



WELCOME TO *YOUR* JOURNEY

## VINAPIX PHOTOGRAPHY TOURS

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*"Our sole mission is to get you to the best place, at the best time of the year, at the best time of the day, so that you can create the best photograph."*

**F**rom the endless plains of the Mekong Delta to the remote and rugged peaks of the North-west Highlands, Vietnam is a vast and diverse place. From the ancient streets of the North where life continues much as it has for thousands of years to the bustling skyscrapers of the South where almost everything is new and changing, Vietnam is a place of startling contrasts, and from the well dressed and fashionable youngsters of the big cities to the colourful costumes and traditional lifestyles of over fifty ethnic minority groups Vietnam is one of the most culturally exciting places on the planet.

**T**here is something for everyone here, and for the photographer every day is a parade of sights and opportunities that can be found nowhere else. VinaPix Photography Tours are run by photographers and only for pho-

tographers. Indeed, we have been photographing Vietnam for twenty years, and no one knows the country better than we do. Our tours are unique. We don't try to fit everything into one rushed trip. Rather we follow the seasons and only run tours when the weather is optimal for photography. We make sure you arrive at the best locations at the right time of day... and have enough time to create photographs you can be proud of.

**F**or this reason we run only one tour to each of the four distinct regions in Vietnam each year. Each of these four tours has been crafted so that you will visit the iconic locations required for any respectable Vietnam portfolio. We also, however, take you further off the beaten track to places of beauty and interest that are less well known... adding an element of originality and uniqueness to your work. Every tour also includes

opportunities for photographers to explore their personal interests, be that street photography, food photography, portraiture and so on. Indeed, each tour can be customized to meet participant's desired photographic outcomes.

**O**ur rates include all accommodation, transport, meals and sundry costs\* starting from the day before the tour officially begins until we return you to the airport for your flight home. While you are here the only thing you need to focus on is taking great photographs. We have put a lot of work into making our tours the very best Vietnam photographic experience possible and we take great pride in what we offer, so please take a look through this brochure and if you would like any additional information, do not hesitate to contact us.

*\* See page 11 for details*

## HANOI AND THE NORTH

See temples floating on misty lakes in the heart of an ancient city and countless pagodas unchanged over hundreds of years.

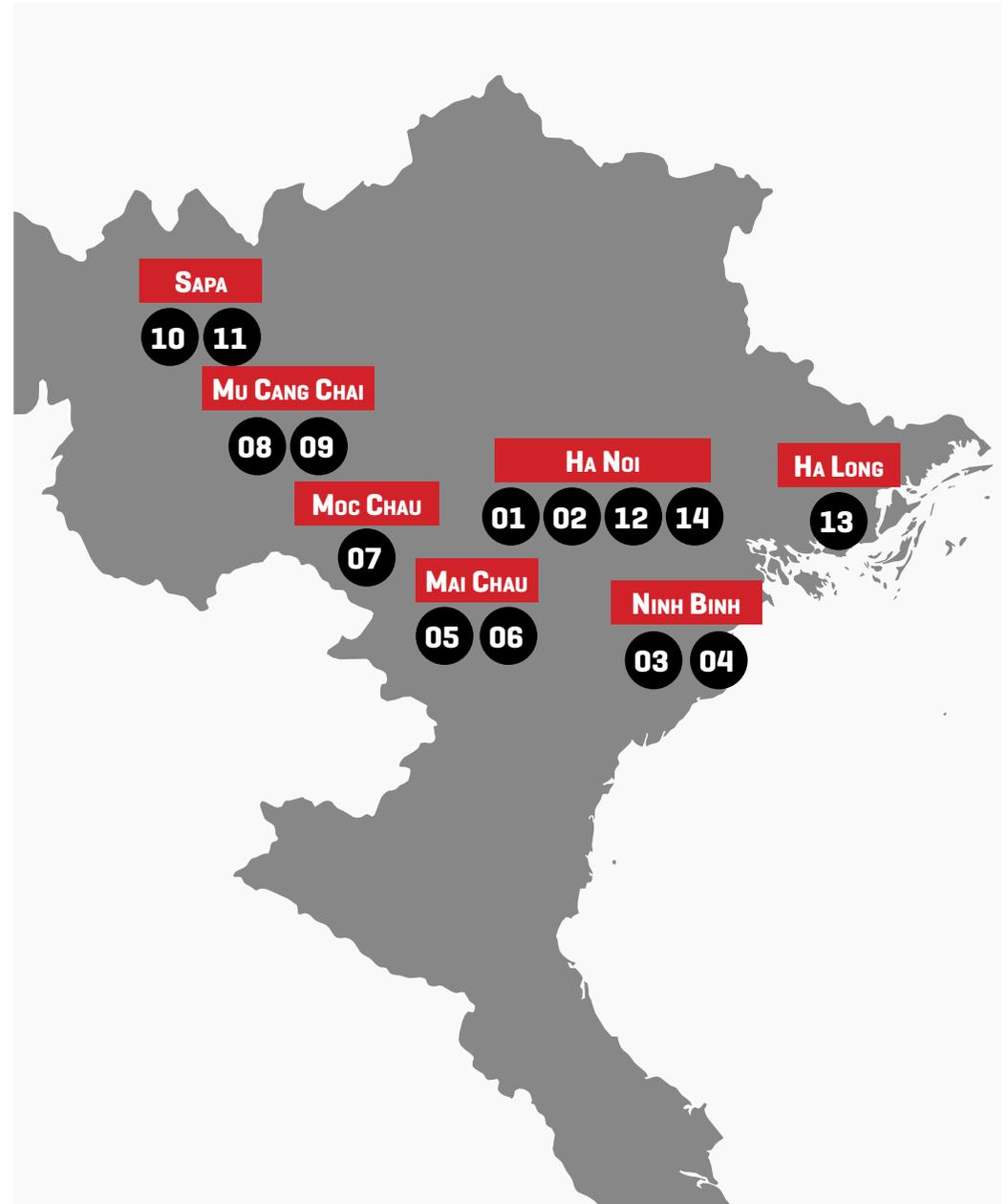
Share tea with families in walled villages in the heart of the Red River delta. Be paddled down rivers which pass under mountains and sail in a junk among three thousand islands rising from a jade sea.

