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North West Discovery 4WD Landcruiser or Mercedes Benz bus (Private Tour)

During this cultural expedition, you will enjoy the best of Northern Vietnam in the areas of Mai Chau, Lai Chau and Sapa. The roads wind precariously across the mountain ranges capturing the intensely varied lifestyles of the Vietnamese people. The mountainous North West provides the perfect terrain for trekking routes. The Thai minority, a warm and friendly ethnic group will welcome you into their homes and share their stilt house lifestyle. The final two days of your journey may be spent trekking to stay in minority villages around Sapa, or just relax and enjoy strolling around the town and the surrounding area.

Day 1:

Leaving Hanoi at 7.00am we head west to Mai Chau.

Arriving at about midday we check into the White Thai ethnic minority village and spend the afternoon relaxing and walking around the village meeting the people.

Dinner and overnight stay in the Stilt house possibly enjoying folk songs and dancing together and drinking from the bamboo tube.

(Lunch in village)

(Overnight in village)

Day 2:

Departing in the morning we say farewell to our village friends and hit the road for Son La. Arriving in the mid afternoon we check into our hotel and have free time to relax or to take a stroll around the town.

Son La is the site of an old French penal colony where anticolonial revolutionaries were jailed. Although much of it was destroyed by the US warplanes offloading their unused ammunition during the Vietnam US war, it has been partially restored and along with the little museum makes for interesting viewing.

The surrounding area of Son La is home to several Montagnards (Mountain people),

The White Thai, Meo, Muong, and Black Thai people.

A small display of their handcrafted wares can be seen in the local town market.

(Stopping for lunch on the way)

(Overnight in hotel)

Day 3:

Moving on we head directly west towards Dien Bien Phu, one of the remotest parts of Vietnam. Passing by the villages of the ethnic minority people, The White Thai, Meo, Muong, and the Black Thai we take in the picturesque scenery.

Dien Bien Phu is 35km as the crow flies from the Laos border, and is situated in the Muong Thanh Valley.

For centuries it has been a major town on the transit route for traders between Myanmar, China and the north of Vietnam,

but more recently in May of 1954 it became a place of special significance in the creation of a modern state of Vietnam.

It was the site of a decisive battle that led to a 57 day siege of the French garrison and consequential end of the French colonial occupation. The history of Dien Bien Phu is the main attraction here and now being the capital of Lai Chau province the once small town is growing considerably.

On the site of the battle there now stands Dien Bien Phu Museum where old French tanks and artillery can be seen along with the re- building of the bunker headquarters of the French commander Colonel Christian de Castries.

(Stopping for lunch on the way)

(Overnight in hotel)

Day 4:

Heading north through Lai Chau province we are confronted by some of Vietnam's most spectacular scenery. Nestled in a beautiful valley and surrounded by a magnificent mountain range we enter the small town of Lai Chau.

On arrival we check into our hotel and freshen up.

Then if so desired we take a drive up the mountain Pha Din. In the local language, Pha Din means heaven and earth and according to the local legend, this area was the frontier between Heaven and Earth. Climbing and descending the slopes with their many bends and deep gorges amid such magnificent scenery is a really enjoyable and interesting trip and makes for some good photos.

(Lunch in hotel)

(Overnight in hotel)

Day 5:

Departing Lai Chau and arriving at Sapa around midday we check into our hotel, freshen up and have the rest of the day to explore the town and maybe take a short hike up to the lookout over the Sapa Valley.

Here there is great shopping for local produce at the town's market, and many handicrafts available from the hill tribes' people selling their wares.

Or you can take a short hike to visit the Black H'mong Hamlet of Cat Cat where you can sit and relax or bathe in the rainforest waterfall, then on to the village of Lao Chai and return to Sapa.

(Stopping for lunch on the way)

(Overnight in hotel)

Day 6:

On this morning we can return to Hanoi or stay for another day in Sapa.

If the choice is to remain for a further day then you may go on a comfortable Trek through the Sapa valley visiting some of the villages of the colourful Dao hill tribes' people and returning to the town in the afternoon.

Or we can take a short hike to visit the Black H'mong Hamlet of Cat Cat where you can sit and relax or bathe in the rainforest waterfall, then on to the village of Lao Chai and return to Sapa.

Or you can just relax and enjoy the local attractions of the town.

(Stopping for lunch on the way)

(Overnight in hotel)

Day 7:

After an early breakfast we depart Sapa at 7am and arriving back in Hanoi at 5-6pm.

Tour includes: 4WD Landcruiser or Mercedes Benz bus, guide, accommodation, all meals and national park entrance fees.

What's not included in your tour: Drinks and personal expenses.

Note: Please view website for all tour prices.