

# Vietnam Hill Tribe Trek AND BEAR SANCTUARY VISIT

24th October - 3rd November 2018

## Information Pack



Join this exclusive challenge to help support Animals Asia end bear farming and improve the welfare of animals in Asia.

This trip is operated by The Different Travel Company (ATOL 6706) for Animals Asia Foundation UK (Registered Charity No. 1086903). All the flights in this brochure are financially protected by the ATOL scheme. When you pay you will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate. Please ask for it and check to ensure that everything you booked (flights, hotels and other services) is listed on it. Please see our booking conditions for further information or for more information about financial protection and the ATOL Certificate go to: [www.atol.org.uk/ATOLCertificate](http://www.atol.org.uk/ATOLCertificate).





## Vietnam Hill Tribe Trek & Bear Sanctuary Visit

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### About Vietnam

Vietnam shares its borders with Cambodia, Laos, China and 3,000km of coastline facing the South China Sea. Vietnam is one of the most densely populated country in the world with 80% still living a rural existence. The majority of the population (87%) are Viet or 'Kinh' people; the remaining 13% is made up of over 50 ethnic hill tribe peoples who live mostly in the central and northern mountainous areas of the country. Each hill tribe has its own unique customs and dialect.



### Hanoi

Vietnam's leafy capital is a city of lakes, shaded boulevards and public parks. With narrow alleyways lined with shops selling traditional handicrafts and arts the old centre is an enchanting place to wander. A chaotic mass of motorbikes swarms through the tangled web of streets, locals sip coffee and take part in synchronised Tai Chi. Designer clothing stores sit next to noodle bars and the colonial legacy of Vietnam's past is complimented by the modern high rise buildings. Hanoi is a paradox but fascinating and beguiling.



### The Bear Sanctuary

Over 11,200 bears are held on bile farms throughout China and Vietnam and undergo torturous extraction methods for their bile because it is believed to be effective as an ingredient in traditional Asian medicine despite the availability of inexpensive and effective herbal and synthetic alternatives. With assistance of local government forestry departments, Animals Asia's Moon Bear Rescue Centre in Tam Dao, Vietnam has

saved over one hundred bears from the cruelty of the country's illegal bear bile industry. After months of surgery and physiotherapy to mend shattered bodies, the bears are rehabilitated and live out their lives in semi-natural enclosures and dens positioned on 12 hectares of land just outside of the beautiful Tam Dao National Park. The Rescue Centre also conducts ground-breaking research to help educate and change the attitudes of those who use traditional Asian bile medicines.



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### Itinerary

**Day 1 (Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> October): London to Hanoi.** Depart London for an indirect overnight flight to Hanoi.



**Day 2 (Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> October): Hanoi.** Arrive in Hanoi and transfer to a central hotel. You will have the rest of the day at leisure to settle in and explore independently. This evening you will gather together for a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

*Accommodation: hotel.*

*Meals: Dinner.*



**Day 3 (Friday 26<sup>th</sup> October): Hanoi to Hang Village.** After breakfast we depart Hanoi for a scenic drive to Pu Luong Natural Reserve (approx. 4 hours). We will stop for lunch in Mai Chau before driving a further 22km into the reserve where we will begin our trek, a gentle 3-hour trek to Hang Village, home to a Thai ethnic minority where we spend the night with local Thai families in their traditional stilted houses, and have the chance to stroll around the village before dinner.

*Trek: approx. 3 hours / easy terrain.*

*Accommodation: Traditional stilt house.*

*Meals: BLD.*



**Day 4 (Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October): Hang Village to Kho Muong.** Today we will trek for around 6 hours on a path which runs mostly through jungle. We make a lunch stop in a small village along the way before setting off again this afternoon passing several Thai villages. Tonight we will stay in Kho Muong village, a Muong minority village.

