



Northeast Vietnam

Includes »

Ba Be National Park.....	89
Con Son & Den	
Kiep Bac	91
Haiphong.....	91
Halong Bay.....	94
Halong City.....	98
Cat Ba Island.....	99
Bai Tu Long Bay.....	108
Mong Cai & the Chinese Border	110
Lang Son	111
Cao Bang.....	112
Ban Gioc Waterfall & Ngoum Ngao Cave.....	115

Best Places to Eat

- » Big Man Restaurant (p93)
- » BKK (p93)
- » Bamboo Café (p105)
- » Vien Duong (p106)

Best Places to Stay

- » Monaco Hotel (p92)
- » Nam Cat Island Resort (p105)
- » Whisper of Nature (p105)
- » Suoi Goi Cat Ba Resort (p105)

Why Go?

Northeast Vietnam's top ticket is Halong Bay, and while visiting the World Heritage site is an essential experience, the region also showcases craggy limestone peaks, tropical forests, caves, waterfalls and historic sights.

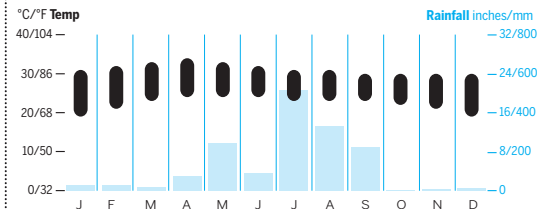
To the south of Halong Bay is Cat Ba, a verdant island renowned for its hiking, biking, sailing and world-class rock climbing. To the east, Bai Tu Long Bay continues nature's spectacular show all the way to the Chinese border, and Quan Lan Island is emerging as a destination for pioneering travellers.

Looming above the coast, the karst connection continues into Cao Bang province, and the brooding mountains are one of Vietnam's most idiosyncratic landscapes. With Sapa and northwest Vietnam firmly on the tourist map, head northeast instead to explore remote backroads and the sublime lakes of Ba Be National Park.

China-bound travellers can access two important border crossings at Mong Cai and Dong Dang.

When to Go

Halong City



Feb–Apr The weather is often cool and drizzly, with fog making Halong Bay visibility low.

Jun & Jul Peak season for Vietnamese tourists; busy on Cat Ba Island, especially on weekends.

May–Sep The region is impacted by tropical storms, which may disrupt Halong Bay tours.

History

Dominated by the Red River basin and the sea, the fertile northeast is the cradle of Vietnamese civilisation. Until very recently, Vietnam has had challenging relations with the neighbouring Chinese. China occupied the country in the 2nd century BC, and were not vanquished until the 10th century.

Any time the Chinese wanted to advance upon Vietnam's affairs, they could do so

through the northeast. The most recent occurrence was in a 1979 attempt to punish the Vietnamese for their occupation of Cambodia (p112). Thousands of ethnic Chinese also fled from this region in the 1970s and '80s.

More than three decades on, border trade is surging ahead and Chinese tourists flock to the region during summer.



Northeast Highlights

- 1 Escape **Halong Bay's** (p94) tourist buzz by gently kayaking into hidden lagoons and grottoes
- 2 Hike, bike and climb your way around the great outdoors in **Cat Ba Island's** (p101) fascinating national park
- 3 Explore **Lan Ha Bay** (p100), an emerging area of gorgeous islands and beaches with superb rock climbing and sailing
- 4 Pioneer your own route around the off-the-beaten-path islands of **Bai Tu Long Bay** (p108)
- 5 Board a boat to glide through lakes and rivers, and spend the night with a local Tay family in **Ba Be National Park** (p89)
- 6 Check out the crazy karst scenery of **Cao Bang** (p112), and the province's waterfalls, caves, lakes and historic sights