

Vietnam overview

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 10 November 2015 03:02 - Last Updated Wednesday, 02 March 2016 08:13



General Information

Official name: The Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Capital: Hanoi

Population: 87 million people (2011)

Total Area: 331.212 square kilometers

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Major religion: Buddhism

Major language: Vietnamese

Monetary unit: Vietnam dong

Internet domain: .vn

International dialing code: +84

Time Zone - Standard time zone: UTC/GMT +7 hours

Location

Vietnam is one of the most beautiful countries located in the South East Asia. In the North, Vietnam shares the long borderline with China. In the East, Vietnam is bordered by the Gulf of Tonkin, in the East and South by the South China Sea, in the South West by the Gulf of Thailand, and in the West by Cambodia and Laos. Owing to stretching the length of the Indochinese Peninsula, Vietnam boasts a unique shape of an elongated S and a long coastline of 3,260km with a lot of wonderful sites.

Climate/Weather

Although Vietnam lies entirely within the tropics, the Vietnam's climate surprisingly varies from region to region with the annual average temperature from 22°C to 27°C because of its topography. The mountainous people of

[Sapa](#)

in the north might be seeking shelter from snow while the urban dwellers of

Ho Chi Minh City

in the south seek refuge from mid-day heat.

In the North (from Hai Van mountain pass in the middle of Vietnam to the North), it is the weather of four different seasons in a year: Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. Spring lasts from February to April with warm weather. In Spring, it is characterized by fine drizzle that helps plants grow fast and flowers bloom brightly. Summer lasts from May to August with hot and showery weather. The sun shines almost days. And there are sometimes sudden thundershowers that make summer less hot and become cooler. Autumn lasts from September to November with cool air, and dry and lightly windy weather. It can be said that it is the most beautiful season in a year with yellow leaves falling on the streets and yellow bright shines in day time although sometimes typhoons threaten life and agriculture in the country. Winter lasts from November to January with cold and dry weather. It is the coldest season in a year. Frost and snow can also occur in the mountains (over 1000m above level sea), that make Vietnamese people eager to go up to see and take nice photos of such scare event of a year.

The southern region is predominantly sub-equatorial with two main seasons of wet rainy season and dry season. A wet rainy season ranges from April to September. It is often sunny in mornings and rainy in late afternoons. Showers often rain heavily but stop quickly. A dry season spans the months of October to May. The weather becomes hotter. The Sun shines all days. But it becomes so cool at night. Definitely, the weather is rather stable in the south.

Language

The official language of Vietnam is Vietnamese, which is the mother tongue of the Vietnamese people who constitute 86% of Vietnam's population, and of about three million overseas Vietnamese. And it is the second language of the ethnic minority groups in the country. It is monosyllabic, with each syllable having six different tones that can change the meaning of the word. This makes it quite difficult for new learners. Beside the official language, each ethnic minority group has its own dialect that has been used and preserved in daily life.

The Vietnamese writing system in use today is an adapted version of the Latin alphabet, with additional diacritics for tones and certain letters. The different tones are indicated by the use of accent marks. This system of writing, called quoc ngu, was created by a French Catholic missionary, Fr. Alexander De Rhodes, in the 17th century to translate the scriptures. When France invaded Vietnam in the late 19th century, French gradually replaced Chinese as the official language in education and government. Vietnamese adopted many French terms, such as **đ** **m** (dame, from madame), **ga** (train station, from gare), **s** **mi** (shirt, from chemise), and **b** **úp bê**

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(doll, from poupée). In addition, many Sino-Vietnamese terms were devised for Western ideas imported through the French. However, the Romanized script did not come to predominate until the beginning of the 20th century, when education became widespread and a simpler writing system was found more expedient for teaching and communication with the general population.

People

Although it is a small country with the area of 329,560 square kilometers, there are up to 54 different ethnic groups inhabiting in Vietnam, of which Kinh (Viet) people accounts for nearly 86% of the whole population, and the others are ethnic minority groups that represent about 14%.

According to historical materials, Viet people was the first group living in Vietnam. And then other people came from the Southeastern Asian area. Almost of them are from China. Their ancestors migrated to Vietnam few hundred years ago. There are ethnic minority groups such as Khmer and Cham, descendents of inhabitants who lived in central and southern Vietnam before the area was conquered by Vietnam. The other groups are Muong, Pathen, Pu peo, etc. All of them are divided into 5 major groups following the language they speak: Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Viet-Muong, Sino-Tibetan, and Austronesian.

Nowadays, Kinh (or Viet group) mostly base in plains, especially in the Red River Delta and the Mekong Delta. The ethnic minority groups locate in the mountainous areas. Each group has their own custom and tradition. However, they are all friendly and love peace.

