

A close-up photograph of a wooden spinning wheel with a spool of white yarn, set against a background of vibrant red fabric. The wheel is made of light-colored wood and has a spool of white yarn on it. The red fabric is textured and appears to be a knitted or woven material. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the wood, yarn, and fabric.

Textile seekers

Artist Retreat

“It slowed me down, let me be in the moment”

“This is a trip for anyone who adores nature, craft, textiles, community, food and, authenticity. If you are curious, adventurous, creative or simply seek something different, travel with Thao. I left with an appreciation of Vietnamese art and tradition, the time it really takes to create something beautiful, of the pioneering spirit of these women and their values on family, heritage and each other. It slowed me down, let me be in the moment, made me aware of all the work, time and passion that we do not see. I want to discover more, travel deeper, explore the entire world with TextileSeekers. Roam the planet with passionate people whenever you can.”

Liz Schaffer - Founder And Editor Lodestars Anthology Magazine

*BUILD CONNECTIONS WITH COMMUNITIES
INTERACT WITH ARTISTS AND CRAFTSPEOPLE
STUDY ANCIENT TEXTILE TECHNIQUES IN VIETNAM*

TextileSeekers takes travellers on a journey into the historical and cultural heart of a country. Collaborating with native tribes as guides, we bring you an authentic experience with textiles and traditions that are deeply woven into the daily lives of the local people. In the interest of preserving cultures, we have designed tours centred around our philosophy of 'slow travel,' which is the practice of building connections between visitors and a community, rather than bussing tourists from one destination to another. Meet artists and craftspeople, study ancient weave and dye techniques, explore traditional markets alive with local culture, discover handpicked galleries, visit and stay with local experts and artisans.

Seek inspiration in the stories we tell, of artisans, trades and culture through art, fashion, and travel. Read about our ethos, learn more of our mission of working with other women and making a difference in their lives.

Follow us on Instagram or Facebook and feel free to drop us a mail to let us know what luxury means to you.

[Instagram.com/textileseekers/](https://www.instagram.com/textileseekers/)

[facebook.com/TextileSeekersTravel/](https://www.facebook.com/TextileSeekersTravel/)

Please contact us hello@textileseekers.com for image usage.

"I wanted to create something that would allow me to give back to these creative communities, to take what I have learnt in fashion and implement it in an ethical way that benefits these local tribes."

Thao Phuong - Founder of TextileSeekers

www.textileseekers.com



WHAT IS OUR TEXTILESEEKERS ARTIST RESIDENCE PROGRAMME?

Are you a fresh graduate or a fashion student in your final year in university? Perhaps you are a photographer seeking to travel and access new remote locations, or a brand looking for inspiration?

In TextileSeeker's bid to promote sustainability in today's fashion ecosystem, we are offering an exclusive opportunity for you to join our journey this October 17th, 2022.

Our Artist Retreat platform like artist in residence programmes not only aims to guide you through the processes of developing your project, it will also open your eyes to the beauty of sustainable textile practices.

Thao, our founder of TextileSeekers, will also be on-site as chief creative consultant. She will offer her expertise and share her experience in design, as well as facilitate you to bring your vision to life.

DEFINING THE PURPOSE

The main objective of establishing the Artist Retreat residence programme is to foster professional development and opportunities for both visiting artists and the host community, as well as providing a platform for a creative community to be invigorated through an exchange of ideas and new ways of working.

We hope to cultivate relationships with other artists while raising the profile of local tribes in Vietnam.

We believe artist residencies are vital in giving an aspiring artist the time and space to explore and create from within. Through cultural and artistic exchanges, new ideas are hatched and experimentations can be nurtured. Artist residencies also forge networking opportunities for an artist who is taking his or her first steps into the creative industry. Ultimately such an experience will not only shape one's work, but also sculpt one's approach and thinking.





WHAT DOES THE RETREAT OFFER

This is an 11 day programme consisting of multiple workshops to provide artists with the tools and skills they need to focus on creating or honing their sustainable work.

We will connect you with local communities through our retreat in Mai Chau. You will get to immerse in artisanal workshops as well as learn all about traditional textile-making techniques from the different tribes in the region. From botanical dyeing to hand embroidery, you will step right into a wealth of knowledge that has been passed down through generations.



