

Alternative Highlights in Vietnam and Cambodia



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Look familiar?

These are the kind of images typically shown online, in travel brochures and on social media – the ones which showcase spectacular locations in isolation, as if the photographer just stumbled across them. But what is really happening off camera?

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Angkor Wat – or Not?



The ruins at Angkor are comprised of over one thousand temples and attract almost two million visitors per year. Though it's undoubtedly incredible, Angkor Wat itself is just one temple in the complex and is crowded at all times of year.

GO ANYWAY

You won't avoid the crowds completely at Angkor Wat, but you've still got to go! A dawn visit offers the most atmospheric experience and exploring by bike is a fun way to weave your way there along the backroads.

EASY ALTERNATIVE

Get further away from the box-ticking, core Siem Reap route and you'll uncover mysterious lost temples shrouded in jungle. Get lost in Beng Melea or Koh Ker for a true sense of discovery.

OFF-THE-BEATEN-TRACK UNESCO ALTERNATIVE

If your holiday combines Siem Reap with the capital Phnom Penh, then did you know you could stop overnight at sleepy Kampong Thom and visit the newly recognised UNESCO World Heritage site of Sambor Prei Kuk?

[See our alternative destinations on the next page](#)

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Alternative Destinations



BENG MELEA



SAMBOR PREI KUK



Halong Bay – or Away?

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With its emerald waters and iconic limestone cliffs, Halong Bay is one of the most recognisable sights in Vietnam. However, every day hundreds of boats follow a similar route around so there is often congestion from all the excursions, particularly at the caves, village shops and wherever kayaking is possible.

GO ANYWAY

Take a seaplane tour from Hanoi and see the Bay's beauty from a serene aerial perspective.

EASY ALTERNATIVE

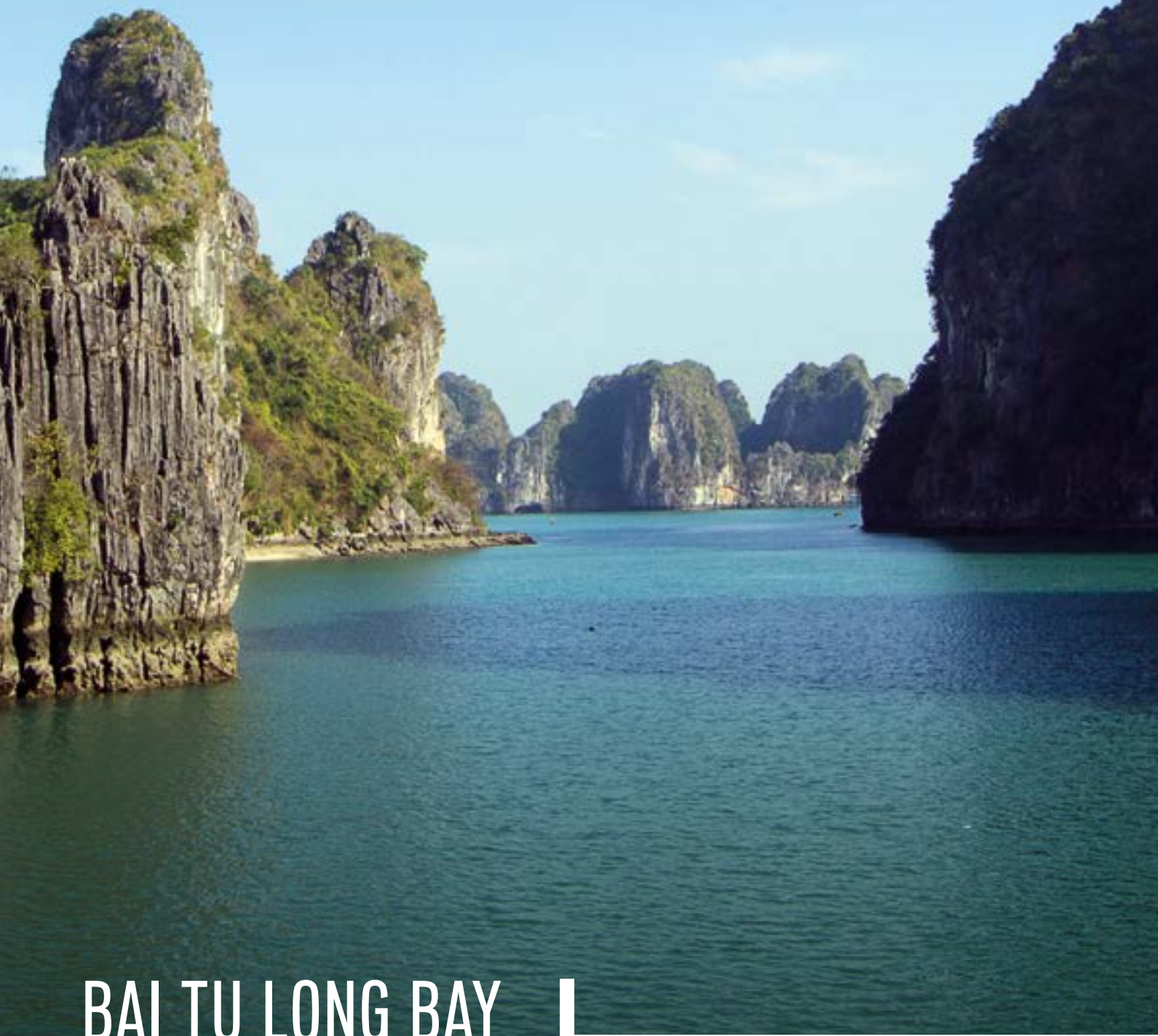
Go to Bai Tu Long Bay instead. To the east of the busy "Halong" area, it has the same beautiful scenery but with far fewer boats. Don't expect total isolation: tourists are beginning to get wind of this destination, but you'll certainly have a much more relaxing experience.

