

A romantic couple is silhouetted against a vibrant sunset. The man is in the foreground, his back to the camera, with a woman's hand resting on his shoulder. They are looking out over a calm body of water towards distant, jagged karst mountains. The sky is filled with soft, golden light from the setting sun, creating a serene and intimate atmosphere.

PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE

BAI TU LONG & LAN HA BAY

VIETNAM

•◁ HERITAGE LINE ▷•
REFINED WATERWAY VOYAGES

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DESTINATIONS

Northern Vietnam - some facts & figures

A country of stunning diversity, Vietnam boasts majestic mountains, thousands of kilometres of pristine beaches, and lush green rice fields stretching endlessly. Anchored by Hanoi in the north, steeped in ancient history, and the modern, French-influenced metropolis of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) in the south, Vietnam offers a blend of tradition and modernity.

Your main destination on your journey with Heritage Line is Bai Tu Long & Lan Ha Bay, both part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Halong Bay. A visit to Northern Vietnam is incomplete without experiencing the spectacular views of over 3,000 limestone karsts. Sculpted into unique shapes by wind and weather, the karsts conceal deserted beaches, magnificent caves, and hidden lagoons accessible only through crevices in the cliffs revealed at low tide.

The best way to explore the Bays is via an overnight cruise. This allows ample time to venture into caves and lagoons, and to relish the peaceful morning start as the sun rises over the rugged surroundings.

	Vietnam Facts
Currency:	Vietnam Dong (VND)
Capital:	Hanoi
Population	~ 99 million
Language	Vietnamese
Int. Calling Code:	+84
Religion	Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Catholicism
Time Zone	UCT/GMT +7
Electricity	220 Volts, 50Hz
International Airport:	Ho Chi Minh (SGN), Hanoi (HAN), Hue (HUI), Cam Ranh (CXR), Danang (DAD), Phu Quoc (PQC)

Weather & Climate

The North of Vietnam is defined by four seasons with mild to chilly winters and hot summers. The temperature can range from an extreme 5°C (41°F) in winter up to 35°C (95°F) in the summer. The summer months (May to August) are typically very hot and can get humid, but despite the heat, this period is still great to visit the bay region. The Vietnamese winter lasts from November to January, featuring cooler and drier weather and an average temperature of 14-23°C. In this season, the night-time is often longer than the daytime with sunshine hours between 7:00 am and 5:00 pm. Rain occurs sporadically in the form of drizzle. The bay region can become foggy and mystic on certain days during the wintertime, allowing a different experience in this region. The best time to visit Northern Vietnam is during spring (March to April) and autumn (September to November), when days are generally warm and sunny.

Clothing

Generally, casual clothes are recommended. Loose fitting, lightweight cotton materials are the most comfortable for warm conditions, layers of warmer clothes for cold conditions and a warm water/windproof jacket for wintry weather in the north. You may consider bringing a light scarf for air-conditioned establishments. If you visit religious sites knee length shorts are acceptable. Consider bringing some special rain protection clothes during the rainy season periods. Umbrellas are provided aboard our ships, but some small ones to fold into your backpack are always very handy.

Money

The Vietnamese currency is the Vietnam Dong (VND). It is the only accepted currency in the country. Money can be exchanged at foreign currency exchange outlets and gold shops, banks, and sometimes at hotels. Foreign notes that are old, torn or faded can be difficult to exchange or to pay with, so make sure you bring clean bills in good condition. Traveller's cheques can often be difficult to change. **ATMs** are available in most of all big and small cities throughout Vietnam and you will receive local currency. Our ships do not have an ATM on board. Major credit cards (Visa, Master Card, American Express) are accepted in the major cities throughout both countries. Some outlets may charge you a credit fee. On board you can pay with most common credit cards.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENT & CERTIFICATION

Passport

Passports must be valid for a minimum of six months **after the date you leave the visiting country**.

Visa

Please check for visa waiver and special visa programs issued by the Vietnamese government at the time of your travel or booking. Please visit the [FAQ section](#) on our website to find the latest updates on Vietnam's visa waiver programs and their requirements.

In addition to visa waiver programs, Vietnam offers a convenient e-Visa system for selected countries. Currently, 80 countries, including the United States and most European nations, are eligible to apply for a **Vietnam e-Visa**. Vietnam e-Visas are available as single-entry or multiple-entry tourist visas, valid for up to 90 days. Please print a hard copy of your approved e-Visa to present at flight check-in and immigration checkpoints. E-visa application website: <https://evisa.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn/khai-thi-thuc-dien-tu/cap-thi-thuc-dien-tu>

Not all Vietnamese border entry points accept e-Visas. Before applying, please check the list of the designated entry ports that accept Vietnam e-Visas here: <https://www.vietnamvisa.org.vn/vietnam-evisa-ports-of-entry/>.