*Trek: approx. 6 hours; slightly uphill, rocky path*

*Accommodation: Traditional stilt house.*

*Meals: BLD.*



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**Day 5 (Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> October): Kho Muong – Nua Village.** The trek is a little harder day today, as we trek uphill into the Pu Luong range, passing through a number of small hamlets and minority villages en route. After 3 hours of gentle ascent, we will then descend to the village of Nua, a village of Thai ethnic minority people, where we spend the night in local homes.

*Trek: approx. 6 hours, gentle uphill trail and a gradual descent.*

*Accommodation: Traditional stilt house.*

*Meals: BLD.*

**Day 6 (Monday 29<sup>th</sup> October): Nua Village – Hieu Village.** Today's trek through the verdant countryside will take around 6 hours as the path runs up and downhill through forests, rice terraces and scenic villages. Along the way we are likely to see farmers working on rice paddies and children going to school. We spend the night in the Thai village of Hieu.

*Trek: approx. 5 hours, undulating terrain.*

*Accommodation: Traditional stilt house.*

*Meals: BLD.*

**Day 7 (Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> October): Hieu Village – Pho Doan – Tam Dao National Park.** This morning our final day of trekking takes us along the Ma River where we will enjoy lovely views of the river, rice fields and waterwheels until we reach the small market down of Pho Doan where we stop for lunch. After lunch we will meet our vehicle and drive to Tam Dao National Park (approximately 5 hours), where we check into our hotel and have dinner.

*Trek: approx. 2-3 hours, long descent.*

*Accommodation: Hotel.*

*Meals: BLD*

**Days 8-9 (Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> October – Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> November): Tam Dao Bear Sanctuary.** The next two days are spent at the Tam Dao Moon Bear Rescue Centre where you will gain a deep understanding of the plight of the bears and the incredible work of Animals Asia.

*Accommodation: Hotel*

*Meals: BLD*



**Day 10 (Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> November): Tam Dao – Hanoi.** Today you will transfer from Tam Dao to Hanoi for the indirect flight home.

*Meals: BLD.*

**Day 11 (Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> November): Hanoi – London.** Arrive back into London.



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### Trek Overview

This 5-day trek takes you far off the beaten track and into the remote and beautiful hills of Northern Vietnam in the Pù Luông Nature Reserve area. Passing through remote villages and staying at different local stilt house accommodations each night will give you an authentic insight into the lifestyle of the ethnic minority people who live in the area. The trek is graded moderate to challenging.



### The Pù Luông Nature Reserve

The Pù Luông Nature Reserve is located on two parallel mountain ridges which are separated by a valley which contains several villages and lots of agricultural land. You will trek in both the reserve and in this central valley which offers a unique range of experiences and landscapes. Covering over 170km<sup>2</sup>, the nature reserve is home to 600 animal, bird and reptile species, and over 1000 species of plant.

### Who accompanies us?

You will be accompanied by professional English-speaking local guides who have an excellent knowledge of hiking and culture in the region and are first aid trained. You will also be accompanied by an excellent support team, and a Different Travel Company tour manager who together will support you and make your challenge memorable.



### What's the terrain and scenery like?

The terrain will vary throughout the 5 days but in general it is mostly flat and on established routes through villages and jungle, and occasionally along short sections of road. There are some steep sections to contend with but your guides will support you all the way. The route offers an interesting variety of scenery as you pass through rice terraces, cross shallow rivers, ascend into cloudy forests and enter remote villages. Underfoot the terrain will vary each day but may be quite stony, on roads, grass, over large natural limestone slabs, and depending on the weather, potentially very muddy trails. You will cover approximately 15-20km per day which will take around 6-7 hours. The itinerary is subject to change depending on the weather and, particularly, rainfall.



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### What is the weather like?

Temperatures are closely linked with the weather conditions but you can expect highs of 28°C during the day, dropping down to 19°C at night. Weather conditions will vary but in general you will experience hot but cloudy days with occasional short rain downpours and high humidity. It's important to be prepared for all weather conditions and temperatures so ensuring you have the correct kit, such as a waterproof dry bag for inside your daypack and a lightweight poncho to keep you dry but cool when walking. When the sun comes out it can feel very hot and be very bright so wearing sunglasses and a hat, and keeping well hydrated is crucial.



