

Bac Ha District

Lào Cai Province · Vietnam

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Bắc Hà is a highland town in Lào Cai province, in the mountains of northern Vietnam. It is best known for its Sunday market, where Flower Hmong, Dao, Tay and other communities gather in colourful clothes to trade. The town sits at about 900 metres, so it is cooler than the plains, with hills, maize fields and plum orchards around it.

Most visitors come for a day or a night from Sa Pa or Lào Cai. Plan to be here on a Sunday.

When to visit

The Sunday market runs all year. March and April bring plum, peach and pear blossom. September and October are dry with golden fields. Winter from December to February is cold and foggy, and snow is rare. Summer from June to August is wet.

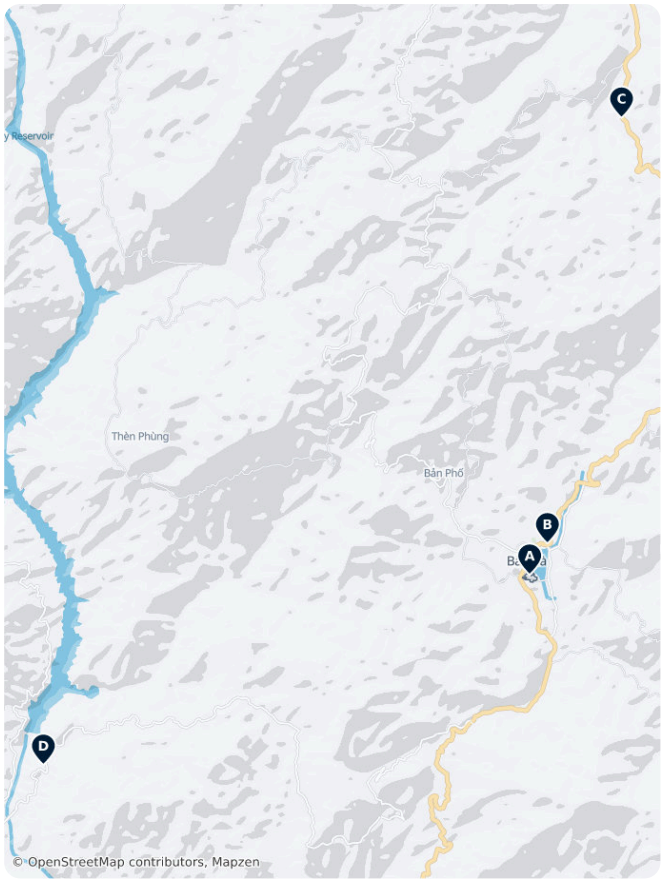
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Great Great for hiking	16° / 23°	6° / 1°	Dry air · Calm winds
February	Great Great for sightseeing	19° / 26°	8° / 3°	Dry air · Calm winds
March	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 29°	12° / 6°	Dry air · Calm winds
April	Good Good for sightseeing	26° / 32°	16° / 10°	15 rainy days · Humid air · Calm winds
May	Fair Fair for sightseeing	28° / 32°	18° / 14°	20 rainy days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds · UV 8 (Very high)
June	Poor Poor for sightseeing	28° / 31°	20° / 18°	24 rainy days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds · UV 8 (Very high)
July	Poor Poor for sightseeing	28° / 31°	20° / 19°	25 rainy days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
August	Poor Poor for sightseeing	27° / 30°	20° / 18°	25 rainy days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
September	Fair Fair for sightseeing	26° / 29°	18° / 15°	19 rainy days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds · UV 8 (Very high)
October	Good Good for sightseeing	23° / 27°	15° / 11°	13 rainy days · Calm winds
November	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 25°	11° / 6°	Dry air · Calm winds
December	Great Great for hiking	16° / 22°	7° / 2°	Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: February, March, November, December

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights

- A Bac Ha Market is the large Sunday market in the town centre, with textiles, animals, food and rice wine.
- B Hmong King's Palace is a large mansion built in the early 20th century for a local ruling family, with a mix of Chinese and French styles.
- C Chợ Cán Cấu is the Cán Cấu market, held on Saturday, in the hills near the border with China.
- D Chợ Cốc Ly is the Cốc Ly market, held on Tuesday, in a Flower Hmong area.