Immunisation

Generally speaking, there are no mandatory requirements for vacations in Vietnam, and therefore, **no proof or certificate** is required to enter the country **except for Yellow Fever**. If you are coming from – or transiting through – a country that is classified of yellow fever transmission (by the WHO), you have to have a certificate of a yellow fever vaccination available at immigration. A **Covid-19 vaccination** certificate is also no longer required.

Flight Ticket

If you have a return ticket to your home country, please bring a copy to show to the immigration at the time of arrival. Especially at the Vietnam immigration, you might be asked about it.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Vaccinations

We recommend having some of the basic vaccinations completed ahead of time that are recommended in general, for long-haul travels, especially to countries that do not have the standard of the "western" hemisphere. You may like to consider having vaccinations for tetanus, diphtheria, typhoid, Hepatitis A (and B), for example. Please also get a personal consultation from your doctor to ensure you receive the best coverage, especially if you consider yourself an at risk patient. Please bring your vaccination pass and have a copy of it stored online or a physical version as a backup

Malaria: In some areas of Vietnam, there is a low risk of malaria. In Cambodia, the risk is low if you travel along the places our cruise is visiting. In Cambodia, the risk increases if you travel to north-western areas or in Vietnam more in the central parts. For our cruises, we would not recommend taking anti-Malaria medication but using traditional methods to avoid mosquito bites.

Dengue: A viral illness that is transmitted to humans by mosquito bites. It is present in Vietnam and Cambodia. The mosquito that spreads dengue bites during the day and is more common in urban areas. There is no vaccine - prevention is through avoidance of mosquito bites by wearing long and light clothes and using anti-mosquito spray.

Yellow Fever: there is no need to have vaccination (however, see above)

Travel & Health Insurance

We strongly recommend purchasing a travel insurance to cover any unforeseen circumstances that may arise including, but not limited to, sickness, medical expenses and repatriation, cancellation fees, loss of luggage, travel disruptions, emergency evacuation, and early return due to any arising issues in and around your family at home. **Please bring your travel insurance documents with you.**

Medication and Prescriptions

If you are a traveller requiring regular medication or have any preconditions, we highly recommend bringing detailed documentation with you that explains your status and health conditions in case of any unforeseen issues that other parties may need to be aware of (e.g., hemophilia, diabetes, allergies, etc.). Please inform our reservation team at the time of booking about any important preconditions so that we are fully aware .

Physical Fitness & Limitations

Heritage Line itineraries are varied and active to offer the best experience in a destination. Sight-seeing on shore includes walking or soft-hiking tours, steps, tender boat transfers and bicycle rides. The excursions require a minimal to moderate level of fitness and mobility. Also, getting on and off the ship or certain terrains may require surefootedness. Some activities may include some light trekking for moderate fitness, similar to the offered cycling tours require moderate to average fitness. Please also factor in that you are in a tropical country with higher humidity and temperatures than you are probably used to in your home country.

Our ships are not equipped with handicapped facilities such as ramps or elevators, and hallways and doorways may not be wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs or similar. Onboard, there are staircases and life in the cabin might impose restrictions to movement with a wheelchair (some cabin types and in particular bathroom facilities will not allow that at all). We kindly request guests requiring special assistance be accompanied by a companion who is physically able to provide such assistance. Transfers and shore excursions adhere to a set schedule and cannot be adjusted for unexpected delays due to physical limitations. Heritage Line also requires full detailed information at the time of booking about any pre-conditions that will or may have an impact on the operation of our services. **Heritage Line will need to explicitly re-confirm that a booking of a disabled person can be accepted.** Please see more details in our terms and conditions about medical affairs.

Personal Safety in General

In general, Vietnam is very safe for travellers. Violent attacks are rare, although petty theft can be a problem in big cities if no precautions are taken. Please always follow the advice of our cruise director or guides. Where possible, do not take important documents or valuables outside but keep them in the ship's safe. Be careful with your mobile phone when using it in public – especially on sidewalks. Do not leave your wallet or mobile phone in the back pocket of your trousers or anywhere else that's easily reached (like an outer zip-up compartment on a rucksack). Be especially careful at crowded places like markets to avoid pick-pocketing and purse-snatching. Do not engage in conversation with people approaching you in an uncommon or suspicious way, they may like to distract you. Do not climb on any structures or buildings during sight-seeing or leave the walking trail a tour guide is proposing.

