

# Vietnam Travel Tips

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By Tony Hoang  
[www.vietnamtraveltour.net](http://www.vietnamtraveltour.net)



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# Why travel to Vietnam

**Most people still think of Vietnam as a battle field, in fact, HOWEVER, that old history has all gone for long, giving place to a brand new era when peace and safety reside! These days, instead, you may often hear CNN, BBC, or many other prestigious channels talking about something like "Vietnam - a safe destination of the new millennium", or "Vietnam - the Hidden Charm" , etc. Yes, it's now opening to the world as a friendly and exotic place on earth!**



You're curious? Oh, so why don't you think of coming? Here are some of the reasons why you should visit "her" - the charming-like-a-girl Vietnam:

1. "She" is a new place. It's not touristy like in Thailand and many places you go, people got stunned by your appearance.
2. "She" is safe and friendly. The majority of people in Vietnam are farmers, pure farmers. Many of them have never learnt of much apart from the village they were born in. Naturally, they're almost all friendly and safe to be around. Moreover, the communist government does a good job in ensuring securities all over the country. Nothing of a crime has happened to tourists for the last decades.
3. "She" has lots to see: A thin country stretching for thousands of Km from North to South. It has beautiful mountains with colorful and rich culture hill tribes. It has beaches and many of those are considered best in the world but still, they're not touristy. Sound cool enough? Not end yet, she's home to 7 UNESCO World Heritages. Almost anywhere you go, you're stumble on a World Heritage.
4. "She" is marvelous, but money-saving. If you want to, then 1 US dollar could buy you a basic lunch or dinner. Wandering around and you want to find somewhere to sit and drink? Normally, you don't have to pay more than one dollar for it. Cheap accommodations and services are everywhere around the Old Quarter in Hanoi and Pham Ngu Lao street or Bui Vien street - Sai Gon (if you're traveling on a tight budget). If yours is not a tight budget? Never mind! You can also find the world top hotels and resorts in here.
5. Is travel here convenient? Sure, many companies operate the open bus (good quality in general) and they run almost to every capital cities in the country. Moving around is very easy. If ya want to take it easier? Well, lots of tour companies everywhere you go. You don't have to work on where to go when you wake up 2morrow.
6. After all, traveling is to experience the difference. And Vietnam is different from any place that you have been!

So, Vietnam? Why not!

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# First time to Vietnam

## Vietnam Travel alerts

**Travel insurance:** As still a developing country, Vietnam has several diseases, so besides bringing medicines, it's better to buy insurance for yourself before you go, because all the medical safety advice in the world isn't going to cover your medical bills if something does go wrong. You may refer to World Nomads for buying online.

**First Aid kit.** Now that you've gone to the trouble of getting yourself a whiz-bang first-aid kit, remember to actually take it with you. There's no point coming off that mountain bike at the top of the hill and realizing the bandages are all the way at the bottom.

**Mosquito bites** are the cause of most tropical diseases, so dress to avoid getting bitten – wear long pants and long sleeves, especially at dusk. Use mosquito repellent on any exposed skin, and sleep under a mosquito net if one is provided (or travel with your own if you are camping or staying in remote areas).

**Beware of strong (or even not so strong) sun in summer time**, especially if you are not used to it – you can burn or get heat stroke before you know it. Carry a hat and sunscreen in your daypack and remember to reapply the lotion after you have been swimming. Also drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration in hot climates.

**The tap water is NOT safe to drink, except for those at the airport, big hotels & restaurants.** Drink sterilized one or buy bottled water (making sure the seal on the bottle is intact).

**Food.** Beware of dishes that include uncooked produce (salads, fresh fruit and vegetables). Fruits that can be peeled (bananas, mangoes, etc) are generally safe to eat. Beware of frozen foods that may have been thawed and refrozen, and of undercooked meat, fish or poultry. When eating at food stalls, use your best judgment: if the food or preparation area looks dodgy, don't even consider eating it. If you are unfortunate enough to get diarrhea, the basic rule is stop eating and drink plenty of (bottled) water for a few days until it has passed.

**No glove, no love.** If romance happens along the way, practice safe sex. HIV/AIDS are quite widespread here. That means using a condom – and it's best to bring one from home, or else you may buy at the locality, so it's safe for you.

**Beware of thieves.** As in any country in this world, tourists should beware of thieves. In Vietnam, bus, crowded streets, festivals, exhibitions, etc. are normally ideal places for thieves to “do business”. Thus, be very careful with your precious stuff.

## General

If this is your first time to Vietnam, there are several things that you may not have known, yet should be kept in mind. For **clothes**, please don't pack few clothes and shoes. Though you can buy clothes here, none of it will fit you. Remember to bring lots of **medicine**, as there is some disease in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese love westerners, so be prepared for **lots of questions**. If you bring kids, they will be adored, especially if of fair complexion as it is so different.

The **roads** are in chaos and noise. Also, crossing the road you'd better take extra care as bikes do not stop; they go around you.

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It will be very **hot and humid especially further south**, so bring hats and lots of water as it might cost more for foreigners to buy a bottle of water (around USD1).

**Haggling** is good fun and even water is to be haggled for. Always approach it with a smile. Wet wipes/anti bacterial dry hand wash is always recommended and take a toilet paper roll for when you are out and about. Bring on portable bathrooms if you are prepared.

**On road trips**, ex. from Dalat to Saigon or Nha Trang to Dalat, stop by smaller city as you are on the main Highway. The markets range from Tea/Coffee to Pottery to handweaved bags. **Make sure you have your camera** in hand as there will be sights that may amaze you.

### **Suggested places to consider before you go**

**Halong Bay**, only a few hours out from Hanoi has natural landscape but is still under development. However, a boat trip out from Halong Bay is a great thing to do and the cave exploration will thrill the kids. Bai Tho is a good outfit to hire a private boat and see the bay for 4 hours. If your kids enjoy nature, they will love the view and appreciate its beauty. If they enjoy sitting on boats, they will just love the experience. Rent out a junk to stay overnight for it is an experience to just enjoy the quietness and beauty of Halong Bay.

**Hue** is beautiful and you can hire bikes/motorbike out to the surrounding scenery. Hue may not be as fun for young kids because it is mostly cultural and historic.

**Hoi An** is very safe. If you love shopping then this is the heaven. You can have shoes made, or suits and summer dresses made. All are in good quality and inexpensive. Go for a deal where you 'don't pay until happy' (or only pay small deposit). Yaly is excellent for clothes, although they are more expensive and it is more fixed pricing. There is a lovely French coffee shop by the river and the older Vietnamese here do speak French. There are also beaches nearby. In Hoi An, the Victoria or Golden Sand are right at the beach, and are convenient for families. Golden Sand has a nice, long pool where the children can play.

The overnight train to Hue from Hanoi is very cheap and has cabins of 4 drop down beds. Cyclos are nice to ride in.

**Hochiminh City (HCMC) (aka Saigon)** is not totally safe, so definitely stay in the tourist areas. The Cu Chi tunnels and historical tour (just out of HCMC) is well worth going on and will fire the kid's imagination. The War Museum in HCMC is not recommended for children since its photography is explicit and it is unblinking in its coverage of the Vietnam War.

**For a nice beach, Mui Ne is recommended.** It has a nice long stretch of beach lined with a variety of boutique hotels. A road runs parallel to the beach with plenty of restaurants and a few shops. It's not really a key resort, but absolutely lovely. There are some spectacular bright red sand dunes there then you can sled down on bits of cardboard, great fun! The wind can pick up on the beach in the afternoon, the breeze is great but you can end getting sand blasted so it's probably be best for the kids to be on the beach on a morning. Also recommend is the Sailing Club Mui Ne.

**Interesting types of entertainment:** Kayaking in Ha long Bay, trekking in the central highlands, mountain biking and visits to the Cu Chi tunnels.

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## **Vietnam Entry Visa**

### **Vietnam Entry Visa Info**

1. Tourist visas allow visitors to enter and exit Vietnam at Hanoi, Hochiminh City and Danang airports, or at any of its twelve land borders, of which three with Cambodia and China, and six with Laos.
2. Tourist visas are valid for a single 30-day stay. The Government often talks about issuing visas on arrival to certain favored nationalities. Arranging the paperwork for a Vietnamese visa has become fairly straightforward, but it remains expensive and unnecessarily time-consuming.
3. It is possible to arrange a visa on arrival through a Vietnamese travel agent. They will need passport details in advance and will send a confirmation for the visa to be issued at your airport of arrival. In Asia the best place to pick up a Vietnamese visa is Cambodia, where it costs around US\$30 and can be arranged on the same day. Bangkok is also a popular place as many agents offer cheap packages with an air ticket and visa thrown in.
4. If you plan to spend more than a month in Vietnam, or if you plan to exit Vietnam and enter again from Cambodia or Laos, arrange a three-month multiple-entry visa. These cost around US\$95 in Cambodia, but are not available from all Vietnamese embassies. In our experience personal appearance influences the reception you receive from airport immigration - if you wear shorts or scruffy clothing, look dirty or unshaven, you can expect problems. Try your best to look 'respectable'.

### **Visa Exemption**

Only citizens of certain countries can visit Vietnam without Vietnam entry visa. Those countries include: most citizens of ASEAN countries are no need Vietnam visa for visit Vietnam within 30 days; citizens of Korea, Japan & Scandinavians (Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland passport holders) are no need Vietnam visa for visit Vietnam within 15 days. All other citizens are required to get Vietnam entry visa before departure (Vietnam visa issued prior to departure by Vietnamese consulates or embassies) or a pre-approved Vietnam entry visa (visa is issued on arrival at Vietnam's International Airports) supplied before arrival in Vietnam.

1. No Vietnam entry visa required for travel less than 30 days: Citizens of Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Brunei and Laos.
2. No Vietnam entry visa required for travel less than 15 days: Citizens of Japan, South Korea, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland.
3. No visa required for travel less than 90 days or several visits within 6 months: Citizens of France holding valid diplomatic or official passports.
4. No Vietnam entry visa required for travel less than 60 days: Citizens of Chile holding valid diplomatic or official passports.

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5. No Vietnam entry visa required for travel less than 60 days: APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) Holders from Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) member economies.
6. No Vietnam entry visa for traveling to Phu Quoc Island – Vietnam : Foreigners and Vietnamese nationals bearing foreign passports who enter Vietnam through an international border gate and then travel to Phu Quoc Island and stay in Phu Quoc less than 15 days will also be exempt from Vietnam visa application. Passports must be valid for at least 45 days. After arriving in Phu Quoc Island, if visitors want to travel other localities or stay in the island for more than 15 days, the immigration department will be responsible for issuing visas right on the spot.

### **How to apply for a visa to Vietnam?**

You can either apply by yourself at Vietnamese embassies or consulates in your country or have a local travel agent (your sponsor) do part or all the procedures.

#### By yourself:

- Required documentations: you have to submit: **passport** of six months' validity, **visa application forms**, and **probably some others** required by Vietnamese embassy or consulates in your country. Visa forms are available by getting directly or by mail with a stamped, self-addressed envelope addressed to their Visa section. Request by email is perhaps acceptable (in some cases). See Visa application form and list of Vietnamese Embassies and Consulates abroad (also available Foreign Embassies and Consulates in Vietnam).
- Time: processing tourist visa application typically takes four or five working days.
- Cost:: fees vary from embassy to embassy; about \$50 in Bangkok and \$85 in Washington, for example.

#### By local travel agency:

Provide two types of visa services: **Visa Application letter** and **Full-packaged service** (on-arrival visa). Please refer to the detailed visa procedure and services for more information

For more information and/or to apply for a visa to Vietnam, please click here

<http://www.vietnam-visa.com>

### **Visa to Vietnam: DOs & DON'Ts**

Visas are still an expensive aspect of travelling to Vietnam.

**DO** ensure that you apply for a visa well in advance. If you do so from outside Asia, it may take even longer. Ask for a multiple entry visa (same price, but not always granted) or at least a double entry visa.

**DON'T** forget to arm yourself with a sheaf of passport photos: vital for visa applications and useful for other official dealings within Vietnam.

**DO** check for up-to-date information: regulations change frequently, as do visa lengths and prices. Once you are on your way to Vietnam, usually on the flight or when you arrive at the airport, you will be asked to fill in an entry/exit form and to keep a (yellow) copy.

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**DON'T** lose this form, you may need it to open a bank account or show an officious hotel receptionist and if you do mislay it, you may have to fill out another one before you leave the country.

**DO** beware of the double dating system. Your visa will contain a termination date and your passport will most likely be stamped with a permit to stay until... date. These two dates are rarely identical! And, of course, the earlier of the two is the one that counts.

In case of staying for work in Vietnam;

**DON'T** leave home or lose a copy of your employment contract or an official letter from the company or agency as this is required for issuance and extensions of your visa.

**DO** contact the Immigration Police in Hanoi or Hochiminh City for extension of your tourist visa. A long-term visa must be renewed, although, in special circumstances, it can be extended for a few days. However, if you need to change visa category (for instance, from a tourist visa to a business visa), you will have to leave the country in order to get the new visa issued.

If you plan to leave Vietnam during your visit, for example to visit a neighboring country and then to return to Vietnam, **DO** make sure that it says multiple entry or double entry on your visa, or you will not get back into Vietnam without a fresh visa!

If you know where you wish to enter or exit Vietnam (other than at the three international airports in Hanoi, Da Nang, and Hochiminh City), **BEFORE** you apply for your visa, **DON'T** forget to specify these border crossings so that they can be added to your visa. Otherwise, you can have them added from within Vietnam, but with a little more hassle – and money, of course.

## Embassies & Consulates

**Embassies of foreign countries in Vietnam & Vietnamese Embassies in other countries:**

Country	Foreign Embassy in Vietnam	Vietnam Embassy abroad
<b>Albania</b>	49 Dien Bien Phu, Ha Noi Tel: 84-4-8253865	Tirana, Tel 2556, Telex 2253 AMBRVS AB
<b>Algeria</b>	12 Phan Chu Trinh, Ha Noi Tel : 84 -4 - 8253865 Fax : 84 -4 - 8260830 Website : <a href="http://www.ambalgvn.org.vn">http://www.ambalgvn.org.vn</a>	30 Chenoua Hydra, Anger, Tel 600752
<b>Australia</b>	66 Ly Thuong Kiet, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8252763 Web: <a href="http://www.ausinvn.com">http://www.ausinvn.com</a>	6 Timbarra Crescent, O'Malley, Canberra, ACT 2603 Tel (062) 866509, Fax 864534 <a href="http://www.au.vnembassy.org">http://www.au.vnembassy.org</a>
<b>Belgium</b>	B3 Van Phuc, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 252263	Avenue De La Floride 130, 1180 Bruxells, Tel (02) 3749133 Fax 3749133

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<b>Bulgaria</b>	2 Van Phuc, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 252908	Sofia-1113, Ul. Iliya, Petrovl, Tel 639043, 658486
<b>Cambodia</b>	Hanoi: 4 Thuyen Quang, Tel 8264816 Ho Chi Minh City: 41 Phung Khac Khoan, Tel: 84 - 8 - 8292751	Son Ngoc Minh area, Phnom Penh, Tel 25481
<b>Canada</b>	39 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8265840	470 Wilbrod Street, Ottawa, K1N 6M8, Canada Tel: (613) 236-0772 Fax: (613) 236-2704
<b>China</b>	46 Hoang Dieu, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8253736, 253737	32 Guangua Lu, Jianguomenwai Dajie, Beijing, Tel 5321125, 5325414
<b>Cuba</b>	65 Ly Thuong Kiet, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 825477 <a href="http://www.vietnamembassy.cu">http://www.vietnamembassy.cu</a>	5A, Avenida No. 1802, Miramar, Cuidad de la Habana, Tel 296262
<b>Czech</b>	13 Chu Van An, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8254131	Holeckova 6, Praha 5, Tel 546498, 531723
<b>Denmark</b>	19 Dien Bien Phu, Ha Noi Tel: +84 (4) 8 231 888 Web: <a href="http://www.dk-vn.dk">http://www.dk-vn.dk</a>	Gammel Vartov Vej 20, 2900 Hellerup, Denmark Telephone: 45 3918 3932 Fax: 45 3918 3932 <a href="http://www.vietnamemb.dk">http://www.vietnamemb.dk</a>
<b>Finland</b>	Suite 603, Central Building, 31 Hai Ba Trung, Hanoi. Tel: 84 - 4 - 826 6788 Web: <a href="http://www.finland.org.vn">www.finland.org.vn</a>	Aleksanterinkatu 15, 5th floor 00100 Helsinki, Finland Tel. +358 9 562 6302 / +358 9 622 9900
<b>France</b>	Hanoi: 49 Ba Trieu, Tel: 84 - - 252719, 254367, 254368 Ho Chi Minh City: Consulate 102 Hai Ba Trung, Dist 1, Tel. 8- 8297231 <a href="http://www.ambafrance-vn.org">http://www.ambafrance-vn.org</a>	62 Rue Boileau, 75016 Paris, Tel 45245063, 45276255, Fax 45243948
<b>Germany</b>	29 Tran Phu, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8253836 <a href="http://www.germanembhanoi.org.vn">http://www.germanembhanoi.org.vn</a>	Konstantinstrasse 37, 53179 Bonn, Tel (0228) 957540, Fax 351866
<b>Hungary</b>	43-47 Dien Bien Phu, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8252748	V1 Benczur U. 18, Budapest, Tel 429943
<b>India</b>	58 Tran Hung Dao, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8253409	42F, South Extension, New Delhi, Part 1, Tel 624 586, 623 823
<b>Indonesia</b>	50 Ngo Quyen, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8256316	25 Jalan Tenku Umar, Jakarta, Tel 6221/3100358, 325347, Fax: 6221 3100359 Telex 073 45211 SRVNM IA
<b>Italy</b>	9 Le Phung Hieu, Ha Noi	Plazza Barberini 12, 00187 Roma,