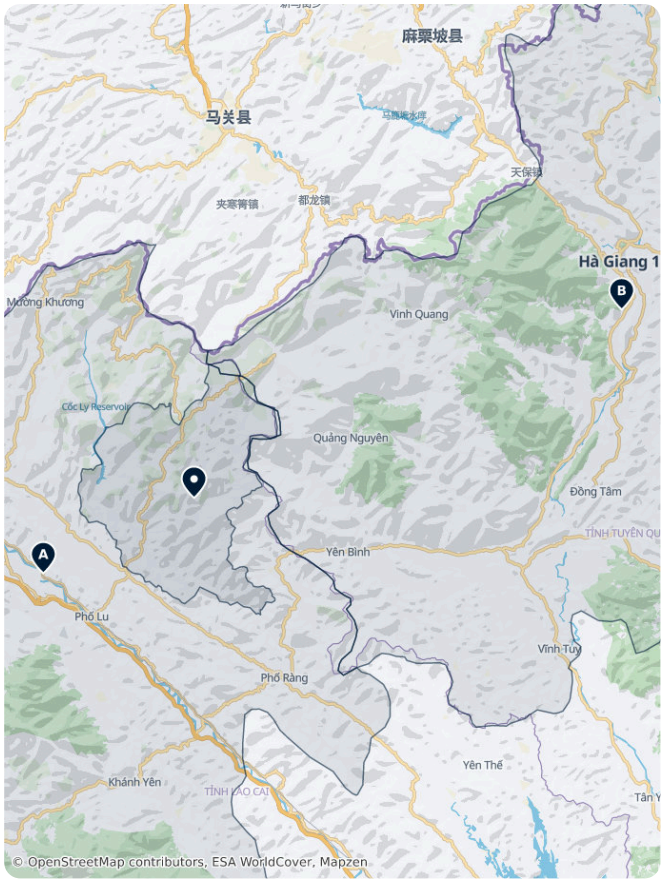
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What to experience

- **Wander the Sunday market**: Go early, before 9 am, for the best atmosphere.
- **Visit the Hmong King's Palace**: A short visit with a large courtyard.
- **Taste corn wine**: A local drink made in the valley.
- **Walk to nearby villages**: Short trails lead to Flower Hmong and Tay villages.
- **Stay in a homestay**: Simple stilt houses offer meals and rooms.

Day trips

- A Lao Cai: Lào Cai and Sa Pa lie about 70 to 100 km away.
- **Cán Cấu market**: A Saturday market up a mountain road.
- **Cốc Ly market**: A Tuesday market in a lowland valley.
- B Ha Giang: another northern highland province for a longer trip.



Where to explore

- **West**: Lao Cai covers Sa Pa and Fansipan.
- **East**: Ha Giang has the Hà Giang Loop.
- **Capital**: Hanoi is the main gateway.

Getting there

- **By bus**: Buses and minivans run from Lào Cai to Bắc Hà in about 2 hours. Direct buses also leave Hanoi.
- **From Sa Pa**: A tour or private car takes about 3 hours.
- **By train**: Trains run from Hanoi to Lào Cai. Then continue by road. Vietnam Railways
- **By air**: There is no airport in Bắc Hà. Hanoi is the nearest hub.

Getting around

- **Walking**: The town centre is small and walkable.
- **Motorbike hire**: The best way to reach the markets and villages.
- **Taxi and car**: Available through hotels for the markets.
- **Bicycle**: Possible in the town and nearby valleys.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The town centre is compact, but the other markets and villages are a drive away.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

The town is hilly. Cycling is possible in the valleys but roads are steep outside.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** A car or driver helps for the market and for Cán Cấu. Mountain roads are narrow.
- **Roads**: The road from Lào Cai is paved but winding.
- **Market days**: Traffic and parking are crowded on Sunday mornings.

