

VIETNAM

Lake Ba Be



**Interactive
Travel
Guides**

**Plus
Bonus
Na Hang
District**



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Your Vietnam Travel Specialist

FOREWORD



Thanks for downloading this FREE interactive travel guide. You've made an excellent choice if you plan on **GETTING OFF THE BEATEN TRACK** in (LOCATION). Before you delve into the content of this travel guide, please take a few minutes to read this foreword. It outlines how to make the best use of the information contained within.

First-hand experience: This travel guide has been put together using first-hand experience gained from traveling to, and exploring, all the locations presented within. The information and photos featured in my travel guides, have been collated over years of putting boots on the ground. There is no second-hand information, or information which is plagiarized from other travel sources, within this guide. Every cave, waterfall, river, viewpoint, jungle trail, temple site, guesthouse and restaurant presented, or promoted, I have been to and seen and/or experienced myself.

Getting off the beaten track: The primary focus of my travel guides is **ADVENTURE TRAVEL** (and activities) to locations which are non-mainstream tourist destinations. As an example, there is no information for the mainstream tourist locations of **VIETNAM** (except as transit hub's before heading off to a more remote location) listed in this travel guide. As such, the information in this guide is directed towards travelers (not tourists) who are keen

for a bit of adventure - caving, climbing, jungle trekking, kayaking - in an off the beaten track location, of South East Asia. If these types of activities aren't to your liking, then this travel guide won't be much use to you. There's no information in here about the party towns in South East Asia.

Budget travel: Knowing the importance of making the most of your hard-earned currency, my travel links (**12GO ASIA**) and accommodation links (**AGODA**) are predominantly budget oriented. They provide a range of options for getting to a central hub, or base, from which you can make your daily explorations.

Independent sightseeing: Instead of going on group tours, I strongly promote the idea of renting your own vehicle (car or motorbike) and venturing out yourself. To help you get to the exact location, there's always a **GOOGLE MAPS** link to show the route from a hub (hotel or guesthouse) to the sightseeing attraction. If there's a local tour operator offering excellent adventure type tours, or activities, I'll provide links to their website. A good example of a great adventure tour operator is **GREEN DISCOVERY LAOS**, who offer excellent caving, kayaking and trekking tours throughout Laos.

The Table of Contents: This is page four of the travel guide and has a sequential list of sections, which you can go to directly by clicking on the **GREEN** numbered tab.

YouTube Links: These take you directly to my YouTube Vlog (**Megaworld Asia**) where you can see short, high quality travel videos of the numerous attractions listed in my travel guides. If you enjoy the videos, please hit the like button and don't forget to subscribe to see my upcoming adventures.

Your next adventure is just one click away

Safe travels,

MEGA

Lake Ba Be

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**Your Next Adventure
Is Just One Click Away**

How To Use This Interactive Travel Guide

The Table Of Contents: To effortlessly move from the TOC to the page you want to view, simply click on the **page number**: **1**

YouTube Links: These will take you to a short highlights video, of the sightseeing attraction, in the section you're looking at:



Other Links: These take you to ancillary services such as recommended restaurants, or car and motorbike rental agencies, in the location you're traveling to:

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Travel Links: This takes you to **12GO ASIA**, an excellent travel group which provides a range of options for getting around the region:



The Table Of Contents: To move back to the TOC, click on the **yellow arrows**, at the bottom of each Page: 

Google Maps Links: These provide a route from a designated location (e.g., a hotel) to a particular sightseeing attraction:



Information Links: These links take you to information sites, such as Wikipedia or Wiki-voyage, to provide more in-depth info on a particular subject or location:



Accommodation Links: This takes you to the Agoda website to check accommodation availability and make bookings:



It's Time To Get Off The Beaten Track



LAKE BA BE - GENERAL INFORMATION

About: Lake Ba Be is located 230 km north of Hanoi. With a surface area of 6.4 km, it's considered to be the largest natural lake in Vietnam. The primary attraction is the natural beauty of the area. The lake is surrounded by jungle covered, limestone peaks with rise dramatically from the shoreline. Sightseeing cruises are offered by local tour companies which operate from the marina along the Northern edge of the lake. There's plenty of home-stay/guesthouse accommodation available next to the lake. Some of the guesthouses have kayaks available for paddling tours around the lake. **Click the following link to see the location of Lake Ba Be:**



Getting there: If you have your own means of transportation (a motorbike) then simply follow Google Maps to get there. **For bus or taxi services, click on the following link to check transportation options:**