Journey deep into forgotten valleys and walk alongside the H'Mong people in their colourful costumes as they gather the rice harvest from terraced fields clinging to the sides of rugged mountains.

This is our most visually dramatic tour and a bucket list must do. All this and much more is here waiting for you.

## ARRIVE HA NOI

We start by meeting you at the airport and then take a short drive into Hanoi, where you have time to freshen up and relax before we enjoy our first meal together in Vietnam. We have an early night to help you overcome any jet-lag you might have.



**01****HA NOI**

**A**fter a late breakfast we explore the ancient '36 streets' around the historic Hoan Kiem lake after which we spend some time exploring the city's largest market before traveling to West Lake where we photograph a number of stunning temples on the lake shore and find a great location to take full advantage of the sunset.

**02****HA NOI**

**T**here's an early start, for those interested, as we visit Hoan Kiem lake to watch the old folk of Hanoi practicing Tai Chi in the dawn light. After breakfast we visit the Temple of Literature, one of the oldest public universities in the world and then continue exploring the more photogenic of Hanoi's ancient temples. In the afternoon we travel into the countryside to visit one of the ancient walled villages on the banks of the Red river.

**03****HA NOI – NINH BINH**

**T**oday we leave Hanoi and travel south to enjoy the unique karst limestone landscapes of Ninh Binh. We visit an ancient temple and take to the water to explore the caves and incredible vistas of this wonderland. For the energetic there's the chance to photograph some great landscapes from the top of a little mountain in the beautiful late afternoon light.

**04****NINH BINH**

**W**e begin today with a visit to one of the largest golden Buddha statues in the country and then continue to explore secret hidden valleys and local farms scattered amongst the towering cliffs and quiet canals of this magical place. Again the sunset finds us in the perfect location to photograph the rivers and mountains before we head back to our hotel for a well-earned dinner.



***"One morning in Tra Vinh filled a 64Gb card... incredible opportunities!"***

*— Linda Meyer. South Africa*





05

NINH BINH – MAI CHAU

**H**eading West into the mountains proper we enter the homeland of the H'mong people. Here we visit them in their homes and in their fields as they work. The landscape becomes truly dramatic as we make our way through winding passes and into remote valleys in search of that unique photograph. For those interested there's the option to share the evening meal and spend the night in the home of a local H'mong family.

06

MAI CHAU – MOC CHAU

**A**fter breakfast we take a short drive to Moc Chau, where we wander amongst the ordered green tea plantations set amongst rugged hills and forests. Later, arriving in Son La we have the option of exploring local villages, visiting a pagoda built into a mountainside cave and exploring the local markets where we experience a unique form of street photography. Again the day ends high in the hills where we enjoy another wonderful landscape of peaks and valleys as the sun sets.

07

MOC CHAU – MU CANG CHAI

**R**ising early we travel North through some truly lovely landscapes, stopping here and there to take photographs and visit isolated homesteads clinging to the sides of forested mountains. Soon we are passing through vast valleys of terraced rice fields, and join the local H'mong people as they cut the rice and bring in the harvest. This is one of the most unique locations in South East Asia and on many a photographers bucket list.