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	Tel: 84 - 4 - 825624 <a href="http://www.embitalyvietnam.org">http://www.embitalyvietnam.org</a>	Tel 4755286, 4754098
<b>Japan</b>	49 Nguyen Du, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8257902	50-11, Motoyoyogi-Cho, Shibuya-Ku, Tokyo, Tel 81334663315, Fax 813 3466 3312
<b>Korea, (People's Dem. Rep.)</b>	25 Cao Ba Quat, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8266621	7, Munxu Str., Pongyang, Tel: 291 Korea, South Tel: 722 704 3570/1, Fax 822 793 1009
<b>Korea (Republic of Korea)</b>	4th floor, 360 Kim Ma, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8315111 <a href="http://www.hanquoc-emb.net">http://www.hanquoc-emb.net</a>	Add: 7 Munsu Street , Pyongyang Tel: 381 7353 - Fax: 381 7632 Consulate: 381 7111 Code: 00-850- 2 <a href="http://www.vietnamembassy.co.kr">http://www.vietnamembassy.co.kr</a>
<b>Laos</b>	Hanoi: 22 Tran Binh Trong, Tel: 84 - 4 - 8254576 Ho Chi Minh City: Consulate 43 Phung Khac Hoan, District 1, Tel: 84 - 8 - 8292751, 8292744	1 Thanon That Luang Rd, Vientiane, Tel 413400, 413403, 413409
<b>Malaysia</b>	A3 Van Phuc, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8253371	4, Peslaran Stonor, Kuala Lumpur, Tel (03) 2484354, Fax 2483270
<b>Mexico</b>		Calle Sierra Ventana 255, 11000 Mexico, DF, Tel 5401612, 5401632
<b>Netherlands</b>	Daeha Office Tower, 360 Kim Ma, Hanoi. Tel. 84 4 8315650 <a href="http://www.netherlands-embassy.org.vn">http://www.netherlands-embassy.org.vn</a>	
<b>Myanmar</b>	Building A-3, Van Phuc, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 253369, Fax: 84 - 4 - 252404	40, Kmin Kochin Road, Yangon, Tel 50361
<b>Philippines</b>	E1 Trung Tu, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8257948	Philippines 54, Victor Cruz, Malate, Manila, Tel (632) 500364, 508101, Fax 508101
<b>Poland</b>	3 Chua Mot Cot, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8252027	0-468 Warszawa, Ul. Kawalerii 5, Tel 413369, 415867
<b>Romania</b>	5 Le Hong Phong, Ha Noi Tel: 84 4 8252014	15 Strada Autrului, Bucharest, Tel 116120, Fax 11604
<b>Russian Federation</b>	58 Tran Phu, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 825463	Ul. Bolshaia Piragovxkaia 13, Moskwa, Tel 2450925
<b>Singapore</b>	B4 Van Phuc, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8233966	10 Leedon Park, Singapore 1026, Tel 468347 <a href="http://www.vinatradesingapore.org">http://www.vinatradesingapore.org</a>
<b>Slovakia</b>	13 Chu Van An, Ha Noi Tel: 84 4 8254131	

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<b>Sweden</b>	2 Van Phuc, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8254824 <a href="http://www.hanoi.embassy.ud.se">http://www.hanoi.embassy.ud.se</a>	Slotsvaeg 26, 125 71 Alvsjo, Tel (08) 861218, 861418, Fax (08) 995713 <a href="http://www.vietnamemb.se">http://www.vietnamemb.se</a>
<b>Switzerland</b>	77b Kim Ma, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8232019, Fax: 84 - 4 - 232045	Ch. F. Lehmann 34, 1218 Grand- Saconnex, Tel (022) 798 98 66, Fax 798 98 58
<b>Thailand</b>	63-65 Hoang Dieu, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 235092, 256053, 262644	83/1 Wireless Rd., Bangkok, Tel (02) 2517201, (02) 2515836 <a href="http://www.vietnamembassy.or.th/">http://www.vietnamembassy.or.th/</a>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	116 Ly Thuong Kiet, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8252510 <a href="http://www.uk-vietnam.org">http://www.uk-vietnam.org</a>	12-14 Victoria Road, London, W8 5RD, Tel (071) 9371912, Fax. 8376108,
<b>USA</b>	7 Lang Ha, Ha Noi Tel: 84 - 4 - 8431500 Web: <a href="http://www.usembassy.state.gov/">http://www.usembassy.state.gov/</a> 4 Le Duan Blvd, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City; Tel 84-8-82209433	1233 20th Street NW, Suite 400, Washington DC, 20036 Tel (202) 861-0737, Fax (202) 861-0917 <a href="http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org">http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org</a> Consulate 1700 California, San Francisco, Tel (415) 922-1577 <a href="http://www.vietnamconsulate-sf.org">http://www.vietnamconsulate-sf.org</a>

## **Vietnam Money/Currency and Banks**

### **Money/Currency**

Vietnam's currency issued by the Vietnam State Bank is the Dong (VND), which is non-convertible. The Vietnamese use both coins and paper notes. But as Vietnam is currently changing its money system, there exists two different money systems (old and new) at the same time, which can cause confusion. Coins include VND 5,000; 2,000; 1,000; and 500. These values have paper note equivalences. The following values: VND 500,000; 200,000; 100,000; 50,000; 20,000; and 10,000. Cheques with value as Vietnamese dong include: VND 1,000,000 and 500,000.

Notes: Make sure that the Vietnamese notes you receive are not torn, because many shops and restaurants will not accept them. Also try not to change too much money at one time, as you will end up with a large wad of notes. Be careful, the 20,000 notes look only slightly different from the 500,000 one but the value is a big gap.

Besides the local currency, the US Dollar, preferably crisp clean bills, is also widely accepted among major shops and restaurants. Travelers checks can be cashed at authorized foreign exchange outlets and banks and require presentation of passport. These are widely accepted in hotels and banks. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take traveler's cheques in US Dollars. Visa and Master cards are becoming more accepted in many big hotels and restaurants, especially in large cities.

### **Exchange rates**

Exchange rate can be referred to at <http://www.oanda.com>. In general, 1 USD is

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approximately 16,514VND, and 1 EUR approximates 24,059VND around the current writing time.

You can exchange your money at the airport before leaving, or at banks and official exchange centers in Vietnam. You are strongly recommended not to exchange money in the black market.

### **Banking**

#### International Banks

There are a number of international banks operating in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City with 24-hour cash withdrawal facilities, particularly ANZ Bank in Hanoi and the HSBC in Ho Chi Minh City. Here cash can be withdrawn on Visa and Master cards as well as other cards such as Cirrus.

While traveler's checks have become somewhat obsolete in many places due to the advent of ATM's, in Vietnam they are quite useful. For example, in Hanoi, you can cash U.S. dollar checks at banks for a 1.25-1.5% charge. This is not more expensive than using an ATM, once you figure in bank fees. Please note that using travelers checks is most useful if you can buy your checks without a commission, which some banks and other organizations offer their customers.

#### Banking hours

The hours may differ from bank to bank. Generally banks open from Monday to Friday: 8:00 – 11:30 and 1:00 to 4:00. Some large banks also open through lunch or on Saturday mornings. Banks are closed on public holidays.

## **Vietnam Travel alerts**

**Travel insurance:** As still a developing country, Vietnam has several diseases, so besides bringing medicines, it's better to buy insurance for yourself before you go, because all the medical safety advice in the world isn't going to cover your medical bills if something does go wrong. You may refer to World Nomads for buying online.

**First Aid kit.** Now that you've gone to the trouble of getting yourself a whiz-bang first-aid kit, remember to actually take it with you. There's no point coming off that mountain bike at the top of the hill and realizing the bandages are all the way at the bottom.

**Mosquito bites** are the cause of most tropical diseases, so dress to avoid getting bitten – wear long pants and long sleeves, especially at dusk. Use mosquito repellent on any exposed skin, and sleep under a mosquito net if one is provided (or travel with your own if you are camping or staying in remote areas).

**Beware of strong (or even not so strong) sun in summer time**, especially if you are not used to it – you can burn or get heat stroke before you know it. Carry a hat and sunscreen in your daypack and remember to reapply the lotion after you have been swimming. Also drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration in hot climates.

**The tap water is NOT safe to drink, except for those at the airport, big hotels & restaurants.** Drink sterilized one or buy bottled water (making sure the seal on the bottle is intact).

**Food.** Beware of dishes that include uncooked produce (salads, fresh fruit and vegetables). Fruits that can be peeled (bananas, mangoes, etc) are generally safe to eat. Beware of frozen foods that may have been thawed and refrozen, and of undercooked meat, fish or poultry. When eating at food stalls, use your best judgment: if the food or

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preparation area looks dodgy, don't even consider eating it. If you are unfortunate enough to get diarrhea, the basic rule is stop eating and drink plenty of (bottled) water for a few days until it has passed.

**No glove, no love.** If romance happens along the way, practice safe sex. HIV/AIDS are quite widespread here. That means using a condom – and it's best to bring one from home, or else you may buy at the locality, so it's safe for you.

**Beware of thieves.** As in any country in this world, tourists should beware of thieves. In Vietnam, bus, crowded streets, festivals, exhibitions, etc. are normally ideal places for thieves to “do business”. Thus, be very careful with your precious stuff.

# Shopping in Vietnam

## I. Shopping in VN in brief

Shopping in Vietnam is a fun and interesting experience, and guarantees good bargains to those who know what to look for. It is true to say that you can find nearly anything in Vietnam. Markets vary from high class shopping malls, supermarkets to bustling open market, galleries, boutiques and street stalls.

It is not recommended that you buy imported, famous branded products such as clothing, perfume or electronics in Vietnam as tax makes these items more costly than neighboring countries.

In terms of shopping for tourists, Vietnam is most famous for its handicrafts, war souvenirs, authentic clothing, art, antiques and gems.

Hotspots include Hanoi, Hoi An and Ho Chi Minh City, each of which has a tempting selection of everything from avant-garde art to sumptuous silk suits.

### Art and Antiques

Vietnam has very strict regulations about exporting real antiques. There are several shops to hunt for art and antiques. Both traditional and modern paintings are a popular item. More sophisticated works are displayed in art galleries, while cheaper mass-produced stuff is touted in souvenir shops and by street vendors. Be careful and check your sources for certificates if they claim to sell you an original or antique piece.

### Clothing

Vietnam is emerging as a regional design center and there are some extravagant creations in the boutiques of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

Clothing varies greatly from tourist T-shirts to beaded handbags and traditional ao dai (the traditional costume) made to fit your size. Items made from silk are a popular buy, with prices varying depending on the material and tailor. Pre-made traditional dresses are sold in many places. However, it is more recommended to have the dress made to fit your body, which takes more time and slightly more money.

Shoes, slippers and handbags made from traditional materials (silk and bamboo) can also become unique gifts and accessories.

The Vietnamese traditional conical hat, can be found everywhere throughout the country, but hats made in Hue are most famous as they have a poem embroiled on the inside.

Non (conical hats) are favorite items for women in both rainy and sunny times. The best quality ones can be found in the Hue's area.

### Gems and jewelry

Vietnam is rich in gemstones. The jewelry business is also increasing during current years, and sophisticated works are produced by both big businesses and traditional craftsmen. The quality of the gemstones sold is sometimes doubtful, so it is recommended that you buy gems at prestigious locations and be ware with cheap prices.

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### **War souvenirs**

Most war souvenirs sold today in Vietnam (for example, Zippo lighters engraved with platoon philosophy) are fake reproductions. Be careful while transporting these items as many airlines do not allow weapons, even fakes to be carried on their planes.

### **Handicrafts**

Other popular handicrafts in Vietnam include lacquer ware, wood-block prints, and oil and watercolor paintings, blinds made from bamboo, reed mats, carpets, and leatherwork.

### **Tip: Bargaining**

Bargaining should be good-natured, smile and don't get angry or argue. Once the money is accepted, the deal is done. Remember that in Asia, "saving face" is very important. In some cases you will be able to get a 50% discount or more, at other times this may only be 10%.

## **II. Shopping in VN: DOs and DON'Ts**

### ***Markets & Minimarts***

DON'T miss the markets: among the most atmospheric in Southeast Asia and still the hub of commercial activity everywhere in Vietnam. Notable markets include floating ones in the Mekong Delta, Cho Lon market in the district of Hochiminh City that bears the same name, the large fruit and flower market in Da Lat, any of the major markets in Hanoi, the colorful Sa Pa market and other ethnic minority markets in the mountainous north of the country.

DO go early when shopping at local markets. Goods are brought fresh everyday from the countryside and without refrigeration they will suffer from the heat as the day drags on. Shopping in Hochiminh City is now little different from shopping in Bangkok or any other Asian metropolis. Commercial complexes and supermarkets are also sprouting up in Hanoi and other sizeable towns.

DO check the expiry dates carefully on any imported produce you buy: many of the more obscure items in these shops have been quietly gathering dust (not to say rotting away) for years. In Hanoi, you may notice a baffling remnant of the city's old ways. Tradesmen as part of Chinese-style commercial guilds were traditionally grouped together geographically (as many have remained in the Old Quarter), but a more modern breed of shopkeepers, such as those selling televisions or making photocopies, often elect to bunch together in a similar way. The practical upshot of this is simply impossible for the moment to obtain, say, a tennis racquet. Then, one day, you will turn a corner into an unexplored street and be confronted by an entire row of shops selling nothing but tennis racquets.

### ***Bargain, bargain, and bargain***

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The idea of a fixed pricing system is still quite novel in most commercial contexts, which means that a little good natured haggling is an important habit to develop. Anywhere outside of supermarkets, restaurants and anything controlled by the state, bargaining is possible and usually essential.

DO be warned that, as you are always easily spotted from a distance as a foreigner, you will be asked to pay more than locals. Sometimes just a little more, but often outrageously more, even if this is not always immediately obvious to you, especially when relatively small sums are involved. It might seem like a snip, but you may be paying ten times the going rate.

If you feel mean haggling over such small sums or are tempted just to pay up for a quiet life, DON'T forget to think of other people who will pass this way after you. You should not be too afraid of offending local sensibilities: if you pay vastly over-inflated prices without a murmur, you'll simply be seen as the sucker you're letting yourself be taken for!

DO negotiate firmly if you want to rent a place: as a foreigner, you are a good prospect, since you will almost certainly pay more than a local, you won't start worshipping your ancestors in the house and refuse to ever move out – and you may even attract other monied foreigners to the neighbourhood. However, you should also be aware that there is no legal protection for people renting accommodation: if you have a problem, you must solve it with your landlord – again, through negotiation. The pleasant result is that Vietnam has actually been getting cheaper over the last few years.

### ***Fake goods***

Much of Southeast Asia is notorious as an earthly paradise for counterfeiters and Vietnam is no exception.

DO consider your motives carefully if you purchase counterfeit goods: if you buy a Rolex wristwatch for \$20, you know that there is no chance of it being anything like a real one, except for its superficial appearance. If this is all you want, that's fine, but DON'T complain if you get searched at customs on your return home, have your fake Rolex confiscated and are made to pay a fine equivalent to the cost of a genuine one. Copies of expensive makes (especially good ones) pose a real threat to business and these luxury goods companies are determined to defend their interests – and have the means to do so. Very good copies can be found in Vietnam, particularly items such as clothes, sports equipment and luggage. The Vietnamese are redoubtable and wily business operators, and both foreign and domestic companies often find it impossible to prevent know-how from leaking out. Even products made from materials imported exclusively find their way onto the local market at budget prices.

However, DO let the buyer beware that it's possible to find excellent deals, but only if you really know what you are doing.

DO check the quality of what you're buying, especially if there are safety concerns involved.

DON'T expect to get your money back if you change your mind after making a purchase,

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or even if you realize belatedly that the goods you have been sold are not as advertised... Check everything checkable yourself before you hand over your money. If it runs on electricity, get the assistant to plug it in and test it.

### ***What not to buy in Vietnam?***

There are some products which you may find for sale here which you should avoid. These may be illegal in Vietnam or your home country, or simply may encourage destruction of the environment and harm to the local people. These include:

**Coral and coral products.** Buying these products encourages destruction to Vietnam's irreplaceable coral reefs.

**Sea Turtle products.** You may find preserved sea turtles in shops - particularly sold in the open in Hanoi. This should be obvious--but sea turtles are endangered and all products made from them are illegal.

**Rice wine containing whole animals or animal products.** Wildlife populations have been decimated in Vietnam. Many of the animals and animal parts used as ingredients in rice wine are globally threatened and endangered - including the snakes.

**Ivory, bone and tooth products.** This animal product will be illegal in most home countries, regardless of which animal it came from. The only allowable products may be those made from farm animals--but this may be very difficult to distinguish.

**Alligator and crocodile leather.** This is illegal to transport between many countries.

**Drugs** - including marijuana are illegal and the sale or use of them can carry SEVERE penalties.

**Prostitution** is illegal and destroys not only yourself, the person you engage with, and your family. Aids and other serious STD's are VERY COMMON in Vietnam--even the countryside.

### **III. 10 tips to savvy shopping in VN**

DO always ask around to get an idea of basic prices: a ride on a motorbike, a plate of fried noodles, a packet of cigarettes, a kilo of mangoes, etc. For more important purchases, try and get a local friend to go along with you, or better still, let him do the buying without you: prices are often lower when foreigners aren't around.

DON'T feel awkward or rude about bargaining: everyone bargains in Vietnam and you'll look like a green tourist if you don't.

DO insist on being quoted a price as soon as you start showing interest in a commodity or requesting a service. It's too late to ask once the silk shirt has been wrapped or after your

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bike has been fixed. This first price is your starting point and it's quite probably too expensive, so

DON'T look happy or resigned to paying what you're asked: always begin by showing your gentle disapproval, tut-tutting or saying something like: *t quá!* (Too expensive).