Guided tours from Hanoi: This is probably the best option for doing a tour around Ba Be Lake, anywhere in Northern Vietnam. Guided tours normally include all transportation, accommodation, meals, and sightseeing excursions. An excellent option for guided tours in the North of Vietnam is MR. LINH'S ADVENTURES, from Hanoi. **Click the following link for information on their tour packages:**



Lake Ba Be Accommodation: The main accommodation area is on the southern side of the lake - mainly guesthouses or home-stays alongside a river which branches off the lake. There's also an road to this area which branches off route # DT 254. **Click the following link to see the accommodation area:**



Lake Ba Be Guesthouses

LAKE BA BE - GENERAL INFORMATION

Mr Linh's Home-stay: This is a nicely appointed guesthouse, overlooking the lake, which is owned and operated by LINH'S ADVENTURES. This home-stay has air-conditioned rooms and comfortable beds. A nice aspect of a stay here is being able to enjoy your dinner in the open garden area, while overlooking the lake and enjoying a cold beer, or a few shots of happy water (rice whiskey). Click the following link for the location of Mr. Linh's Home-stay:



Food & coffee: Unfortunately, there aren't many choices for food and coffee outside the guesthouses. Mr. Linh's Home-stay serves excellent local food and there's always plenty of cold beers in the refrigerator.

Getting around: If you have your own transportation, getting to the various sightseeing attractions in the area isn't a problem. All of the roads, even the smaller ones, are paved. If you're doing an arranged tour, then they will have a schedule for your time at Ba Be Lake. Renting a motorbike, or bicycle, from the guesthouse you're staying in, may be possible. To do a lake cruise, simply ask at the guesthouse you're staying at, and they can arrange it.



Inside Hua Ma Cave

Ba Be Sightseeing: The primary sightseeing attraction at Ba Be is the lake. Other attractions include a couple of nice caves and waterfalls.

In no particular order, they are:

- Hua Ma Cave
- Puong Cave
- Tham Pay Cave
- Tat Ma Waterfall
- Dau Dang Waterfall

Note: All of these attractions are a few km from the guesthouse area and are best visited as part of a tour, with a guide.



Lake Ba Be landscape

LAKE BA BE SIGHTSEEING - PUONG CAVE

Puong Cave: This interesting cave site is located at the Northern end of Lake Ba Be. It's a few km along a river (Nang River) feeding into the lake. Click the following link for the location:



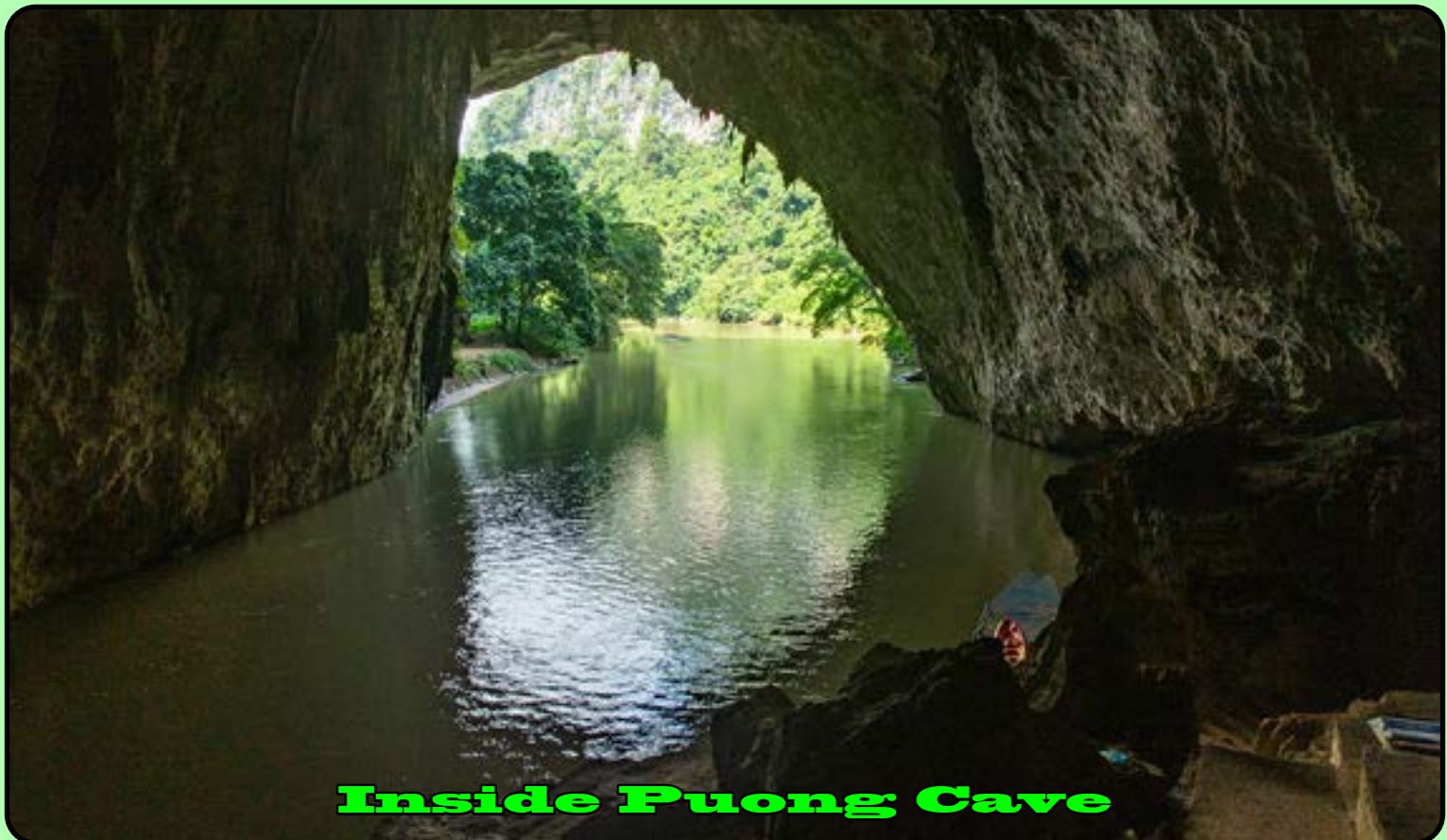
The following trip report comes from a tour with MR. LINH'S ADVENTURES.



Large tunnel: PUONG CAVE is simply a large volume tunnel, through a limestone peak, with wide openings at each end. The distance between the entrance and exit points is little more than 300 meters and there's plenty of ambient light throughout. At around the mid-point of the cave, the boat pulled over at a cement landing to enable us to make an excursion up into the cave.



Cave tour: There's a cement pathway, of approximately 200 meters, which provides access deeper into the cave. My guide, Mr. Hai, informed me there was a high ceiling at the top of the pathway, with lots of resident bats. As we progressed further in, the sound of screeching bats got louder. There was also the noticeable stench of bat poo (guano). At the highest point along the pathway, I shone my torch up into the ceiling, some thirty meters above, and there were hundreds of bats milling about. The walking tour through cave took around thirty minutes to complete.



LAKE BA BE SIGHTSEEING - NANG RIVER

Continuing the trip with MR. LINH'S ADVENTURES.



Ba Be Lake: After the cave tour, we rejoined the boat for a forty-minute ride down the NANG river to Ba Be Lake. The scenery along the river was mostly jungle covered, limestone peaks with a few farms and small villages nestled in between. We eventually arrived at Lake Ba Be where there was a noticeable change from the muddy brown of the river water to the emerald green of the lake. Mr. Hai informed me that LAKE BA BE was the largest natural lake (not a dam) in Vietnam. It's spread is 6.5 square km. We had an enjoyable cruise across the lake, with plenty of mountain scenery surrounding. After forty minutes of cruising the lake, we went up a side stream to eventually arrive at our disembarkation point. From there it was a short walk to our accommodation for the next two nights.



Nang River



Lake Ba Be



Ba Be Lake landscape

LAKE BA BE SIGHTSEEING - HUA MA CAVE

Continuing the trip with MR. LINH'S ADVENTURES:

Hua Ma Cave: This cave is only 10 km from Linh's Home-stay and is well worth the effort to visit. The cave entrance is on the side of a forested hill, and 250 steps from the parking area. Click the following link for directions to HUA MA CAVE:



Doing the cave tour: This cave is the highlight attraction of the area. Like many of the cave sites I've been to in Vietnam, this one is well developed for a safe and enjoyable sightseeing experience. There's a solid cement pathway through the accessible (700 meters) length of the cave, and internal coloured lighting to highlight the many beautiful formations (stalactites & stalagmites) within. An additional unusual touch is the recorded bird chirping throughout the cave. This cave is the highlight attraction of the area.