08

MU CANG CHAI

**W**e rise before dawn to take advantage of the early light in this terraced wonderland, after which we spend the day wandering through the green and gold valleys, stopping here and there at farms and spend time with the locals in the fields or sipping tea in their wooden villages. The dusk light finds us high on the side of a beautiful terraced valley with some local H'mong dressed in their traditional costumes, before we return to the village, where there is the option of spending the night with a local family.

***"Vietnam: the country, the people and the food – it's everything you could ask for and more."***

*– Philip Baker. United Kingdom*



**09****MU CANG CHAI – SAPA**

**F**or those interested there is again the choice to rise early and enjoy the sunrise from a different location. We then take a slow drive North through valley after valley of terraced mountainsides, stopping here and there until we reach the O Quy Ho mountain pass on a road you will never forget. The mountains around here are the highest in Vietnam and admiring the incredible valleys and countless waterfalls will fill the rest of the day, until we arrive in the well-known hill station of Sapa.

**10****SAPA**

**S**apa is a tourist town, but it is also the best opportunity to get in amongst many of the local ethnic minority peoples, all of whom are instantly identifiable by their brightly coloured traditional costumes. We will again spend the day walking along mountain side trails visiting villages and homes and joining the locals as they work their fields or haggle at the roadside markets.

**11****SAPA – HA NOI**

**T**his morning begins with the opportunity for some dramatic sunrise photography after which we visit a few of the more remote villages in the district and also spend some time exploring the streets and landmarks of Sapa itself. In the later afternoon we travel to Lao Cai, where we catch the overnight sleeper train back to Hanoi.

**12****HA NOI**

**W**e arrive back in the capital early and check into our hotel. We take it easy today, but options include some additional street photography, a few more of the city's ancient pagodas and temples or, for those who wish, a visit to the army museum and the infamous 'Hanoi Hilton' prison. Later there is a choice between further cityscape at sunset or seeing a performance of Hanoi's famous and very photogenic water puppets.



***"The most fun I've had doing street photography in twenty years."***

*— Hennie Van Der Merwe. South Africa*



**13****HA NOI – HA LONG**

**A**fter an early breakfast we travel to the coastal city of Ha Long and board our luxury junk. Now we sail South amongst the three thousand islands of this fantastic World Heritage Site, stopping here and there to visit quiet beaches and explore deep caves. We spend the afternoon at a floating village, visiting the local on their fish farms and visiting a floating school. Evening finds us anchored in a cove surrounded by tiny islands as the sunsets.

**14****HA LONG – HA NOI**

**W**e rise early to the smell of freshly brewed coffee and enjoy the views as the sun rises over the bay, offering iconic photographs of this stunning location. We slowly make our way back to the harbour through the wild Northern part of the bay. By midafternoon we are back in Hanoi with some time to sort out our bags and even do a little souvenir shopping. We then visit a famous local restaurant for our final dinner together.

## DEPART HA NOI

**A**fter breakfast we say our goodbyes, check out of our

hotel and make our way to the airport to catch our onward flights.

*NOTE. This is a suggested itinerary. It may change a little due to local conditions or group preferences.*



## HANOI AND THE NORTH

### DATES

Please refer to our online schedule on the website:

<http://vinapixphototours.com/tours/>

### COST

The cost per person is \$2800

This is \$200 a day – **Inclusive of:**

- All accommodation - on a room share basis.\* *(including your first night, before the tour officially begins)*
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner every day and general refreshments
- All transport
- All entrance fees, ferry fees etc. *(where applicable)*
- All tips and charitable contributions

**This excludes:**

- Your flights to and from Vietnam
- Your Vietnam tourist visa *(if applicable)*

- Your travel insurance
- Any strong alcoholic drinks, souvenirs or additional tips

A deposit of \$500 per person is required to confirm a booking. The remainder is payable upon arrival.

*(No deposit is required until the minimum of six group members has been achieved and the tour is confirmed)*

*\* Single rooms are available – the additional cost will be calculated upon demand.*

### CUSTOMIZATION

The daily schedule of this tour can be adapted to some degree to meet your specific photographic interests. Should the group as a whole agree an extra day can be spent at any location. In addition many personal interests can be accommodated, such as extra time for street photography, food photography etc. Once you have confirmed your booking you will receive a customization form.



***"The sunrise at Lak Lake alone was worth the whole trip. Thank you."***  
— *David Goodman.*  
*United States*

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### YOUR GUIDE

Every tour will be accompanied by Ian Morton, a professional photographer who has lived and worked in Vietnam for the last twenty years.