Our Four Pillars

Like the legs of the Tay Tribe stilt homes which form the core foundation of an establishment, our four-pillared ethos keeps us grounded as we hold on to a solid set of values and set our sights on creating sustainable slow travel tours for our travellers.

Our pillars ensure we stay on firm ground, never deviating from our goals and never forgetting our dreams.

Pillar One: Sustainability

TextileSeekers champions sustainability in fashion and we believe not only is the consumption of fashion worth looking into when contemplating on the issue of sustainability, the entire chain of textile manufacturing needs a revamp to make the process more environmentally friendly.

Thao, the founder of TextileSeekers, has seen and felt the effects of what fast fashion does to the environment as well as to indigenous communities, and wishes to make a change.

On the Artist Retreat to the Tay tribes of Mai Chau, Thao and her team of local guides and artisans are enthusiastic about educating travellers on how the fashion industry can strive for eco-friendly efforts, while showcasing traditional textile crafts which could possibly offer a sustainable solution for companies in terms of sourcing for textiles.

Pillar Two: Slow Travel - A New Luxury

TextileSeekers offers travellers the opportunity to build connections with communities, interact with artists and craftspeople, and study ancient textile techniques. Each retreat that is organised is a slow travel experience filled with art, design, fashion and the discovery of new places.

Every journey opens doors into colourful destinations and allows explorers to tip-toe into a world of crafts and culture while embracing the beauty of travelling solo. We define what luxury truly means - having the time to be still and to enjoy every moment life brings. We gently inspire our travellers to find the courage to listen to the heart and evolve as an individual. We aspire to live well, and with authenticity.



Pillar Three: Female Empowerment

As a led-by-women company, we make it our goal to work with other women, supporting each other, inspiring each other and in some cases, helping to make a difference to some of their lives. We collaborate directly with women from the local communities and tribes in the countries where our tours are organised.

We also team up frequently with other female artists, photographers, writers, filmmakers, musicians, and designers, because it is truly amazing what each woman has achieved in her field of specialty. We know by coming together, we can achieve so much more. United, we can make a difference - actively, consciously and deliberately, we can change the world.

Pillar Four: Our Destinations

When designing our much-awaited second itinerary, we knew there would be corners of Vietnam yet to be uncovered, paths yet to be walked, and cultures yet to be immersed into.

There is the historic capital of Hanoi, but also breathtaking nature, which many travellers, even seasoned ones, will be captivated and moved by. There is mouthwatering, life-altering, delicious food everywhere, made with the freshest ingredients, perfected over generations, finely showcasing the passion and reverence Vietnamese people have for eating well. There is a depth of heritage to explore, and many textile techniques to acquaint intrepid travellers with.

From the city to the countryside, visitors will get to participate hands-on in the craft activities, as they experience a world of textiles and traditions. With a diverse ethnic minority community in Mai Chau, there will be an opportunity to immerse in the buzzing local culture, and live amongst the indigenous people. Most important of all, our travellers will get to fulfil their wanderlust, along with discovering the authentic side to Vietnam so often overlooked by tourists. That's what we consider a remarkable travel experience.

ARTIST RETREAT

Weaving the Tales That Remain

From the hustle and bustle of the fast-paced city life of Hanoi to the serenity of breathtakingly unspoilt nature, our feet-to-the-ground journey begins in the historical capital of Vietnam before winding its way northwards towards the forested mountains of Mai Chau. Your senses will undergo an enduring awakening, your inspirations ignited and revived. Deep within you, a work in progress is underway; a force of discovery that will lead to true metamorphosis.

Side by side, we are embarking on a textile discovery tour as we unveil the unspoilt haven of Mai Chau, home to the Ban Lac people, whose Thai ancestors settled northwest Vietnam. The two tribes, known as the White Tay and Black Tay, migrated from the Yunnan province in China, and are renowned for their vibrant embroidery and mastery in decorative silk production. On this retreat, we will seek inspiration for life, discover ancestral textile knowledge, slow down our footsteps and treat ourselves to a rejuvenation of the mind, body and spirit amid the beating heart of this unique cultural setting.