### Where do we stay?

While staying in the cities (Hanoi and Tam Dao) you will stay in a hotel, twin or triple rooms with en-suite facilities. During the trek, the group will stay together in a village, in one traditional stilt house. The main house is laid out over one upstairs level, with one very large living /sleeping area and a kitchen in an adjoining room or at the end of the living area. Underneath the house is where you will be served your breakfast and evening meals. Tables, chairs, plates, mugs and cutlery are provided. You may be able to purchase soft drinks or beer at the village depending on availability (payable locally).



### Where will we sleep?

The sleeping area is very large; occasionally accommodating up to 25 people. The entire group will share one room together to sleep. You are **strongly** recommended to bring ear plugs (which you have tried out in advance and are comfortable using) so you can block out the inevitable snoring which will otherwise disturb your sleep.

You are provided with a thin mattress, pillow and blankets but you are recommended to bring a silk or cotton sleeping bag liner for additional warmth and comfort as it can get cool at night. Mosquito nets are provided for you each night.

Flip flops, slip-on sandals or pumps are advised for use around the village, particularly for back and forth between the shower/toilet facilities as shoes are not to be worn inside, and your hiking boots will be muddy from walking.





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### What is the food like?

The food served will be traditional Vietnamese with some Western dishes too. The food is freshly prepared, delicious and plentiful.

Vietnamese food isn't spicy but if you like your food with a kick, chilli or chilli sauce is often available if you ask. You will have breakfast and dinner at the stilt house you are staying in. Lunch will be eaten at local homes along the way. Typical dishes include:

*Breakfast:* Pancakes, fruit, coffee, bread, eggs, omelette, fruit fritters.

*Lunch:* Fried noodles with vegetables and/or egg, bread rolls

*Dinner:* Rice, fried chicken, meat stir fry, chips, spring rolls, omelette, eggs, fish, vegetable dishes, fresh fruit, noodles.



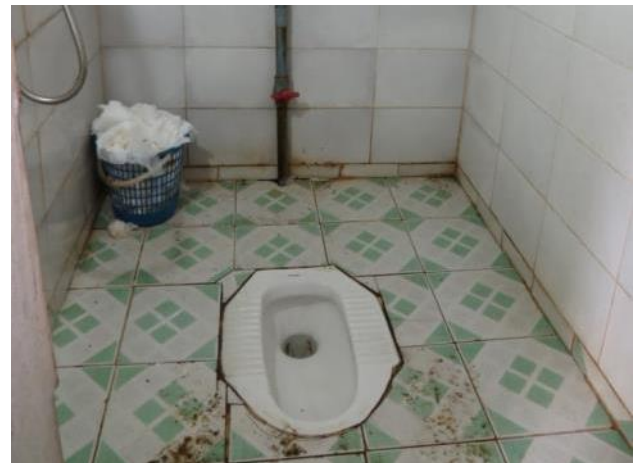
### What are the bathroom facilities like?

There are shower facilities located across the courtyard next to the main stilt house. There may not be hot water and the quality of the facilities will vary so please do not expect hotel standards. We recommend that you take quick showers, turning off the water when lathering up, so any warm water can be shared. You should also bring a small pack of baby wipes to freshen up during the trek day.



### What about toilet facilities?

Toilet facilities at each village will vary but you can expect Asian-style squat toilets, and possibly an additional Western sit-down toilet. Some toilets flush but some you may have to flush using a bucket of water. Toilet paper is not usually provided so you should bring your own which **must** only be put into the bins provided, never flushed. The sewer pipes are not large enough to cope with toilet paper so if you attempt to flush it, you are likely to block the pipes and make the facilities unusable for everyone. During the trek you will need to pack up any toilet paper you use to dispose of properly at the village. **NEVER** leave toilet paper or other litter on the trail.





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### How fit do I need to be?

It is advised that you start training at least 6 months before departure to ensure your best chance of success and enjoyment on the challenge. Hill walking while carrying a backpack should form a major part of your training as this will most closely replicate the actual trek, and be the best way to prepare your body for what is involved.