Food & drink

Bắc Hà food is mountain food. Try thắng cố, a horse or pork stew sold at the market, grilled meats, sticky rice and corn wine. Plums and peaches are sold in season. Meals are at the market stalls and small restaurants around the town.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Pho · Phở
Beef or chicken noodle soup with a fragrant broth, fresh herbs, and rice noodles; commonly eaten for breakfast.

LUNCH

Bun Cha · Bún chả
Grilled pork patties and slices served with rice vermicelli, herbs, and a sweet-sour dipping sauce; a Hanoi specialty.

Bun Bo Hue · Bún bò Huế
A spicy, lemongrass-scented beef noodle soup from the city of Hue.

Cao Lau · Cao lầu
A noodle dish unique to Hoi An, with thick chewy noodles, pork, and greens, traditionally made with local well water.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Banh Mi · Bánh mì
A French-influenced baguette sandwich filled with pork, pate, pickled vegetables, and herbs.

Banh Xeo · Bánh xèo
A crispy turmeric rice-flour crepe filled with pork, shrimp, and bean sprouts, wrapped in lettuce and herbs.

Goi Cuon · Gỏi cuốn
Fresh (uncooked) spring rolls filled with shrimp, pork, herbs, and vermicelli, wrapped in rice paper.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Che · Chè
A category of sweet dessert soups or puddings made with beans, fruit, jelly, and coconut milk, served hot or over ice.

DRINKS

Ca Phe Sua Da · Cà phê sữa đá
Strong drip coffee served over ice with sweetened condensed milk; Vietnam's signature drink.

Bia Hoi · Bia hơi
Cheap, light draft beer brewed fresh daily and sold at street-side stalls, especially in Hanoi.

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Safety & health

Bắc Hà is a safe town.

- The market is crowded. Keep your valuables close.
- Ask before taking photos of people.
- Mountain roads are steep and can be foggy. Take care on a motorbike.
- Nights are cold in winter. Bring warm clothes.
- Medical care is basic. The nearest large hospital is in Lào Cai.

History

Bắc Hà was ruled in the early 20th century by the Hoàng family, local Tay and Hmong leaders, under French protection. They built a palace in a mix of Chinese and French styles, now a museum.

The market grew from a trading place between mountain communities. It is still the main event of the week and remains a place where people trade animals, tools and cloth.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Vietnam at a glance:

CURRENCY

VND ₫

ELECTRICITY



Type A / Type C / Type F
220 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES

