STC EXPEDITIONS

ETHICAL SCHOOL ADVENTURES SINCE 2006



Vietnam

The Hidden Trails of Pu Luong

16 Days

Join us on this active exploration of northern Vietnam and experience the extraordinary beauty, tradition, and adventure that this region conjures up so effortlessly. We will bike and hike through rice terraces developed over thousands of years by the locals, visit traditional ethnic minority villages, learn how to make salt, discover towering limestone scenery and kayak amongst the UNESCO world heritage site of Halong Bay. Throughout it all, the magnificent beauty and vibrant colours of Vietnam come shining through.

counting carbon: informing decisions about climate action

4,336

Kg CO_2e per person

Learn more about our **Carbon Labels**

t: 01392 660056 | **e:** schools@thestc.co.uk | **w:** www.thestc.co.uk

Your Recommended Expedition Itinerary

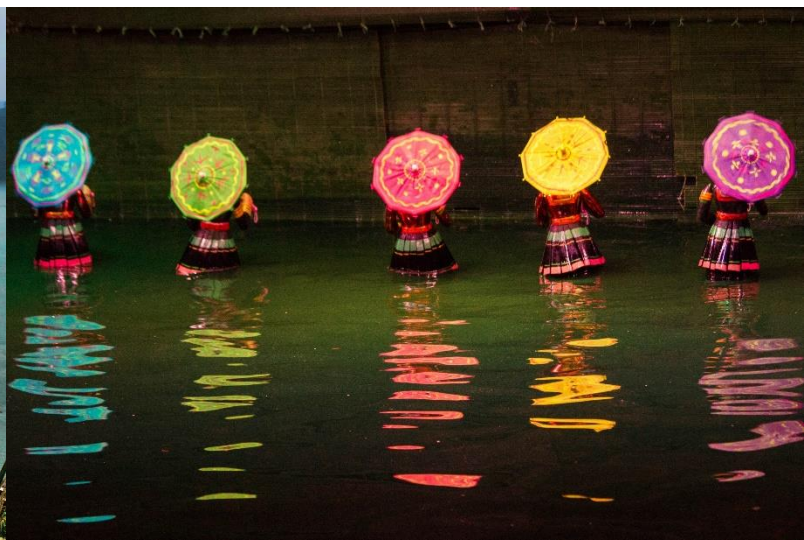
Days 1 - 2	**Depart from the UK, Arrive in Hanoi** On arrival, we are met at the airport and transferred to our hotel to check in. This evening we have a welcome dinner and a briefing from our Vietnamese trip leader.	LD
Day 3	**Hanoi cooking class with market visit - culture sites in Hanoi in the afternoon, night train to Lao Cai** At 7:30 – 8:00AM pick up at your hotel and transfer to the meeting point and go to the market to buy all ingredients for our cooking class today. Then you will have lunch with the food you cooked today. Afternoon visit Literature temple, Ethnic minority museum, Hoan Kiem Lake then have dinner] and stay overnight in Hanoi.	BLD
Day 4	**Hanoi - Cycling to Mai Chau** Departure from your Hanoi hotel at 8:00 AM. Start riding after an hour drive on the quiet countryside roads, cycling distance can be flexible as we will have our van following us all the way. We will take a lunch stop halfway to Mai Chau, we will then continue our afternoon cycling up and down hills, and along the Hoa Binh lakes where you encounter an amazing view of the peaceful lakes. Our late afternoon descending down hills to Mai Chau, arrive in Poom Coom – a tribal village of Thai. Dinner and overnight in a local guest house here. Cycling Distance: about 50 – 80 km Trail Difficulty: 3/5	BLD
Day 5	**Mai Chau- Pu Luong** It's better to be up early to witness the local life here. After breakfast, we go for a short car ride then cycle along Ma riverbank, and If good weather, we will try a 10 km single track to some very remote villages along Ma river. Enjoy our picnic lunch in a local house then challenge ourselves with 12 km cycling up hill to 650+ m through Pu Luong nature reserve, you can give this a miss by enjoying the views from the van support to the top. We then hit the trails down-hill riding with spectacular view of mountain, forest and rice paddies. We arrive in Don Village for dinner and overnight at a traditional homestay, take a short walk around the village to enjoy the best-terraced fields of Pu Luong. Cycling Distance: 40-80 km Trail Difficulty: 3/5	BLD
Day 6	**Kho muong village to Hieu** Waking up early today is recommended as your chance to witness more local activities in the morning. After having our breakfast, we say good-bye to our host by around 8.00 AM for our good hike ahead. More trek today through hidden gems of Pu Luong including beautiful view of valleys, nice terraces and peaceful villages. We stop for our picnic lunch then continue our trek through more villages to reach Hieu village in the afternoon. Take a rest as you wish then you are free to stroll around the village to interact with the locals and visit the beautiful waterfall nearby. Back to the homestay for dinner and overnight at homestay. Trekking Distance: about 12 km (5 – 6 hours) Trail Difficulty: 3/5	BLD