Tat Ma Waterfall: This is a small waterfall located approximately 5 km from Hua Ma Cave. For the parking area there's a short hike (500 meters) to the base of the falls. The best time to visit is probably September/October when the rains have abated, but there's still a good flow over the falls.



Tat Ma Waterfall

Click the following link to see the location of TAT MA WATERFALL:



To see highlights of all the above-mentioned locations, click on this YOUTUBE LINK:



Colourful illumination

NA HANG DISTRICT - GENERAL INFORMATION

About: This is a more remote, and less visited, area to the north of Lake Ba Be. The primary sightseeing attraction of Na Hang is a large lake, created by the damming of the GAM RIVER. The lake and its surrounds are a pristine wilderness area with no real tourist development. There are no hotels, resorts, or buildings to be seen anywhere on the lake shore. The BEN THUY THUONG LAM Marina has boats available for cruises along the lake.

Getting there: The distance from Lake Ba Be to Gam River Marina is approx. 90 km by road. If you're riding a motorbike, due care should be observed as the road is a continuous series of twisting mountain turns. **Click the link below for directions from Lake Ba Be to Gam River:**



Guided tour: The best option for seeing this area is to do a guided trip with one of the tour companies from Hanoi. They will provide transportation, a guide, and an excellent tour experience. **Click the following link for more information:**



NA HANG SIGHTSEEING - GAM RIVER CRUISE

The following trip report is from a tour I did through Na Hang and Gam River, with Mr. Linh's Adventures.

Na Hang Home-stay: My accommodation for the third night of my tour was a home-stay in NA HANG DISTRICT. The home-stay was basically a village house, with spare rooms, in a farming area. Because the Na Hang area is yet undeveloped for tourism, the nearest accommodation to the lake is these simple home-stays. The home-stay was built entirely of timber and the living and sleeping area was upstairs - the building was basically on stilts with the communal area underneath, at ground level. Unfortunately, my mattress was like a board, and probably the hardest I'd ever slept on. To help me get to sleep, my tour guide suggested having a few shots of "happy water." Anyone who's done any touring around Vietnam will know what happy water is. It's local rice whiskey (moonshine) and it certainly helps you get to sleep. I had six shots with my dinner and sleeping on that hard mattress wasn't such an issue after all. **Click the following link for the location of the home-stay in Na Hang: [Google](#)**



Boat cruise

Na Hang Lake Tour: The following morning I woke early and went down to the communal area. The scenery surrounding us was quite stunning. There were the usual yellow and green rice fields, surrounded by mist covered limestone peaks. NA HANG really is one of the off the beaten track areas of Vietnam. After a filling breakfast we made our way to the marina - a place called BEN THUY LUONG LAM. **Click the following link for the location of the marina:**



Gam River scenery

NA HANG SIGHTSEEING - WATERFALL TOUR

Nam Me Waterfall: The plan for the day was to do hike up to a multi-level waterfall called NAM ME. To get there we'd need to do a forty minute cruise along the lake, before pulling over and starting the hike. Along the way, the scenery was superb. It was pristine. There is no development anywhere along the lakeside. Unfortunately, I had to abandon the idea of going to Nam Me waterfall. The distance, from where we pulled over in the boat, to the waterfall was four kilometers and mostly uphill. I was carrying camera gear and a handy-cam, and it was slow going. About 300 meters into the hike, I asked the local guides "how long it would take to get there at my speed?" They replied, "three hours." Understanding that the return leg would be slower, due to a steep descent, I calculated the round trip could take eight hours minimum. I told Hai, my guide from Linh's Adventure Travel, I'd return next year and do an overnight camping trip to Nam Me Waterfall.

Khoui Nhi Waterfall: Fortunately, there was another very scenic and easier to access back near the marina. It was a bit disappointing not getting to Nam Me Waterfall but my assured me that KHOUI NHI was very scenic and a great place to go for a swim. As it turned out, it was a beautiful location. From the boat landing it was a 300-meter hike, mostly uphill, to the main waterfall.



On the way there were several smaller waterfalls at lower levels. This was a pristine area, with crystal clear pools of water to be seen. The waterfall at the third, and highest level, had a large plunge pool which was an excellent swimming location. A small waterfall fed into a large turquoise pool. It was certainly a memorable spot and definitely well worth the effort of getting there. **Click the following link for the location of Khoui Nhi Waterfall:**



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