

# Snow in northern highlands makes vacationers smile, locals hot under the collar

By [Long Nguyen](#) January 13, 2021 / 07:44 am GMT+7

*As it snows in the northern highlands, visitors thrill to 'European scenes', but locals suffer disruptions and losses.*

*On January 10, when the temperature in many northern areas hovered around zero degrees Celsius, Nguyen Van Quan and his friends rushed in excitement from Hanoi to Lao Cai Province.*

*They'd heard it was snowing. And they'd never seen snow before.*

*A rare occurrence in Vietnam, it was snowing as a result of the strong cold front that arrived in Vietnam's northern mountainous region recently. The country has experienced a colder winter than usual this year as the Pacific Ocean Sea surface temperature drops, forming the La Niña phenomenon, according to experts.*

*Together with hundreds of other tourists flocking to the northern highlands, Quan and his friends were mesmerized by the white snow blanketing the region.*

*"I feel like I am in a European country, it looks so poetic and romantic," Quan, 28, exclaimed on seeing snow for the first time in his life.*

*But among locals who have to live with the snow, there was no excitement. For them, it was just an extreme weather phenomenon that typically inflicts difficulties and losses.*



*Lao Cai's Bat Xat District sees thick snow and frost on January 11, 2021. Photo by Nguyen Chinh.*

*The ethnic minority groups, in particular, have suffered the most, not having the means to keep themselves warm in such extremely cold weather.*

*The freezing temperatures have forced students to stop attending schools. On January 11, hundreds of schools in the provinces of Dien Bien, Lai Chau, Yen Bai, and Lao Cai were closed.*

*Several local children were seen dressed in flimsy jackets with extra layers of plastic film.*

*Adults unable to venture out and work for daily wages have deepened the crisis for many households.*

*Many farmers and motorbike taxi drivers in these northern regions have lamented that they have had no choice but to stay at home to keep themselves warm. "We can feel the coldness in our bones," said Nguyen Van Siu, a motorbike taxi driver in Sa Pa.*

*"It is freezing and too dangerous to step outside," he said.*

*Even after stocking up on firewood for months to prepare for the intense winter as advised by local authorities, they were surprised by the snow that lay several centimeters thick in some areas.*

*"People like me are afraid of such weather as it stops many activities; fire is the only savior but who can sit by the fire all day?" said Lo Thi Mai, 54, a resident of Sa Pa Town in the northern province of Lao Cai.*

*Worried about their incomes, some people have had no choice but to go out and try and earn some money or keep their animals warm and reduce their losses.*

*"I went out at noon to cut grass and cook for our pigs to keep them warm, avoiding early morning coldness, but I could not stand it after two hours," said Mai.*

*Perhaps the saddest sight of this weather has been children venturing out to the streets to earn some money for the family in freezing weather, hawking various items. Sa Pa Town has had many kids out on the streets, hawking goods to tourists in freezing conditions.*

*The snow has also made locals wary of accidents and other risks.*

*Over the last few days, Mai said, her son and daughter-in-law have had to regularly wipe out snow falling heavily on the roof to prevent it from being damaged.*

*Those traveling on the roads are particularly susceptible to accidents in the weather, as ice forms on the surface.*

*Many cars and motorbikes have skidded on frosty and icy mountainous roads and crashed into cliffs in Lao Cai and Lai Chau provinces over the last few days.*

*"I saw several scenes of vehicles crashing into cliffs and decided to stop driving and take some road," said driver Nguyen Van Tien, who was driving on National Road 4D, heading to the O Quy Ho mountain pass in Lai Chau on January 11.*

*Apart from skidding and crashing, landslides are another risk as snow has accumulated in thick layers on the mountains, said Nguyen Van Huong, deputy head of Lai Chau's Department of Transportation.*

*On January 11, the Directorate for Roads of Vietnam recommended that people should limit traveling to mountainous areas due to the cold weather.*



*A car skids and crashes into a cliffside in Lao Cao Province, January 11, 2021. Photo by Thuy Quynh.*

***'We don't like snow'***

*The cold weather directly affects many economic and agricultural activities, and some households in the northern highlands have suffered losses.*

*In several areas, farmlands and roads have been covered in snow and frost, making it impossible for people to go out and work.*

*"Everything freezes, including the earnings," Mai said.*

*The extreme weather phenomenon has also killed hundreds of animals and hectares of crops.*

*"Honestly we do not like snow, because it brings huge losses in farming and ranching," said Sung A Duoc, a resident of Nhi Cu San Village, where the temperature was gone as low as minus five degrees Celsius. His farm has been covered in snow for days, so the family has been unable to cultivate or harvest vegetables.*

*To reduce their losses, farmers have been asked to take their cattle to lower places to shelter from snow and frost, feed them with hot soup, and cover crates carefully.*

*The snow stopped falling on January 12, as the northern highlands is expected to enter a period of dry cold, mild sunshine, and low humidity. But snow still lies several centimeters thick in many areas.*

*No more snow is what locals are yearning for.*

*Mai's hope was fervent: "I hope it (the snow) will melt quickly, so our lives can return to normal, the cattle stop dying and we will stop shivering."*