

Halong-Yen tu (~200kms East from Hanoi)

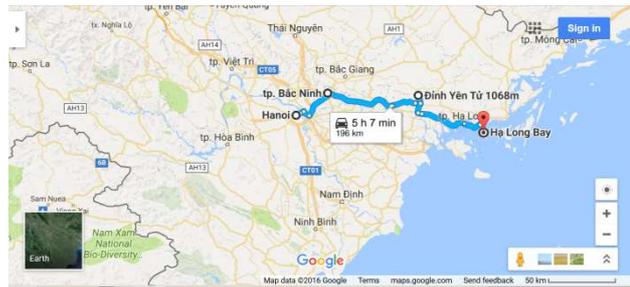
Halong: the shortest trip should be 2 days including 1 night in Halong.

Halong-Yen tu: the shortest trip should be 3 days including 2 nights in Halong.

4h excursion by boat in Halong bay, to Heaven Palace cave

6-8h excursion by boat in Halong bay, to Heaven Palace cave, Titop beach, Surprise cave.

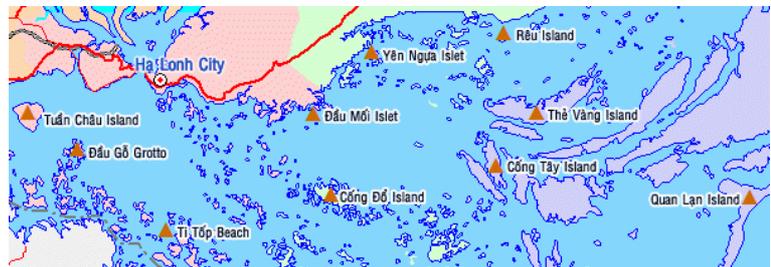
One should combine to visit Yen tu on the way back from Halong (Yen tu is 60km from Halong)



Hạ Long Bay (Vịnh Hạ Long-“Descending Dragon Bay”) is located in the Gulf of Tonkin, within Quang Ninh Province, in the northeast of Vietnam, 165 km from Hanoi, covering an area of 43400ha and including 1969 limestone islands and islets in various shapes and sizes, most of which are uninhabited and unaffected by humans. It is a center of a larger zone which includes Bái Tử Long Bay to the northeast, and Cát Bà Island to the southwest. The core of the bay has an area of 334km² with a high density of 775 islets. The limestone in this bay has gone through 500 million years of formation. The evolution of the karst in this bay has taken 20 million years under the impact of the tropical wet climate.



It first named as Lục Châu, Lục Hải. During Ly, Tran and Le dynasty it had the name Hoa Phong, Hải Đông, An Bang, Vân Đồn. At the end of 19th century the name Halong had appeared in the documents and sea-maps of French. In 1898, 1900 và 1902, Legderin-the captain of (French) Avalence and sailors saw the pair of giant sea-snakes. On the Hai Phong news, published in French, there was an article with the title “Dragon appeared in the Bay”.



Burning beach (Bãi Cháy)

an artificial sandy beach with a length of more than 500m and a width of 500m. According to legend, Bãi Cháy is the place where the army force of Trần Dynasty (1225-1400) led by Tran Khanh Du burned Mongols' vessels. Northeast wind then blew fire toward the west side of Cửa Lục Bay and set fire to the dried forest nearby. Another folk-story says that in the past, boats used to anchor at the west side of Cửa Lục. Fishermen gathered and burned leaves around those vessels in order to deal with shipworm that bored into them.

Bài Thơ Mountain (Poem mountain): a beautiful limestone mountain located in the Halong city center, the half of foothill is associated with the land, the other half is immersed in sea water. In many places, people can see the mountain in the different shapes.

Bai Tho Mountain used to be called Truyen Dang mountain (Light Projecting mountain, núi Rọi Đèn or Truyền Đăng Sơn). According to the legend, the guards had to set up the fire to alarm the capital if they see any aggressors. In 1468, King Lê Thánh Tông patrolled at the North East Sea, his boat stopped at the foot of Truyen Dang mountain to drink wine and recite. Touched by the charming of the natural beauty, King Le Thanh Tong etched a poem on a flat rock, about 2.5m above the ground, including 56 Chinese characters. In 1729 Lord Trịnh Cường, a famous poet during Lê-Trịnh period, leaded troops to patrol over there. Read poetry of King Le Thanh Tong, Lord Trinh rewrite a poem on a cliff leaning down toward the earth,

so it has avoided the destruction of the rain and remains clear and very easy to read. By the early 20th century, many travelers read these poems and then they carved 7 more, with all Chinese and Vietnamese characters on the nearby cliffs.

Heaven Palace Cave (Động Thiên Cung)

located in the southwest of Halong Bay, about 6 kilometers from Bai Chay beach, on the Đầu Gỗ Island (old name: đảo Vạn Cảnh, đảo Canh Độc).

The island have a peak of 189m, with a shaped like a throne embracing two caves Dau Go cave located high above and the Heaven Palace close the water's edge which are about 100m apart.



It is the most beautiful cave of the Bay. The cave is with complicated interior structure, many floors, and high ceiling with stalactites and stalagmites with different forms and shapes. The stalactites inside had the shapes of dragon, phoenix, and Four Pillars which made those people think about an imperial palace (Heaven Palace Cave). Due to having the narrow cave door and the strongly development of the flora surrounding, the entrance of Thien Cung cave was hidden. The cave was discovered quite late, in 1993.

Wooden Stakes Cave (Đầu Gỗ/Giấu Gỗ)

is on the same name island. It was formed during the Pleistocene period, 2million years ago. The cave is 27m above the sea level, the entrance is 12m wide and 17m high, the height of the dome is 25m.