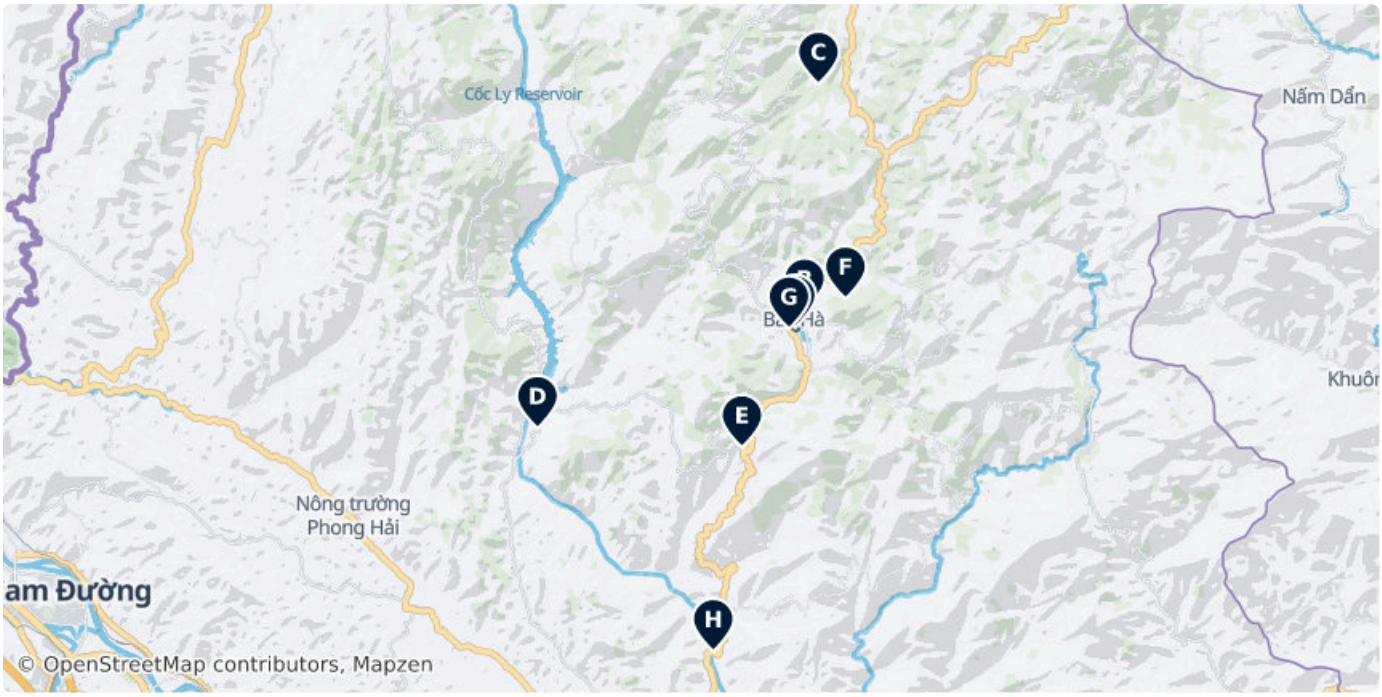
Vietnamese

TAP WATER

Not safe to drink

Bac Ha Essentials

Bac Ha is a highland hub in Northern Vietnam characterized by its weekly ethnic markets and historical landmarks. The region features the early 20th-century Hmong King's Palace, showcasing a blend of French and Chinese architecture, and the Bac Ha Temple, dedicated to 16th-century regional defenders. Weekly trade centers include the large Sunday market and specialized Saturday buffalo sales at Can Cau. The surrounding landscape is defined by extensive rice terraces and the Chay River, where the Coc Ly market convenes every Tuesday.





A Bac Ha Market

Held every Sunday, this is Northern Vietnam's largest ethnic market. It serves as a trading hub for Flower Hmong, Tay, and Dao communities selling livestock, traditional textiles, and local corn wine.

(Unnamed Road), Vietnam (22.53540, 104.29214)

Su	07:00–14:00

B Hmong King's Palace

Built between 1914 and 1921, this mansion features a blend of French and Chinese architectural styles. It served as the residence for the local Hmong rulers, Hoang Yen Chao and Hoang A Tuong, during the colonial era.

(22.54100, 104.29556)

C Chợ Cán Cấu

An open-air market operating every Saturday near the Chinese border. It is specifically known for its large-scale buffalo trade and the traditional colorful attire worn by the Flower Hmong people.

(22.61734, 104.30060)

D Chợ Cốc Ly

A traditional market held every Tuesday along the banks of the Chay River. It facilitates trade between diverse ethnic groups including the Flower Hmong, Black Dao, and Nung communities.

(22.50140, 104.19811)

E rice terraces

Sculpted mountainsides used for wet rice cultivation. These terraces are most prominent during the watering season in May and the golden harvest period in September and October.

(22.49494, 104.27272)

F 360 Viewpoint over rice fields

An elevated vantage point providing panoramic views of the surrounding valley, terraced agriculture, and limestone peaks characteristic of the Lao Cai province highlands.

(22.54504, 104.31047)

G Bac Ha Temple

A late 19th-century spiritual site dedicated to Vu Van Mat and Vu Van Uyen, brothers who defended the border region during the Le and Mac dynasties.

(Unnamed Road), Vietnam (22.53495, 104.28990)

H Swimming Spot #bor

A natural waterfall and swimming hole located in the rural outskirts, offering a freshwater basin surrounded by local vegetation and rock formations.

(22.42624, 104.26223)

DATA SOURCES

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