DO consider various bargaining options, not just a straight fight over figures. If you buy several, the price should come down. Ask them to throw in some small extra you would like, for the same price. If you are quoted a price in US dollars, ask how much that is in Vietnamese Dong and try rounding it down. Be forewarned, though, that the concept of the special offer is still in its infancy here (like 1 percent off if you buy a truckload)...

DON'T hesitate to walk away if you cannot agree on a price: either they'll come after you or you'll find the same thing on sale somewhere else.

DO stay Zen... Shopping can be quite a rodeo when you're surrounded by eager stallholders all shouting, smiling, waving and pointing at their wares.

DON'T buy antiques to take home unless you're confident that you can get them out of the country. The law prohibits their export, but remains vague as to what exactly constitutes as an antique.

DO buy ethnic minority products directly from ethnic minority people, if at all possible, rather than from shops run by ethnic majority merchants, who often exploit their suppliers ruthlessly.

DON'T expect to get the better of any deal: Vietnamese have boundless reserves of experience and patience in doing business.

**Ref:** Good buys in Vietnam:

Lacquer ware  
Ceramics Painting  
Woodblock prints  
Silk  
Clothes in general  
Embroidery  
Carvings (stone and wood)  
Precious or semi-precious stones (such as jade)  
Jewellery  
Rugs

#### **IV. Newspapers, Magazines, CD-ROMs**

**Newspapers and magazines** are mainly written in Vietnamese. However, there are some newspapers and magazines available in English and French, including:

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The Vietnam Investment Review

Vietnam News

Saigon Times

Investment News

Vietnam Economic News

Vietnam Economic News

Vietnam Today

Vietnam Pictorial

Le Courier du Vietnam

Street vendors and big hotels also sell foreign newspapers and magazines, including:

The Bangkok Post

New Nation

Business News

News-week and Times

Indochina

Asian Weekly, etc.

**CD-ROMs:** Once in Vietnam, visitors can make the acquisition of different CD-ROMs created by the Tourism Information Technology Centre. They present different aspects of Vietnam, of the culture, or they focus on one special region. Useful for the traveler, these CD-ROMs are also nice souvenirs to bring back home or to other.

## **V. Top recommended shopping places**

### **1. HANOI**

#### **Shopping center in HANOI**

##### **Trang Tien Plaza**

Add: 24 Hai Ba Trung St., Hoan Kiem Dist.

Tel: 934 9734

Fax: 934 9715

##### **Vincom**

Add: 191 Ba Trieu St., Hai Ba Trung Dist

Tel: 974 9999

Fax: 974 8888

#### **Arts Products**

54 Traditions Gallery

Address: 30 Hang Bun St, Hanoi

Tel: 04/715-0194

Website: [www.54traditions.com](http://www.54traditions.com)

This gallery is more like an ethnographic museum, library, and gallery all rolled into one. The space is divided into five theme rooms (e.g. "Functional Objects", and "Shamanism")

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and co-owner Mark S. Rapport is more than happy to play guide for a day. Rapport is a self-described collector, baseball cards when he was a kid, African art while living in New York, and then Vietnamese minority art when he moved to Hanoi. Rapport has a natural gift for bringing the artifacts to life and, given the range of affordable pieces (small mounted prints made from antique stamps or seals got for less than \$10/£5.55) and exquisite antique artifacts, few people walk away empty-handed.

### **Apricot Gallery**

Address: 40B Hang Bong St, Hanoi

Tel: 04/828-8965

Website: [www.apricot-artvietnam.com](http://www.apricot-artvietnam.com)

This gallery features minimalist artists like Le Thiet Cuong, whose family fled Hanoi for the countryside from 1964 to 1973 to escape American bombings, and Le Thanh Son, whose colorful canvases of village life impressed Mr. Clinton enough that he bought one to take home.

This large, well-lit, air-conditioned space holds some works by Vietnam's most well-known contemporary lacquer painter, Dinh Quan, as well as other artists of the current vanguard (all priced accordingly, of course). Apricot Gallery carries 80% famous artists and 20% upcoming artists. See if you can spot which paintings fall into which categories. The gallery has hosted several international customers, including former president Bill Clinton, who purchased a landscape piece by Hoang Hai Anh. Hoang, naturally, falls into the 80% group.

### **Enen**

Address: 24 Xuan Dieu St, Hanoi

Tel: 04/240-4344

This store has a random, but good selection of foreign labels that appears to have fallen off the export truck. You'll stumble across pieces by boutique darlings like Vanessa Bruno, Baby Phat, BCBG, and even some familiar Abercrombie & Fitch cotton separates. They have western sizes, but whatever is on the rack is what they have, so if it's not your size, it's not meant to be.

### **Galerie Royal**

Address: 60 Ly Thai To St, Hanoi

Tel: 04/936-6672

This small boutique is sandwiched between the Hilton and the Metropole and caters to high-end shoppers. They carry three lines only, Kenzo, Korloff and La Perla. The La Perla lingerie and swimsuit selection is top notch.

### **Hanoi Art Contemporary Gallery**

Address: 36-38 Trang Tien St, Hanoi

Tel: 04/934-7192

Website: [www.hanoi-artgallery.com](http://www.hanoi-artgallery.com)

This large corner space carries a large collection. The friendly staff greets you with smiles. Here you'll find standard copies and some very unique pieces.

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**Hanoi Gallery**

Address: 42 Cau Go St, Hanoi

Tel: 04/824-1854

Different from all the rest by virtue of the fact that this little open-air storefront sells only old Communist propaganda posters, mostly artful copies that are "worried" to look old (the difference is obvious), but the stark images are quite appealing.

**Hanoi Moment**

Address: 101 Hang Gai St, Hanoi

Tel: 04/928-7170

Website: [www.nishinjsc.com](http://www.nishinjsc.com)

A small selection of porcelain and lacquer flatware is sold in this smartly laid out store. Rather than leaving you to dig through assorted stacks of plates and bowls, Hanoi Moment displays a small selection of pieces arranged in eye-pleasing display areas.

**Lien Art Gallery**

Address: 27 Nha Tho, Hanoi

Tel: 04/828-5913

Website: [www.lien-art-gallery.com](http://www.lien-art-gallery.com)

On the corner adjacent to the cathedral, the cramped two floors here are stuffed with lots of copy works of both famous Vietnamese artists and European masters. This is the best place to drop off a family photo and have it done in oil in a few days.

**Life Photo Gallery**

Address: 39 Trang Tien St, Hanoi

Tel: 04/936-3886

This gallery carries the works of two prominent Hanoian photographers whose color prints of the Vietnamese hinterlands, including some of the finest portraits and scenes from the hilltribes of the far north and Central Highlands region, have been published widely. You'll find some of their best prints here, framed and at prices unheard of in the West. Pick up a great souvenir or get some inspiration for your own snapshots. The eccentric photographers themselves, Mr. Le Quang Chau and Mr. Do Anh Tuan, are often on hand and happy to chat.

**Mai Gallery**

Address: 183 Hong Bong St, Hanoi

Tel: 04/828-5854

Website: [www.maigallery-vietnam.com](http://www.maigallery-vietnam.com)

Like the Apricot Gallery and Art Vietnam, this gallery carries a good deal of work by well-known and established Vietnamese artists. It also has a handful of exclusive artists, whose works are only available at their gallery. These include the latest darling of Vietnamese landscapes Phan Thu Trang, a young painter (born in 1981) who has been with Mai Gallery since 2004. Staff here is helpful and the gallery has an excellent layout with good lighting for easy viewing.

**Handicrafts****Impress Travel Company Limited**

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**Indochine House**

13 Nha Tho, Hanoi  
Tel: 824 8071

**Craft Link**

43 Van Mieu, Hanoi  
Tel: 843 7710

**Anh Duy Lacquer**

25 Hang Trong, Hanoi  
Tel: 514 1580

<http://www.adpub.com.vn/>

**Art Antique Shop**

3 Hang Can, Hanoi  
Tel: 8266109

**Dong phuong Oriental House**

7 Xuan Dieu, Hanoi  
Tel: 716 0131

**Hand Made**

6 Au Trieu, Hanoi  
Tel: 091 330 8443

**Vietnamese House**

1 Trang Thi, Hanoi  
Tel: 934 7417

**Vinh Nga**

Group 5, Bat Trang Village, Gia Lam  
Tel: 874 0123

**Craft Collection**

39A Ly Quoc Su, Hanoi  
Tel: 828 9524

**Quilt & Crafts**

4B Yen The, Hanoi  
Tel: 747 0982

**Song**

5-7 Nha Tho, Hanoi  
Tel: 828 9650

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**99 Hang Gai Shop**  
99 Hang Gai, Hanoi  
Tel: 8268684

**Garments and fashion in Ha Noi**

**Louis Vuitton**

Address: 15 Ngo Quyen, Hanoi  
Tel: 04/824-4977

Odd that you can buy a knockoff of the latest Louis Vuitton bag just around the corner -- any corner really -- but these are the real deal at the real deal prices. They also have beautiful original antique LV trunks on display in-store, and sometimes in the lobby of the Metropole. Next door is a Cartier Watch boutique. You have arrived, darling.

**Hanoi Silk**

Address: 1 Thanh Nien Rd, Hanoi  
Tel: 04/716-3062

Website: [www.hanoisilkvn.com](http://www.hanoisilkvn.com)

Hanoi Silk has a collection comparable to Khai Silk and carries good ready-to-wear as well as tailors' silk garments.

**Hoa Sua Embroidery and Sewing Showroom**

Address: 21D Ha Hoi, Hoan Kiem District, Hanoi  
Tel: 04/822-6912

Like their affiliated restaurants and cafes in Hanoi (and in Sapa), the folks at the Hoa Sua Showroom are an outlet for disadvantaged children, many of whom are hearing-impaired, to receive on-the-job training and placement in a career. The shop here carries a nice collection of daily-use items, tablecloths, and slip covers, as well as made-to-order goods. An expat favorite, and your money goes to a good cause.

**Ipa Nima and Tina Sparkle**

Address: Ipa Nima: 34 Han Thuyen St., Hai Ba Trung District; Tina Sparkle: 17 Nha Tho St., Hoan Kiem District

Tel: 04/928-7616 Tina Sparkle

Website: [www.ipa-nima.com](http://www.ipa-nima.com)

You've come to the right place for gaudy little Zakka fashion bags and accouterments for the ladies. Run by jet-setting Hong Kong lawyer-turned-designer Christina Yu, the place is popular with Japanese and Singaporean ladies and has managed to cause a small stir in other international markets. Celebrities Jamie Lee Curtis and Kelly Osbourne (admittedly, not your typical fashion icons) have been known to sport an Ipa Nima creation or two. Yu herself admits that you either love it or you hate it. Her bags are creative, glitzy affairs adorned with rhinestones, metal grommets, and contrasting materials. They have two stores: a newly opened flagship Ipa Nima store in the south end of town, and Tina Sparkle in the heart of the popular Church Street cafe area.

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**La Casa**

Address: 12 Nha Tho St, Hanoi

Tel: 04/828-9616

Website: [www.lacasavietnam.com](http://www.lacasavietnam.com)

This store uses traditional Vietnamese crafts and combines local materials with a modern edge. It's an excellent place to scope out little gifts to bring back home that people will actually like.

**Coco silk**

Add: 37A Van Mieu St.

Tel: 7471535

Fax: 7471535

**Vu Thu Giang**

Add: 148 Giang Vo St., Ba Dinh Dist.

Tel: 8312519

Fax: 8312519

**Thuy An (silk, tailoring)**

Add: 179 Hang Bong St.

Tel: 8269402

Fax: 9287541

**Kenly silk**

Add: 108 Hang Gai St.

Tel: 8267236

Fax: 8289785

**Khai silk**

Add: 121 Nguyen Thai Hoc St.

Tel: 7470583

Fax: 8245150

**Mirror Mirror**

Address: 1 Truong Han Sieu, Hanoi

Tel: 04/944-6529

Website: [www.mirror-design.com](http://www.mirror-design.com)

Young designer Ha Truong's creations are, according to her slogan, "understated, artful, contradictory."

**Mosaique**

Address: 22 Nha Tho St, Hanoi

Tel: 04/928-6181

Here is a popular little boutique and a great place to pick up some designer silver jewelry, silk hangings, or ready-to-wear items, and home goods from furnishings to lamps. Major credit cards are accepted.

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**Ha Dong silk**

Add: 102 Hang Gai St.

Tel: 9285056

Fax: 9285438

**Hanoi Boutique**

Add: 2B Ly Quoc Su St.

Tel: 8255507

**Le Minh silk**

Add: 79 Hang Gai St., Hoan Kiem Dist.

Tel: 8288723

**Duc Loi silk**

Add: 93 Hang Gai St., Hoan Kiem Dist.

Tel: 8286981

**Markets and Supermarkets in Hanoi****Dong Xuan market**

Add: Dong Xuan street, Hoan Kiem dist

Tel: 928 0671

**Hang Da market**

Add: Hang Da street, Hoan Kiem dist

Tel: 828 6889

**19-12 (19 December) market**

Add: 41-43 Hai Ba Trung street, Hoan Kiem dist

Tel: 826 2410

**Big C**

Add: 222 Tran Duy Hung street, Trung Hoa Ward, Cau Giay dist

Tel: 784 6878

**Metro**

Add: Pham Van Dong street, Cau Giay dist

Tel: 755 1617/ 755 2204

Fax: 755 1650

**Citimart Somerset Grand**

Add: 49 Hai Ba Trung street

Tel: 934 2999

Fax: 934 2888

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**Fivimart**

Add: 210 Tran Quang Khai street

Tel: 826 0167

Fax: 934 1039

**Book Shops in Hanoi****Bao Thang Book Shop**

276 Pho Hue

Tel: 978 2321

**Doan Trang Book Shop**

40B Ba Trieu

Tel: 824 3716

**Dong Tay**

32 Ba Trieu

Tel: 825 1374

**Foreign Language Bookshop**

61 Trang Tien

Tel: 824 8914

**Ha Noi Book Shop**

46 Tran Hung Dao

Tel: 934 6855

**Ha Huong Book Shop**

6 Trang Thi

Tel: 828 5781

**Hoa Hien Book Shop**

56 Ba Trieu

Tel: 826 7207

**La Boutique**

15 Ngo Quyen

Tel: 826 6919

**Tien Phong Book Shop**

175 Nguyen Thai Hoc

Tel: 733 6235

**Trang An**

240 Ton Duc Thang

Tel: 511 3040

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**Thuan Book Shop**

80B Ba Trieu

Tel: 822 7272

**Tinh Hoa Book Shop**

147 Doi Can

Tel: 722 1419

**Yen Bookshop**

24 Kham Thien

Tel: 518 0571

**2. HOCHIMINH CITY**

**Shopping Centers in Ho Chi Minh city (HCMC)**

**Diamond Plaza Center**

Add: 34 Le Duan St., Dist 1

Tel: 8225500

**Tax Plaza**

Add: 135 Nguyen Hue, Dist 1

Tel: 8213849

**Sai Gon Center**

Add: 65 Le Loi, Dist 1

Tel: 8232505

**An Dong Plaza**

Add: 18 An Duong Vuong St., Ward 9, Dist 5

Tel: 8323288

**Zen Plaza**

Add: 54-56 Nguyen Trai St., Dist 1

Tel: 9250339

**Parkson Trade Center**

Add: 35 Bis Le Thanh Ton St., Dist 1

Tel: 8277635

**Arts & Crafts**

**Dong Duong**

Address: 45 Dong Khoi St, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

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Tel: 08/827-3748

Soapstone carvings and fine statuary.

### **Galerie Lotus**

Address: 47/202 Dong Khoi St, and 30 Le Loi St, Ho Chi Minh City

Tel: 08/829-2695

Website: [www.lotusgallery.com](http://www.lotusgallery.com)

Stop by this large upstairs gallery space and the friendly staff can arrange reproductions and commission work. They also have the standard Vietnamese copies lining the walls.

### **The Ho Chi Minh Fine Arts Museum**

Address: 97A Pho Duc Chinh St, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Tel: 08/829-4441

If you're truly keen on learning about the scene in Ho Chi Minh, this is the place to start. Three floors house an evolving modern collection, featuring new and established Vietnamese artists' works in sculpture, oil, and lacquer, as well as a nice collection of ancient Buddhist artwork and some Cham statuary. The museum offers a good glimpse into the local scene. From there, have a look at Lac Hong Art Gallery, located on the ground floor of the museum (tel. 08/821-3771), which features the works of many famous Vietnamese artists. There are galleries throughout the city, many clustered around Dong Khoi and near all the major hotels. Here, you can get some great deals on reproductions of popular works (reproduction being a big industry in town), and those with deep pockets will find easy introductions to the artists or their representatives themselves. For a price, you can turn any photo into an enormous oil painting.

### **Garments & Fashion**

#### **Catherine Denoual-Maison**

Address: 15C Thi Sach St, Ho Chi Minh City

Tel: 08/823-9394

This store has exclusive linen and silk cotton blends in elegant neutral tones of white and cream. Bedding, cushions, and runners are designed with tasteful embroidery and everything has a luxuriously high thread count.

#### **Gaya**

Address: 39 Ton That Thiep, Ho Chi Minh City

Tel: 08/914-3769

This store carries a beautiful selection of clothing, home décor, and furniture from one local Vietnamese and four expat designers. Everything is of serious quality. The linens are from Catherine Denoual, so expect a beautiful collection. Clothing is by Cambodian-born, France-raised Romyda Keth. The dresses are beautifully cut and are often multi-colored and touched with embroidery or a bit of sparkle. It can look like too much on the hanger, but more often than not looks smart and sophisticated once you put it on. The quality of material and cuts are amazing and the staff has an excellent eye for fit.