The name: it is linked with historic battle against Mongolian invaders under Tran dynasty in 13th^h century. Dau Go Cave was the place hiding wooden stakes before they were driven into Bach Dang River. These stakes created a trap to destroy the enemy's ships. Other explanation is that the mountain-island looks like the head of a wooden piece in the water. At the two sides are the "knots" that people are often carved into the wood for dragging it (Đầu gỗ).

The information about Dau Go cave was in the tourist book Merveille de Monde (Wonders of the world) in 1938. In 1918, King Khải Định and French governor in Indochine Albert Pierre Saraut has visited this cave.

Surprise Cave (Sung Sot Cave)

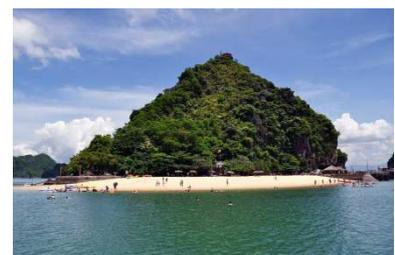
lies on Bo Hon Island group, surrounded by the Bo Nau Cave, Me Cung Cave, Luon Cave and Ti Top Island. The cave was found by the French in 1901 and called as Grotte des surprises. Sung Sot Cave is a large cave with the size of 12.200m². The cave has three compartments and high ceiling with lots of stalactites in various shapes. The ceiling's maximal height is 30 meters. In the middle, there is a giant and beautiful stalactite pillar connecting the cave's ground up to the roof.

The mouth of Sung Sot Cave is about 25 meters above the sea level. There is a stone in the shape of a horse and a long sword next to the entrance. The ancient legend has told that, after defeating the An Enemy, Thanh Giong fled to Heaven, leaving his sword and horse to reassure local people and dislodge demons. Currently, inside the cave, there are many natural images as the marks of that fierce battle. The trail of his horse became many little lakes and smashed rocks.

Ti Top Island (Đảo Ti Tốp)

during the French occupation named Cát Nàng located on the Halong Bay area about 14km from Bai Chay east. It has the name Ti Top after Ho Chi Minh visited Halong Bay with Russian astronaut Gherman Titov in 1962.

Ti Top island has steep slopes and flat-shaped white sand beach at the foot of the mountain. The boat tour on the island often had to tourists climbing ashore panoramic Gulf, swimming, boating kay-battery.



Sacred Yen Tu mountain (Yên Tử)

in Uong Bi District, Quang Ninh Province, is famous for its beautiful landscapes, historical relics and hundreds of ancient pagodas and towers, earning its name as the Buddhism capital of Dai Viet, Vietnam's former name. All the pagodas and sites here bear legendary stories of Vietnamese King Tran Nhan Tong who left the throne for his son and left his royal palace to follow a religious life in Yen Tu in late 1299 and founded Truc Lam Zen (Thiền phái Trúc Lâm).

There is 6km track on steps made from rock, through the bamboo and pine tree forest. Since 2002 one can go by the cable car.

Giải Oan Stream (Vindication/ Exoneration Stream). The legend: The son (King Tran Anh Tong) did not want his father (King Tran Nhan Tong) to follow the religious practice in Yen tu and had sent many imperial concubines and beauties there to persuade King Tran Nhan Tong to abandon his religious life to return to the palace. But the King did not change his mind. To show the loyalty to the King, they committed suicide/they were drowning in the streams. Some of them died. King Tran Nhan Tong ordered to built up a temple to absolve their souls. Other did not want to leave there. He had to give them the house and fields at the bottom of the mountain.

From the Giai Oan tream one climb up 500m along the path shaded by ancient pine trees (Tùng alleys) dated back 600 to 700yrs Hue Quang Tower Garden. It is the place where a tower with the statue of Buddhist King Tran Nhan Tong inside is situated.

Hoa Yen Pagoda (old name: Vân Yên (light foggy cloud)), near Hue Quang Tower Garden, is the main pagoda built during the Ly Dynasty (the 11th century). King Lê Thánh Tông renamed it Hoa Yen Pagoda, while seeing the beautiful landscape, the cloud like the blooming flowers spread in front of the pagoda.

Close to the pagoda is thác Bạc, thác Vàng - Silver and Golden waterfall.

There are two rows of ancient pine trees, dating back 600 to 700yrs (Tùng alleys) from Giai Oan to Hoa Yen pagoda.

One-roof Pagoda (Chùa Một Mái) built in the cave, Bao Sai Pagoda (Chùa Bảo Sái), Chùa Vân Tiêu-the earliest pagodas built up when King Tran Nhan Tong was there to practice.

Am Ngự Dược, am Thung : places to have medicine productions from the herba collected in Yen Tu Mountain.

The last stop is Đồng (Bronze) Pagoda-the highest pagoda on the Peak of Yen Tu Mountain, 1068m above sea level. It is 20m² with a height of 3.35m, made from bronze with a weighs around 70 tons. The pagoda is skillfully carved and from far away looks just like a golden lotus. At the beginning there was only one big flat square stone at the highest peak of Yen Tu mountain. Behind it was the steep cliffs. Tran Nhan Tong chose this place for meditation. During Le dynasty (1428-1527) the wife of Lord Trinh has built a pagoda, the whole architectural structure as well as statues in the temple are bronze. Due to the extreme conditions of nature, the Pagoda was damaged and has undergone many times of restoration. In 2007, the temple was rebuilt completely.



At the foot of Yen Tu Mountain is Truc Lam Zen Monastery or Lan Pagoda (Chùa Lâm, Long Động Tự). In 1293, King Tran Nhan Tong had rebuilt a temple into a splendid pagoda. It was destroyed during 1947 and rebuilt again in 2002.