Food

Eating out in Vietnam ranges from street food to fine dining in luxury hotels. Though from anywhere, it cannot be denied that [Vietnamese food](#) is tasty and healthy. It is often made by different kinds of vegetables. Rice is the staple cereal and fish-sauce "nuoc mam" is extensively used. The most popular dish among the local people is the Phở - a noodle soup with meat, beef or chicken. The chicken soup (pho ga) or beef soup (pho bo) is quite spicy and available at all food stalls at US \$0.60 per bowl. Pho Bo Tai is a soup with rare beef fillets. Another specialty is the spring roll, which is found in many versions, with varying ingredients used.

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The menu in restaurants is mainly non-vegetarian with dishes made from pork, fish and beef, snake and soft-shell turtle, which is considered a delicacy. Chè is a dessert made from sticky rice, beans, and a seasonal fruit. International cuisine such as French, Chinese, Japanese, Italian and American is also available.

Fruit smoothies made from seasonal fruits are popular. Fruits such as custard apple, sugar apple, banana, avocado, durian, strawberry, jack fruit, passion fruit, dragon fruit, lychee and mango can be found in fruit stalls. You will need to clean the fruit thoroughly before eating.

It is also recommended that you buy bottled water rather than drinking tap water. Don't miss out the bia hòi (meaning 'beer gas'), as the Vietnamese call draught beer. Imported brands such as Carlsberg, San Miguel and Heineken are available along with local brands such as Tiger, Saigon, and 333 (pronounced "ba-ba-ba").

Currency/ Money

The currency is the Vietnamese Dong (VND). Notes are available in denominations of VND 500,000; 200,000; 100,000; 50,000; 20,000; 10,000; 5,000; 2,000; 1,000; 500; and 200 (less used now) hundred. Many tourists call Vietnam is a country of many thousand Dong.

Coins have just recently been re-introduced and are available in 5,000; 2,000; 1,000; 500; and 200 Dong denominations. However, the State Bank has revoke all for some reasons.

The USD is less used in Vietnam's cities. Tourists can exchange USD for VND when travel around Vietnam for personal expenses .

VISA, MasterCard and American Express cards are accepted in major hotels, restaurants, and shops in the urban areas. Travelers Checks are easily changeable at banks and moneychangers all over the country. Commissions are US\$1 for a US\$100 TC at Vietcombank, US\$2 at ANZ Bank.

Shopping

Vietnam is not exactly a shopper's paradise, and the streets are awash with little shops selling all manner of items. You can do a lot of souvenir shopping in Hanoi, Hanoi's Old Quarter is particularly excellent for visitors with shops selling clothes, gold, embroidered tablecloths and handbags. Around [Hanoi](#) have many handicraft villages, Good souvenirs are marble figurines and vases, ceramics from Bat Trang village, silk paintings from silk village, and hand-painted greetings cards. In particular, the lacquer ware, tailor-made *ao dais* (female national costume), mother-of-pearl inlay work, silk paintings, and wood block prints are very artistic and worth acquiring to take back home. The hill tribes of the Central Highlands and the north of the country now sell colorful woven bags and clothing. Ho Chi Minh City is also a good place to shop for jewellery, carpets and leather work.

Transportation

Transportation in Vietnam may not rate as the best in the world. But, easy for you can get flight to come in and you can get by quite easily in the cities. Taxis are by far the most convenient mode of transportation and not expensive. If you want to try and be a little different, then the cyclo (three wheels) or pedicab is an interesting and enjoyable way to explore a city. These are available at all street corners and can be the best way to see a city rather than whizzing around in a taxi. Alternatively, you can also go by the motorbike taxis. A must do is to take the boat tours which are available for many destinations. To getting the high land of Vietnam, you can take a night or day train, with luxury cabin (air condition...) the train will make you feel comfortable. From Vietnam, if you want to go to some country near Vietnam (China, Lao, Cambodia, Thailand), flight or train is best choice.

Health

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Healthcare is one among the issues attracting the concern of most foreign travelers to Vietnam. Vietnam features a mixed public-private healthcare system, in which the public sector plays the leading role. Since the reform of the healthcare sector in 1989, the private healthcare sector has grown steadily with more and more private hospitals and clinics established. Along with the increase of the quantity, the healthcare quality has also been greatly enhanced not only in public sector, but also in private one. Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh owns the largest number of hospitals and clinics with the most advanced technology as well as quality. So if you are planning to travel to two such destinations, healthcare issue is not a big worry. However, if you are traveling to such remote regions of Vietnam as the northwestern region or the central highlands, it is advisable that you bring some popular medicines. But for tiredness when traveling to these regions, you may have chance to experience a primary form of healthcare treatment of the ethnic minority people – bathing with traditional kinds of herb and tree leaves. It seems amazing but let's try and enjoy it!

Vaccinations

Special Precautions

Diphtheria

Yes

Hepatitis A

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Yes

Malaria

Sometimes

Rabies

Sometimes

Tetanus

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Typhoid

Yes

Yellow Fever

No

Inoculation regulations can change at short notice. Please take medical advice in the case of doubt. W

There are excellent hospitals in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and health care centres in all provinces, but facilities are limited and there is a lack of medicines. [Health insurance](#) is essential and should include cover for emergency repatriation by air. Immediate cash payment is expected for services.

