

Ba Be Lake and Homestay in Vietnam



Highlights

Mysterious Ba Be Lake lies 270 kilometres north of Hanoi, as rich in legend as it is in biodiversity. The lake is a small pocket of tropical paradise, providing a safe haven for a plethora of creatures, including some endangered species. It is also home to communities of people from Vietnam's ethnic minorities, who still live in rural simplicity along its shores. This is a unique chance to see a remote part of the country and be a guest of the local people.

Ba Be Lake is the largest natural lake in Vietnam. It is situated in the north of the country, at the centre of a national park, which was created to protect the lake area from development. The eight-kilometre-long stretch of water is surrounded by waterfalls, caves and incredible rock formations; limestone crags draped with tropical forest and climbing bamboo descend steeply to the edges of crystal clear water. The lake is home to over a hundred different species of fish. The forest guards at least fifty animal species including the pangolin, the loris and the black gibbon, as well over 400 species of plants. Villages around the lake are home to the White Hmong, Tay and Coin Dao people, whose way of life has remained unchanged for hundreds of years.

Take a boat ride out onto the placid waters of the lake and take in the stunning scenery. Venture into the caves and marvel at the alien limestone shapes created by the seasonal fluctuations in the level of the lake waters. One cave shelters a colony of up to ten thousand bats. You'll stay at the traditional Tay village of Pac Ngoi, with its stilt houses, where life is simple and modest. In these beautiful, fertile surroundings the local people sustain themselves through fishing and rice farming.

Is it for me?

If you're a nature lover, you'd be hard-pressed to do better. This place is alive in a way that few places can be; the fertile surroundings produce a riotous explosion of diversity; everything is green and lush, and the hillsides resound with the calls of birds and mammals hidden in the forest. The homestays are far from being five-star accommodation, but this is precisely their charm: for two nights you get to experience what it's like to live here, amid towering, vine-clad hills, in houses built from the surrounding forest, eating food grown and cooked by the hands of your hosts, and enjoying what must be one of the loveliest lakeside settings anywhere in the world.

Accommodation

Accommodation at Ba Be Lake is in a local village homestay. The houses in the area are built in traditional fashion, from wood and bamboo, raised on stilts above the ground and with a central kitchen hearth. The accommodation is simple but comfortable, and facilities modest but clean. You're sure to be smitten by the warmth and hospitality of your hosts.

This is a community of fishers and farmers and the meals you will eat are made from local produce. If you stay in a homestay in Vietnam the food here may prove to be the best of your stay: steamed rice accompanied by numerous small portions of fresh vegetables, tofu and fish and chicken, all grown, caught or reared locally and cooked and spiced to perfection.

Prices from

138 GBP (3 days) per person

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Itinerary

Day 1: Hanoi-Ba Ba

Your guide will meet you in your hotel lobby this morning at approximately 8.00am before the 270km drive to Ba Be. As you progress north, the scenery becomes more and more picturesque. From the scheduled lunch stop it is around two and half hours to Ba Be National Park. Arriving in Ba Be by mid to late afternoon, you will check into the homestay and then head out to explore the local area before the sun sets. The homestay is simple but will have beds, blankets, towels and mosquito nets.

Day 2: Ba Be Lake

After breakfast, you'll board a private boat for a cruise on the lake. Weather permitting you can swim in crystal clear waters before visiting a picturesque waterfall. Lunch will be at a simple local restaurant. Following lunch, board the boat to the Tay village of Pac Ngoi. A visit to this small hamlet will enable you to witness how little the lives of the people in these remote areas have changed.

Day 3: Ba Be-Hanoi

This morning return to Hanoi. En route you may wish to stop at the interesting Thai Nguyen Ethnology Museum (closed on Mondays). Arrival time back into Hanoi will be mid to late afternoon.

Details

Getting there

You need to get to Hanoi. There are flights to Noi Ba Airport from most major UK airports.

Price includes

All transportation and transfers (including transfer from and to hotels in Hanoi) in air conditioned vehicles, English speaking guide, all accommodation based on twin share basis with daily breakfast, additional meals as indicated in the itinerary, admission fees when on guided tours.

Price details

Price quoted above is per person for a group of two.

Comfort level

Down to earth (hostels, camping, huts)

Experience required

A reasonable interest is all that is needed

Reviews (1)

Reviews of this experience

“ This was a great trip, although you do need to be prepared for a lot of travel, however that was certainly part of the fun, looking out for motorbikes loaded with livestock, families, kitchen appliances. The landscape was breathtaking, and our guide had lots of information to help us understand our surroundings. The homestay was clean and comfortable, the family fed us extremely well, and were very friendly. ”

Karen reviewing Ba Be Lake and Homestay in Vietnam