Through curated workshops, and carefully planned tours to vibrant markets, contemplative museums, old craft quarters and bucolic villages, our 11 day, 10 night kaleidoscopic itinerary will ensure you get to broaden your mind, taste authentic local cuisine, connect with diverse tribes and fellow wayfarers, while exploring what it means to travel solo with eyes, minds, and hearts wide open.



A Larger Message: Female Empowerment

Our 11-day Retreat is not about being bussed around to various destinations and hastily being introduced to just a bit of everything at each pitstop.

We will delve deep to uncover ancient textile techniques and sublime traditional crafts. We will interact with artisans, designers, storytellers, and tribespeople, many of them are women from local communities and tribes. By joining us on this journey, you are making a difference by helping to empower these ethnic minority women, enabling them to gain employment and achieve financial independence.





Putting textile knowledge to use

Besides getting to know Hanoi and Mai Chau from a local's point of view, you will also gain hands-on experience to guide you in creating your very own project based on the workshops you attend throughout the trip.

Highlights

- Creative consulting - as our founder Thao Phuong will be onsite for the duration of the retreat.
- Networking and connections with local peers, and the residents of the lodge.
- Access to materials and workshops - however if you have any special equipment which you may require, please advise.
- Overland transportation in a private comfortable air-conditioned 16 seater car commencing from and concluding in Hanoi, including entrance fees into villages. The driver will be available for additional journeys that each artist may require for an additional fee.
- Private airport transfers if you arrive and depart within 24 hours of the tour dates, available upon pre-request, payment is to be made directly to the driver.
- Hanoi accommodation: x2 nights in a 4 star rated boutique hotel.
- Accommodation: x8 nights at the Avana Resort.
- Lunch is included during most workshops, featuring local dishes made with seasonal ingredients, with vegan and vegetarian options available.
- Breakfast is included with your hotel accommodation.
- Workshops, demonstrations and all materials are included for batik, indigo and natural dyeing, embellishment, weaving, applique and embroidery.
- Tickets and entrance fees into museums, with optional audio or guides.
- TextileSeekers can provide a letter of credit pending university approval and a reference letter if requested.



About your luxurious stay at the Avana Retreat in Mai Chau

Avana retreat - whose name comes from the Sanskrit word for 'beautiful flower' - is pristinely situated amid lush jungles and leafy valleys, and sits in the heartland of three of Vietnam's ethnic groups. A beautiful example of high-end hospitality with sustainability at its core, it has been meticulously designed to reflect a love and respect for nature. Since the first villa was built, more than 10 hectares have been reforested at Avana and the surrounding region.

At this hotel retreat, we're able to immerse ourselves in local culture and celebrate the heritage of this tropical landscape, and guests are invited to explore all fifteen spectacular hectares of its mountainous environs - perfect for nature lovers and those seeking inspiration from the landscape!

Further accentuating the retreat's position in such a culturally rich location, there is an on-site museum that awaits your exploration. Surrounded by wild grasses and dense woodland, a 1970s traditional stilt house has been turned into an educational centre, showcasing artefacts and handicrafts produced by the ethnic groups who call this landscape home. This collection weaves a potent story about the rituals, beliefs, symbolism, and everyday life of the groups, and provides a comfortable insight into a time-honoured set of cultures to pique your curiosity.

Guests are also welcome to unwind in the beauty of the Orchid Spa, Avana's wellness centre which utilises local organic oils, herbs, and extracts, restoring balance, increasing wellbeing, and cultivating a holistic approach to mental health and happiness. Coupled with wonderful local gastronomic encounters, the Pung Waterfall Private Dining area, a cinema, cultural dance performances, blissful villas, a sustainable ethos and a staff featuring 90% local community members, it's a hospitality experience which allows you to get closer to this unique and unforgettable corner of Vietnam.



Day One

We begin in Hanoi, where the pulse of Vietnam beats the loudest in an alluring capital city, where old and new come together. After arriving at your boutique hotel, take your time to unpack and join me for a refreshing welcome drink. Here you will meet me, as well as the TextileSeekers tribe.



Day Two

It's Inspiration Day! On your second day of the trip, we will be exploring selected museums, wandering the alleys of Hanoi's 36 Street in the Old Quarter, which buzzes with artisans and craftspeople. We will also visit curated antique stores, and visit the studio of Ms. Tinh, a proud member of the Black Tay tribe who works with natural dyes and vintage looms. We'll have the opportunity to purchase some of her handicrafts, and explore how she has adopted the city as her home from which to continue her tribal traditions.



