



Run - don't walk - through the mountains of Hanoi

Trail runners are flocking to northern Vietnam's mountainous outposts to take on the most challenging and beautiful races in the country

For trail runners, Hoang Lien National Park, 300km northwest of Hanoi, is the stuff of dreams. Waterfalls of rice terraces and ribbons of green-tea trees wrap around the lower slopes, while evergreen forests creep up to jagged peaks, which can reach to heights of up to 3,143m.

The local mountain residents have carved out a network of trails that crisscrosses the topography to span thousands of kilometers - which also lend themselves to the Vietnam Mountain Marathon, the country's most popular trail run happening from September 21 to 22. The event will see over 3,500 participants tackling six distances: a speedy 10km, a 15km, a 21km half marathon, a 42km full marathon, and 70km and 100km ultra marathons.

"All our races in northern Vietnam have one thing in common - a palpable sense of adventure," says UK-born David Lloyd, director of sports at Topas Group, which is the organizer of the Vietnam

Mountain Marathon.

Hoang Lien National Park doesn't just offer adventure appeal, but also cultural intrigue: Vietnam is home to 54 ethnic groups, many of which reside in the park. Topas Group thinks carefully about each trail, trying to include as much ethnic diversity as possible to reward wearied participants with passing glimpses of rarely visited remote villages.

These trail runs also go far beyond Vietnam's northwest. Hanoi is hugged by a semicircle of jaw-dropping mountainous scenery, which Topas Group employs to offer two other races scheduled for the first half of 2020: the Vietnam Trail Marathon in Moc Chau on January 11, and Vietnam Jungle Marathon in Pu Luong on May 23. "The fact that we can operate three very distinct races in the region speaks volumes about the variety of spectacular terrain on offer here," says Lloyd. vietnamtrailseries.com
- Joshua Zukas



Need some motivation getting off the couch? C25K claims to help new runners go from zero to 5K distance runners in eight weeks. To build up strength and stamina, the app offers workouts that starts with a mix of running and walking. C25K is available for both iPhone and Android users. c25kfree.com



Best hiking spots in...

VANCOUVER

Foreshore Trail

The 5km Foreshore Trail steers you along the shoreline, passing by graffiti-covered relics from World War II. Views of forested mountains and ocean waters make up most of the one-way trek, which also passes by Wreck Beach - Vancouver's only nudist beach.

vancouvertrails.com

Watersprite Lake

Less than two hours from Vancouver is Watersprite Lake, a challenging hike that leads you on a seven-hour, 17km loop with phenomenal views of mountain peaks, creeks, and valleys.

vancouvertrails.com

Othello Tunnels

A two-hour drive from Vancouver, the old Othello Tunnels is a beginner-friendly 3.5km trail comprising boardwalks, bridges, waterfalls and rivers. Built in 1914 as part of a railway, it funnels through the Coquihalla Canyon Provincial Park.

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