

## **Animals Asia Foundation Vietnam Moon Bear Challenge**

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### **Day by day itinerary:**

#### **Day 1 / 8 November 2009**

##### **Hanoi**

On arrival in Hanoi you are met and transferred to your hotel. You meet your tour leader here who will organise a pre-trip briefing, before heading out for an optional group dinner. Until your meeting we encourage you to get out and discover the delights that Vietnam has to offer. Make sure that you take a hotel business card so that you will be able to find your way back to the hotel.

#### **Day 2 / 9 November 2009**

##### **Hanoi to Tam Dao National Park**

Hanoi is one of Asia's most enchanting cities. This northern capital is a quiet, contradiction of its southern counterpart. Its relaxed ambience is a joy, with exploration best on foot or bicycle. The shopping is fun and the many lakes and parks provide enjoyable escapes. We take a guided half-day tour of Hanoi, visiting the major sights, including the Temple of Literature, One Pillar Pagoda, and paying homage to Vietnam's most famous revolutionary, Ho Chi Minh. We also include lunch at the KOTO café – an amazing project aimed at providing vocational training and experience in the hospitality industry for underprivileged young people. All the staff you meet at this café have come from poor backgrounds. In the afternoon, we drive to Tam Dao National Park to visit the Animals Asia Bear Rescue Centre. We stay overnight in Tam Dao National Park.

Meals included: 1 breakfast

#### **Day 3 / 10 November 2009**

##### **Tam Dao National Park**

Full day trek in the National Park. Start trekking from the hotel to the summit of Rung Rinh mountain which is one of the highest mountains in Tam Dao. The trek takes about 6-7 hours from the altitude of 900m to 1300m in the jungle. Picnic lunch will be provided during the trek. We stay overnight in Tam Dao town

Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, 1 dinner

#### **Day 4 / 11 November 2009**

##### **Tam Dao National Park - Hanoi**

We start trekking from our hotel to Tay Thien area where many temples and pagodas are located. We stop along the way at a couple of picturesque waterfalls. This trek takes approximately 3 hours.

We return to Hanoi in the afternoon. This evening we begin our exciting journey up to Sapa when we board the overnight train for the Vietnam - China border town of Lao Cai N.B: This is a local train and conditions on board are generally quite basic. The beds on board come with a pillow and sheets, although some people may wish to bring their own sleeping sheet (purely optional and not a necessity). Also, breakfast tomorrow is not always available on the train, so it is recommended that you purchase some breakfast supplies before boarding in Hanoi.

Meals included: 1 breakfast

#### **Day 5 / 12 November 2009**

##### **Sapa**

We'll catch a glimpse of China over the other side of the river this morning as we disembark from the overnight train and begin our drive into the mountains and on to the picturesque minority hill tribe town of Sapa. Set amidst some magnificent mountain scenery and in the shadow of Vietnam's tallest peak, the 3,143-metre-high Mt. Fansipan, the former French colonial hill station town of Sapa is home to some of Vietnam's most colourful minority hill tribes. Like Dalat in the south, the French developed Sapa in an effort to replicate parts of the Alps and the Pyrenees. A number of their villas remain but many were lost in 1979 when the Vietnamese army evicted the



invading Chinese. We'll spend the afternoon discovering the charms of this magic little town.

**Day 6 / 13 November 2009**

**Sapa**

We depart from Sapa via jeep for a 30 minute journey to Ta Van village, where the Tay ethnic minority live. A long walking day of approximately five hours will take us firstly to the H'mong & colourful Red Dzao villages at Giang Ta Chai where we will spend the night in a local homestay.

Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, 1 dinner

**Day 7 / 14 November 2009**

**Sapa**

Depending on the route we are able to take from here, the trekking can be difficult at times with some steep uphill and downhill walking but the spectacular landscape, with a mixture of terraced rice fields, bamboo forest and rustic villages, makes the hardship worthwhile. After lunch at Su Pan we will continue trekking to the Zay village at Ban Ho where we will spend the night in a local homestay.

Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, 1 dinner

**Day 8 / 15 November 2009**

**Sapa**

Leaving Ban Ho village we continue for approximately six hours of uphill (steep at times) and downhill trekking through the villages of Nam Ken and Nam Toong, home to the Xa Pho & Red Dzao ethnic minorities, all friendly and welcoming. This evening we arrive in the Tay minority village of Thanh Phu where we will spend the night in a local homestay.

Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, 1 dinner

**Day 9 / 16 November 2009**

**Sapa - Hanoi**

This morning we continue trekking for approximately two hours to Su Pan where we meet our vehicle and drive to Sapa. This afternoon, after having our first hot shower in a few days, we transfer to the Lao Cai train station and board our overnight sleeper train back to Hanoi.

Overnight: 4 berth sleeper train

Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch

**Day 10 / 17 November 2009**

**Halong Bay**

On arrival back into Hanoi, we will drive to Halong Bay. 'Ha Long' means 'descending dragon' and legend has it that a giant dragon plunged into the ocean at this point, cutting the bay from the rocks as it thrashed its way into the depths. We prefer Mother Nature's version and awe-inspiring Halong Bay, with its 3000 limestone karsts thrusting skyward out of the sea, is one of her finest pieces of work. Our Halong Bay excursion begins with a 3½-hour drive through the fertile Red River Delta to the bayside town of Bai Chay. We board our chartered boat shortly before midday and enjoy a full afternoon lazing on deck as we cruise through this most amazing seascape. A seafood lunch is served on board and we have the opportunity to go for a swim before going ashore on one of the islands to explore colourful limestone caves. With any luck we may witness a fabulous sunset over Halong Bay before enjoying dinner prepared by our crew. Accommodation tonight is on board our boat in simply-furnished twin-share cabins with en suite facilities, but if the weather is fine, there is the option of sleeping on the top deck under the stars.

Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, 1 dinner

**Day 11 / 18 November 2009**

**Halong Bay**

Following breakfast we make our way back to Hanoi and arrive shortly before lunchtime. Our remaining time in Hanoi is free for shopping and sightseeing, or relaxing in one of the lakeside cafes.

Meals included: 1 breakfast



**Day 12 / 19 November 2009**

**Tour ends**

This morning we travel by road to Tam Dao National Park for second visit to Animals Asia Bear Rescue Centre. In the afternoon we transfer back to Hanoi for our ongoing flight.

Meals included: 1 breakfast

