

LANDSCAPES OF VIETNAM

Exploring the Country's Most Iconic Natural Vistas

Home to an extensive collection of historical and cultural attractions, Vietnam is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating and photogenic countries in Southeast Asia. Join *Signature* as we explore some of the most breathtaking Vietnamese landscapes.



Home to a fascinating range of historical and cultural attractions, Vietnam is one of Southeast Asia's most beautiful countries, attracting millions of travellers to its lush mountains, bustling cities, and golden beaches. Despite rapid modernisation in Vietnam's urban centres of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the country's ancient landmarks and sweeping natural landscapes continue to offer abundant sightseeing opportunities. From tropical forests that house thousands

of rare wildlife species, to a Sahara-like desert landscape complete with adventure activities, we have compiled a selection of the most exceptional landscapes in Vietnam, complete with photo opportunities and experiences for the perfect Vietnamese vacation.

HA LONG BAY

Arguably Vietnam's most recognised landscape, boasting over 1,600 limestone islands and islets, the UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site of Ha Long Bay (or Halong Bay), is located in northern Vietnam and

Isolated from the mainland, the Con Dao Islands are one of the star attractions in Vietnam



boasts surrealistic scenery and a wide range of bio-diverse plant and animal species. Instantly recognisable from its starring role in numerous films throughout the years, Ha Long Bay is a must-visit destination for any first-time visitor to Vietnam.

Getting there: Ha Long Bay is reachable by car and minibus from the city of Hanoi (170 kilometres away), or by joining one of the numerous day tours available from the city. If time is of the essence, an hour-long helicopter transfer is possible, or you can opt for an exhilarating seaplane trip from Hanoi to Ha Long Bay.

CON DAO ISLANDS

Con Dao Islands comprises 16 uninhabited islets just off the southern coast of Vietnam, each offering expansive beaches shaded by evergreen trees. The main (and only inhabited) island, Con Son, was once the site of French-run prisons for Vietnamese activists who were involved in the independence movement. Today the island is a popular snorkelling, swimming, and diving spot.

The more remote Con Dao Islands are renowned turtle breeding sites, where sea turtles lay their eggs between June and September each year.

Getting there The Con Dao Islands are accessible within an hour's flight from Ho Chi Minh City with Vietnam Airlines (VASCO) being the only carrier with regular flights to the island.

SAND DUNES OF MUI NE

Characterised by signature white and red dunes, the Sand Dunes of Mui Ne offer picturesque Sahara-like desert landscapes and adrenaline-fueled activities that include sandboarding, kite flying and quad-biking.

The White Dunes are by far the larger dunes, and are known by the locals as Bau Trang or White Lake. Conversely,



Sand Dunes of Mui Ne Dao Islands are one of the star attractions in Vietnam



the Red Dunes might not be as impressive in size as their white counterparts, their reddish-brown colour makes for an excellent photographic backdrop, while sand-sledging is a popular activity on the dunes.

operators in Mui Ne offer day trips to the dunes, although one can easily make your own way by rental car or hotel shuttle if you prefer to explore the golden dunes at your own pace.

Getting there: Numerous tour

FAN SI PAN MOUNTAIN

Giant Buddha statue on the top of Mount Fan Si Pan, Sapa





Sapa, a small mountain village in Lao Cai Province, is located approximately 350 km northwest of Hanoi, close to the Chinese border. Here, the Hoang Lien Son range of mountains, which includes Fan Si Pan, Vietnam's highest peak.

This unassuming little town is home to varying ethnic groups - including the Hmong, Dao, Tay, Giay, and Xa Pho - although Sapa also welcomes a diverse range of visitors who are attracted by the highland tribes, iconic rice paddies,

and forest treks. Blessed with awe-inspiring natural beauty, Fan Si Pan Mountain - and the village of Sapa - are not-to-be-missed highlights for any trip to Vietnam.

Getting there: Book a cabin on the overnight train from Hanoi to Lao Cai, then reach the village of Sapa by minibus or taxi. Fan Si Pan Mountain is situated approximately nine kilometres southwest of Sapa, and is reached on foot. Three- and five-day hiking trails are



Aerial view of the Mekong River Delta region near Ben Tre, South Vietnam



available between October and March.

MEKONG DELTA

The infamous Mekong Delta consists of several river canals that snake their way through the southern Vietnam plains. Locally known as “The River of the Nine Dragons”, the 15,000-m² delta is lined with riverside villages, Buddhist shrines, floating markets, fish farms, and rice plantations. Great for travellers looking to explore a more traditional part of Ho Chi Minh City, day trips to this natural attraction are available at various price points, often including stops at prominent villages such as Ben Tre, My Tho, and Cai Be.

Getting there: Take a full-day guided Mekong Delta day cruise from Vuon Kieng Pier in Ho Chi Minh City, and explore the traditional culture,

lifestyle, and customs of villagers along the river banks.

HO CHI MINH CITY

With its broad boulevards and French colonial-era architecture, Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) is the eternally elegant business and financial hub of Vietnam. The city’s prominent history dates back hundreds of years to the Khmers who initially settled the region, through the Vietnamese takeover during the 17th century, and the French conquering of Saigon, as it was then known, in 1859.

At the peak of the Vietnam War in 1969, the city had four-and-a-half million inhabitants who were all evacuated when Saigon, and the rest of the South, fell to North Vietnam in 1975.

Today, Ho Chi Minh City is a popular

tourist destination due to its fascinating culture, classic French architecture, sleek skyscrapers, and ornate temples and pagodas. The city boasts a bustling nightlife, with rooftop bars that overlook Saigon (the city centre) and beyond, while fantastic restaurants offer a combination of French, Chinese, and, of course, local Vietnamese cuisine.

Getting there: Several major carriers operate daily flights from Johannesburg and Cape Town to Ho Chi Minh City, via various hubs across Asia and the Middle East. 

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