Electricity

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Vietnam runs off a 220V/50Hz system.

Communications

The international country code to dial into Vietnam is +84. To dial overseas from within Vietnam, dial 00 followed by the relevant country code and phone number.

Emergency numbers in Vietnam are: Ambulance (15); Fire (14); and Police (13).

Although Vietnam is in the process of modernising its communication systems. The easiest mode of communication is by telephone. All hotels allow the use of telephones and some do not charge for domestic calls. International direct dialling facilities are also easily available and standard charges are applicable. However, if you are using this facility from a hotel, it may work out to be expensive. The most convenient way to communicate when you are in Vietnam would be to make use of cellular phone technology. All you need to do is buy a pre-paid phone-card and you can be in touch wherever you go. Recharge the card when your talk time is over. All incoming calls are free in Vietnam, regardless of where the calls come from. You have to pay the local rate for local calls and the charges for international calls per minute are also very reasonable. There is a concession when you call during off-peak hours: 11:00pm to 7:00am. The cellular phone system in Vietnam is GSM. Ever since the government of Vietnam has permitted Internet usage in the country (in 1997). There are internet cafes in most hotel lobbies and business centres, which you can use to access your mail by paying 4,000 to 5000 VND per hour. However, some sites have been blocked by the government.

You can also use the good old-fashioned way of communication by using the postal service. Post offices in the country are open from 8am to 8pm. A booklet of ten postcards costs 10,000 VND. Letters and postcards take about two weeks to be delivered to either Europe or the USA.

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Public Holidays

01 January

New Year's Day (Tet Duong Lich)

01 - 03 January (Lunar Calendar)

Tet (Vietnamese New Year - Tet Am Lich)

03 February

Anniversary of the Founding of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

□ 10 March (Lunar Calendar)

Hung King Temple Festival

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30 April

Liberation Day (Giai Phong Saigon - the day on which Saigon surrendered – 1945)

01 May

International Labour's Day (Quoc te Lao Dong)

19 May

Ho Chi Minh's birthday (1890)

Eighth day of the fourth moon

(usually in June)

Buddha's birthday (Phat Dan)

02 September

Vietnam National Day (1945)

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25 December

Christmas Day

Note: When a public holiday fall on Saturday and/or Sunday, then the Monday following the holiday is substituted.

How to get visa to Vietnam

In order to enter Vietnam, travelers need Vietnam visas. There are two ways to get a Vietnam visa depending on your method of arrival. For those who travel by air, getting a visa on arrival is considered the best way. For this method, you do not need to visit Vietnam Embassy in your country; all you have to do is to go online at a prestigious travel agency, which will process you entry procedure. Your visa then will be stamped at Vietnam International Airports on arrival.

Another way to get [Vietnam visa](#) is to visit Vietnam Embassy at your country. For this method, you need to send off your original passport with longer time of processing.

So, it depends on whether you want it fast or not, cheaper or not, and more convenient or not to choose the best way of getting a Vietnam entry visa!

Accommodation

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Accommodation arrangement is one among the most concerning issue when traveling to Vietnam. Vietnam offers a wide range of accommodation satisfying the needs of different classes of travelers. With reasonable prices and good quality, [Vietnam hotels](#) network is a great choice for most foreign travelers to Vietnam. Tourists can find suitable hotels in most travel destinations and beauty spots along the S-shaped country of Vietnam. The country welcomes all classes of tourists from business travelers, leisure travelers, and back-packers, etc. with a large hotel network ranging from luxury to budget ones. Do visit and find your favorite accommodation.

Vietnam in the eyes of foreign tourists – The past and present!

Vietnam is a beautiful country! Most tourists visiting the land are surprised by the marvelous untouched landscape. However, in the eyes of many travelers, Vietnam is not yet a peaceful place to visit since they implicitly assume that the vestiges of the long-lasting Vietnam War are still everywhere along this nation. It is surely that some tourists are hesitating to travel to this country as they still worry about the bombs or mines left.

Vietnam underwent a fierce and long war against the American empire and the French colonist, that's true! The war had destroyed the country in a long time and the vestiges remains are still there. What these vestiges are! They are not the bombs or the mines left as thought by several foreign travelers. It can be assured that Vietnam is now one among the most peaceful country with amazing scenery and ever friendly locals. A large number of tourists traveling to Vietnam are curious and amazed at the historical vestiges, which are the museums, tombs, temples, and other historical places, without any danger from bombs or mines as thought.

Do come and experience the peaceful and beautiful land and erase the prejudice on this country. Vietnam promises to bring travelers from all over the world memorable trips with its long-standing history and diverse culture, all of which create a united and unique traditional

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land.

More information: [Vietnam Map](#) – the need for any tourist!