Day Four

We will greet the fourth day of our tour with a morning of meditation. Once refreshed and invigorated, we will drive to the home of White Tay Tribal leader, Ms. Vi, where we will uncover first-hand the silkmaking process from farm to cocoon, and explore the ingenious use of natural dyes made from indigenous plants and flowers, which lend the region its iconic colours.

We will dive deeply into the weaving traditions of the Tay people, and follow the journey of brocade and jacquard which is enlivened with imagery and countless symbols, each with its own unique story to tell of the Tay tribe's unique heritage. You and your fellow travellers will participate in creating your own interpretations, finding inspiration in yourself and your new surroundings.

Day Three

Today we will head to Mai Chau taking in the majestic scenery as we wind our way through forests and mountainous vistas. Upon arriving at the beautiful Avana Retreat, our new home in Mai Chau, we will have time to reconvene over dinner, share our hopes and aspirations for this part of our journey, and take in the truly breathtaking surroundings as we adapt to a wholly different pace of life.



Day Five

It's impossible to overstate the significance of hemp in Mai Chau, a cornerstone of the Blue H'mong tribespeople in the region. We will partake in a hemp making workshop to better understand the culture behind hemp and its various products, which include the woven fibres which result in a highly versatile fabric. You'll be invited to try your hand at batik drawing, as well as freehand fabric drawing to create a design of your choice.

Day Six

Today is all about relaxing, catching up with one another, and enjoying the facilities at our resort. There will be opportunities to enjoy another workshop of bamboo basket weaving or continue on your creative endeavours, as well as plenty of time to relax, read, and share ideas and stories with your fellow travellers.

You'll have a one-on-one session with Thao to plan your project itinerary for the following days.

Day Seven - Day Ten

All travellers have a flexible schedule to work on their project. In the evening of day ten, we'll come together for a sumptuous meal, where we will reflect on all we've discovered along the way.

Day Eleven

It's time to return to whichever corner of the globe we call home. Our hearts and minds full of colour, inspiration, and new approaches to time-honoured practices, one journey has ended... and yet countless more have begun.

Price

Double Occupancy US\$3100 per person (additional surcharge of US\$2100 for single occupancy), excl IVA.

Mai Chau accommodation at the Avana Retreat includes stay in their lantana mountain bungalow including private bathroom.