### **Impress Travel Company Limited**

**Phone:** 844 – 3734 6777, **Fax:** 844 – 3232 1106, **Hotline:** 8912 225 694

**Hoang Silk**

Address: 201 Dong Khoi St, Ho Chi Minh City

Tel: 08/825-6629

Tailor Lien can make you a lovely ao dai or a silk separate according to your style and design in 24 hours. If the fit comes out wrong or is off, she is excellent at tweaking and working with you until it comes out right.

**Ipa Nima**

Address: 85 Pasteur St, or 76 Le Lai St, Ho Chi Minh City

Tel: 08/824-2701

The place to get funky, original handbags decked out in tassles, patterns, and busy prints. Their Saigon stores are not as large and expansive as their flagship in Hanoi, but there is still a great selection on offer.

**Kenly Silk**

Address: 132 Le Thanh Ton, Ho Chi Minh City

Tel: 08/829-3847

A brand-name supplier with some of the best ready-to-wear silk garments in the town.

**Khai Silk**

Address: 38 or 107 Dong Khoi St, in Legend Hotel, New World Hotel, and Sheraton Hotel, Ho Chi Minh City

Website: [www.khaisilkcorp.com](http://www.khaisilkcorp.com)

With outlets throughout the country, Khai Silk is one of the best places for ready-made and tailored silk in Vietnam. The signature store is right downtown at 107 Dong Khoi St., but they have shops throughout the city in some of the finer hotels. Good business sense says, "If something works, then copy it," so there are lots of Khai Silk look-alikes, but Khai is the best.

**La Bella**

Address: 85-87 Pasteur St, Ho Chi Minh City

Tel: 08/823-0172

Come here for a fine collection of silk, jersey, and cotton separates and dresses as well as silk sleep and lounge wear. Some designs are simple, like long, roman-style jersey dresses, and others are eccentric, like silk wraparound halters and sequined skirts. Hochiminh City's Gifts & Souvenirs

**Alphana Jewelry**

Address: 159 Dong Khoi St, Ho Chi Minh City

Tel: 08/829-7398

Gold, silver, and precious stones for all budgets.

**Annam**

Address: 16-18 Hai Ba Trung, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Tel: 08/822-9391

**Impress Travel Company Limited**

Phone: 844 – 3734 6777, Fax: 844 – 3232 1106, Hotline: 8912 225 694

A fine selection of imported goods, with Italian and French wines as well as European chocolates and other comfort foods.

### **Authentique Interiors**

Address: 38 Dong Khoi, Ho Chi Minh City

Tel: 08/822-133

This outlet is just across from the Majestic Hotel, at the terminus of Dong Khoi Street at riverside. The place is two floors of warehouse-style shopping, with every chachki you could imagine. On the first floor, find unique table settings that are decidedly modern, but made from local materials and with a Vietnamese/Chinese flair. Upstairs are lots of little bins with trinkets, as well as furnishing and gifts. Prices are marked, but they offer discounts if you buy in bulk (and this might be a good place to pick up a handful of small gifts for family and friends back home).

### **HCMC's Wine**

#### **Bacchus Corner**

Address: 17/11 Le Thanh Ton St, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Tel: 08/829-3306

Website: [www.tankhoa.com](http://www.tankhoa.com)

Expat communities bring their luxury tastes with them, and this stylish storefront carries hundreds of fine vintages for the discerning.

### **Markets and supermarkets in Ho Chi Minh**

#### **Ben Thanh Market (Traditional)**

Add: Quach Thi Trang square, Dist. 1

#### **Binh Tay Market**

Add: Thap Muoi St., Ward 2, Dist. 6

Tel: 855 6130

#### **An Dong Market**

Add: 34-36 An Duong Vuong St., Ward 9, Dist. 5

Tel: 832 4543

#### **Big C**

Add: 138A To Hien Thanh St., Ward 15, Dist. 10

Tel: 863 2993-863 2991

### **Bookshops in Ho Chi Minh city**

The best area to look for maps, books and stationery is along the north side of Le Loi street, between the Rex Hotel and Nam Ky Khoi Nghia street, in the Dong Khoi area. There are many small, privately run shops as well as the large government-run ones.

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On De Tham street, around Pham Ngu Lao, there is a handful of shops dealing in used paperbacks and bootleg CDs. Here you can also swap books. Check out the following places.

**Fahasa Bookshop**

Add: 185 B Dong Khoi and 40 Nguyen Hue street

Tel: 822 4670 and 822 5446

One of the best government-run bookshops, with good dictionaries, maps and general books in English and French.

**Phuong Nam Bookshop**

Add: 2A Le Duan street

Tel: 822 9650

Opened: 8am-9.30pm

Carries imported books and magazines in English, French and Chinese, mostly of the instructional variety.

**Tiem Sach Bookshop**

Add: 20 Ho Huan Nghiep street

Opened: 8.30am-10pm

Not so much a bookshop as a backdrop of used English and French titles for the cosy Bo Gio cafe.

**3. HUE CITY**

**Shopping Centers in Hue**

General Department Store

1 Hanoi St., Hue

**Souvenir shops in Hue**

**Nguyen Phuc Long**

8 Hung Vuong St., Hue

**Shop Hue**

7 Hung Vuong St., Hue

**Perfumer River**

7A Hung Vuong St., Hue

**Huong Duong**

59 Phan Dang Luong St., Hue

**Clothing, Cosmetics, Shoes, & Silk**

**Impress Travel Company Limited**

**Phone:** 844 – 3734 6777, **Fax:** 844 – 3232 1106, **Hotline:** 8912 225 694

**Bao Thanh**

49 Tran Hung Dao St., Hue

**Boi Tran**

17 Tran Hung Dao St., Hue

**Trang Tien**

95A Tran Hung Dao St., Hue

**Camay**

80 Hung Vuong St., Hue

**Thao Vi**

25 Hung Vuong St., Hue

**Ryna**

6B Tran Cao Van St., Hue

**Xuan Thu**

10 Hung Vuong St., Hue

**Binh Nhi**

5 Hung Vuong St., Hue

**Bao Tran**

11 Hung Vuong St., Hue

**Ben Ngu**

36 Tran Thuc Nhan St., Hue

**Thanh Thanh (shoe)**

15 Phan Dang Luu St., Hue

**Hung Phu**

11 Tran Hung Dao St., Hue

**Silk Huong Giang**

44 Le Loi St., Hue

**Tan Quang**

66 Le Loi St., Hue

**Liz**

18A Nguyen Tri Phuong St., Hue

**Impress Travel Company Limited**

**Phone:** 844 – 3734 6777, **Fax:** 844 – 3232 1106, **Hotline:** 8912 225 694

**Mimi**

10 Phan Boi Chau St., Hue

**Markets & Supermarkets**

Hue is known for producing the finest conical hats in Vietnam. The city's speciality is "poem hats", which, when held up to the light, reveal shadowy scenes of daily life. Hue is also home to one of the largest and most beautiful selections of rice -paper and silk paintings available in Vietnam, but the prices quoted are usually inflated to about four times the real price.

**Dong Ba market**

Tran Hung Dao St., Hue  
(This is Hue's largest market.)

**Ben Ngu Market**

Phan Boi Chau St., Hue

**Hue Unimes Shop**

2 Tran Hung Dao St., Hue

**4. HOI AN****Arts & Handicrafts****Hung Long Art Gallery**

Address: 105 Nguyen Thai Hoc St, Hoi An  
Tel: 0510/861-524

This popular gallery features fine lacquer-works by artist Nguyen Trung Viet. These stylized images, mostly of young women, are quite appealing. Prices are affordable and they can ship anywhere on the globe.

Hand-painted Chinese scrolls make a great souvenir, and Mr. Ly Si Binh, down the street from this gallery at 21 Nguyen Thai Hoc St. (Tel. 0510/910-721), can script anything from *peace* or *determination* to your best buddy's name in Chinese (if it's wrong, he won't know the difference anyway). And it's fun to watch cheery Mr.Binh at work.

**Kim Bong Carpentry**

106 - 108 Nguyen Thai Hoc St., Hoi An  
Tel: (84-510) 862 279

**Que Noi Gallery**

83 Nguyen Thai Hoc St., Hoi An  
Tel: (84-510) 863 184

Recently opened gallery showcasing the contemporary artwork of acclaimed local artist

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**Phone:** 844 – 3734 6777, **Fax:** 844 – 3232 1106, **Hotline:** 8912 225 694

**Bui Cong Khanh.**

Reaching Out (Hoa Nhap Handicrafts)

103 Nguyen Thai Hoc St., Hoi An

Tel: (84-510) 910 103

A centralised marketing service for gifts & handicrafts made by disabled Vietnamese.

"Great gifts for a Great Cause".

**Fashion shops****Yaly Couture**

Address: 47 Nguyen Thai Hoc St, Hoi An

Tel: 0510/910-474

47 Tran Phu St., Hoi An

Tel: 510/861-119

580 Cua Dai St., Hoi An

Tel: 0510/914-997

If you're confused by the glut of small tailor storefronts and wonder about the quality of the work, Yaly Couture is your answer. Yes, the prices are higher, but quality comes with more of a guarantee and the same efficient service (12-hr. turnaround for a new suit).

Also try their many ready-to-wear items in the small showroom at the town center. Good track record.

**Bao Khanh Tailors**

37 Phan Dinh Phung St, Hoi An

Tel: (84-510) 861 818

Popular tailors specialising in made-to-measure fashion, formal wear and casual clothing.

Well patronised and enjoying a good reputation.

**Bambou Company**

Address: 96 Nguyen Thai Hoc St, Hoi An

Bambou produces their own unique T-shirts with local themes and designs, all in real cotton with big Western sizes available. They also have cool Asian-inspired clothes, like string-button Chinese shirts and loose travel togs like fishermen's pants and loose shirts.

**Hanh Hung**

Address: 39 Phan Dinh Phung St, Hoi An

Tel: 0510/910-456

This is one of the best of the town's many budget tailor shops. Ms. Hung is friendly, speaks English well, and cuts good budget deals or can do higher-quality work with better materials for just a hitch more. You can't miss this two-story, neon-lit place on the corner of Phan Dinh Phung and Nhi Trung or at 02 Le Loi (also near Phan Dinh Phung). It's open daily from 8:30am to 10pm.

**Son Ca**

127 Tran Phu St., Hoi An

Tel: (84-510) 861 569

**Impress Travel Company Limited**

**Phone:** 844 – 3734 6777, **Fax:** 844 – 3232 1106, **Hotline:** 8912 225 694

Napkins, table linen and more all beautifully embroidered by hand. Son Ca also offers bespoke fashions and ready-to-wear.

**Thuong Gia**

41 Nguyen Thai Hoc St, Hoi An

Tel: (84-510) 910 712

Foreign-managed tailor shop housed in a converted ancient shophouse which was used as a set during the filming of The Quiet American.

**Yaly Couture**

47 Nguyen Thai Hoc St., Hoi An

Tel: (84-510) 910 474

High-quality tailors specialising in modern fashions for ladies and gentlemen. Wide range of fabrics & styles. All tailoring is carried out on the premises - unlike many other Hoi An outlets.

**Leisure Activities**

Jeremy Stein's RAINBOW DIVERS

Hoi An Beach Resort, Hoi An

Tel: 0914 224 102

PADI 5 Star IDC&National Geographic Divecentre

[www.divevietnam.com](http://www.divevietnam.com)

**5. Da Nang**

**Fine Handicrafts & Souvenir Products**

**Ha Long Pottery - Central Vietnam Branch**

Add: Plot No.5, the 2nd September street

Tel: (84.511) 611170

**Gia Thinh High-Grade Pottery**

Add: 315 Hoang Dieu street

Tel: (84.511) 897167

**Hoang Kiet Fine Handicrafts Terra-Cotta**

Add: 68 Vo Van Tan street

Tel: (84.511) 647113

**Non Nuoc fine handicrafts stone Co., Ltd**

Add: 153 Nguyen Chi Thanh street

**Tra My Cinnamon Cuisine Art Production & Trading Co.**

Add: 211 Phan Chau Trinh street

Tel: (84.511) 827293

**Impress Travel Company Limited**

**Phone:** 844 – 3734 6777, **Fax:** 844 – 3232 1106, **Hotline:** 8912 225 694

**Muoi Thuong Fine Arts Products**

Add: 133 Hung Vuong street

Tel: (84.511) 824695

**Nam Hai**

Add: 95B Phan Chau Trinh street

Tel: (84.511) 810952

**Viet Tri**

Add: 77 Hung Vuong street

Tel: (84.511) 824006

Non Nuoc fine arts stone products are on sale everywhere at the Non Nuoc Fine Art Village at the foot of the Marble Mountains in Hoa Hai ward, Ngu Hanh Son district of Danang City and mostly at all hotels in the city area.

**Pottery products**

No.123 - 129 Le Duan St., Da Nang, or  
T-junction linking Nui Thanh - Trung Nu Vuong street.

**Jewelery and Cosmetics****Sai Gon Jewelery Company (SJC), Danang Branch**

Add: 131 Hung Vuong street

Tel: (84.511) 837517

**Hoa Kim Nguyen Goldsmith's Shop**

Add: 270 Ong Ich Khiem street

Tel: (84.511) 823544

**Tin Thanh Goldsmith's Shop**

Add: 37 Tran Hung Dao street

Tel: (84.511) 823705

**Phia Van Goldsmith's Shop**

Add: 336 Ong Ich Khiem street

Tel: (84.511) 823226

**Cat Loi Goldsmith's Shop**

Add: 08 Le Duan street

Tel: (84.511) 810010

**Thanh Toan Goldsmith's Shop**

Add: 63 Tran Hung Dao street

Tel: (84.511) 822445

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**Debon Cosmetics Company, Danang Branch**

Add: 41 Nguyen Van Linh street

Tel: (84.511) 871501

**Revelon Cosmetics Branch**

Add: 69 Tran Hung Dao street

Tel: (84.511) 823307

**Shiseido Cosmetics Branch**

Add: 35 Hung Vuong street

Tel: (84.511) 825163

**Tulip Cosmetics Shop**

Add: 105 Le Dinh Duong street

Tel: (84.511) 582523

**Amore Cosmetics Branch**

Add: 26 Phan Chu Trinh street

Tel: (84.511) 810566

**Tenamyd Cosmetics**

Add: 182 Hung Vuong street

Tel: (84.511) 837966

**KosÃ© Cosmetics**

Add: 90 Quang Trung street

Tel: (84.511) 887727

**Carita Paris Cosmetics**

Add: 130 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai street

Tel: (84.511) 812532

**South-Korean Cosmetics**

Add: Le Duan street

**Kanebo Cosmetics**

Add: 47 Le Duan street

Tel: (84.511) 812669

**Books, Newspapers & Other Cultural Products in Da Nang**

**Books Publishing Center**

Add: 31- 33 Yen Bai street

Tel: (84.511) 821246

**Central Vietnam Children's Books Center**

**Impress Travel Company Limited**

**Phone:** 844 – 3734 6777, **Fax:** 844 – 3232 1106, **Hotline:** 8912 225 694

Add: 169 Tran Phu street  
Tel: (84.511) 812333

**Danang Bookstore**

Add: 78 Bach Dang street  
Tel: (84.511) 820413

**Central Vietnam Bookshop**

Add: 264 Hoang Dieu street  
Tel: (84.511) 582085

**Phan Chau Trinh Bookseller's**

Add: 409 Phan Chau Trinh street  
Tel: (84.511) 822919

**Le Thanh Ton Bookstore**

Add: 11 Le Thanh Ton street  
Tel: (84.511) 832719

**Danang Publishing House Bookshop**

Add: 17A Quang Trung street  
Tel: (84.511) 812964

**Foreign Languages Bookseller's**

Add: 101 Phan Chu Trinh street  
Tel: (84.511) 822760

**General Cultural Bookstores**

Add: 70 Phan Chu Trinh street  
Tel: (84.511) 816003

**Chanh Tri Bookshop**

Add: 116A Nguyen Chi Thanh street  
Tel: (84.511) 820129

**6. NHA TRANG**

Along with Hanoi, HCMC and Hoi An, Nha Trang has emerged as a reasonable place to look for art. Though actual galleries are scant, there are several local painters and photographers who display their work on the walls of Nha Trang's resorts, restaurants, cafes and bars.

**Fashion shops**

**Bambou Company**

Add: 15 D Biet Thu St., Nha Trang

**Impress Travel Company Limited**

**Phone:** 844 – 3734 6777, **Fax:** 844 – 3232 1106, **Hotline:** 8912 225 694

Tel: 910 774

Email: [bambou-company@hotmail.com](mailto:bambou-company@hotmail.com)

Run by a French expat, Bambou Company produces high-quality T-shirts (75,000d to 100,000d) featuring cool original designs.

Also worth checking out are the hand-painted T-shirts done by a friendly local painter named **Kim Quang** (Tel: 0913-416 513). Quang works every night from his wheelchair at the Nha Trang Sailing Club.

### ***Arts & Handicrafts***

#### **XQ Nha Trang Arts & Crafts Centre**

Add: 64 D Tran Phu St., Nha Trang

Tel: 826 879

Website: [www.xqhandembroidery.com](http://www.xqhandembroidery.com)

Opened: 8am-8pm

You can watch the artisans at work at this embroidery workshop and gallery, where intricate embroidery 'paintings' are painstakingly worked by hand.

#### **Hung Hara Photo Lab**

Add: 2CD Biet Thu St, Nha Trang

Tel: 828 030

### **Bookshops in Nha Trang**

#### **Mr.Lang's Book Exchange**

Add: Outdoors, near the War Memorial, Nha Trang

Stocks a good collection of used books in a variety of languages.

#### **Shorty's Bar**

Add: 45 Biet Thu street, Nha Trang

Tel: 810 985

Carries a great selection of mostly English-language books.

