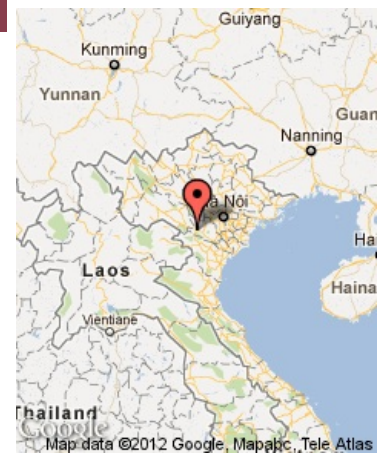


Trek Mai Chau and Pu Luong, Vietnam



Highlights

This short, three-day tour in Vietnam gives a peek into a different way of life. You'll stay in traditional Thai stilt homes in Pu Luong, share meals with your host families and trek through gorgeous countryside. You'll also have time to spend exploring villages alone.

Vietnam. It's a place where in one pocket, you'll find rice fields and kids riding buffalos, while in another, you'll be dazzled by flashing neon signs and drowned out by the incessant hum of motorbikes. It's a country of extremes, but the Mai Chau and Pu Luong areas in the North West of the country are definitely more along the lines of the former. In particular, the Pu Luong nature reserve really impresses and is considered by many to be an area of outstanding natural beauty. Rice terraces carpet hillsides, villages hide at the edges of thick forests and wispy clouds roll across the hilltops.

What's really great about this trek is that not only do you get well and truly out of the city and into the countryside, but you also get to stay in traditional Thai stilt homes. Yes, they may be basic, but it's not everyday you get to stay in one of these and see how other people live their lives. You'll share meals with host families, wander around little villages and if you're up for it – can help out with morning chores. In between all this, you'll trek through paddy fields, visit ethnic Thai people and also have time to explore alone.

Is it for me?

If you're the sort of person who likes getting off the beaten track rather than simply staying in the tourist hotspots, this tour will be right up your street. You'll get out into the countryside on treks and stay with two local families – so you'll get a real insight into life here. Outdoorsy types and anyone keen to learn and experience a different way of life will really benefit from this tour. It's probably best if you're open to sharing space with people and enjoy trying new foods as that way you'll be able to relax and get the most of out of the experience.

Accommodation

You'll be staying in traditional family homes – Thai stilt houses. Inside, they're basic, so don't expect any extra luxuries. That said, the welcome is warm and you'll be eating breakfast and dinner here – expect local, traditional meals made by the family.

Neither accommodation or meals are of a hotel standard, but the families here are well used to welcoming people into their homes, so while it will be a new experience for you, it won't for them - so you can rest assured you'll be made to feel at home.

Itinerary

Day 1: Hanoi – Mai Chau – Pu Luong

Leave your hotel in Hanoi at 8am and transfer to Mai Chau. Upon arrival at Poom Coom village in Mai Chau you'll take a short walk to visit the ethnic Thai people and you'll have lunch in a local home. Around 1pm you'll take a short ride to the Ma river where you'll enjoy a short boat trip after which you'll go on a two-to-three-hour walk through hillside villages and rice paddies. In the evening you'll be welcomed into a traditional Thai home on stilts.

Prices from

184 GBP (3 days) per person

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Here in Hang village you'll have dinner and stay the night.

Day 2: Pu Luong

In the morning you can join in with household activities, or take a stroll around Hang village before breakfast, then at 8am your trek starts. Today you'll walk around five to six hours. The first hike is hard with some steep climbs and stream crossing. You'll enjoy a picnic lunch at Eo Ken village, and later arrive in Kho Muong – possibly the most beautiful village setting in all Vietnam. You can walk around the village, meet the locals or relax in one of the three eco-homestays that you'll spend the night in.

Day 3: Pu Luong – Thanh Hoa – Hanoi

After breakfast you'll start your trek. You'll make your way through the valley, past villages and eventually arrive in Pho Doan town after three to four hours walking. There'll be a short break for lunch at a local food stall. Later on you'll be taken back to Hanoi by car.

Details

Getting there

To reach Hanoi, you'll probably need to change in Bangkok or Hong Kong as there are few direct flights here. Flights with Vietnam Airlines and Pacific Airlines are likely to be your best bet.

Price includes

Lunch and dinner on the first day, all meals on the second day, breakfast and lunch on the third day, transfers, accommodation, entrance fees, services of a tour guide.

Price details

Price quoted is per person based on two people in a group. Prices vary depending on group sizes:

Individual traveller - \$433

Three people - \$173 per person

Four people - \$191 per person

Five people - \$161 per person

Please contact us for more prices if you have a larger group (maximum group size is 10 people).

Comfort level

Down to earth (hostels, camping, huts)

Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed

Travellers should bring

Passport, change of clothes, sun-glasses & hat, toiletries, sun-block, insect repellent, flashlights, good shoes, personal first aid kit & medicines, small VND notes for buying drinks. If you feel the need then sleeping bags, cable lock for your bags is recommended.