



This prospectus sets out the contents of the tour and together with the Booking Conditions and Booking Form is the basis of our contract with you.

Vietnam – The Far North **28 March - 15 April 2013** **Tour 1271**

This is an adventurous, moving on tour through the mountainous northern provinces of Vietnam. Luggage transfer and vehicle support will be provided, but the tour is best suited to fit, experienced cycling enthusiasts. Vietnam's far north is undoubtedly the best place to cycle in the country as the roads see virtually no tourists and avoid Vietnam's notorious highways. Starting in vibrant Hanoi, the road winds through superb scenery of limestone karstic rock formations, gorges and rice paddies up to the Chinese border. This area contains some of Vietnam's most spectacular mountain scenery and is populated by the greatest concentration of ethnic tribal groups in Asia. There is a rest day at Bac Ha, giving time to visit the colourful Sunday market before climbing Tram Ton, Vietnam's highest pass, at 1900metres. After returning to Hanoi on the overnight train, the route continues by road to world heritage Ha Long Bay, then includes a cruise on a luxury junk amidst the surreal beauty of the limestone islands. The last night is spent in Hanoi with time to explore the old town and to visit Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum.

Itinerary

- Thurs 28 Mar Fly from London Heathrow on Thai Air flight TG911 to Bangkok, departing at 1150.
- Fri 29 Mar Arrive in Bangkok at 0610. Onward flight Thai Air flight TG682 to Hanoi, departing at 0750. Arrive at 0935. Transfer to hotel. Assemble bikes. Evening at leisure. Stay 1 night.
- Sat 30 Mar Vehicle transfer and short cycle ride to Ba Be National Park. Stay 1 night.
- Sun 31 Mar Morning boat cruise then cycle to Bac Me. Stay 1 night.
- Mon 1 Apr Cycle to Meo Vac. Stay 1 night.
- Tues 2 Apr Cycle to Dong Van. Stay 1 night.
- Wed 3 Apr Cycle to Yen Minh. Stay 1 night.
- Thurs 4 Apr Cycle to Ha Giang. Stay 1 night.
- Fri 5 Apr Cycle to Pan Hou Eco-resort. Stay 1 night.
- Sat 6 Apr Part cycle, part vehicle transfer to Bac Ha. Stay 2 nights.
- Sun 7 Apr Day at leisure in Bac Ha to visit Sunday tribal market.
- Mon 8 Apr Cycle to Sa Pa. Stay 2 nights.
- Tues 9 Apr Cycle over Tram Ton pass and return to Sa Pa (the highest pass in Vietnam).
- Wed 10 Apr Cycle to Lao Cai to board the overnight train to Hanoi.
- Thurs 11 Apr Arrive Hanoi early morning. Transfer to Ha Long Bay. Afternoon cruise. Overnight on luxury junk.
- Fri 12 Apr Morning cruise before returning by road to Hanoi. Pack bikes for journey home. Stay 1 night.
- Sat 13 Apr Time to explore Vietnam's vibrant capital, Hanoi. Visit old quarter and Ho Chi Minh mausoleum. Afternoon transfer to Hanoi airport for Thai Air flight TG565 to Bangkok, departing at 2025. Arrive Bangkok 2215.
- Sun 14 Apr Onward Thai Air flight TG910 to London Heathrow, departing at 0110.
- Mon 15 Apr Arrive London Heathrow at 0715.
- Mileage 60 - 110 kilometers per day

Luggage carrying

This is a fully supported tour. There will be vehicles to transfer luggage, participants and cycles.



Accommodation and meals

Accommodation on most nights will be in 2-3 star guesthouses/hotels with en-suite facilities. One night will be spent on an overnight sleeper train (4 berth carriages), and one night on a comfortable luxury junk, two per cabin, with attached bathroom. Rooms are based on two people sharing. All meals are provided, apart from lunches on non-cycling days. Most evening meals will be taken at hotels or local restaurants. Vegetarian food is available.