Day 7	**Pu Luong Trek from Hieu village to Nua village (homestay)** Breakfast at the homestay at 8:00 AM, we take another day of village-to-village trekking and via nice cool streams. Short pause for lunch enroute then following the local path via rice paddies to get to our homestay for shower, dinner and stay the night. Trekking Distance: 10-12 km (about 5-6 hours) Trail Difficulty:4 /5	BLD
Day 8	**Nua – Kit – Nua village** Leave Nua village after having breakfast. Start our full day trek climbing deeper into the Pu Luong Nature Reserve. Picnic lunch on the way. Continuing our trek, passing through ethnic villages. Our day ends with a wonderful sunset (weather dependent) in Nua village. Dinner and overnight at our Thai homestay. Trekking Distance: about 15 km Trail Difficulty: 3/5	BLD
Days 9 - 11	**Nua village project – Afternoon transfer to Ninh Binh** This morning we can explore the village by walking and cycling. We have lunch and then take a boat trip into National Park for some bird watching. Later, we return to our homestay for dinner and join in a traditional evening of music with the villagers.	BLD
Day 12	**Ninh Binh Excursion** This morning we will join in with local people to make salt – still done in a traditional way. We also visit a local museum before having lunch and then transferring to Halong. On arrival in Halong City in the late afternoon, we check into our hotel and have dinner. Tomorrow is the start of our grand finale – a trip through Halong Bay.	BLD
Day 13	**Ninh Binh – Halong bay welcome on board (overnight on cruise)** Have breakfast and then we will go to Halong bay. After around 4 hours' drive, we arrive in Halong harbour. Get on the boat and have lunch while cruise on the bay. Do kayaking and swimming. More cruise and park overnight area. Enjoy cooking demonstration and enjoy happy hour, have dinner and stay overnight on the cruise.	BLD
Day 14	**Bai Tu Long Bay** Full day cruise and kayaking, swimming on the bay.	BLD
Day 15	**Cruise and then back to Hanoi (hotel stay)** More cruise on the bay, visit Thien Canh Son cave then back cruise for brunch before check out and cruise back harbour. Noon time off the cruise and transfer back Hanoi. Check in and have dinner on your own.	BLD
Day 16	**Transfer to airport and return to UK** We are transferred to the airport in time for our flight back home.	B





Look what's included:

· International flights
· All accommodation, transportation and activities
· All food as described above
· Local, bi-lingual, first-aid qualified STC leader
· Parent and student trip launch presentation
· Pre-travel training programme
· 1-day offsite safety INSET day for school staff
· ATOL financial protection
· Emergency Medical & Repatriation Insurance
· Group first aid kit and prescription meds pack
· BS8848 safety management and risk assessments
· Detailed pre-departure information and kit lists
· Comprehensive teacher travel packs
· Permanent operations team in your destination
· 24-hour UK operational support whilst overseas
· Donations to two carbon & conservation charities
· Free Fairtrade t-shirt for every participant and teacher
· Free travel guide book to your destination

What's not included:

· Transport to airport in UK
· Drinks (advice will be given on purification of water)
· Visas or tourist cards if required
· Any required inoculations or Covid tests
· Personal spending money
· Tips for guides, drivers and porters (ask for guidance)
· Airport departure taxes paid locally
· Personal effects and cancellation insurance



A word about Responsible Tourism

On our expeditions and educational journeys, we strive to connect teachers and students with the people they meet, nurture the cultures they experience and protect the beautiful environments they are lucky enough to explore.

