



Halong Bay Vietnam

Halong Bay lies in the Gulf of Tonkin to the east of Hanoi. It consists of some 3000 tiny islands which together form a dramatic limestone seascape which is without a doubt Vietnam's most natural wonder. If you're in Hanoi then you simply **MUST** ensure that you find time for an overnight visit to this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Legend has it that Halong Bay was created when a dragon that lived in the mountains ran to the sea its mighty tail gouged out valleys and crevasses, the areas dug up by its tail became filled with water leaving only the high land visible. Geologists on the other hand blame wind and sea erosion! Visitors who were previously in Thailand will notice a close similarity with the limestone scenery around Krabi on the south west coast.

[Halong Bay Cruise Tours](#) from Hanoi

From Hanoi there are many operators offering cruise tours to Halong Bay. Some of these are full day excursions returning to Hanoi the same night. Considering it's a 3½ hour drive this hardly seems worthwhile. A far better option is to take an overnight or preferably a two night stay with overnight accommodation onboard one of the many vessels touring the islands.

The weather can be quite changeable in this area. Visitors between February and April might not get to appreciate the beauty of the area as a result of cool, drizzly conditions which create a low fog and poor visibility. During summer on the other hand the danger of tropical storms may force boat operators to vary their schedules. We visited in early December and saw low clouds ahead of us as we approached but by the time we left the shore this had cleared and we enjoyed glorious blue skies and stunning scenery throughout our time onboard a Chinese junk called the Dragon's Pearl.

It's well worth paying more than the minimum for these cruise tours as there is quite a range of quality of boats taking passengers around Halong Bay. We heard horror stories of people who couldn't sleep at night because of rats running inside the walls of their ship. For this reason we selected a tour with TUN Travel (26 Bat Su, Hanoi). The price was \$77 US per person travelling on a small and very comfortable minibus with an excellent guide to Halong Bay where we boarded the Dragon's Pearl for a one night cruise around the islands. The whole trip was first class and we cannot recommend them highly enough.

Halong Bay Sightseeing and Activities

The main attraction of Halong Bay is the stunning limestone karst scenery. The moment your ship sets sail you'll be snapping away with your camera but don't worry there's no rush as the scenery just gets better and better. Besides the magnificent views, visitors come to explore the caves in the region which can only be accessed from the charter boats. The Halong Bay Tour included a visit to Hang Sung Sot cave which has three beautiful chambers of stunning rock formations including a famous fertility symbol.

Cat Ba National Park is another attraction where you can go hiking or simply sunbathing on the beaches. You won't find sandy beaches within Halong Bay itself but there are some small sandy strips on Cat Ba Island and in Lan Ha Bay which is just off the island.

The organised tours will normally stop in a safe place for you to have a swim but watch out for the current which we found very strong. Also if you take a two night stay onboard a ship you'll be able to take a kayak and explore a number of grottoes. Some Hanoi travel companies offer tailor made kayaking holidays through Halong Bay with the option of overnight camping. You can contact [Đặt khách sạn](#) to have more details about Halong bay cruises.