OFF-THE-BEATEN-TRACK UNESCO ALTERNATIVE

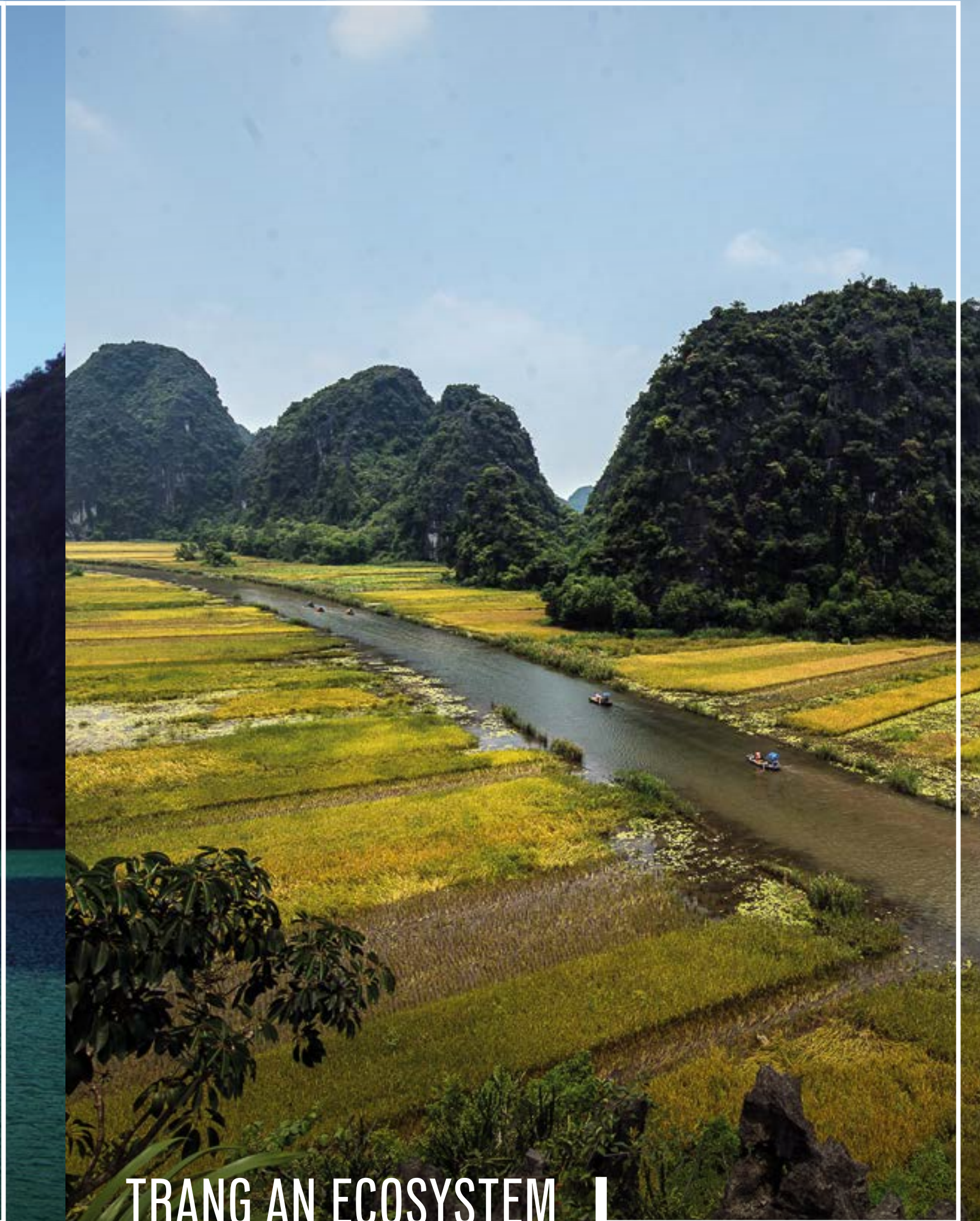
Try Trang An Ecosystem in Ninh Binh (UNESCO since 2014). Trang An is exceptionally scenic, easily accessible from Hanoi or you can stay overnight to spend time exploring the surrounding paddy-field countryside too.

[See our alternative destinations on the next page](#)

Alternative Destinations



BAI TU LONG BAY



TRANG AN ECOSYSTEM



Hoi An – with a Plan

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With its yellow shop-houses lined with bougainvillea, the ancient port of Hoi An is as well-preserved as ever. However, the nearby city of Danang has developed as a destination over recent years and reams of coach parties visit Hoi An from there each afternoon.

GO ANYWAY

Stay in the town itself. Peaceful properties such as the Anantara Hoi An are within walking distance of the centre so you can easily explore in the morning or evening and retreat to your pool in the afternoon.

EASY ALTERNATIVE

Explore the very near but seemingly rural islands of the Thu Bon River by bike or Vespa. You'll get a flavour of real local life as well as a fantastic view of Hoi An from a peaceful vantage point on the opposite side of the river.

OFF-THE-BEATEN-TRACK UNESCO ALTERNATIVE

Split a visit to Hoi An with a stay in less-visited Hue. Hue has UNESCO monuments, culture and scenery and the two locations can be combined by a train or even Vespa ride through the mountains.

[See our alternative destinations on the next page](#)

Alternative Destinations



THU BON RIVER



HUE



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