Many companies talk the talk, few truly walk the walk. We are far from perfect, but we are leading the way in sustainability in the school travel sector. In 2018 we were the first UK travel company to become **Travelife Certified** – a verified sustainability certificate formally recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

Travelife CERTIFIED Excellence in sustainability

Trees for Life

This is our passion, and we'd love to tell you more about it in due course. In the meantime, for more information on some of the steps we take as a company to make our operations more sustainable, please visit:
https://www.thestc.co.uk/travel/what-do-we-do/

Physical Rating for this trip: Grade 3

3/5

Moderate physical activities are included in Grade 3 trips. Good health and reasonable fitness are important to get the most out of the trip. Trips of this grading are likely to include some walking at moderate altitude (up to 2,500m) and occasional longer/harder days may be involved, with between five and seven hours of walking on certain days. The trip may contain other activities such as cycling or rafting which also require physical effort and a reasonable level of fitness. Some steady preparation and an increase if your underlying fitness levels would help you get the most from this grade trip.

Cultural Rating for this trip: Grade 4

4/5

Students joining trips at this level will find the comforts of home are more of a rarity – or viewed another way, a welcome luxury. English is unlikely to be widely spoken and the food will be quite different to home, perhaps for extended sections of the trip. You should observe local customs so not to cause offence. You'll be exposed to signs of poverty and accommodation in some locations is likely to be basic. Whilst a challenge, destinations and trips at cultural level 4 are also a fantastic opportunity to see a very different part of the world.



Travel Safety & Other Expedition Training

Preparing students and teachers for their upcoming adventure is an opportunity to teach important life skills and a vital part of our overall approach to safety management. Please ask for your quote for the training schedule specific to your expedition. Topics covered will include:

Responsible Tourism workshop

An interactive workshop covering ethical and sustainable travel dilemmas as well as:

- Long term positive and negative impacts of travel
- Water usage & other resource management
- Cultural considerations
- Ethical volunteering and cultural imperialism

Travel Safety Training

This is delivered through a series of talks, games, discussions, activities and videos:

- Safety approach and attitude to risk
- Being open about problems
- Health & hygiene
- Specific hazards related to your expedition e.g: dehydration, altitude, bite avoidance etc.
- Money management
- Kit selection, luggage and packing
- Water purification
- Itinerary & activity specific issues
- Fitness expectations / training ideas



A journey of 1,000 miles...

Starts with a single step... Contact us now to start your expedition journey

1 Ask for your personalised quote & further information

If this itinerary doesn't quite scratch your expedition itch then let us tailor-make one for you. Our wealth of experience and expert in-country contacts means we can design an adventure that's just right for you and your students. Contact us for more information and a detailed quote.

2 Ask for risk assessments and marketing materials

We can provide initial risk and threat assessments to help you with your expedition approval process. Ask for posters and your Pre-Booking Information Pack too.

3 Arrange an expedition launch evening

This is a chance for students and parents to hear more about the expedition with a comprehensive information evening covering the itinerary, safety management, the build-up to the trip and lots more. There is also plenty of opportunity for questions.

STC EXPEDITIONS

The home of the modern, innovative school expedition, where a sustainable, ethical approach guarantees unique experiences and a life enhancing adventure.

STC EDUCATIONAL

Our school trips and educational tours are all about maximising the learning opportunities of travel. It's all here, the humble school tour has just come of age.

STC ESCAPES

Adventures, holidays and cultural journeys for teachers looking to 'Escape the Classroom' and discover more about our amazing world, its people and places.



"I am being completely serious when I say that I won't ever run a school trip without you guys. I trust you and your team completely - and the in-country staff that you carefully cultivate and train are a cut above the rest."
Teacher feedback, *King's High Warwick*

Contact Us:

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