Price - £2199

The price is based on a minimum number of 16 participants taking part in the tour and is calculated at a rate of 1.53 US Dollars to £1 sterling (based on exchange rates published on www.x-rates.com on 25 September 2011; please note Booking Conditions, clause 4). If there are insufficient bookings by the closing date of 17 January 2013 we will contact you and return all monies paid, though in certain circumstances the tour may still run at below minimum numbers but at the same price.

Price includes:

- Flights London-Bangkok-Hanoi, and Hanoi-Bangkok-London
- 13 nights hotel accommodation, half board basis, sharing rooms
- 1 night overnight sleeper train from Lao Cai to Hanoi
- 1 night luxury junk, shared cabins, lunch, evening meal and breakfast
- Lunches and light refreshments on all cycling days
- Coach transfers between Hanoi airport and hotel and from Hanoi to Ha Long Bay and return
- Other vehicle transfers as per itinerary
- Support vehicle to transfer luggage, participants and cycles as necessary
- The services of a local English-speaking guide
- CTC Cycling Holidays & Tours costs

Price does not include:

- Meals in transit
- Drinks with evening meals
- Lunches and daytime refreshments on non-cycling days
- Entry fees to any attractions – budget £10
- Vietnam visa costs – budget £30
- Gratuities for support crews; tips in restaurants / hotels
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance

Payment schedule

A deposit of £200 per person must accompany the Booking Form, and an interim payment of £600 per person is due by 31 August 2012. The final balance of £1399 per person is to be paid ten weeks prior to departure, by 17 January 2013. Cheques should be made payable to **CTC Tours** or complete the credit/debit card slip in the booking pack.

Cancellations

Should you be forced to cancel your booking for any reason you must notify us in writing. Cancellation charges are as follows:

Written notice received:	Cancellation charge:
Before 31 August 2012	Deposit (£ 200)
31 August 2012 to 17 January 2013	30% (£ 800)
18 January 2013 through to departure	100% (£2199)

To make a booking

Complete, sign and return the Booking Form together with your deposit and the relevant part of the Travel Insurance Declaration Form **directly to the leader** (address on Booking Form).

Passports, Visas and Health

Visas are required for Vietnam. Information on how these can be obtained will be provided by the leader.

There are no compulsory vaccinations for EU residents although it is strongly recommended that you are vaccinated against Typhoid and both Hepatitis A and B. Tetanus and polio vaccinations should also be up to date at the time of travel. You should contact your doctor at least 3 months prior to travel to obtain these vaccinations and the latest advice to travellers re malarial prophylactics.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you are adequately insured for this tour.

Whether you already hold a policy or will be taking out a new one, the cover it offers must be comparable to that stated in clause 8 of the Booking Conditions, and you must complete the enclosed Insurance Declaration Form and return it with your Booking Form.

CTC Cycling Holidays & Tours Ltd can accept no responsibility for any costs you may incur due to insufficient insurance cover.

LEADER'S INFORMATION SHEET

The information below is given by the tour leader to help enquirers decide if the tour is suitable for them.

Vietnam – The Far North **28 March - 15 April 2013** **Tour 1271**

The area covered by the Tour

The far north of Vietnam is undoubtedly the best area in the country for cycling, as the roads see virtually no tourists and avoid Vietnam's notorious highways. From Hanoi we go to Ba Be National Park with its breathtaking scenery of towering limestone mountains, forests, waterfalls and lakes, then cycle north through the mountains to Bac Me and on to Meo Vac. Here, close to the Chinese border, is reputedly one of the best road trips in Vietnam, the road cuts into the side of the rock face. Far below is the Nho Que River, and towering above is the rock face of the mighty gorge.

On to the Lung Cu commune, the northernmost point in Vietnam, before continuing through limestone peaks and perpendicular rock walls to Yen Minh then on to Ha Giang. A more leisurely ride takes us to Pan Hou eco-site near Thong Nguyen Village.



We will enjoy a day off the bikes at Bac Ha with its interesting Sunday market, frequented by colourful Tay, Nung, Dao, Flower H'Mong, Giay and Phu La hill-tribes. The route then continues to Sa Pa, a hill station established by the French, in a beautiful setting surrounded by mountains. A climb to the Tram Ton Pass, the highest pass in Vietnam, is followed next day with an exhilarating descent to Lao Cai, where we board the overnight train to Hanoi.

