



## Some major festivals & events in 2009

### JANUARY - MARCH

#### Tet Nguyen Dan (Lunar New Year Festival)

January 25 - 28, 2009

Tet is the most important of all Vietnamese festivals. Tet is a time for family members to get together and greet a new lunar year in the hope of good fortune for the year. During the run-up to Tet, people busy themselves with shopping for new clothes, food, flowers and miscellaneous ornaments. Houses are whitewashed and decorated anew. Traditional dishes such as *banh chung*, *cu kieu*, etc. are made. At Tet, people visit and extend their best wishes to relatives, friends and neighbours. Fireworks, unicorn dances, music shows and flower fairs are often seen on this occasion. Tet is especially loved by children because they are given *tien li xi* which is "lucky money" put in special small, red envelopes. The oft-repeated phrase for foreign visitors to practise at this time is *Chuc mung nam moi* (Happy New Year).

As the leading company in the field of tourism not only in Ho Chi Minh City but also in the whole country, Saigontourist will organise the following street events on the occasion of the forthcoming Lunar New Year:

#### Street of Flowers

To drape downtown Saigon in unusually striking splendour, a myriad of spring flowers in bloom brought from all over the country will show off their beauty along Nguyen Hue Boulevard, one of

the city's main streets. Besides blossoms, colourful tropical fruit, brilliant light bulbs, odd shapes of ancient bonsai, and twinkling decorations on trees and buildings will also be on display along with exciting pageants from the City Hall to the waterfront to help give the boulevard a stunning gorgeous look.

Venue: *Nguyen Hue Boulevard*

Duration: *January 23 - 27, 2009*

#### Streets of Performances

As part of Tet celebrations, a spectacular street parade will be organized in downtown Saigon to promote Vietnam's high quality products. The parade features adorned cars, unicorn and dragon dances, traditional marching bands, trumpet groups, gymnastic teams and others. In addition, outdoor stage entertainment performances are also held with laser lights, vivid colours and powerful sounds. 23 September Park will play host to an exhibition of favourite Vietnamese goods, cultural performances and meetings between producers and customers.

Venue: *Dong Khoi Street, Nguyen Hue Street, Le Loi Boulevard & 23 September Park*

Duration: *January 23 - 27, 2009*

#### Street of Lights

Being the premier shopping street for trendy Saigonese and foreign visitors, Dong Khoi Street will be dazzling thanks to a new lighting system during the run-up to Tet. The web of bright

colourful bulbs hanging onto trees at Tet will illuminate all the high buildings (hotels, restaurants, shopping malls) and fill them with the magic of the season.

Venue: *Dong Khoi Street*

Duration: *January 2009*

#### Hoi An's Full-Moon Festival

On 14<sup>th</sup> night of each lunar month

This event is held monthly on the 14<sup>th</sup> night of the lunar month in the ancient town of Hoi An. On that night, the streets of Hoi An are all lit up with traditional hand-made silk lanterns in all the colours of the rainbow. Along the streets, traditional local dishes such as *cao lau noodle soup*, *su se pasties*, etc. are put on sale. In front of the houses, old men in traditional costume play chess. Traditional games such as lottery, earthen pot beating, etc. are seen here and there in the town. Folk songs are exchanged between young men and women on boats in the Hoi An River. All of these make the night in Hoi An enchanting and romantic. Recently, in order to please visitors from afar rushing to the town, the festival has an extended schedule on every Saturday night weekly.

#### Perfume Pagoda Pilgrimage

January 31 - April 9, 2009 (from the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the first lunar month to the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the third lunar month, main festival days last from the 15<sup>th</sup> day to the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the second lunar month). Perfume Pagoda or Huong Pagoda, the biggest pilgrimage site in northern Vietnam, is situated in

Huong Son Village, My Duc District, Ha Tay Province, approximately 70km south-west of Hanoi. The Perfume Pagoda Pilgrimage is the longest festival in Vietnam. On this occasion, scores of thousands of pilgrims and visitors come to admire the beautiful landscape, the grottoes and caves, and to implore Buddha for happiness and good luck in the numerous pagodas scattered in the mountains. A sampan ride on the Yen stream surrounded with high mountains, deep forests and rice fields is probably the most memorable experience for visitors and pilgrims alike.

#### Lim Festival (Quan Ho Festival)

February 7, 2009 (13<sup>th</sup> day of the first lunar month)

This festival takes place in Lim Hill, Lim Town, Tien Son District, Bac Ninh Province. It is related to a local tradition which involves *quan ho singing*. *Quan ho* is a type of folk singing originating from the exchange of songs between young men and women. The Lim Festival is also dedicated to Hieu Trung Hau, the founder of *quan ho*. It consists of a procession, *quan ho singing* contests and other games such as swinging, human chess, wrestling, etc.

