

VIETNAM TRAVEL TIPS & INFORMATION

PASSPORT AND VISA

A passport with more than 6 months of validity remaining is essential. Check [here](#) for detailed information on visas to Vietnam

CLIMATE AND WEATHER

Vietnam stretches over 1,800 km from north to south, with an area of 332,000 square km. Vietnam's topography varies from coastal plains to mountain ranges, therefore the climate from North to South can be very different.

Check here for detailed information on the climate in Vietnam.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS***

No actual vaccinations are officially required. Travelers are advised to check with their doctor or travel immunization clinic regarding the advisability of inoculation against typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis A & B and malaria. It is recommended that all travelers take out comprehensive Personal Travel Insurance to cover personal belongings, or in case of accident or illness, etc.

ELECTRICITY***

The usual voltage is 220V, 50Hz. The two-pin (ungrounded) plug is more popular than the three-pin one. If you have any devices needing a special outlet, please bring its adapter kit. The best investment is a universal AC adapter, which enables you to plug it into any outlet without damaging your appliances.

CURRENCY, MONEY EXCHANGE & ATM

The local currency is the Dong (abbreviated "d" or VND). Money, particularly US dollars can be exchanged at banks, hotels, and authorized money exchangers. Most retailers do not accept checks. But Visa, Master & JCB cards are widely accepted. Some merchants also accept AMEX. A 3% bank charge on transactions (4% for AMEX) is pretty common, due to bank policies. ATMs are very popular in most tourist destinations.

PACKING LIST

Be a smart traveler. Before heading overseas, make a list of things to bring. You are recommended to “travel light” as much as possible. Please refer to the weather section of the website to identify what you should pack (sunblock, appropriate clothes, hat, mosquito repellent etc.)

SAFETY

Ostentatious displays of money, jewelry, luggage, and dress can encourage the wrong type of attention. When travelling, be aware of where your luggage is at all times- particularly your hand bag, camera, etc. Do not leave them unattended or hanging on the back of chairs in restaurants. Petty theft is also common on crowded trains, buses, and at supermarkets.

ETIQUETTE

Vietnamese society is an interesting blend of modern and traditional. Rural areas are known to be more traditional than big cities, hence it is appropriate to dress modestly in rural areas as well as in temples, museums and historical heritage sites.

It is worth noting that in Vietnam, pointing at something or somebody with your finger is considered impolite, as well as touching people, especially on the head. Vietnamese society is very respectful of its elders and while nobody would say a thing in any circumstance, it is again appropriate to respect elderly people, help them cross the street and keep your voice low when talking to them.

Finally, ask to the person you want to take a picture of if it's okay to do so.

TIME ZONE & WORKING HOUR

Local time is GMT + 7 hours. Most government offices are open from 8:00 / 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 / 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, but are closed from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for lunch. Banks are closed after 4:00 p.m. Some foreign companies or private enterprises are open Saturday mornings. Most shops and department stores are open every day until 8.00 or 9.00 p.m.

MUSEUMS OPENING TIME

The Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum is open every morning (except for Mondays & Fridays) and is closed in the afternoon and during the months of October and November for maintenance. Most museums and mausoleums are closed on Mondays except for the War Museum in Ho Chi Minh City (now called the Museum of Vietnamese Revolutionary History) and the Ho Chi Minh Trails Museum which is closed on

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Mondays and Fridays. The Fine Arts Museum is open to the public every day from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

LANGUAGE

Vietnamese is the official language of Vietnam. English is widely used in business. Other popular languages include French, German, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Thai and Russian.

INTERNET

You can access the internet at hotels, cyber cafés & Internet/Computer Service Centers. ADSL technology is widely used in major cities. Also, WIFI internet is available at some cyber cafés, restaurants, and most hotels in major tourist destinations.

Free WIFI is also available in some international airports.

POST SERVICES

A regular international postal service is available. Express Mail Service (EMS) is available to more than 50 countries worldwide with a delivery time of 2 to 10 days.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Vietnam has high international telephone charges. It is important to check the exact amount with the hotel before making a call, as hotel surcharges are often imposed. VOIP calls help reduce call charges. Pre-paid internet & mobile cards can be bought in the major cities so if your phone is unlocked, this solution is cheap (around USD5) and will allow you to call in case of emergency, call your driver, your hotel and even home if you need! Service providers for mobile phone networks are GSM of Vinaphone, Mobile Phone and Viettel, while CDMA are EVN Telecom and S-Phone, HT Mobile etc.

Also, buying a phone in Vietnam is really cheap and you can get a basic phone for USD15, with a prepaid card.

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS & AIRPORT TAXES

Flight times may vary from day to day. Schedules are subject to change without prior notice. You should allow an hour at the airport for the check-in process prior to your flight departure. Baggage allowance is 20kg per person in economy class. Hand luggage should not weigh more than 7kg. You are recommended to reconfirm your

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intention to travel at least 24 hours prior to departure from all your points on your itinerary, even if you have a confirmed reservation.

Airport departure tax for domestic and international flights is included in the airfare issued.

FOOD AND DRINKS***

Foreign visitors consider Vietnamese food quite healthy. It is neither spicy nor oily. It has a very distinctive style, although it is also clearly influenced by Chinese and to a lesser extent, French cuisine. Vietnamese eat mainly rice and noodles. Bread is not a daily family food. Here are just a few examples of the fantastic dishes you can expect to find in Vietnam: Pho (noodle soup), cha cuon (spring rolls), goi cuon (fresh spring rolls), earthen pot-cooked rice and fish, etc.... Tropical fruit varieties are diverse and available all year round. Mangosteens, rambutans, or dragon fruit should not be missed.

Coffee and draft beers are good but often strong. Drinking tap water is not advisable. Bottled drinking water is widely available for a reasonable price. Hotels and restaurants will use hygienic ice. However, if eating at a market or on the street, it may be best to avoid ice.

SHOPPING & BARGAINING***

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 and supermarkets to bustling open markets, galleries, boutiques, and street stalls. Vietnam is most famous for its handicrafts, war souvenirs, art, antiques and gems. To make your trip even more enjoyable, you should know something about the art of bargaining in this country. People will probably overcharge you, but rather than becoming irritated, join the game and bargain with a smile! Before going to Vietnam you should do some research for a general idea about prices in Vietnam.

If you are being followed by street vendors and do not wish to make a purchase, often the best course of action is to say "no" politely and firmly and continue on your way. Do not hesitate or linger, as this will encourage the seller to try and engage you further.