The final three days, cruising through the supernatural beauty of the limestone islands of Ha Long Bay, visiting a floating village, swimming or trekking, then exploring Hanoi's old town and/or Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum provide a perfect

wind-down to a challenging but fantastic bike ride.

Rides and rest days

The riding will be challenging at times, as the distances are between 60-100kms most days and the terrain is hilly and mountainous in places. Most of the route is paved but there are some unmade sections. This tour is best suited to experienced adventure cyclists who can competently cope with the occasional unmade sections and the daily distances. You will be free to ride at your own pace, allowing you to interact with the local population and enjoy the magnificent scenery. There will be vehicle support on all cycling days.

There will be one rest day at Bac Ha, which is timed to coincide with market day. Early on Sunday mornings, villagers from various ethnic communities gather to sell their products and livestock at the market, which then transforms into what may well be one of the most colourful markets in Vietnam. Many people arrive on foot or ponies. The Flower H'Mong women are extremely colourful, with their gorgeous attire in vibrant colours, layers of dresses and underskirts of printed and embroidered fabrics, heads covered with interesting shaped and folded scarves – a photographer's paradise. There are also rest days at the end of the tour as per the tour prospectus.

Accommodation / Meals

The guesthouses/hotels we use are reasonable, generally equivalent to our 2-3 star with private facilities, flush toilets and showers. There will be one night on a luxury junk and one night on the overnight sleeper train from Lao Cai to Hanoi (4 persons per carriage). Breakfast will be taken at hotels, snacks will be provided whilst cycling, and dinner will be either at the hotel or at a local restaurant. Food is plentiful with Vietnamese-style stir fries, rice, noodles and small amounts of meat or fish. There will be fresh fruit. Mineral water is readily available throughout the tour.

Group information

The maximum group size will be 20 including the leaders.

Weather and Clothing

Daytime temperatures should be warm with the risk of some rain. Evenings will be cool and night-time temperatures may be cold. Bring appropriate warm clothing, wet-weather cycling gear and sun cream.

Cycles / Equipment

Touring, ATB or hybrid cycles will be suitable if well maintained and fitted with good wheels and fairly wide road tyres. Road/race bikes with narrow tyres are not recommended. Low gears are advisable. You will not need to carry luggage, but a bar bag or rack-top pack will be useful for spare clothing, camera, sun cream, snacks etc. You should be able to carry two water bottles. It is advisable to fit a calibrated cycle computer, as this will aid navigation. Lights will not be necessary. Each participant will be expected to carry sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs. Once we leave Hanoi, cycle spares will not be available on route. Helmets are not mandatory but if you do *not* intend to wear one, please check that your travel insurance will cover you in the event of a claim.

Money

There will be very few opportunities to spend money other than in Hanoi and Sa Pa. Beer and snacks should cost no more than £10 per day. Currency exchange (US dollars and UK sterling) is available at Hanoi airport. The local currency is the Vietnamese Dong, with approximately 30,000 VNG to £1 sterling.

Maps

As the roads are few, navigation is simple so detailed route descriptions will not be necessary, but you should carry a map in case you become separated from the group. Recommended map – Reise Know-How Verlag Northern Vietnam, ISBN 3-8317-7151-0. We will be supplying a photocopied map of Vietnam showing an outline of the route.

Travel Insurance and Advice

Make sure you have read Clause 8 in the Booking Conditions. Before booking you should check the Foreign Office 'Travel Advice by Country' at www.fco.gov.uk or on 0845 850 2829.

About the leaders

We are both enthusiastic cyclists and have been CTC members for 20 years. We have led tours to many worldwide destinations, and each year we look forward to the reunion with regular travelling companions but also get great satisfaction from introducing new members to the unique camaraderie of CTC holidays. We do not have a set style of leadership but adapt to suit the needs of the group. We encourage all prospective participants to contact us to talk through the tour prior to booking.

John and Pat Ashwell

2 The Retreat, Off Camp Road, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, BS23 2EN

Telephone: 01934 746638 - Mobile 07766 091627

comebiking@btinternet.com

www.comebiking.com