## **6. SPECIAL BUYS IN LAI CHAU**

### ***Rice 64 and Dien Bien sticky rice***

These are best kinds of rice that are grown in Muong Thanh rice field, one of the largest ricefield in the North West of Vietnam. They are known all over the country and especially popular in such provinces as Son La, Hoa Binh, Ha Noi and other neighbouring provinces.

### ***Sau Chit alcohol***

According to local people, Sau Chit is a good kind of alcohol for the health, which have been favored by the administration of villages and group of villages. Nowadays, all of visitors coming to Dien Bien Phu want to taste it.

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### ***Brocade products***

Brocade products reflex clearly the cultural and spiritual life of ethnic groups. In addition, they are made by hard-working and skilful ethnic women. They also show their soul and feelings through every single design of such brocade products as costumes, Pieu scarves, bags, blankets, mattresses, etc.

### ***Rattan and bamboo painted products***

In every day life, the ethnic people have used natural materials to make useful objects. They are also very nice souvenirs for tourists such as rattan desks, chairs, baskets, etc.

Coming to Dien Bien Phu, visitors will feel the greatness of Dien Bien Phu historical victory. Visitors also have chance to taste special local made products, to enjoy beautiful folk songs and to buy nice souvenirs for relatives and friends.

## **7. GOOD SPECIALTIES IN DA LAT**

Once you are lucky enough to be in Da Lat, a wide range of souvenirs and specialties are available for your choice. Markets in this flowerful town are also flowerful. Be bent with fresh colorful flowers and beautiful arts & handicrafts, like Da Lat dinner wine, sweaters, wooden sculptured paintings, brocades, jams, fruits, and so forth.

### ***Da Lat dinner wine***

Any market in Da Lat can be easily found Da Lat dinner wine. Or you can buy it at: Showroom of Trade & Tourism Promotion Center, or

### **Da Lat dinner wine Factory at**

31 Ngo Van So St., Da Lat

Tel: (063) 822491/ 822437

### ***Where to buy sweaters?***

You can reach Hoa Binh area, or at Da Lat market's shops, A zone. Prices range from 35,000 to 60,000 VND/sweater.

### ***Delicate wooden sculptured paintings***

These are popularly sold in Hoa Binh area. Wooden sculptured paintings express the delicateness of Da Lat people via delicate and nice drawings and poems onto the paintings. You can also order the artists to draw what you would like. Prices are from 20,000 VND to hundreds of thousand VND/painting.

### ***Da Lat fruits***

It's best to buy fruits at Da Lat markets in the early morning for best quality. Persimmon, avocado, peach, strawberry, etc. are available at your disposal. Prices are around 20,000 VND/kilo.

### ***Special jams***

Jam prices changes as to quality, but the difference is small. Besides shops at Da Lat

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markets, you can come to some jam and specialty shops at:  
1 Le Hong Phong St., Da Lat  
Tel: (063) 821176

*Some reliable tea shops for suggestion*

**Le Ky Coffee Tea**

21 Hoa Binh zone, Da Lat  
Tel: (063) 831915

**Hoa Lam Coffee Tea**

49 – 51 Phan Boi Chau St., Da Lat  
Tel: (063) 825661

**Vinh Tien Tea**

39 – 41 Pham Ngoc Thach St., Da Lat  
Tel: (063) 821844

**Dat Viet Atiso**

1C Nguyen Khuyen St., Da Lat  
Tel: (063) 822303

**VI. Markets & Supermarkets**

**Markets and Supermarkets in Hanoi**

**Dong Xuan market**

Add: Dong Xuan street, Hoan Kiem dist  
Tel: 928 0671

**Hang Da market**

Add: Hang Da street, Hoan Kiem dist  
Tel: 828 6889

**19-12 (19 December) market**

Add: 41-43 Hai Ba Trung street, Hoan Kiem dist  
Tel: 826 2410

**Big C**

Add: 222 Tran Duy Hung street, Trung Hoa Ward, Cau Giay dist  
Tel: 784 6878

**Metro**

Add: Pham Van Dong street, Cau Giay dist  
Tel: 755 1617/ 755 2204  
Fax: 755 1650

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**Citimart Somerset Grand**

Add: 49 Hai Ba Trung street

Tel: 934 2999

Fax: 934 2888

**Fivimart**

Add: 210 Tran Quang Khai street

Tel: 826 0167

Fax: 934 1039

**Markets and supermarkets in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC)****Ben Thanh Market (Traditional)**

Add: Quach Thi Trang square, Dist.1, HCMC

**Binh Tay Market**

Add: Thap Muoi St., Ward 2, Dist.6, HCMC

Tel: 855 6130

**An Dong Market**

Add: 34-36 An Duong Vuong St., Ward 9, Dist.5, HCMC

Tel: 832 4543

**Big C**

Add: 138A To Hien Thanh St., Ward 15, Dist.10, HCMC

Tel: 863 2993-863 2991

**Markets & Supermarkets in Hue**

Hue is known for producing the finest conical hats in Vietnam. The city's speciality is "poem hats", which, when held up to the light, reveal shadowy scenes of daily life.

Hue is also home to one of the largest and most beautiful selections of rice -paper and silk paintings available in Vietnam, but the prices quoted are usually inflated to about four times the real price.

**Dong Ba market**

Tran Hung Dao St., Hue

(This is Hue's largest market.)

**Ben Ngu Market**

Phan Boi Chau St., Hue

**Hue Unimes Shop**

2 Tran Hung Dao St., Hue

**Impress Travel Company Limited**

**Phone:** 844 – 3734 6777, **Fax:** 844 – 3232 1106, **Hotline:** 8912 225 694

## **VII. Bookshops**

### **Book shops in Hanoi**

#### **Bao Thang Book Shop**

276 Pho Hue  
Tel: 978 2321

#### **Doan Trang Book Shop**

40B Ba Trieu  
Tel: 824 3716

#### **Dong Tay**

32 Ba Trieu  
Tel: 825 1374

#### **Foreign Language Bookshop**

61 Trang Tien  
Tel: 824 8914

#### **Ha Noi Book Shop**

46 Tran Hung Dao  
Tel: 934 6855

#### **Ha Huong Book Shop**

6 Trang Thi  
Tel: 828 5781

#### **Hoa Hien Book Shop**

56 Ba Trieu  
Tel: 826 7207

#### **La Boutique**

15 Ngo Quyen  
Tel: 826 6919

#### **Tien Phong Book Shop**

175 Nguyen Thai Hoc  
Tel: 733 6235

#### **Trang An**

240 Ton Duc Thang  
Tel: 511 3040

#### **Thuan Book Shop**

80B Ba Trieu

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Tel: 822 7272

**Tinh Hoa Book Shop**

147 Doi Can  
Tel: 722 1419

**Yen Bookshop**

24 Kham Thien  
Tel: 518 0571

**Bookshops in Ho Chi Minh city**

The best area to look for maps, books and stationery is along the north side of Le Loi street, between the Rex Hotel and Nam Ky Khoi Nghia street, in the Dong Khoi area. There are many small, privately run shops as well as the large government-run ones.

On De Tham street, around Pham Ngu Lao, there is a handful of shops dealing in used paperbacks and bootleg CDs. Here you can also swap books. Check out the following places.

**Fahasa Bookshop**

Add: 185 B Dong Khoi and 40 Nguyen Hue street, HCMC  
Tel: 822 4670 and 822 5446

One of the best government-run bookshops, with good dictionaries, maps and general books in English and French.

**Phuong Nam Bookshop**

Add: 2A Le Duan street, HCMC  
Tel: 822 9650

Opened: 8am-9.30pm

Carries imported books and magazines in English, French and Chinese, mostly of the instructional variety.

**Tiem Sach Bookshop**

Add: 20 Ho Huan Nghiep street, HCMC  
Opened: 8.30am-10pm

Not so much a bookshop as a backdrop of used English and French titles for the cozy Bo Gio cafe.

**Books, Newspapers & Other Cultural Products in Da Nang**

**Books Publishing Center**

Add: 31- 33 Yen Bai street, Da Nang  
Tel: (84.511) 821246

**Central Vietnam Children's Books Center**

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**Phone:** 844 – 3734 6777, **Fax:** 844 – 3232 1106, **Hotline:** 8912 225 694

Add: 169 Tran Phu street, Da Nang  
Tel: (84.511) 812333

**Danang Bookstore**

Add: 78 Bach Dang street, Da Nang  
Tel: (84.511) 820413

**Central Vietnam Bookshop**

Add: 264 Hoang Dieu street, Da Nang  
Tel: (84.511) 582085

**Phan Chau Trinh Bookseller's**

Add: 409 Phan Chau Trinh street, Da Nang  
Tel: (84.511) 822919

**Le Thanh Ton Bookstore**

Add: 11 Le Thanh Ton street, Da Nang  
Tel: (84.511) 832719

**Danang Publishing House Bookshop**

Add: 17A Quang Trung street, Da Nang  
Tel: (84.511) 812964

**Foreign Languages Bookseller's**

Add: 101 Phan Chu Trinh street, Da Nang  
Tel: (84.511) 822760

**General Cultural Bookstores**

Add: 70 Phan Chu Trinh street, Da Nang  
Tel: (84.511) 816003

**Chanh Tri Bookshop**

Add: 116A Nguyen Chi Thanh street, Da Nang  
Tel: (84.511) 820129

**Bookshops in Nha Trang**

**Mr.Lang's Book Exchange**

Add: Outdoors, near the War Memorial, Nha Trang  
Stocks a good collection of used books in a variety of languages.

**Shorty's Bar**

Add: 45 Biet Thu street, Nha Trang  
Tel: 810 985

Carries a great selection of mostly English-language books.

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# **Restaurants, Bars, & Cafes in Vietnam**

## **I. Tips for eating in Vietnam**

### **1. Eating Etiquette**

When eating with chopsticks, do not leave the chopsticks in the rice bowl at the end of your meal. This resembles the incense sticks used to commemorate a death and is considered insulting. Place the used chopsticks side by side either on the table or more commonly, on top of the bowl.

Do not tap the edge of your rice bowl with your chopsticks: The older believe that if you do such thing, next life you will not have enough rice to eat (But in fact, because tapping chopsticks to the bowl will cause chipping to the bowl hence dangerous if you swallow it accidental when eating your rice -)

Do finish until last grain of rice in the bowl. Sometime you can see people hold the chopsticks (lay the chopsticks paraleil to the ground) and slightly bowed. That' s the gesture to thank God - Heaven and Earth - and people who work hard to produce the grain of rice to feed them.

If you are invite to a family meal, wait until the oldest member of the family eat, then you can follow after that: That' s the gesture to show your respect to them. And eat all things they put into your bowl: Your host chose the best bit to his/her guest. Is you had enough food , slightly cover your hand over your bowl and refuse politely and they will stop adding food into your bowl.

Happy eating!!!

# Payment in Vietnam

## Method of payment

Direct payment of *cash* is most popular in Vietnam. Small shops, restaurants and markets usually do not accept any other payment.

Major **credit/debit cards** (such as VisaCard, MasterCard and to some extent American Express) are increasingly being used, especially in big cities and tourist places, but only in restaurants, hotels or big shopping malls with a transactional fee (3%-5%).

*Traveler's cheques* are an easy method of carrying money around, and can be cashed at major banks (but not small banks in small towns).

# Transportation in Vietnam

## I. Tips for using Transport System in Vietnam

### 1. Transportation in Vietnam: DOs & DON'Ts

#### *Planes, Trains & Buses*

**DO** consider flying if you're going a long way within Vietnam, because any other means of transport is always much slower and sometimes only slightly cheaper.

**DON'T** get stuck in the mud: in the rainy season, road and rail are frequently flooded or even washed away in the regions that are hardest hit.

**DO** reconfirm any flight to make sure there's no change.

**DON'T** arrive at the airport just in time for a domestic flight. Until recently, it was actually more expensive for foreigners to travel from Hanoi to Hochiminh City by train than by air. And this is for a journey that still takes a couple of days as opposed to a flight lasting a mere couple of hours!

If what you are after is seeing plenty of scenery and having time to meet people and chat with them, **DO** let the train take the strain. Trains are still very slow, despite reports almost weekly that they are picking up extra speed. They are also a bit noisy and often rather Spartan, but a very pleasant and civilized means of transport, with much more legroom than any kind of bus, and conserve some of the charm of a bygone era. They offer – for a price – air conditioning, plush seats, comfy sleepers and gourmet food in a restaurant car.

**DON'T** opt for the bus if you're prone to claustrophobia, motion sickness, are pregnant, suffer from a weak heart or actually expect to have a good time. The Vietnamese are not renowned for the safety or courtesy of their driving.

**DO** use local city buses: once you've worked out where to catch the ones you want, these present an excellent (and stunningly cheap) way of getting around. Cities in Vietnam are investing in new buses and improving the service in an effort to combat traffic congestion.

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**DO** keep things on the planes, trains, and your hired vehicles clean. In case there's something wrong you may find, call the master right away, or else you may get into trouble later.

### ***Taxis, xe om, and cyclos***

Taxis are fairly cheap and plentiful

**DO** check that the driver starts the meter, unless you agree to a price before you move off and then stick to it.

If you use taxis, xe om, or cyclos, it's best to always make sure you have some small notes on you. The "sorry, no change" line is often used to try and round up the fare to fit your bank notes. If you only carry 50,000 VND bills, it might get expensive.

**DO** make sure the driver has really understood where you want to go rather than just answering "yes" to everything you say and then driving around aimlessly – with the meter running – with the hope that inspiration will strike from some unlikely quarter... If you can't make yourself understood, show your destination to him in writing.

A xe om is a motorbike taxi, a very popular and practical way of getting around. You'll find them on every street corner in the country – or rather they'll find you and eagerly offer their services. This is the fastest way to get across town without having your own bike and is often the best and cheapest way to get to a distant beach, village, site, airport, etc. **DO** fix a price before you hop on, politely ignore any attempt to renegotiate the amount along the way and check that you are indeed where you want to be before you pay off your xe om. You **DON'T** need to bring along a helmet cause all xe om drivers carry one more (besides theirs) for customer.

Cyclos, or bicycle trishaws, offer a quiet, leisurely and eco-friendly way to cover short distance. Cyclo features three wheels. **DO** choose Cyclo to enjoy a city tour as it moves quite slowly.

**DON'T** take Cyclos late at night, unless you know your way around as this is not a very safe option.

### ***Car, motorbike and bicycle rental***

Cars for rent at comfort are Japanese 4x4s and Russian jeeps for long journeys and remote regions visiting. But they usually come with a driver. Yet, car is still not the ideal form of transport for Vietnam's narrow roads and saturated city streets.

For short stays in Vietnam, your driving license from your own country should be sufficient, provided it applies to motorcycles. If possible, **DO** obtain an official Vietnamese translation of your license.

**DO** remember that this driving license will usually only be valid for the same period as your visa! After that, you start the process over again! But experience will make the process much quicker!

Renting bicycles and motorbikes is cheap and easy. And this service is now offered almost everywhere in Vietnam. However, **DON'T** take the risks involved lightly: the number of foreigners implicated in traffic accidents – from minor spills to major, horrific trauma – is proportionately high, and this is a country with a soaring accident rate.

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**DO** take the time to rent a bicycle for a few days before you rent a motorbike. This will allow you to familiarize yourself with local conditions without quite as much speed, risk and hot metal being involved.

**DO** check the brakes, lights and wheel bearings on any vehicle before you rent it.

**DO** keep sharp eye on your rented motorbike to avoid theft.

In Vietnam, horns are heavily used: a motorbike sill runs with no lights or little brakes, but if the horn doesn't work, the bike needs fixing. Some young sparks have the amusing idea of fixing a powerful car horn to a scooter. So **DON'T** let it get to you. If you start screaming at people for blowing their horns, they will simply stare at you in amazement.

**DO** use the horn yourself when you drive, otherwise, it can be dangerous.

Helmets are now used by all motorbike riders as a rule. So **DO** remember to use one for yourself.

**DON'T** buy a Chinese helmet: it might look as good and be cheaper but it won't resist a serious impact.

### **Walking**

When walking around in the cities, **DO** beware of traffic: As crossing the road, follow the zebra crossing, and wait until the light turns blue. Still, remember to look around before crossing as motorbike riders sometimes run even at yellow light and at high speed.

### ***Driving license***

Technically, a foreigner needs a Vietnamese license to drive anything above 50cc; while this is rare if ever enforced, your papers won't be in order if you have an accident, whether it's your fault or not.

For short stays in Vietnam, your driving license from your own country should be sufficient, provided it applies to motorcycles. If possible, **DO** obtain an official Vietnamese translation of your license (unless it mentions that you are not entitled to drive). Official translations can be obtained at the public notary's offices in most large towns. It normally only takes a couple of days and a few dollars.

An international driving license is only a recognized translation of your own country's license. any official-looking, photo-bearing document can be an asset when negotiating your way out of a delicate situation with local policemen or authorities.

If you intend to stay in the country for longer periods and wish to do more serious driving, then you might want to apply for a local driving license. You will need quite a bit of patience for this and a hefty pile of papers and letters that will include photocopies of passport, visa, driving license and originals of your driving license official translation as well as a letter from your sponsoring agency (not needed if you are on a tourist visa). **DO** remember that this driving license will usually only be valid for the same period as your visa. After that, you start the process over again.

## **2. Ten Tips to Survive Vietnam's Traffic**

**DON'T** spend hours waiting to cross the street on foot: that constant tide of traffic won't stop until late at night, so

**DO** as the Vietnamese do: take the plunge and inch slowly across. Observe the Miracle of

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the Red Sea, as the traffic parts like magic, flowing smoothly in front of you or behind, meeting up again on the other side.

**DON'T** make any sudden or unpredictable movements: freeze if you have to, but never lunge forward or backward towards the safety of the sidewalk. In fact, you can do just about anything, but do it with conviction!

**DON'T** forget, if you're riding or driving, to look where you're going – all the time: if you hit anything in front of you, then it's your fault.