Increasing your cardiovascular endurance and core and leg strength will benefit you greatly too so hill walking can be complemented with swimming, running, cycling, gym workouts, team sports, boot camps etc. You can download a number of free apps which will help you train and track your progress. E.g. MapMyWalk, couch to 5k, MyFitnessPal etc. If you attempt to complete the challenge without training it will make the trek unnecessarily difficult and may hinder your experience, and the experience of your team mates.



### Will I receive advice and support on training?

In addition to supplying training tips, The Different Travel Company has a link with online personal training company Brightside Personal Training, who offer online training packages for those who may not have access to fitness advice tailored to their requirements:

<http://brightsidept.kajabi.com/sp/34357>.

Try it out for just £1!



### Who can take part?

The trek can be undertaken by anyone with a good level of fitness, who is healthy and determined. Adequate preparation, planning and training is important because the fitter you are the more you will enjoy this experience. An ideal candidate would be an open-minded person with a sense of adventure or someone who would like to take part in a life-changing fundraising experience in the beautiful landscape.

### Medical declaration

We require a medical form to be completed by everyone upon registering, and any pre-existing conditions, medications used and other medical issues **must** be noted and (if relevant) signed by your GP. Any conditions that develop must be declared and a new medical form completed and signed.



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### Is there an age limit?

You must be at least 18 years old to participate on this trek unaccompanied. It may be possible for you to participate if you are 16 or 17 years old but you must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. There is no upper age limit.

### Medical Declaration

All participants must complete a medical declaration form upon registering, and any pre-existing conditions, medications used and other medical issues must be noted and (if relevant) confirmed by your GP. Any conditions that develop must be declared and a new medical form completed.

### How much does it cost?

There is a £345 registration fee payable at the time of booking then you must fundraise a minimum of £2,990 for Animals Asia. You may also pay this figure yourself.



**What is included?** Return flights from London (*including* current taxes and charges), all local transfers and transport, all accommodation (hotel in Hanoi and Tam Dao, traditional stilt house on trek), all meals, trek permit, expert English-speaking local guides, porters, UK tour manager.

**What is excluded?** Personal expenses (drinks, laundry, trek gear, souvenirs etc.), travel insurance, tips, Vietnamese visa (if required), vaccinations or medication required, transport to/from UK airports etc.



N.B. The itinerary is complex and details may change due to unusual weather patterns, wildlife movements, and the ability of the group and so on. We will do our best to keep to the set itinerary however we cannot be held responsible for changes that might occur outside of our control. In all such circumstances your guide and tour manager will have the final say in the interest of the health and safety of the group. Adventure travel is often unpredictable so flexibility and an open mind is recommended.



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### How will I raise the sponsorship required?

Most people find that this is far easier than they imagined, and we will give you as much support as you need to reach, and even exceed your target! Here are some suggestions for how you could raise your sponsorship. We will send you lots more ideas when you sign up!

- 2 x supermarket bag-packing mornings: £500
- Car boot Sale/ eBay auction: £250
- Quiz night: £250
- Sponsorship - friends, family, colleagues: £300
- Host a party and charge £10 to attend: £400
- Ask five friends/ family members to raise £100 each: £500
- Dress Down Day at work/ lunch money donation £300
- Donate your skills - ironing, babysitting, gardening, DIY: £250
- Karaoke night: £250
- Sponsored beard-shave/ leg wax: £200

Total £3,200

### Is the trip ATOL protected?

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### How do I sign up?

Complete the booking form and return with your £345 registration fee (payable by BACS or cheque) to:

**The Different Travel Company,  
4 Downs Park Crescent,  
Totton, Southampton,  
Hampshire,  
SO40 9GH**

Or you can email your completed form to [info@different-travel.com](mailto:info@different-travel.com). Once your place is confirmed The Different Travel team will email you a training guide, discount vouchers and much more, and the Animals Asia team will support you with fundraising.