About Thao

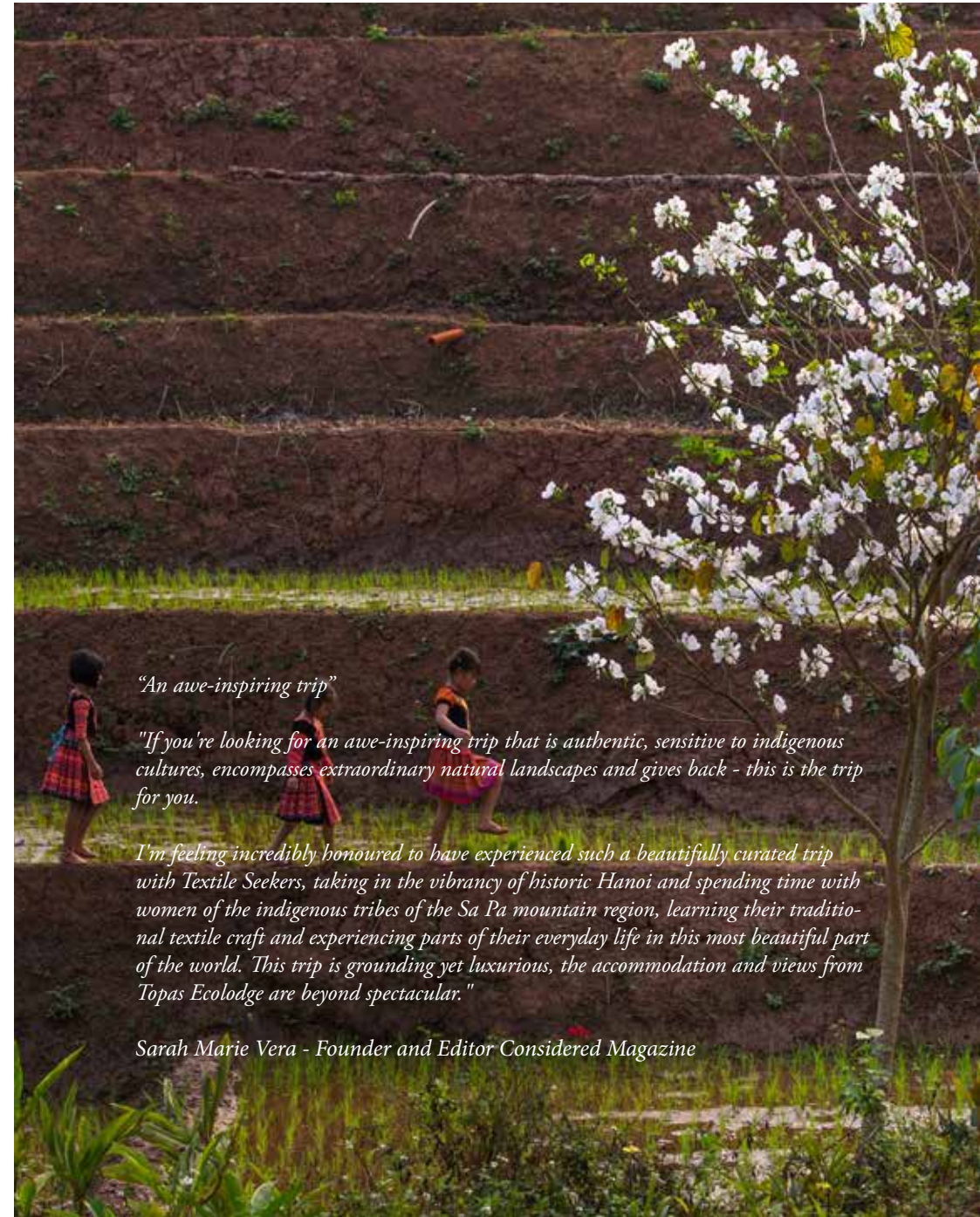
“Our bespoke tours are designed to give you the freedom of time and space to venture into the heart of flourishing artisan niches and cultivate genuine connections with the new people you meet. There is no language barrier, no haste, no judgement. Go at your own pace, move with purpose, be in the present and enjoy each moment”. ”

The founder of TextileSeekers, Thao, has close to 2 decades of experience in the fashion industry. After having worked in a broad spectrum of roles, and having seen the effects of what fast fashion does to the environment as well as to indigenous communities, one of the subjects that resonates with Thao is the issue of sustainability in fashion.

After a trip to Vietnam and getting to know the hill tribes in Sa Pa, something hit home. Thao wishes to use TextileSeekers to highlight the importance of sustainability and the preservation of ancestral textile traditions. She aims to raise awareness and actively contribute to changing the status quo of the currently unsustainable fast fashion world.

TextileSeekers is the embodiment of Thao’s dream. To introduce the concept of slow fashion, celebrate craftsmanship, give back to creative local communities and re-define what luxury ought to mean in today’s socio-economic climate.

A guest panellist for Project Insight, where Thao explored concepts of planetary health, she is also a member of the Southeast Asian Planetary Health Alliance (SEAPHA), which seeks out innovative approaches for sustainable futures in the region and beyond. Thao also works closely with PacificLinks Foundation NGO, runs virtual workshops for underprivileged teens and survivors of human trafficking, and with Restoring Vision NGO, which distributes glasses to remote villages and communities.



“An awe-inspiring trip”

“If you're looking for an awe-inspiring trip that is authentic, sensitive to indigenous cultures, encompasses extraordinary natural landscapes and gives back - this is the trip for you.

I'm feeling incredibly honoured to have experienced such a beautifully curated trip with Textile Seekers, taking in the vibrancy of historic Hanoi and spending time with women of the indigenous tribes of the Sa Pa mountain region, learning their traditional textile craft and experiencing parts of their everyday life in this most beautiful part of the world. This trip is grounding yet luxurious, the accommodation and views from Topas Ecolodge are beyond spectacular.”

Sarah Marie Vera - Founder and Editor Considered Magazine