**DO** give way to any vehicle bigger and noisier than yours. Trucks and buses are particularly dangerous: often old, sometimes unsafe and usually all over the road.

**DO** watch out for unfamiliar obstacles: water buffaloes, rocks of various sizes, broken-down trucks...., people sitting in the road, missing bridges, girls in ao dai cycling five abreast, slow-moving mountains of farm produce, dog fights, impromptu football matches, piles of building materials – and almost no light on anything at night..

**DON'T** hesitate to take evasive action – even if this sometimes means leaving the tarmac or coming to a dead stop.

**DO** try to avoid getting involved in one of the all-too-frequent minor accidents that plague Vietnam's roads (and the major ones as well, of course), but if you are unlucky, **DON'T** lose your cool, in spite of the interference of the large and vocal crowd that may gather: try to settle things amicably and swiftly. Sometimes, paying a reasonable amount of money will save you a lot of hassle.

**DO** remember that the only rule is: you're not allowed to bump into anybody... irrespective of what they did or should have done, or of what the road signs or traffic lights were telling them to do. Some people still seem to think that anything red means forward, comrade

### **3. Traveling with Special Items**

Airlines have seen it all. They have seen passengers transport every type of item - from tubas to scuba gear, parachutes to perishables - and they have rules in place for each and every piece. Following those rules is critical if you want to board smoothly and arrive at your destination on time.

To help you travel better with the possessions you simply must have at your destination, here are some helpful guidelines from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for transporting special items by airlines.

Please note that some airlines and other countries may have additional rules and restrictions on these particular items, so before you travel, check with your travel agent to obtain the most up-to-date information. Your travel agent can verify your airline's policies before you arrive at the airport, so you don't waste time trying to track down the info yourself.

#### ***Alcoholic Beverages***

You cannot take alcoholic beverages with more than 70 percent alcohol content (140 proof), which includes grain alcohol and high-proof rums like Bacardi 151, in your carry-on or checked luggage.

As for alcohol under 70 percent, you may take up to five liters per person in your checked luggage if it's packaged in a sealable bottle or flask.

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## ***Camping Equipment***

**Camp Stoves** - You can bring these as carry-on or checked luggage only if they are empty of all fuel and cleaned so that there are no vapors or residue left - simply emptying the fuel container will leave flammable vapors, so cleaning is essential. Safest bet: ship the fuel containers to your destination ahead of time - passengers frequently have to leave them at the checkpoint because of fuel vapors.

**Gasoline** - You cannot bring any flammable liquids, including gasoline, in either your carry-on or checked luggage.

**Aerosol insecticides** - Hazardous aerosols, such as insecticides, cannot be transported in either your carry-on or checked luggage. Personal items like hair sprays and deodorants are allowed only in limited quantities.

**Flares** - You may not bring flare guns in either your carry-on or checked luggage.

**Knives and Tools** - Pack knives and tools in your checked luggage. Sheath or securely wrap any sharp edges so that they do not injure baggage handlers and security officers.

**Animal Repellants** - You can bring chemical repellants in your checked luggage if the volume is less than four ounces and its active ingredient is less than two percent (most bear repellants exceed these limitations). Safest bet: buy these items at your destination and leave them behind when your trip is over.

**Compressed Gas Cylinders** - Compressed gas cylinders are allowed in checked baggage or as a carry-on only if the regulator valve is completely disconnected and the cylinder is no longer sealed (i.e. the cylinder has an open end). The cylinder must have an opening to allow for an internal visual inspection, and security personnel will not remove the seal or regulator at the checkpoint.

If the cylinder is sealed (i.e. the regulator valve is still attached), the cylinder is prohibited and not permitted through the security checkpoint, regardless of the reading on the pressure gauge indicator.

### **Crematory Containers and Deceased Remains**

You are allowed to carry-on a crematory container, but it must pass through the x-ray machine. If the container is made of a material that prevents the screener from clearly viewing what is inside, then the container will not be allowed through.

Crematory containers are made from many different types of materials, so it's difficult to state for certain whether your particular crematory container can successfully pass through an x-ray machine. Just in case, purchase a temporary or permanent crematory container made of a lighter weight material such as wood or plastic that can be successfully x-rayed.

You may transport the urn as checked baggage provided that it is successfully screened. TSA will screen the urn for explosive materials/devices using a variety of techniques; if cleared, it will be permitted as checked baggage only. Out of respect for the deceased, the

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screener may not open the container under any circumstance.

Some airlines do not allow cremated remains as checked baggage so please check with your travel agent before attempting to transport a crematory container in checked baggage.

### **Currency, Coins, Precious Metals, or Valuable Jewelry**

If you are carrying valuable items such as large amounts of currency, coins or jewelry, ask the security officer to screen you and your carry-on luggage in private. This will maintain your security and avoid public scrutiny. Ask to speak with a screening supervisor before you reach the metal detectors and tell them you would prefer to be screened in a private location.

### **Firearms & Ammunition**

You may only transport firearms, ammunition and firearm parts in your checked baggage; these items are prohibited from carry-on baggage. When transporting firearms, firearm parts or ammunition in checked baggage, you must declare them to airline personnel during the ticket counter check-in process. The firearm must be unloaded and in a locked, hard-sided container.

You should remain present during the screening and provide the key or combination to the security officer if he or she needs to open the container. If you are not present, and the security officer must open the container, the airline will make a reasonable attempt to contact you; if they cannot, the container will not be placed on the plane.

You must securely pack any ammunition in fiber (such as cardboard), wood or metal boxes or other packaging specifically designed to carry small amounts of ammunition. You cannot use firearm magazines/clips for packing ammunition unless they completely and securely enclose the ammunition (e.g., by securely covering the exposed portions of the magazine or by securely placing the magazine in a pouch, holder, holster or lanyard). You may carry ammunition in the same hard-sided case as the firearm, as long as you pack it as described above. Finally, you cannot bring black powder or percussion caps used with black-powder type firearms in either your carry-on or checked baggage.

### **Hunting & Fishing Equipment**

Hunting Knives, Spear Guns, Bow and Arrows - All are prohibited from carry-on luggage and should be packed in checked luggage. All sharp objects should be sheathed or securely wrapped to prevent injury to baggage handlers and security screeners.

Fishing Rods/Poles - Fishing rods are permitted as carry-on and checked baggage. But before you travel, check with your air carrier to confirm that it fits within its size limitations for carry-on items.

Tackle Equipment - Fishing equipment should be placed in your checked baggage, for some tackle can be considered sharp and dangerous. Expensive reels or fragile tackle (such as flies) can be packed in your carry-on baggage.

### **Knitting Needles, Needlepoint & Sewing**

Knitting needles are permitted in your carry-on baggage or checked baggage. However, security officers have the authority to determine if an item could be used as a weapon and may not allow these items to pass through security. To avoid this from happening, bring

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circular knitting needles made of bamboo or plastic and blunt scissors. In any event, be sure to carry a crochet hook with yarn to save the work you have already done in case your knitting tools are surrendered at the checkpoint

Most of the items needed to pursue a needlepoint project are permitted in your carry-on baggage or checked baggage with the exception of circular thread cutters or any cutter with a blade contained inside. These items must go in your checked baggage.

### **Lighters, Matches and Zippos**

You cannot bring lighters (fueled or without fuel) in carry-on luggage or while going through the security checkpoint, but you may bring up to four books of safety (non-strike anywhere) matches in your carry-on baggage or on your person. For safety reasons, you may not bring "strike anywhere" matches at all.

You may take up to two fueled Zippo lighters in your checked baggage if they are properly enclosed in a DOT approved case. You can bring unlimited quantities of unfueled lighters in your checked baggage. If you are uncertain as to whether your lighter is prohibited, please refrain from bringing it to the airport.

### **Musical Instruments**

You may bring musical instruments as carry-on or as checked baggage, but first check with your airline prior to your flight to ensure your instrument meets the size requirements for their aircraft. Security officers must x-ray or physically screen your instrument before it can be transported on an aircraft.

As for specific instruments, pack brass instruments in your checked baggage and stringed instruments as carry-on items, if they are within carrier size limitations.

If you have an instrument in your checked baggage, include short instructions (very clear and understandable to someone with no musical background) for handling and repacking your instrument. Make sure these instructions are easy to find on or near your instrument. Per TSA Screening Policy, you may carry one musical instrument in addition to your one carry-on and one personal item through the screening checkpoint. Individual airlines may or may not allow the additional carry-on item on their aircraft, so check before you arrive at the airport.

### **Parachutes**

You may bring skydiving rigs with and without Automatic Activation Devices (AAD) as carry-on or checked luggage. Typically, a rig will move through the checked luggage or carry-on security screening process without needing physical inspection. However, security officers have a duty to thoroughly inspect any item that raises suspicion. If security officers determine that they need to open a rig to inspect it, you must be present and will be allowed to assist. For this reason, skydivers should add at least 30 minutes to the airline's recommended arrival window when they are traveling with their parachutes. When checking the parachute in as luggage, pack the rig separately without any other items in the bag. Additional items, if suspicious, could trigger an inspection of the entire bag. Parachute owners may help security officers unpack and repack the rig.

### **Scuba Equipment**

You may bring regulators, buoyancy compensators and masks, snorkels and fins as carry-

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on or checked baggage.

Knives and spear guns are prohibited from carry-on luggage and should be packed in checked luggage. Sheath or securely wrap any sharp objects you pack in your checked luggage to prevent them from injuring baggage handlers and security officers.

### **Sporting Equipment**

Certain sporting equipment cannot be brought on-board an aircraft, but they may be transported to your destination in your checked baggage. These items include: baseball bats, cricket bats, hockey sticks, martial arts devices, golf clubs, pool cues, ski poles and ice skates. Any sharp objects in checked baggage should be sheathed or securely wrapped to prevent injury to baggage handlers and security officers.

## **II. Vietnam's Railways**

The railway system in Vietnam is operated by the state-owned Vietnam Railways (Đường sắt Việt Nam). The principal route is the thousand-mile single track North-South Railway line, running between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. This was built at the metre gauge in the 1880s during the French colonial rule. There are also standard gauge lines running from Hanoi to the People's Republic of China, eventually leading to Beijing, and some mixed gauge in and around Hanoi.

### **Rail Routes**

- North-South
- Local
- Hanoi-Beijing

### **Rail Lines**

- Hanoi-Saigon
- Hanoi-Lao Cai
- Hanoi-Quan Trieu
- Hanoi-Dong Dang
- Hanoi-Haiphong
- Kep-Uong Bi
- Hanoi-Thai Nguyen

### **Railway Stations**

- Saigon
- Nha Trang
- Dieu Tri
- Qu ng Ngãi
- Da Dang
- Hue
- Dong Hoi

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- Vinh
- Haiphong
- Hanoi
- Dong Dang
- Lao Cai
- Bien Hoa
- Bong Son
- Duc Pho
- Nui Thanh
- Ta Ky
- Tra Kieu
- Dieu Tri

### **Rail Gauges**

- 1000 mm (2169 km)
- 1435 mm (standard gauge, 178 km)
- 1435 mm and 1000 mm (dual gauge, 253 km)

### **Rail Trackage**

- Total 3160 km
- 506 km of siding

### **Rail Fleet**

- 331 diesel locomotives
- 34 steam locomotives
- 852 coaches
- 3922 cars

## **III. Vietnam's roadway**

### **Over Land Routes to enter Vietnam**

It is now possible to enter Vietnam overland from either Cambodia, Laos, or China.

*From Laos:* There are now three border crossings, including Lao Bao (some 80km south-west of Dong Ha), Cau Treo (100km west of Vinh), and Na Meo - Nam Xoi (213km from Thanh Hoa City).

*From Cambodia:* Your only choice is to go south-east from Phnom Penh to Moc Bai, and from there to Hochiminh City.

*From China:* The Beijing-Hanoi train enters Vietnam at Dong Dang, north of Lang Son, at the border crossing known as Huu Nghi Quan (Friendship pass). Ha Khau Border Gate (Lao Cai Province) and Mong Cai Border Gate (Quang Ninh Province) are open to foot traffic.

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**Note:** Remember that whichever crossing you use, your Vietnam visa must show the correct border gate as your “entry point”. For help with arrangements, you can contact a reliable travel agent in Vietnam or a representative abroad who have comprehensive listings of the company itineraries, hotel information, transfers, and transportation.

### **Basic Safety on the road**

It's easy to let your guard down when you travel. After all, you're more relaxed and there are so many new sights to focus on. In addition to paying attention to your personal safety (avoiding secluded places and not walking alone after dark), you'll need to reset your thinking when it comes to traffic safety, too. The rules of the road aren't the same overseas as they are at home. In some countries, people drive on the opposite side of the road and you'll need to be aware of this before you cross the street - look in the opposite direction from the one you're used to. Pedestrians don't always have the right of way overseas, either. Be sure there are no cars coming when you step into the street: If there are, they may not stop for you!

If you practice these healthy hints you can focus on the scenery - not medical emergencies - and return home with nothing more troubling than some tacky souvenirs!

### **Travel by Cars, Motors & Bicycles**

*Cars for rent:* are available at travel agencies. They offer four to eight seated cars with drivers. It is easy for services in big cities.

*Motorbikes for rent:* are available in most cities and towns, regularly frequented by tourists. Puttering around on a motorbike can be an enjoyable and time-efficient method of sightseeing. It costs around US\$20-US\$30 per day to rent a motorbike.

*Motorbike Taxis (“Xe om” in Vietnamese):* are faster and no more expensive than cyclos, and available at any time. Xe om drivers are easily found in Vietnam, and they do good customer-care (Yet, sometimes too much enthusiastic). This is a better choice than motorbike renting in case you are not familiar with the streets. But remember to bargain!

*Bicycles for rent:* Cycling is perhaps the best way to sightsee around towns. You should pay about US\$5 per day for the a bike.

### **Travel by Cyclos**

Cyclo is a tricycle taxi similar to rickshaws. It is a fun and, sometimes, adventurous way to tour the cities. They are available in many tourist cities such as Hanoi, Hoi An, Hue, Danang, Hai Phong and Ho Chi Minh.

However, some big city like Ho Chi Minh has a strict rule on which routes the cyclos can go because they can cause traffic congestion. Besides, each town has its own price structure. For instance, in Saigon, rates start from around 1 USD for a short trip (about 10 minutes) while the fares can be a bit more expensive in Hanoi. Thus, before you get on a cyclo, make sure you and the cyclo driver agree on the same price. Hold on to your belongings when travelling in a cyclo as passing motorists and the like have been known to grab these as they pass.

### **Bus lines in Vietnam**

There are various types of express-coaches that transport passengers inside and between the cities and provinces.

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#### *Hanoi:*

- Southern Bus Station: 225 Giai Phong St., Hanoi. Tel: 864 1467
- My Dinh Bus Station: close to My Dinh National Stadium, approximately 15km from the centre of Hanoi.
- Gia Lam Bus Station, Nguyen Van Cu St., Long Bien District. Tel: 827 1529
- Luong Yen Bus Station: Nguyen Khoai Road, Hai Ba Trung Dist., Hanoi

#### *Hochiminh City:*

- West Bus Station (Ben Xe khach Mien Tay), 137 Hung Vuong St., Binh Chanh Dist. Tel: 877 6593
- East Bus Station (Ben Xe khach Mien Dong), 292 Dinh Bo Linh St., Binh Thanh Dist. Tel: 898 4893

### **Taxi in Vietnam**

Taxis with meters are available in the big cities and provinces. Most metered taxi drivers can speak a little English.

*In Hanoi:* The price is US\$1 for the first 2km, and every kilometer thereafter costs between US\$0.45 to US\$0.60, depending on which taxi company you choose.

*In Hochiminh City:* The price is US\$0.50 for the first km and US\$0.45 for each km thereafter. (Prices are at writing time).

#### **Note:**

When going for over 30km, remember to negotiate with the taxi operator. When negotiating about the price, try to agree the price in the currency you intend to pay with (Dong or US Dollars) to save arguments later about the exchange rate you were expecting. Always double check the conversion rate you have been offered. Also, you'd best not to take freelance taxis ("taxi du"), which are without meters or with much higher meters. Or else, you may have to pay more than the real price.

## **IV. Air Transport in Vietnam**

### **International Airports**

There are three international airports in Vietnam:

- Noi Bai (Hanoi)
- Danang (Danang)
- Tan Son Nhat (Hochiminh City)

*Noi Bai Airport* is about 35 km from the north of the city. There are Vietnam Airlines minibuses going there, and cars of Airport Taxi (Tel: 873 3333). Fee is around 200,000VND. Bus price from the city centre to Noi Bai is about 2,500-3,000 VND/person.

*Danang Airport* is close to the centre of the city. There are taxis available all the time. Fee is about 100,000VND.

*Tan Son Nhat Airport* is 15km from the city centre. A taxi is about 100,000-200,000VND.

### **Travel around Vietnam by planes**

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Besides other normal types of domestic transport, visitors can also travel to other provinces, cities, and towns inside Vietnam by air. Domestic flights are available everyday. For details, please click here <http://www.vntraveltips.com/before-you-go/further-for-foreign-tourists/111-tips-for-vietnam-domestic-flights-a-intl-flights>

**Domestic Airports:** Gia Lam (Hanoi), Cat Bi (Haiphong), Dien Bien (Dien Bien), Na San (Son La), Vinh (Nghe An), Phu Bai (Hue), Pleiku (Gia Lai), PhuCat (Quy Nhon), Cam Ranh (Khanh Hoa), Tuy Hoa (Phu Yen), Buon Ma Thuot (Dak Lak), Lien Khuong (Dalat), Vung Tau, Con Dao (Ba Ria – Vung Tau), Phu Quoc, Rach Gia (Kien Giang), Ca Mau (Camau).

