



Sapa - Everything you Need to Know

Sapa is a town in Lao Cai Province in Northwest Vietnam close to the Chinese border where foreign tourists can get [visa to Vietnam](#) on land. It is located about 350km Northwest of Hanoi. Here is where one will find the Hoang Lien Son range of mountains, which includes Fansipan - the country's highest peak.

This quiet Vietnamese town is home to a population which consists mostly of minority groups. There are five main ethnic groups in Sapa: the Hmong, Dao, Tay, Giay and Xa Pho. It is said that Sapa was first occupied by the first four groups, since the Vietnamese from the lowlands (better known as the Kinh) did not colonise the highest valleys.

It was only when the French arrived in Tonkin in the 19th century that Sapa was acknowledged and included on the national map. The site where Sapa would be became a key location for the French military as well as missionaries. It was also only in 1993 that Sapa became accessible to many, as this was the year its doors were opened to tourists.

Sapa Attractions

The most prominent attraction in the town of Sapa is Fansipan, which is the highest mountain in Vietnam and it is only 19 km from town. It may seem like a short distance, but the trek is not easy; the rough terrain and unpredictable weather present some difficulties. Tourists who are fit and have mountain climbing experience will enjoy this attraction the most, as the peak is accessible all year round. Technical climbing skills are not necessary, but endurance is a must.

Fansipan can be found in the Hoang Lien National Park, which is an attraction in itself. The park covers a picturesque mountain landscape and several forests, and serves as the habitat for a diverse set of animals. Some species can only be found in Northwest Vietnam and are highly endangered. Nature lovers will truly appreciate this park. Other attractions that are part of the Hoang Lien National Park include the Cat Cat Village and the Ta Phin Village and cave.

Sapa Restaurants/ Dining Scene

Tourists should head on over to Cau May, which is the main street where all the restaurants and cafés are located. This is where one will find both Delta Restaurant and Gerbera Restaurant, two dining establishments frequented by visitors. Delta Restaurant is known for its reasonable prices, as well as traditional Vietnamese fare and Italian dishes. Those who crave for a taste of the West can visit Gerbera Restaurant and enjoy the rustic and charming décor.

Visitors with a sweet tooth will definitely love Baguette and Chocolate Café. This establishment is known as the ultimate destination for chocolate delights and the finest pastries in town. It also serves light meals to patrons. Enjoying a cup of hot chocolate here after a chilly day is truly a treat. Other dining spots worth visiting include Le Gecko Restaurant, Nature Bar and Grill, and Rose Garden.

Sapa Nightlife

Sapa does not have a nightlife scene. There are restaurants and other establishments that sell beer and other drinks, but these close early. The only places

that stay open beyond 22:00 are karaoke joints frequented by middle class Vietnamese travellers. There are no nightclubs or dance halls.

If there is one pub that every visitor should go to when in Sapa, it is the Red Dragon. The establishment is owned by an English expatriate who has lived in Vietnam for a decade. Red Dragon is a two-storey structure: the first floor is similar to an English tea room, while the second floor looks more like British-style pub and just like a true pub, this place boasts an impressive selection of bottled beer and good grub to accompany one's drink (or drinks) of choice, such as sausages (also known as bangers) and mash. Aside from the fine drinks, the fireplace in the joint will also keep patrons warm during the coldest of nights.

Sapa Shopping

Like most rural areas in Vietnam, there are no shopping malls in Sapa. Instead, there are many markets where locals buy (and sell) an assortment of goods. Tourists can also purchase souvenirs and other locally made products in these markets. The most popular of all Sapa markets is the Saturday market. This is made famous mostly because of the 'love market,' wherein teenagers from the tribes go to town to find a partner. Unfortunately, it has become significantly commercial in recent years.

The Bac Ha Market and Coc Ly Market are good alternatives for those who want to experience shopping the way locals do without being dampened by commercialization. Every Sunday, the different hill tribes that meet in the morning to sell their wares make up the Bac Ha Market. Unlike the Saturday market, this is more about local business than tourism. The market is open until noon, but the best time to visit between dawn and late morning. If you miss the Bac Ha Market, you can wait until Tuesday for the Coc Ly Market, which is smaller and less varied.

Sapa Activities

Trekking is the main activity in Sapa, and because Sapa is surrounded by mountains, this is to be expected. This is also the reason there are trekking maps available which show the walking trails and trekking routes around town. Most [hotels in Sapa](#) offer tourists guided half-day and day long treks, but the best places to inquire about these treks are the Cha Pa Garden, Auberge Hotel, Cat Cat View Hotel and Mountain View Hotel.

While it is possible to go hiking around Sapa on your own, it is better to have the assistance of a guide to guarantee a more enriching experience. When it comes to longer treks or overnight stays in the villages, the knowledge of a local will come in handy. Tourists who want to learn something new can go on community-based tours to Sin Chai, a Hmong village. On most tours, overnight stays are arranged so people can learn about textiles, or tribal music and dance.

Sapa Information

One can take a train to reach Sapa, but it is a nine-hour ride from Hanoi to Lao Cai. Those who want less hassle should choose a night train. From Lao Cai, it will take about 45 minutes to an hour of road travel (either by minibus or taxi) to get to the desired destination. Travellers also have the option to drive from Hanoi (usually by motorcycle), but the direct route to the capital will take about 10 hours. Getting around Sapa is mostly done on foot.

The dry season begins from around January and lasts until June. The best time to visit is between March to May because January and February are the coldest and foggiest months of the year. There are times when temperature drops to almost freezing, and visitors find themselves blocked by a thick wall of fog. It is warm during June and August, though it often rains during this time, especially in the mornings. Tourists are advised to visit during the week, when the town is less crowded. Before visiting, tourists should bring with them the necessary gear appropriate for the weather. Good trekking footwear or rubber boots are a must.

Source: [Đặt khách sạn](#)