Doctors, Hospitals, Medical Treatments

The standard of medical facilities within Vietnam varies. International care facilities can be found in the major cities such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Facilities in public and rural hospitals are well below international standards and medical evacuations to a major centre may be required even for a relatively small injury. If a problem arises where you are in need of medical attention, the best option is to visit an international clinic. Please contact your onboard staff or guide for information on clinic services and to find one that is appropriate for international visitors.

Special Diets

Please let us know prior to your departure if you have any special dietary requirements (e.g., vegan, diabetic, gluten-free, etc.). We will make every effort to accommodate your requests, with the resources available to us. Please also bring any medication with you for worst case scenarios to treat yourself in case of a severe allergic reaction, for example.

Sanitation & Hygiene

Though we follow strict protocols for food hygiene and cleanliness onboard, we know that certain guests are sensitive to different environments, food, ingredients, spices, etc. If you have a sensitive stomach or experience discomfort in your stomach, please do inform us immediately. Some medication to support your stomach and adapt to the new circumstances may be considered to bring along. Please avoid eating street food or iced beverages outside the ship during the cruise if these are not recommended as safe by our guide. Be cautious with uncooked food or fruit outside the ship. Clean your hands thoroughly as often as possible or use hand sanitation.

BEFORE YOU GO

Packing Essentials

We suggest that you carry photocopies of all your important travel documents (information and any visa pages of your passport, airline tickets, credit card numbers, travel insurance policy, emergency contact information, etc.) in a separate space from the originals. It is also advised that you leave a copy of all your important travel documents with a friend or family member. Bringing along a few passports sized photos is also recommended.

Packing Check-list

- Emergency contact numbers of Heritage Line, your insurance company, friends and family, your airline and other important suppliers.
- Debit/credit card cancellation numbers in case of loss
- A money belt which can be discreetly placed under your shirt and is comfy to wear
- We have a very good first aid kit onboard, but some basic supplies and general medication should always be in your pharmacy bag.
- Your personal medication with international doctors' notes
- Your vaccination pass with blood group information
- Sun protection: anything that gives you comfort like a hat, sun cream, etc.
- Comfortable and good walking shoes. Sandals or flip-flops
- Mosquito spray & insect repellent. Long-sleeved tops and trousers to protect against mosquitoes at dawn and dusk
- Electronics, chargers and adapters you need for your equipment (our ships have two pin EU socket with 220 Volts, 50Hz)
- Bring cash in USD to change (ATMs are usually available to withdraw money in local currency, onboard you can pay by credit card)

Special Request

If you have any special requirements such as food restrictions, any celebrations, any special occasions, movement restrictions, health problems requiring special care, etc. please inform us at the time of booking as best practice via the emails reservation@heritage-line.com, care@heritage-line.com. There is more contact information at the end of this document.

FAQ

Heritage Line has a detailed FAQ section on our website, which is worth browsing and reading through. <https://heritage-line.com/passenger-information/>. We hope you will find all answer to open question there. Otherwise contact us.

IMPORTANT BOOKING INFORMATION

Cruise Voucher/Ticket/Confirmation

If you have booked directly with Heritage Line, we have your booking with details on file. You will receive an e-mail from us with a booking confirmation, including a booking code. If you like, you can print and bring this booking confirmation with you for your check-in – it is not necessary though. If you have booked through any third party, you may have received an individual booking confirmation from your travel agent. Heritage Line issues individual booking codes to any booking party as a clear identification code. If your travel agent did not forward this to you – no problem – as long as we have received your guests' details including your passport information via your agent your booking is safe with us. Please ensure that your travel agent has shared with you our cruise carrier terms, which form part of any cruise booking from any party. <https://heritage-line.com/terms-conditions/>

Embarkation, Disembarkation

Important! We have detailed instructions (Embarkation Guides) for embarkation and disembarkation to every cruise itinerary on our website in the collateral section.

For our Bai Tu Long & Lan Ha Bay cruises, we have a Welcome Lounge located at Kiosk number 06 - Tuan Chau Marina, Tuan Chau Island, Halong City, Quang Ninh province. **Please find all details in our embarkation guide on the website and take note of the timings requested by us.** You may want to print or save this e-document for yourself. In this document, you also find important contact numbers (ship and emergency). Please cross check the document always close to your cruise date to have the latest update at hand.

EMBARKATION GUIDE

Enhance your journey: If you would like to enjoy a private transfer, please let us know. We can arrange this for an additional fee. For direct arrivals to or departures from the ship with a private car, please see the timings in the embarkation guide.