**From Hanoi:** There are daily return flights to Hochiminh City, Hue, Danang, and Nha Trang. There are also return flights to Na San and Vinh.

**Northern Airport Flight Service Company** (Tel: 852 3451) from Hanoi to Halong Bay by helicopter. There is a flight on Saturdays at 8 a.m, departing from Gia Lam Airport.

**From Hochiminh City:** There are daily flights and return to Hanoi and Danang. There are also return flights to Haiphong, Hue, Quy Nhon, Nha Trang, Dalat, Buon Ma Thuot, Pleiku, and Phu Quoc.

### **Vietnam Airport Taxes**

Applied for both domestic and international departures.

#### ***With international flights***

Passengers have to pay US\$14 per person for leaving Vietnam at Noi Bai Airport (Hanoi) or Danang airport (Danang), US\$12 per person for leaving Vietnam at Tan Son Nhat Airport (Ho Chi Minh City).

#### ***With domestic flights***

From Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City or Danang, the tax of VND 25,000 per person (around US\$1.7) is always added in your ticket fare. Tax for departing from Hue and Hai Phong is VND 20,000 per person (US\$1.3) and from other airports is VND15,000 per person (US\$1).

### **Airport security Regulations**

Here are some tips to help you comply with the new regulations when checking in at Vietnam's International Airport:

#### ***Airport Security and Flight Check in***

Arrive at the airport at least two hours before flight time. You may encounter long lines at check-in counters and airport screening stations.

Curbside baggage check is being reinstated on an airline-by-airline and airport-by-airport basis. Check with the airport to see if your airline has been approved for curbside checks. Otherwise, proceed directly to the check-in counters.

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If you are traveling with a tour group or cruise group, you will no longer be allowed to check in for flights at hotels or at the cruise terminals. You must check in at the airport. If someone is dropping you off at the airport, they must stay with the vehicle at all times. They should not leave it unattended, even for a moment.

You must have a picture I.D. such as a driver's license, passport, or government-issued identification. Ensure that you make your reservation in the exact name that appears on the identification you plan on presenting at the airport. If your name has recently changed and the name on your ticket and your I.D. are different, bring documentation of the change (e.g., a marriage certificate or court order). If traveling with an e-ticket, you must produce a copy of your e-ticket receipt when you check-in.

### ***Airport Security Checkpoint = Getting to Gate***

To enter the secured area beyond the security screening checkpoint, you must show a valid picture I.D. and one of the following boarding documents indicating a flight departure for the current date:

- 1) A receipt for an electronic ticket;
- 2) An itinerary generated by an airline or travel agency confirming an electronic ticket;
- 3) A boarding pass
- 4) A paper ticket.

### ***Receipts and itineraries MUST have ticket numbers on them***

If you do not have a boarding pass, ticket, e-ticket receipt or printed confirmation, an airline-issued boarding document must be obtained at the ticket counter prior to clearing security.

E-ticketed passengers with no receipt, agency or airline-issued itinerary must first go to the airport ticket counter to obtain a boarding pass. More information can be found at <http://www.vietnamair.com.vn/default.aspx?tabid=262>

Passengers, who do not have baggage to check and already have an approved boarding document, as outlined above, may proceed through the security checkpoint directly to the departure gate. Although no curbside or skycap check-in is permitted, wheelchair assistance from curbside will continue to be provided.

Provisions will be made for parents who need to meet unaccompanied minors, for disabled persons and persons with special needs who need to be accompanied by healthcare assistants or guardians and for medical personnel who need to respond to a medical emergency beyond the check point.

All passengers should check with their airline or airport, or visit the airline or airport web site for additional information. <http://www.vietnamair.com.vn/>

Keep your identification handy, as you may be asked after entering the gate area to produce it for airport or airline personnel.

### ***Luggage***

Keep your luggage and carry-on bags with you at all times prior to arriving at the airport and while in the terminal. Unattended bags will likely be confiscated - and even destroyed - by airport security.

Check with your travel agent or airline for information on carry-on luggage restrictions.

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Since you will likely encounter longer waits and more thorough inspections at screening stations, ASTA recommends that you minimize your carry-on items so you can be processed more quickly.

Do not accept any packages or materials from strangers.

Do not carry any sharp instruments (i.e., letter openers, knives, box cutters, scissors, etc.) in carry on luggage.

If you see any suspicious activity or see unattended bags, contact airline or airport personnel immediately.

Carry medications in your carry-on bags.

Hold onto your baggage claim check. Individual airports may elect to provide more security in the baggage claim area.

## **V. Transport by boat**

### **Travel by boat in Vietnam**

To enter Vietnam, there are some boats linking Asian countries with Ha Long and Da Nang ports.

Inside Vietnam, visitors can also travel by sea to the big harbors, such as Ha Long, Da Nang, Hochiminh City, and so on.

From Hanoi and Hochiminh City, there are cruises to several provinces. Ferries sail all the year round to the three major islands located off the coast of Vietnam, including Phu Quoc, Cat Ba and Con Dao. Moreover, there's a ferry running from Hai Phong to Ha Long City, and a hydrofoil service between Hochiminh City and Vung Tau.

You may encounter passenger services in the Mekong Delta, where river ferries haul from bank to bank of the various strands of the Mekong from morning till night.

## **Human-Care Services in Vietnam**

### **1. Useful Numbers in Vietnam**

**Police:** 113

**Fire:** 114

**Emergency:** 115

**Time:** 117

**Information:** 1080

**Directory Assistance:** 116

**International Operator:** 110

### **2. Health Care Service**

Travellers tend to worry about contracting infectious diseases when in the tropics, but infections are a rare cause of serious illness or death in travellers. Pre-existing medical conditions such as heart disease, and accidental injury (especially traffic accidents), account for most life-threatening problems. Becoming ill in some way, however, is a relatively common thing. Fortunately, most common illnesses can either be prevented with some common-sense behaviour or be treated easily with a well-stocked traveller's

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medical kit.

### **Health care system in Vietnam**

Health issues and the quality of medical facilities vary enormously depending on where and how you travel in Vietnam. Most major towns in Vietnam will have a public hospital, but these can be poorly equipped and overcrowded. Also you will probably need a Vietnamese speaker to assist with translation. Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City have a few well equipped private hospitals with English speaking staff, while it is often hard to see a doctor in rural areas.

Pharmacies can be found in almost every town. Write down the name of the medicine you want to buy, or use body language to explain, as not many pharmacist can communicate in English.

Prior to departure, you may want to consult your doctor on vaccination and get well-prepared for a small first-aid-kit. The following vaccines are recommended: Polio, tetanus, yellow fever, typhoid, Japanese encephalitis. Your personal kit must have solution to stomachache, headache and such.

### **Acclimatization**

Adjusting to the tropical climate of South Vietnam can take a while, but you can lessen the degree of discomfort by heeding a few suggestions.

- Wear loose-fitting, natural fibre clothing and open shoes, which give good skin ventilation. Perspiration and dampness can cause bacterial and fungal growth, which cause itching and rashes.
- Increase fluid intake to prevent dehydration. Water and fruit juices are best. Sachets of re-hydration powder are a useful addition to your luggage. When mixed with water the powder forms a refreshing drink designed to rebalance the levels of salt in the body. This is especially useful if you have had a bout of "Travellers Tummy"
- Increase physical activity gradually until you become accustomed to the heat and humidity. Limit outdoor activity to early morning, or late afternoon and evening.
- After bathing, dry thoroughly and apply powder.
- Use a fan to circulate air instead of air-conditioning. This will greatly speed up the process of acclimatisation.
- The sun shines over half of a day along the country, so make sure you bring plenty of sunscreen, wear a hat to protect you head and a sun block to protect exposed areas of the body. Additionally, the dust rate in the air is quite high in industrial cities; it is advisable you buy a small mask just like the local in case you are allergic.
- Vietnam is a tropical country, which entails many kinds of dangerous bacteria and insects. Mosquito repellents are essential. If there are cases of malaria or dengue fever, you should go to doctor immediately.

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### **The Water**

Tap water comes from various sources. In major towns and cities it may have passed through a treatment plant. However, this is no guarantee of its purity so don't drink it. Bottled water is provided in most hotels, and can also be bought easily and inexpensively at most shops. Make sure the seal is intact before you buy. Avoid ice cubes unless you are sure they are made from purified water.

### **Malaria**

If you are going to high risk area such as Ca Mau seek medical advice before you leave. Such advice is best obtained from organisations like the Hospital for Tropical Diseases, in London, who have the latest information. Some strains of Malaria parasite are now resistant to the more common anti-malarial drugs. Therefore, it is important to check ensure that you have the correct medication for the country you are going to visit. Generally it is wise to take sensible precautions to avoid insect bites at all times. If windows are fitted with insect screens use them. The sensible use of an insect spray to kill any invaders is also recommended. Several different brands are available in the shops.

### **Rabies**

Rabies is endemic in Vietnam so if you are bitten by an animal seek medical advice immediately. You should also ask your doctor about vaccination against rabies before you leave home.

### **HIV-AIDS**

If you don't know how this disease is transmitted find out right now!

If you do require an injection of any kind, watch carefully to see that the doctor or nurse uses a new syringe and needle, or take on with you. Condoms are widely available throughout the country.

The bottom line is having your travel insurance ready before the trip.

**Some international hospitals/clinics in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City** (American, French and German doctors on staff)

*In Hanoi:* (Tel code: 84-4)

- **Bach Mai Hospital**  
Giai Phong Street, Tel: 844-869 3731  
*Large local hospital with a well-equipped and staffed foreigners wing.*
- **Hanoi French Hospital**  
1 Phuong Mai Str.  
Tel: 577-1100, emergency: 574-1111  
*Professionally managed and staffed family health clinic with dull emergency medical services including medevac. Foreign and local doctors include experts in tropical medicine, natal care, psychology and other disciplines.*

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- **Family Medical Practice**  
Unit 109-112, Van Phuc, Blog A1, Kim Ma Str.  
Tel: 843-0748 (24hours)  
*Professionally managed and staffed family health clinic with dull emergency medical services including medevac. Foreign and local doctors include experts in tropical medicine, natal care, psychology and other discriplines.*
- **Vietnam-Korea Friendship Hospital**  
12 Chu Van An Str.  
Tel: 843-7231
- **International SOS**  
31 Hai Ba Trung Str.  
Tel: 934-0666, emergency: 934-0555

***In Ho Chi Minh City:*** (Tel code: 84-8)

- **Saigon International Clinic**  
8 Alexandre de Rhodes Str., District 1  
Tel: 823-8888
- **Columbia Asia**  
8 Alexandre de Rhodes, Dict 1, Tel: 848-823 8888
- **Gia Dinh International Hospital**  
1 Trang Long Str., Bin Thanh District  
Tel: 803-0678
- **Franco-Vietnamese Hospital**  
6 Nguyen Luong Bang, District 7, Tel: 844-411 3333
- **Franco Vietnamese Hospital**  
6 Nguyen Luong Bang Str., District 7  
Tel: 411-3333
- **International SOS**  
65, Nguyen Du Str.  
Tel: 829-8520, emergency: 829-8424

### **3. Security notice**

Vietnam is considered one among the safest destinations in the world to travel. No more war, no fights, no terrorism. A stable political environment!  
Yet, as in other countries, daily life sometimes appears thieves. In big cities, do not bring along anything valuable as you go shopping or sightseeing on the streets to avoid thieves or robbers that you probably unluckily encounter. In that unfortunate case, come right away to the nearest police station for help or call 113 for at-sight police assistance. Foreign currencies should be exchanged at banks, or authorized exchange bureaus. Never exchange money on street. Remember that all vendor/street services are rarely of good quality/reliability.  
It is dispensable for you to give aims to beggars and to buy souvenirs from street vendors.

### **4. Drinking and Eating Safety**

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By drinking and eating safely during travel, one can avoid serious diseases like Traveller's diarrhoea, Cholera, Typhoid and Hepatitis A.

**The following are the simple guidelines:**

- Always wash your hands thoroughly after using the toilet and before eating. Brush your teeth with bottled water. Keep your mouth closed in the shower.
- Assume all water is contaminated. Either boil the water for at least 10 minutes if practical or use Iodine drops available from Travel Health Care to sterilise the water.
- Drink bottled water, canned drinks or hot drinks such as coffee or tea.
- Refuse ice in drinks, as it may have been made from contaminated water.
- Avoid salads as these are often washed with contaminated water.
- Food should be thoroughly cooked and eaten hot. Avoid foods which have been pre-cooked and reheated, as well as cold meat, raw seafood and shellfish, such as oysters, crabs, prawns and lobster. Never eat uncooked seafood.
- Milk and other dairy products should be avoided unless you can be sure they have been pasteurised and stored properly. Eat only fruit which **you** peel or cut. Do not eat fruit which have been peel or cut by others.
- Water can be made safe either by boiling for at least 10 minutes or use 2% iodine drops to sterilise for 30 minutes.

**5. Vietnam Travel Insurance**

**Should not travel without health insurance**, even if you're fit and healthy – accidents may happen.

Find out your insurance plan, declare any existing medical conditions you have to make clear which will cover you. You may require extra cover for adventure activities such as rock climbing. Check their payment plan (e.g.: directly to providers or reimburse you after you pay on the spot). It may decide which medical-expense option you have to pay, as well as documentation, policies required.

If you travel through a local agent, they normally supply insurance services of Bao Viet or Bao Minh (state-owned companies), with the highest assessment of US\$10,000. Fee is about US\$1,5 per day.

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## Top 10 Travel Tips

1. **Check the latest travel advice** for your destination and subscribe to receive free e-mail notification each time the travel advice for your destination is updated.
2. **Take out appropriate travel insurance** to cover hospital treatment, medical evacuation and any activities, including adventure sports, in which you plan to participate.
3. **Before travelling** (particularly travelling overseas), register your travel and contact details online or at the local Vietnamese Embassy, high commission or consulate once you arrive, so we can contact you when in need.
4. **Obey the law.** Consular assistance cannot override local laws, even where local laws appear harsh or unjust by Australian standards.
5. Check to **see if you require visas** for the country or countries you are visiting or transiting. Be aware that a visa does not guarantee entry.
6. **Make copies** of your passport details, insurance policy, travellers cheques, visas and credit card numbers. Carry one copy in a separate place to the originals and leave a copy with someone at home.
7. **Check with health professionals** for information on recommended vaccinations or other precautions and find out about overseas laws on travelling with medicines.
8. **Make sure your passport has at least six months validity** and carry additional copies of your passport photo with you in case you need a replacement passport while overseas.
9. **Leave a copy of your travel itinerary** with someone at home and keep in regular contact with friends and relatives while overseas.
10. Before departing your home check whether you are regarded as a national of the country you intend to visit. **Research whether holding dual nationality has any implications for your travel.**

## General DOs & DON'Ts for Vietnam

Vietnam is a friendly and safe place to travel with the hidden charm. But each country have special different, Vietnam too. Different about culture, history and style life... With a sprinkling of common sense, your trip should be smooth and trouble free. Do not be overly paranoid though. Generally, Vietnamese people are very appreciative if they see you trying to abide by the customs, and very forgiving if you get it wrong or forget. If you make the effort, you will be rewarded. With a cool head and sensible planning, one can avoid these problems.

The below advice meant to help you have a perfect trip to Vietnam:

### DOS

- Greetings are no different to western countries, there are no cultural formalities that as a foreigner you would be expected to know or practice.
- Vietnamese dress conservatively. Not only for the prevailing weather, but also not to cause offence to the local people. Despite the heat, it's best not to show off too much skin. If you do, especially girls, you'll only draw stares from the locals. Vietnamese have conservative dress codes, and it is only in larger cities that these codes are a little more relaxed. Do not wear revealing clothing.
- Dress well when visiting pagodas. No shorts or tatty beer t-shirts. Shoes are fine, and rarely will you have to remove them. If unsure, just follow what the locals do.
- Drink plenty of bottled water, especially when walking around sightseeing. No need to carry huge bottles around with you, a vendor is never far away and no doubt they will find you before you find them. During the summer months you should be drinking a minimum of two liters per day. If you drink tea, coffee & alcohol you should increase your water intake accordingly as these will help to dehydrate you.
- Travel with recommend tour agencies. Even if you plan to buy tickets when in country, research your journey a little first on the Internet. A good resource is Lonely Planet's Thorn Tree Forum, where fellow tourists discuss travel in Vietnam. This way you avoid unreliable tour agencies and badly run hotels.
- Store your cash, credit cards, airline tickets and other valuables in a safe place. Most 4-star hotels have in-room safes, otherwise ask the reception to keep your valuable things in their deposit facility.
- Take a hotel business card from the reception desk before venturing out from your hotel. This will make your return to the hotel in a taxi or cyclo much easier.
- Carry a roll of toilet paper in your daypack on long excursions from your base hotel. You never know when you might need it!
- If invited into a home, always remove your shoes at the front door when entering.
- Ask for permission when taking a photograph of someone. If they indicate that they do not want you to, then abide by their wishes.
- DO NOT offer money or push the issue.
- Check on your first day whether you need to reconfirm your next flight, if so do it then. Some airlines do not require this anymore but it is still worthwhile calling

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them so that they at least have your contact details, in case the flight is delayed or whatever.

