



**HA LONG BAY
WEEKEND TRIP**

There are several amazing weekend trips to get involved in during your time with PMGY in Vietnam. Travelling over the weekends is a huge part of the experience as it gives you the opportunity to explore the country with fellow volunteers on the program.

With PMGY volunteers being based in the urban environment of Hanoi, they are usually able to organise trips independently without the need for our team to travel with them. There are many travel agents based in the city who can provide affordable and reputable weekend trip options to our volunteers, and they also allow for you to meet other travellers in Vietnam. As a result, we have found participants to prefer the flexibility to explore all the opportunities available to them once they arrive in Hanoi rather than pre-organising trips only for people to want to change these plans once they arrive. You can therefore book weekend trips locally based on your budget, travel preferences and once you have met other volunteers on the program.

We have outlined a couple of popular weekend trip options to give you an idea of some of the trips you can get involved in during your time with us. We recommend participants do not make any firm commitments until they arrive in Vietnam as participants will usually travel in a group and our team are a great resource to help you make plans!

It is common for volunteers to make weekend trip plans for a 3 day period when travelling further afield. This will mean choosing to miss a day from your volunteer project. Subsequently, you should give as much notice as possible to the local team and staff at the project to ensure they can approve your plans before you make any trip commitments and make alternative arrangements if necessary.

With emerald waters and towering limestone cliffs off the faces of over 1500 islands, it is no surprise that Ha Long Bay was honoured as a UNESCO site in 1994. This expanse of land has been uniquely shaped by more than 500 million years of combined tropical downpours and dense jungle growth. Each islet varies, from height, to steepness – some are even hollow! This means makes the bay unbelievably breath-taking.

Ha Long Bay's name translates to 'where the dragon descends' and is thus matched with an intriguing story about how the bay first came about. Legend has it that thousands of years ago, a dragon charged through from the mountains towards the ocean, carving out the bays and valleys with its tail as it went. We'll let you decide whether you believe with this local folktale as you explore the path yourself!

This weekend trip offers the perfect opportunity to rest, recuperate and explore after a busy week at project back in Hanoi. Your itinerary is jam-packed with a whole host of activities that allow you to make the most of your time off! From kayaking, to exploring caves and cooking classes,

this is an adventure not to miss out on!

ITINERARY

DAY 1 - LETS GET EXPLORING

You will be picked up by coach from your meeting point in Hanoi and begin your 4 hour journey to Ha Long Bay, arriving just in time for lunch! Upon climbing on board the vessel, you'll enjoy a delicious selection of traditional Vietnamese dishes as the boat begins its journey deep into the jigsaw of islands. After replenishing your energy levels and having a chance to settle into your room, it's time to explore the 'Surprising Cave' – we won't give anything away! It's then your turn to be in charge of navigating the waters as the group splits up across kayaks to explore all of Ha Long Bay's hidden nooks and crannies.

Dinner is served back on board just before sunset. Activities continue into the evening with options ranging from karaoke, to dancing, squid fishing, or quite simply, playing cards!



DAY 2 - LET THE ADVENTURE CONTINUE

After a good night's rest, it's time to set-sail again. Our first stop of the day is a pearl farm. Here you'll have the opportunity to witness these beautiful stones being cultivated by local fishermen. For the rest of your day, you will have the chance to relax on a nearby beach, involving yourself in activities such as badminton, volleyball or more kayaking! For an additional charge, you may instead choose to instead explore a nearby village by bike!

At the end of the day, you will be transferred to Cat Ba Island, to spend your night off the boat. After a buffet meal at the Bungalow, you may choose to spend your evening fishing or relaxing on the sandy beach.



TRANSPORT

You will travel to Ha Long Bay from Hanoi and back via coach. Transport during the remainder of your time will be by boat.

DAY 3 – COOKING UP A FEAST AND BACK TO HANOI

It's a relatively early start, so up you get - it's time to grab breakfast! After refuelling, you'll head back onto the boat and you'll begin the journey out of the depths of the bay, back to mainland. But before it's time to leave, there's still plenty of time to top off this weekend's adventure! It's time to get your chef hat on, today you're a student in the kitchen. You'll then eat your creations for lunch before docking into Ha Long harbour, where your trip unfortunately comes to an end. Your coach journey back to Hanoi will allow you reflect on all the new memories you have made during this incredible weekend away.



ACCOMMODATION

You will stay on board the boat for your first night and in a bungalow on Cat Ba Island for the second. Rooms are shared, with up to 6 volunteers per room. Our team will do their best to arrange twin rooms or single beds, but from time to time some volunteers may be required to share double beds depending on availability. The accommodation will be basic but clean and comfortable. You should have all the amenities you need such as western toilet and a shower. Wi-Fi is also available, although it may be intermittent.

MEALS

Meals may be typical Vietnamese cuisine and served on board the boat or a local restaurant. Any drinks or snacks will be at your own expense.