Passenger Details

Cruise operation is very similar to flight operation, requiring the registration of passenger details with authorities (ports, immigration, government). Therefore, we need detailed passenger information ahead of time **(at least four weeks prior to your cruise departure)**, including the following data:

- passport details (first, middle and last name, passport number, nationality)
- your email address (if we do not have it on file),
- a (mobile) phone number where we could reach you and
- the address or hotel where you will stay prior to or after the cruise
- If possible, your VISA as a soft copy to double check if all is in order for boarding (please prepare some copies)

Heritage Line will contact you on the ground the day before boarding day to double check that everything is ok. Therefore, we need the above details please for our record. **If you have booked with a 3rd party**, please make sure they forward these details to us. Otherwise, you can send the information directly to Heritage Line via email: reservation@heritage-line.com or care@heritage-line.com. (Please make sure we can identify your booking by giving us the cruise destination, ship name, cruise date, and your full name).

Cruise Program

Detailed cruise program can be found via these links for Bai Tu Long circuits: <https://heritage-line.com/itinerary/halong-bay/> or for Lan Ha Bay circuits: <https://heritage-line.com/itinerary/lan-ha-bay/>

Please also read our terms in regards of itinerary changes. While we make every effort to follow the itinerary provided, some things remain beyond our control and we reserve the right to make changes.

Cruise Inclusion, Exclusion, Benefits

Please note that cruise inclusions and exclusions apply as stated on our website at the time of boarding. We reserve the right to amend our cruise inclusions. For major changes, we will inform every booker. For cruise benefits, they will apply as stated on our website at the time of boarding as well. By all means, we will honour confirmed inclusion at all times in the framework of our policy. Detailed inclusion and exclusion, as well as cruise benefits for different cabin types booking can be found on our website in a detailed leaflet: www.heritage-line.com/brochures/

ON BOARD

Internet

There is complimentary internet onboard which is suitable to chat and browse. We are connected via mobile network and are therefore dependent on the location of the ship, so the reception can fluctuate. Wireless (Wi-Fi) internet access is available in cabins and public areas on board. In remote river areas, there might be no internet connection available.

Language

The onboard language is English and all tours and services are conducted in English. Our resident guides, cruise director, head of departments and tour accompany staff speak English fluently. The rest of the crew speaks English, but may not be fluent or have in-depth vocabulary.

Guide

We have our own, very experienced English-speaking tour guides that escort our guests on shore excursions and also are available on the ship for personal chit-chats. If you need another a foreign-language speaking guide to translate into your mother language, we can organise that for you as a supplement.

Tap & Drinking Water

Our water onboard is 100% safe. However, we do not recommend drinking tap water as we have a water treatment system onboard. Please use tap water for showers and brushing teeth only. We provide complimentary drinking water onboard with in-room carafes and portable drinking water bottles for the excursions,

Cuisine & Beverages

Heritage Line offers a mix of Asian, Western and Fusion cuisine on board. We serve dishes either with a buffet or a la carte. We cater to most food restrictions and preferences if you have any. All ice used in beverages is produced onboard using purified water. We include local and national dishes in our cuisine that are easy to consume for the western palette. Vietnamese food is light and seasoned with herbs and spices. Khmer cuisine is closely related to its neighbouring countries of Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, although it is not as spicy. Curries, stir-fried vegetables, rice, noodles and soups are staples of the Khmer diet. Coconut milk is a main ingredient of many Khmer dishes. Aboard a Heritage Line ship, you will find an extensive drinks menu from juices and soft drinks to cocktails, spirits and wines. A complete collection of Western spirits is served in all establishments.

Corkage Fee: We do not allow guests to bring their own food, wine, beer, spirits, or soft drinks for consumption, unless otherwise agreed by the management. We consider offering a corkage charge for selected types of beverages. Please check this with our reservation team. The usual charge per bottle ranges between 25-35 USD.

Noise

Travelling on ships, trains or planes does come with a certain level of noise. Though Heritage Line ships are built with an approach to offer the best and most comfortable onboard cruise experience, including noise reduction to the lowest level possible, there are areas where noise is not completely unavoidable. At night times the engines stop and generators do the work to produce electricity. There will be a minimal level of vibration and noise to expect in certain areas of the ship (estimated around 50db).

Luggage

Please read our detailed terms for luggage in the terms and conditions. We generally do not restrict the quantity of luggage but oversize luggage and other items must be declared.

Electricity, Adapter

On Heritage Line Ships, the electricity runs at 220 Volts, 50Hz. The standard plug used is a two-pin round plug. Adaptors are available on board but limited. Please bring your own.