## **DON'TS**

- Never carry more money than you need when walking around the streets. Do not wear large amounts of jewelry. There are two reasons for not doing this:  
(1) It is considered impolite to flaunt wealth in public;  
(2) It is more likely that you may become a victim of a pickpocket or drive-by bag snatcher.
- Don't be paranoid about your security, just be aware of your surroundings.
- Don't wear singlets, shorts, dresses or skirts, or tops with low-neck lines and bare shoulders to Temples and Pagodas. To do this is considered extremely rude and offensive.
- Avoid giving empty water bottles, sweets and candies or pens to the local people when trekking through ethnic minority villages. You cannot guarantee that the empty bottles will be disposed of in a correct manner, and the people have no access to dental health. If you want to give pens, ask your guide to introduce you to the local teacher and donate them to the whole community.
- Never sleep or sit with the soles of your feet pointing towards the family altar when in someone's house.
- Never lose your temper in public or when bargaining for a purchase. This is considered a serious loss of face for both parties. Always maintain a cool and happy demeanor and you will be reciprocated with the same.
- Do not try to take photographs of military installations or anything to do with the military. This can be seen as a breach of national security.
- Never take video cameras into the ethnic minority villages. They are considered to be too intrusive by the local people. Wear a lot of jewellery or take a bag with you. Violent crime is highly unusual in Vietnam, but petty crime is more apparant. If you have a bag, or tout a digital camera around your neck, you are a potential target.
- When taking a ride by motorbike taxi (*xe om*) make sure your bag, if any, is not on display or easy to grab. Bag snatches, although still rare, are probably the most likely crime a tourist would encounter, and it raises the probability immensely if you are tailing a camera or a laptop in the wind.
- Physical displays of affection between lovers in public are frowned upon. That's why you may come across couples holding hands but not hugging or kissing.
- Remember, this *is* Vietnam, a devolping country, and things don't quite work as you are maybe used to. Don't be paranoid about your safety, just be aware of your surroundings.
- Do not carry your passport a leave it in the safe in your hotel. A photocopy will suffice if local law states that you need to.

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# Connectivity in Vietnam

## I. Telephone and Faxes network in Vietnam

### Vietnam communication network

#### *Fixed telephone and fax*

- Provided by Vietnam Post and Telecommunication (VNPT) and Viettel;
- Phone number code: **Seven digits** (for Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City only) and **six digits** (for other cities). Each city has its own code (**city code**), such as: 4 (Hanoi), 8 (Ho Chi Minh City), 54 (Hue) etc...

#### *Mobile phones*

- Provided by VNPT, Viettel and some other state-owned companies, including:  
**GSM:** Vinaphone (code: 91), Mobiphone (code: 90), Viettel (code: 98);  
**CDMA:** S-phone (code: 95) and EVN-Telecom (code: 96)
- Using GSM 900/1800 with **standard SIM card** which is compatible with most of Asia, Europe and Australia, but not with North America;
- Phone number code: **Network code + seven digits** (e.g: 091.2328866)

#### *City phone (available in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City)*

- Provided by VNPT, a mixture between mobile phone and fixed telephone, offers cheaper cost, mobility but limited usage (within the city only);
- Phone number code: **8 digits, begins with '91'** (e.g: 37346777)

### Costs

Charges are depended on the service providers.

- International calls cost around US\$1 per minute but may be higher at hotels. A **cheaper alternative** is to make these calls from the post office. Reserve charges or collect calls are possible to most, but not all, including: France, Australia, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, Denmark, Switzerland, the UK and the US.
- In-city calls are cheap and usually **free** at most of hotels and restaurants for tourists;
- City-city calls are depended on the destination city, from 500d to 3,000d per minute;
- Tel-to-mobile calls cost around 1,200d per minute;
- Mobile-to-mobile calls cost around 2,500d to 3,000d per minute. Instant message (SMS) costs 400d for domestic and US\$1 for international one.

### Make direct calls

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International code: 00  
Domestic code: 0  
Vietnamese code: 84

<b>To Vietnam:</b>	00 + 84 + [city / network code] + [phone number]
<b>From Vietnam:</b>	00 + [destination-country code] + [phone number]
<b>Within city:</b>	[phone number]
<b>To other city:</b>	0 + [city code] + [phone number]
<b>To city phone:</b>	0 + [Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City's code] + [phone number] (dial phone number directly when you are in the same city)
<b>To mobile phones:</b>	0 + [network code] + [phone number]
<b>From mobile phones:</b>	0 + [city / network code] + [phone number]

### Discount options

- **171 service:** dial 171 at the beginning of any calls (or at the end when call to mobile phones), save up 50%;
- Make call between **11pm to 7am** and **weekends**, save up 20%;
- Buy a **SIM card with local number** for your mobile phone. It's more convenient to receive any calls such as from relatives and sometime cheaper than using hotels' service;
- Using **roaming service** to use your phone number in Vietnam (if not expensive).

### Important phone numbers (available in every Vietnam cities)

113 Police  
114 Fire Brigade  
115 Ambulance  
1080 Information about society, economy, culture (in Vietnamese, English, French)  
101 Long Distance Domestic telephone service  
102 Directory assistance for long distance domestic telephone service  
103 Operator-assisted long distance domestic telephone service  
110 International telephone service  
112 International telephone service rate  
113 International telephone service inquiries  
116 Phone number inquiries  
117 Time inquiries  
118 Ring back test  
119 Advice on telephone repairs  
1088 Consultation in areas of health, law, informatics, psychology, living skills...  
See Vietnam Yellow Pages for more information.

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## **II. Postal Service in Vietnam**

Post Office ("**Buu Dien**" in Vietnamese) appears in every city, town, village and rural sub-district, opens from 6.30am to 9pm, including weekends and public holidays.

International postal rates are similar to those in European countries.

Items mailed to international destinations: regular service takes a month, airmail service takes five to ten days, express-mail service (**EMS**) takes less than 5 days and everything is registered.

FedEx, DHL and UPS are reliable for small parcels or documents and available in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

Postcards cost from 7,000D to 15,000D, depending on the destination.

Receiving even a small package from abroad can cause a headache, and large ones will produce a migraine. If the parcel contains books, documents, video tapes, computer disks or dangerous goods, it's possible that a lengthy inspection will be required, which could take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks.

### **Local, international mail service includes the followings**

Letters & Postcards Publications, publications for the blind, small packages. (Weight limit of small package is not over 2kg).

### **Parcels - Local and Overseas**

Weight limit of local parcels is defined by post. office of each province. General maximum weight for one parcel is 31.5 kg.

### **Postal Financial Services**

1. Remittance by mail & telegram is provided throughout : the country .Vietnam Postal Service has opened one way international remittance service from France, Japan, Belgium, USA, Czech, Slovakia, Latvia, Singapore, China, Malaysia to Vietnam.
2. Express money transfer is available in towns, centers of cities and provinces within Vietnam.
3. Post Saving is provided throughout the country in the following ways:Time Saving
  - Demand Saving
  - Collection Saving
  - Personal Saving Account
  - Pay salary in personal saving account

Telegraphic bouquet service: including telegraphic bouquet with congratulation, greeting and telegraphic bouquet with condolence

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## **Press Distribution**

1. Newspapers and magazines are retailed at any Post Office and Kiosk.
2. Period subscription of domestic and imported publications:

Customers can purchase domestic press at any Post Office at any time with long-term or subscription modes.

- For subscription of imported overseas publications, Post; Office will announce the list of those and receive orders 2 times a year.
- Post Office will deliver publications at customers' addresses.

## **Express Mail Service (EMS)**

Express Mail Service (EMS) delivers letters, parcels, mail items, goods.. domestically & internationally on schedule of VNPT as announcement to each region & country. Weight limit for EMS parcels to overseas depends on the agreement with target country. EMS is available in 54 cities and provinces within Vietnam and to 51 countries in the world.

## **Other postal services**

- Consignment post service
- Subscribing mail boxes service
- Unaddressed mail drop service
- PTN service (From Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City, Quang Ninh, Haiphong, Hai Duong)

## **Accept delivering of postal and parcel with special service**

When sending postal items and parcels, customers can use other special services as following:

- Par avian: Items and parcels are transported by airway (If airway is available on the line).
- Registered: Parcels will be tracked by separate codes, recorded in to files during processing in order to be traced when necessary.

*Certification at sending (A parcels):* A parcels are normal parcels with certification of sending. Senders should pay at the price & will be issued receipts.

*Express mail service:* Senders require immediate delivery of parcels to receivers after arrival. This service is available for the receiver. With address within delivering area of

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the Post-Office in the cities & towns, accepting request at the time of applying postal items & parcels.

**Postal items and parcels using Post Retante are not allowed to use express.**

- Advice of Delivery: Service provider is responsible for informing the senders of delivery
- A Main Propre: Items & parcels will be delivered to receivers whose names and addresses are indicated on them.
- Post Restante: P & T will keep items and parcels at delivery post office and receivers themselves will receive there.
- Items Pasted at the address requested by the sender: Provided when senders request or have contracts with Post Office.
- Items delivered to the address requested by the sender or the addressee: Provided when senders or receivers order Post offices to deliver at requested addresses once or usually, except postal items under 500gram.
- Insured items: Senders enumerate articles' value. Items and parcels are insured by the value of price stated maximum stated price for a document article is 1,000,000 dong and for a goods article is 30,000,000 dong.

**III. Internet Access in Vietnam**

Today the Internet is widely available throughout towns and cities in Vietnam, including **dial-up** (VNN1260 or VNN1269) and **ADSL** (MEGA VNN). ADSL services are used in most hotels, guesthouses and cyber cafés while dial-up services can be used through telephone line.

Hotels and guesthouses may apply varied charges on internet usage. **Cyber cafés** are a good choice with just 2,000 to 3,000d per hour. Many **post offices** also offer this service. It's easy for tourists to get access to the internet here: what you need is only your personal notebook or laptop (with "standard" modem) as hotels offer several facilities in the room. You can buy **prepaid cards** to save cost. They are sold at most post offices. Remember that the **power supply voltage** may vary from that at your home, risking damage your equipment. So use it with care!

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## Leave for airport/railway station

- If you are leaving by air, wherever else you might go after checking out hotel, don't forget to be present at the airport at least one hour before the departure time.
- If you go by train, at least half an hour before the departure time you must be at the station gate.
- Should you have lots of things in your luggage, quickly bring them to the packaging place nearby to pack so that you could come back to the lounge for in-time boarding.
- If you did not have time to buy gifts, spend some time on shopping here as international airports are ideal places for a country's souvenirs. But of course, they are almost a little bit more expensive.

### Suggested Gifts

Unique gifts, products and services for babies, children and families should be brought from Vietnam as gifts. Examples are Ao Dai, baby clothes, Asian dolls, Vietnamese cultural gifts, and much, much more. Following is the story of a foreign tourist woman who has come back to the US after an interesting time in Vietnam. Please refer to it for reliable suggestions on what to bring to as gifts from Vietnam;

### *Gifts to Bring Home from Vietnam*

One of the things that was the most overwhelming for me about Vietnam was the amount of things for sale there. There aren't many different ways for people to make their living, so there are many, many stores everywhere you go. At first, the number of stores, and the amount of goods for sale made it tough for me to concentrate on what I wanted to buy to take home.

I had several different purchasing needs. Most importantly, I wanted to buy things for my daughter to give to her as gifts for her birthday and other special occasions throughout the next 10 years. For this purpose, I wanted things that were significant to Vietnam, or were made in Vietnam. I also wanted to purchase things for our home that were distinctly Vietnamese. Lastly, I wanted to buy small things to take back as gifts to friends.

Gift buying can be tough in Vietnam for several reasons, the sheer volume of things for sale, the inexpensiveness of most things, and I know that I felt very strongly the need to take things back so that one of my daughter's cultures would be well represented. Since I have returned from Vietnam, a number of people have asked me what kinds of things I got, and why. So I thought this list might help others think before hand of what they might want to look for. Be sure to look for the labels on some things to make sure that they were made in Vietnam, if that is important to you. Many of the things for sale in Vietnam were made in China!

*The Vietnamese are known for several special things.* Their *lacquer* items are lovely, and you can get many things that are lacquered. (I heard of one family who bought a dining room table and chairs and had them shipped home!) They are also famous for their *silk embroidered paintings*, which are amazing. (I was slightly troubled by the whole indentured servant labor aspect of these places, but my desire to have something for my

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daughter that was "truly" Vietnamese won out, I'm afraid.) They also have many shops with *beautiful linens that are embroidered with traditional Vietnamese scenes, symbols, etc.* And I loved the *woven crafts that were made by the hilltribes in the Central Highlands.*

- 3 ao dais (traditional Vietnamese dress, one for my mother, myself, and the baby. I had them make the baby's for a 2 year old.)
- Several outfits for my daughter at different ages
- 3 silk embroidered paintings
- Several T-shirts (the quality of most T-shirts was poor, so check around)
- Hand-woven wallets, various sizes to give my daughter as gifts
- Hand-woven wall hangings
- Vietnamese coin collection (bought from a street vendor)
- Vietnamese stamp collection (also from a street vendor)
- Vietnam postcards (I bought lots of postcards from street vendors, and will have some of them laminated to give to my daughter to play with, and others I will put in an album for her. It is always a good idea to buy postcards of the places you see in case your film doesn't develop. That way you still have a picture of it!)
- Vietnamese children's video (our guide helped me pick the following items out)
- Vietnamese tape of traditional children's songs
- 3 CD's of traditional Vietnamese music
- Several holiday ornaments in the form of Asian dolls
- Children's books (I got a variety of books, some in English of Vietnamese stories, some in both English and Vietnamese, and some books like Winnie the Pooh that were written in Vietnamese.)
- A woven reed basket.
- Dolls (Almost everyone in our group wanted to take home a traditional Vietnamese doll, but we discovered that Vietnamese children don't really have dolls the way we think of them in this country. You can find dolls in fancy ao dais, often in glassed in boxes, the kind meant to display on a shelf. I had more luck finding the type of doll I was looking for, one that she could hold and play with and drag around with her, in this country.)
- Silk scarves
- A silk embroidered tapestry of the ABC's with Vietnamese symbols for each letter
- Embroidered bibs (for special occasions)
- Musical instruments (a bamboo flute, a bamboo xylophone, a "noise maker" that sounds like the noise the "soup kids" make in the streets.)
- A good map of Vietnam and HCMC
- Embroidered gift bags
- Several plates to be displayed on a wall (a bamboo plate, jacktree plate, rosewood plate, and a large lacquered plate)
- A painting of a village scene
- 3 scrapbooks
- 1 special lacquered scrapbook
- Linen embroidered placemats and napkins

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- Various linen items (all embroidered, clothes, bibs, table runners, etc. All had special Vietnamese scenes on them.)
- Many lacquered boxes in various shapes and sizes
- Several sets of chopsticks and chopstick holders, including a child's set of chopsticks.
- Bamboo windchimes
- A child's conical hat
- A wooden, carved statue of a Vietnamese woman in a conical hat and ao dia
- Various Vietnamese prints

*Note:*

Someone on the Internet gave me the name of a great book, *Que Huong My Homeland Vietnam by Nguyen Manh Dan*. It is a book of photographs of Vietnam by Vietnamese photographers that also contains Vietnamese songs and poetry written in both English and Vietnamese. It is reported to be a lovely book, and apparently you can't get it here in America, so you may want to look for it in Vietnam. It is heavy though, so it will weigh you down, but it sounds worth it!

## **Preparation for Leaving**

- Double check all the documents to bring along with you: Passport, Visa, Air/Train tickets, money, credit cards, precious things, and the like.

- Be sure to pack all your stuff at least 15 minutes before checking out of your hotel as you need time to ensure that nothing important is left here.

- Remember to take in hand some clothes that suit the current weather at your next destination (or country home) in case it is cooler than in Vietnam, or to wear a short-leaved T-Shirt with an outer coat if the current weather in Vietnam is cooler than where you're heading.

- And, to end up your days' journey here, don't forget some tips for your hired guide and driver. The amount of tip money is totally based on your trip satisfaction with service of guide and driver and it does not compel (according to your culture). However, US\$ 2-3/ per day is acceptable for each. Now after checking out, you are ready to leave for the airport/railway station.

## **Crossing the border**

When leaving Vietnam, a quantity over 300g of gold must be declared and be permitted by the State Bank. Goods of commercial nature and articles of high value require export permits issued by the Customs Office. Antiques, some precious stones and animals listed in Vietnam's red-book may not be brought out of the country. In particular, you are not allowed to bring out:

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- Weapons
- Munitions
- Explosives
- Drugs
- Liquor, Water (even bottled water)
- Fish sauce
- Antiques
- Live wild animals
- Rare plants
- Documents relating to national security

Breaking these rules, you will be punished by Vietnamese laws.

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## **Related news**

### **Jetstar Pacific to open new international routes**

The Jetstar Pacific Airlines Joint Stock Aviation Company will open three new international routes from HCMC to Siem Riep (Cambodia), Singapore, and Bangkok (Thailand).

The carrier said on August 15 that it plans to put these routes into operation in late October or early November with one daily flight on each route.

Also the same day, Jetstar Pacific announced it will halt its domestic flights between HCMC and Nha Trang in the central coastal province of Khanh Hoa as from September 5.

### **Air taxi in Halong City**

The Northern Flight Service Company has started an air taxi service from Hanoi to northern Quang Ninh Province and from Halong City to Halong Bay.

A return ticket on the Hanoi-Quang Ninh air route costs US\$550 and the helicopter, which can carry seven passengers will provide visitors with an amazing panorama of the beautiful places in and around Halong Bay.

This new service will attract more tourists to the bay, which has been recognised as a

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World Natural Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

## **Vietnam airlines news**

The national flag carrier Vietnam Airlines will launch on August 12 its direct service from Hanoi to Nagoya township of Chubu, the third biggest economic hub of Japan, announced the carrier.

The direct flights connecting Hanoi and Nagoya will be offered on every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday on A321 Airbus.

So, Vietnam Airlines is now the sole carrier to operate the Hanoi-Nagoya direct service, and Nagoya is its fourth destination in Japan, after Tokyo, Osaka and Fukuoka.

On the debut of the new direct service, Vietnam Airlines will organise a golf competition on August 9 with the participation of 100 players, mainly Japanese businessmen and passengers.

To mark the 35th anniversary of the Vietnam-Japan diplomatic ties, Vietnam Airlines will take part in two Vietnam festivals to be held in Tokyo in September and Fukuoka in October to promote Vietnamese culture and tourist sites.

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