls and expenditure of a personal nature
- Tips and gratuities

## Practical Information

### Country Facts:

- Official Name: The Socialist Republic of Vietnam
- Population: 84 million
- Language: Vietnamese
- Religion: Predominantly Buddhist, with Confucianism, Taoism and other minorities.
- Currency: Vietnam Dong (VND)
- Time Zone: GMT plus 7 hours
- Electricity: 220V, 50 Hz AC (some 110V, 50HZ AC) 2 pin plugs
- Weights and Measurements: Metric
- International Dialing Code: +84

### Travel Insurance (compulsory)

Indochina Pioneer Vietnam does everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. However, traveling always involves some risk, so we require that you purchase travel insurance to protect you and your possessions against trip cancellation, medical problems, baggage loss or damage.

Direct Customer Service: [info@indochinapioneer.com](mailto:info@indochinapioneer.com)

Website: [www.indochinapioneer.com](http://www.indochinapioneer.com)

### Passports

You must have a valid passport which expires no later than 6 months after the date you leave Vietnam

### Visas

You must have either a letter of approval for a visa or a valid visa on arrival in Vietnam. You can get a Vietnam tourist visa from any Vietnam Embassy or consulate office world wide. Your travel agency can also obtain a visa on your behalf.

### Your Health: Preventing Illness



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We recommend you consult your doctor for vaccinations, preventions and medications needed for traveling in tropical country like Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

### Your First Aid Kit

It's a good idea to bring a first aid kit stored in a watertight container. You may never need the following items, but it's good to be prepared.

### Your Pre - departure Check List

- Travel documents (passport, visas, travel insurance certificate, air tickets, tour voucher)
- Money (traveler's cheques, cash, credit card, debit card and money pouch)
- Day pack for your personal needs during the day
- First aid kit
- Medication, including a doctor's letter if you are carrying a large amount of medication
- Prescription glasses and contact lens solution if required
- Alarm clock
- Flashlight
- Travel plug/international adapter
- Insect repellent
- Refillable water bottle and water purification method
- Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
- Bathing suit
- Lightweight travel towel
- Ear plugs/eye mask
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Local language phrase book
- Camera, film and/or memory cards with spare batteries
- Raincoat/umbrella
- Waterproof jacket
- Tampons (difficult to buy in Vietnam)
- Clothes suitable for visiting temples (long pants or long skirts, long sleeved tops)
- Warm clothes for winter months. (Nov to Feb)

**Please note:** As domestic airlines impose a maximum baggage weight of approximately 20kg, try to travel light. Also, train cabins and boat cabins in Halong Bay have limited space so pack light and use soft luggage if possible.

### Money

The local currency is the VND (dong). Bank notes come in denominations of 100, 200, 500, 1000, 2,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000, 50,000, 100,000d and 500,000 dong. Coins come in denominations of 200, 500, 1000, 2000, and 5000 dong.

Updated exchange rate can be found at <http://www.xe.com>

Both Vietnam Dong and USD can easily be used for purchasing.

ATMs are popular around the country. Credit cards are widely accepted in large shopping place and hotels, restaurants. Some small cash needed for petty shopping.

### Departure airport taxes

Your international and domestic tickets include departure tax.

### The Climate

The Vietnamese climate is variable and differs widely from north to south and within regions. Flooding may cause minor alterations to trip itineraries.



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Check <http://www.weather.com>

### Safety

Vietnam is considered one of the safest destinations in Asia. Women and independent travelers can travel easily here. Petty theft and purse snatchings sometimes occur, especially in the larger centres. The usual precautions are recommended: keep your bags zipped and close to you at all times. Do not carry large amounts of money. Keep some money in your hotel safe. When you are away from your hotel, you should remember to carry bottled water, toilet paper, a copy of your passport/visa/travel insurance/some limited cash/credit card cancellation numbers, your first aid kit, medications and hotel card. And don't forget your camera.

### Food and Beverage

Travellers to Vietnam love the food! Its style is unique, relying on quality and seasonally fresh ingredients rather than added spice. The traditional Vietnamese breakfast is Pho – a bowl of rice noodles flavored with sliced beef or chicken and fragrant broth, garnished with fresh coriander and bean sprouts. Excellent and well priced seafood is available throughout the country. Duck, chicken, beef, and lean pork are also featured on most menus, as well as fresh salads and vegetable dishes and delicious legacies from the French colonial period.

The Buddhist influence also means lots of vegetables. Bottled mineral water, soft drinks, and Vietnamese tea and coffee are readily available. Beer, usually a light larger style, is the main alcoholic drink. The local rice wine (ruou gao) is popular with many Vietnamese.. Just remember, do not drink (or even brush your teeth) with tap water. Use bottled water instead. It is safe to have ice in your drinks, and there is no need to avoid fruits and vegetables. Strict vegetarians should make it clear that they do not eat meat and fish as either may be included in vegetable dishes.

### Clothing

We recommend light, comfortable, and easy to launder clothing. It can be cool during Hanoi's winter and the rainy season in the central region, so a sweater or light jacket will come in handy. Thermal underwear is a must you are trekking in winter. You will need good walking shoes and sandals that can be easily removed for visiting temples and private homes. Your knees and shoulders should be covered when you are entering a temple.

### Etiquette

Body language: You should know that most Asian people believe that the head is the most important part of the body. To touch a Cambodian or Laotian or some Vietnamese people on the head is a grievous insult. Conversely, the feet are the lowest and the dirtiest part of the body. To point your feet at someone is an insult. To point your feet at an image of Buddha is unforgivable. Women should never touch monks and avoid sitting next to them on public transport.

### Business hours

Government agencies work Monday to Friday from 7:30 hrs to 16:30 hrs (excluding one-hour lunch) and are closed Saturday and Sunday. Banks are open Monday to Friday from 7:30 hrs or 8:00 to 11.30 hrs and from 13:00 hrs to 16:00 hrs and are closed Saturday and Sunday. Private shops are open from 8:00 or 8:30 hrs to 21:00 or 11:00 hrs

### Tipping

If you are happy with services provided by your local guides and drivers, a tip, though not compulsory, is appropriate. While it may not be customary to you, it is of great significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels, it inspires excellent service, and is an entrenched feature of the tourism industry across destinations. Here are our suggestions;

- Meals (restaurants): the average amount is \$1
- Guides: We recommend \$2-\$5 per day for local guides (depending on group size),



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- Drivers: You will have a range of drivers on your trip. Some will be with you for a short journey while others may be with you for few days. We would recommend a higher tip for those more involved with the group however a base of \$1 to \$2 per day would be appropriate (depending on group size).
- Bellboy: the average amount is \$1
- Chambermaid: the average amount is \$1 per day.

For larger groups and adventure trips you may want to increase this. But please remember that it's totally up to you, these are guidelines only.

For fully detailed travel tips in Indochina, please click [travel guide](#) on our website

*For any further information or inquiries, please feel free to email us at [sales@indochinapioneer.com](mailto:sales@indochinapioneer.com)*