Dress Code & Behavior

All passengers travelling with us are expected to be appropriately dressed to conduct themselves in an orderly and acceptable manner, and not to disrupt the enjoyment of other passengers. We wish for guests to feel at home but equally show respect for others. For dinner, you may like to consider dressing yourself smart casual, whilst during day time we do not ask for a special attire on and off the ship as long as it does not conflict with religious requirements, which our tour guide is happy to share with you. Usually, when visiting holy sites or travelling in remote parts, it is recommended to wear clothes that cover shoulders and knees. More about behaviour onboard can be read in our terms as well.

Payment

The official currency on board is VND. The cruise operates on a cashless system, with all purchases billed to your onboard account. At the end of the cruise, bills may be settled in cash with VND or by credit card (American Express, Visa or MasterCard).

Gratuities, Tipping

Heritage Line does not include onboard (crew) gratuities in the cruise price. Tipping to the crew onboard is subject to the level of satisfaction. We recommend a gratuity of 16 USD per full cruise day, per passenger. Guests can ask to add gratuities to the onboard ship account or leave any amount you like in an envelope at the reception.

SHORE EXCURSION

Group excursions

Our on-shore excursions are led by an English-speaking tour guide or the cruise director. Excursion taking place in the morning and afternoon times. Please review for detailed timings of our cruise programs per your booked itinerary. All shore excursions are operated as group tours.

Level of difficulty

All excursions are easy walking over level ground for short distances. Sometimes excursions become moderately taxing with a few inclines and a set of stairs. Mobility is required to get on and off the ship into tenders and from tender to land. When possible solid gangways are provided to walk easily between the ship and the shore. Cycling excursions require an intermediate level of fitness (mostly flat terrain, distances approx. 10 km). Kayaking is a pretty easy activity and you can follow your rhythm and pace. For the soft or hiking activities, we recommend having a moderate-good level of fitness and quite good surefootedness. Passengers should gauge their own health and physical abilities when considering what activities to partake in.

Adjustment of Sightseeing, Activities

We operate our itinerary and excursion as published on our website at the time of boarding. So please collect the latest program prior to your cruise departure. We honour what we have published on the website, however, in the event of changes that are hard to control for us, we reserve the right to alter or substitute sightseeing and activities.

Travel with Open Mind

Bai Tu Long & Lan Ha Bay are fascinating destinations, charming scenery, as well as rich with culture and history. During your travels, you may encounter new customs and different ways of life. Appreciate and enjoy these differences, as this is one of the highlights of traveling in this destination. Friendliness and tolerance towards others are essential for everyone's enjoyment of the holiday. And a smile opens all doors in Vietnam.

Customs & Behaviour ashore

When visiting pagodas and temples, shorts and tank-tops should not be worn as your knees and shoulders must be covered. Footwear and socks must be removed in pagodas. Shoes are also often removed upon entering private homes.

In Vietnam, upon meeting someone new, people may simply nod to each other or may shake hands. Using both hands to shake someone's hand is a warm gesture of respect. Beckoning someone by crooking your finger is considered rude. The correct way to call someone over is to extend your hand with the palm down and flap your fingers towards your wrist. Public displays of affection between men and women should be kept to a minimum. Though it is seen as perfectly normal for a pair of men or a pair of women to link arms or hold hands.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Use these contacts as follows in regards of the purpose of your call please:

In our home country: You have any questions about your booking	reservation@heritage-line.com +84 (0) 28 777 010 80 (Vietnam office hours)
In our home country or in the destination: You have any questions about our operation or your booking	Customer Relation +84 (0) 28 353 504 88 – Ext: 408 (Vietnam office hours) care@heritage-line.com
On the day of embarkation: You seeking support on the ground	Heritage Line Welcome Lounge +84 (0) 355 965 868 (mobile phone, 7 am – 5:30 pm) Customer Relation +84 (0) 28 353 504 88 – Ext: 408 (Vietnam office hours) care@heritage-line.com
EMERGENCY Only for emergency please (missed flight or transfer, adhoc health issue, etc.)	+84 (0) 91 339 7076 (24/7)

HERITAGE LINE HEAD OFFICE
 2/27 Quach Van Tuan, Bay Hien Ward
 Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Office Hours (local time):
 Mon – Fri 08:30 – 17:30 | Sat 08:30 – 12:30
Contact@heritage-line.com
 +84 (0) 28 353 504 88

The whole Heritage Line team wishes you a very safe arrival
 and an enjoyable journey in Bai Tu Long or Lan Ha Bay.