

Cat Ba Islands is a system of 367 islands of which Cat Ba is the most famous island. Cat Ba is one of the two largest island among 1969 islands in Ha Long Bay, is located 25 km from Ha Long City. Cat Ba is the convergence of the forest and the beach with around half of its area covered by the National Forest. Sea and the forest combine together to create an unique landscape. Cat Ba Forest is beautiful especially after spring with blossoms everywhere. Deep in the forest visitors can find the full beautiful lake giving such a nice moment that are unforgettable for many people.

Why Not Go

Cat Ba is for those who love trekking, fishing, beach activities, exploring the caves, going around by kayak, sightseeing... Shopping is definitely out of the list as Cat Ba is an island only and everything needs to be transported from inland. Also if you are an outdoor person may find this place lack of activities like bars, clubs... since Cat Ba is a rather quiet place. Cat Ba island is a beautifully dreamy island, is 70 m above the sea level. On the island there is Cat Ba town in the southeast (in the Lan Ha Bay) and 6 communes.

In Cat Ba you can:

- Embed yourself in the beach as Cat Ba has many beaches with white smooth sand, clear water like Cat Co 1,2,3... What's more interesting is the fresh delicious seafood like crab, fish, squid, prawn...you can choose what you like and enjoy it sitting on the seaside itself.
- Shrug off the noisy city life and work stress: Cat Ba is an ideal place to enjoy life, being in a peaceful and quiet atmosphere in the middle of cool sea wind with clear blue water and fresh air will help you have some minutes of relaxation.
- Explore Cat Ba islands: Cat Ba has been recognized by UNESCO as a world Biosphere Reserve on 2nd December 2004. Take your time to visit some famous and interesting cave like Thien Long cave, or go trek in Cat Ba National forest or go to visit isolated islands where you can enjoy smooth white sand and clear blue sea water. Cat Ba National Forest is highly diverse and is home to the highly endangered langur.

Best Time to Visit

Summer time is peak time for tourism to Cat Ba both domestically and from other countries. In Vietnam hot weather is between April and November, Vietnamese people peak time to Cat Ba should be from April to August. However going to Cat Ba during September to November you could enjoy the peaceful atmosphere that is somewhat relaxing also. In Cat Ba 1st April is the festival launching tourism season annually. If you go there during winter i.e from December to March it is quite cold and not advisable to swim.

Where to Stay

For a romantic getaway of course Cat Ba Sunrise Resort is the best choice. Although it's a bit pricey compared to other places in Cat Ba but it's worth it because of the nice food offered, great sea view, great sea atmosphere, good room and services. If you are looking for a budget hotel, Lan Ha hotel at Cat Ba town or Sunset hotel are good choices. You just need to call in to book the hotel, they will send a car to collect

you upon arrival. Those [hotels in Cat Ba](#) are in the middle of Cat Ba – Hai Phong town and you can comfortably find many things within walking distance.

Where & What to Eat

Do not miss Geoduck clam (called Tu Hải in Vietnamese), one kind of clam that in Vietnam can only be found in Cat Ba.

If you come to Đình Vũ ferry terminal you should stop at the Hải Phòng's side to enjoy meals at a nice seafood restaurant called Phúc Đình Quán (in the left hand side if you are from Hai Phong to ferry terminal), which serves very tasty fresh seafood with affordable price. If you are a gentlemen remember tasting coconut wine (fermented in a fresh coconut) while ladies can purchase some as a special gift for their husbands or boyfriends. You can also book a fish farm to serve your meals fresh. Fish farms are around 2-3km from the beach and you have to take boats (which are able to carry up to 10 persons) to go there. It is nice to have lunch while bobbing in middle of the ocean and enjoying taste of the sea over fresh breezing.

Nightlife

In those nice weathered days, you can rent a tour on a boat and go out to the sea at night. You would contemplate lights of fishing boats reflecting along the sea. It looks like a quiet starred firmament.

My to do List

- Visit and swim at Cat Co 1, Cat Co 2 beach
- Take a tour by kayak to view Lan Ha bay and see how islands are looming large from horizon. It is a nice experience for sightseeing. You can also rent a tour in a boat to see Monkey island. Remember to take medicine if you are seasick. This kind of boat or kayak service can ask the hotel for guidance.
- Go to isolated islands like Monkey island and other smaller no-name islands for swimming.
- Have some nice fresh seafood by the seaside among the wind, sand and fresh air.
- Go trekking in Cat Ba National Park if you like. This is a highly biodiversity forest. Experiencing Cat Ba National Park often brings a new and strange emotion to the visitors because of its biodiversity as well as unique caves. This is a tiresome activity of around 10 km walking through the forest but it's also a very nice experience for those who love to trek a tropical forest. Or you can reach the forest by taking Xe Om (motorbike taxi) or a taxi itself for hiking or camping in the midst of the forest. The forest is quite humid so do prepare a mosquito repellent.
- Go to explore the beautiful caves such as Thien Long cave (Phu Long commune). This is a newly discovered cave and open for tourist from 1997. Thien Long cave has 3 levels, each level has an unique structures make tourists think of different stories. Three km from Phu Long is Hien Hao commune, is home to a mysterious cave, "Cay Thi" cave. Cay Thi cave is located in the middle of a mountain 30 m above the sea. In order to get there one need to use the stairs.

Stay Away From

- Some hotels in Cat Ba have been notorious for not so good services such as Thuy Tien hotel (power on and off, lousy services) or Sun & Sea hotel (air-con

and hot bathing water controlled by the hotel itself, won't give you good service if you don't choose to eat at their restaurant...)

- If you choose to trek or go to explore the cave, please bring your convenient shoes.
- Cat Ba is an island, most of the things except seafood need to be transported from inland, as such shopping here is not so recommended except for some souvenirs.
- When shopping at Cat Ba night market, do bargain hard. And be aware of pick pocket in the crowded area.
- If you plan to go by ferry be prepared plenty of time for waiting for the ferry. You had better go back Hanoi before 13.00 otherwise you'll get risk reaching Hanoi late at around 21.00.

Getting There

There are two ways to get to Cat Ba, either by boat from Ha Long Bay or Binh Bridge in Hai Phong, or by bus from Hai Phong and then take the ferry. Ferry is not recommended as it's slow with low frequency and it's really time-consuming to wait for it. From Hanoi to Hai Phong you need to take the bus. Normally buses leave Luong Yen bus station (Hanoi) quite frequent to go to Hai Phong (approx. 3-4h). From Hai Phong you need to take the boat from Binh harbor to go to Cat ba, the express boat takes around 30 min to get there.

Source: [Vietnam Visa](#)