### GROUP SIZE

To enable us to meet every group member's photographic desires, and facilitate access to sensitive locations such as some pagodas and homes, the group is limited to between six to eight people.

### HOTELS

We have sought out the best accommodation possible while keeping costs as reasonable as possible. Hotels are generally in the two and three star range, although we have arranged favorable discounts for top end hotels and resorts at some locations. On some tours, in more remote locations, accommodation may be a little more rustic, but all hotels have air-conditioning and

on-suite bathrooms with hot and cold water.

### TRANSPORT

All transport is provided by new air-conditioned minibuses, with drivers who have been vetted for their care and attention to safety. Internal flights, where applicable, are with Vietnam Airline, a carrier with an exceptional safety record. On some tours we travel by small boats with local guides, but are never far from land and have never had any problems.

### FOOD

Vietnamese cuisine is exceptional, and throughout every tour we have gone out of our way to ensure you experience the finest traditional and regional dishes available. At all locations there are a wide variety of vegetarian options, and in all but a few places Western food is available. Any dietary related issues can be detailed and resolved when you make your booking.

### CLOTHING

You should bring comfortable light tropical clothing and a good pair of worn in walking shoes. Shorts are acceptable at most locations, but long trousers (including jeans) are recommended for visiting pagodas and temples. A good sun hat is a must for those arriving from cooler climes. A more detailed list will be provided when you make your booking.

### HEALTH

Any person of average fitness will have no problem accessing the locations on any tour, indeed the most strenuous activity is a countryside walk along shady lanes. Heat may be an issue in some places, but mineral water is always available. If you have any specific concerns we can address these when you book your tour.



## IAN MORTON



*"A great photographer,  
a wonderful guy and a  
terrific guide."*

*— Tim 'Slim' Selby.  
United States*

Ian Morton grew up in Southern Africa. Upon leaving school he worked as a game ranger in some of the wildest and most remote areas of the sub-continent. Later he trained as a forensic photographer and was responsible for documenting war crimes and genocide throughout Central and East Africa. He arrived in Vietnam twenty years ago, and has remained there ever since.

Ian started VinaPix, a photographic business dedicated to supporting what was then, the country's fledgling tourism and hospitality business. In this capacity he has traveled to every province in Vietnam many times, visiting their most iconic locations, but also straying far off the beaten track in his endless quest for the beautiful, unique and interesting.

In 2010 Ian closed down the VinaPix website and withdrew

from commercial photographic work. As he says "I was tired of taking the photographs that everyone else wanted... I wanted to make the photographs that I wanted!" And so he set out to revisit all his favorite locations, once again traveling the length and breadth of Vietnam, taking with him his cameras and a vision of the art he wanted to create.

These days Ian's methodology is simple. He waits for the right season, searches out the best location, sets up his tripod and camera and waits, and waits, and waits. He waits until the dawn or evening light is perfect, he waits until even the clouds form part of the composition he desires, he waits until everything is just the way he wants it to be. And then he presses the shutter release.

A friend who's traveled with Ian on more than one pho-

tography trip comments that although he uses the latest digital equipment, it's more like working with someone who's shooting with an old 8x10" field camera! Sometimes things work out and Ian only spends a few hours at a specific location. More often or not, however, he will return to the same spot day after day until he makes the photograph he already has in his mind's eye.

What's he going to do with his latest work? Ian confesses that he doesn't know. Maybe an exhibition with giant one and a half meter prints, maybe a large format coffee table book, maybe something else. "I'm more than content now, just taking photographs that show the beauty of this wonderful land – I'm sure that something will evolve out of the work I'm doing one day, but for now I have another photograph to make."

## YOUR OWN TOUR

In addition to our four open tours every year, we offer you the opportunity to book and customize your own tour. Why not get together with your photographer friends and come as group? These tours can be planned to run from seven to fourteen days and can follow one of our recommended schedules or be designed specifically for your group's interests. While you are welcome to arrange a tour to any of the four regions within Vietnam, we can only provide tours around the optimal time

of year for the region you wish to visit. As with all our tours, we unfortunately have to limit the number of participants to eight photographers. On the other hand, we do require a minimum of six participants on each tour.

While we can only run a few customized tours to each region every year, we do enjoy them and always try to arrange them to fulfill any given groups photographic desires. We have had a group spending a fortnight photographing waterfalls, another

documenting food production from the farm to the restaurant and one group spent a week in an Ede ethnic minority village photographing the daily life of the people. Generally, however, we recommend that you follow one of our standard schedules as these provide the widest variety of photographic opportunities and keeps down costs.

If you are interested in a customized tour, please email us and we will reply with all the information you'll need to get started.

*"Already saving for the next trip."  
— Sue and Ken. United Kingdom*