#### Yen Tu Pagoda Festival

February 04 to April 24, 2009 (from the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the first lunar month until the end of the third lunar month).

About 14km from Uong Bi, Quang Ninh Province, the mountainous region of Yen Tu is a complex of 11 pagodas and nearly 100 shrines and towers. It is also the birthplace of the Buddhist sect of Truc Lam. Being the second biggest pilgrimage site in northern Vietnam for many centuries, it attracts to its yearly ceremonies thousands of pilgrims and tourists who come not only to express their devotion to Buddha and commemorate a heroic episode of the country's history, but also to admire the beautiful landscape of this mountainous area.

### APRIL - JUNE

#### Truong Yen Festival

April 02 - 05, 2009 (from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the third lunar month, the main festival day is on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the third lunar month)

The festival is held in Hoa Lu, the capital of Vietnam in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries during the



Dinh and Le dynasties. This is an important event in the region, attracting many participants. The ceremonial festival commemorates King Dinh Tien Hoang, who reunited the country, and King Le Dai Hanh, who defeated foreign invaders. The three main events comprise the lighting of joss-sticks, a mock battle with reed flags and an exhibition of Chinese characters.

#### Hung Temple Festival

April 02 - 05, 2009 (from 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the third lunar month, main festival day on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the third lunar month)

The Hung Temple Festival is organized at the Hung Kings' Temple on the Nghia Linh Mountain, Hy Cuong Hamlet, Phu Tho Province. This festival commemorates the death anniversary of King Hung I, who founded *Van Lang*, the first name of the Vietnamese nation. The festival offers an opportunity for Vietnamese people to visit their motherland. At present, the Hung Temple Festival is regarded as a national event, with representatives of the central government and the People's Committee of Phu Tho Province taking part in the incense lighting ceremony. It features a procession with traditional *banh chung* and *banh day* cakes, bronze drum beating and other traditional entertainments such as robe climbing, wrestling, swinging, a sword performance, a Xoai folk song contest, etc.

#### National Reunification Day

April 30

This date is the anniversary of the liberation of South Vietnam and national reunification. The event is observed throughout the country, especially in Ho Chi Minh City where cultural activities such as musical performances, art exhibitions and theatrical shows about the victory of April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1975 are organized.

#### Ba Chua Xu Temple Festival

May 17 - 21, 2009 (from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> day of the fourth lunar month, main festival day is on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the fourth lunar month).

This festival is celebrated at Ba Chua Xu Temple on the Sam Mountain in Chau Doc, 2km from the border between Vietnam and Cambodia. The temple is dedicated to Lady Chua Xu, the goddess of the region. The event, also called the Via Ba Festival, attracts a great number of pilgrims and visitors, who take this opportunity to travel and contemplate the breathtaking landscape of An Giang Province. The highlights of the festival are the statue-washing ceremony, the procession of the goddess and the performance of traditional southern singing. Whole roast piglets used as offerings will certainly make good pictures.

### JULY - SEPTEMBER

#### National Day

September 02

Vietnam's National Day commemorates the proclamation of the Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Hanoi

in 1945 by President Ho Chi Minh. The historic event is observed in all parts of the country with official ceremonies, music shows, art exhibitions and especially a military parade (not yearly) in Ho Chi Minh City or on Ba Dinh Square where the proclamation was made.

#### Kate Festival

From the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the seventh month according to Cham calendar (equivalent to 25 September to 5 October by solar calendar)

This is the biggest and the most joyful festival in Ninh Thuan Province, where there is a large Cham population. The ceremony is held at the Po Klong Garai Tower, the Po Rome Tower and the Po Nagar Temple in memory of the national heroes, ancestors, deities, and also of King Po Klong Garai and King Po Rome of the Champa Kingdom. It features a female medium and a male magus washing and changing costumes on the stone statue of King Po Klong Garai, followed by singing and dancing.

### OCTOBER - DECEMBER

#### Mid-Autumn Festival

October 03, 2009

The Mid-Autumn Festival is observed around the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> lunar month throughout the country with moon cakes made of wheat flour and filled with lotus seeds, watermelon seeds, egg yolks, sausages and sugar. It is an occasion for children to fully enjoy themselves with singing, dancing, beating drums, eating pastries and parading paper lanterns of various shapes and colours.

#### Kiep Bac Temple Festival

October 8, 2009 (20<sup>th</sup> day of the eighth lunar month- the death anniversary of Tran Hung Dao)

The Kiep Bac Temple Festival takes place annually in Hung Dao Hamlet, Chi Linh District, Hai Duong Province. The temple was built in dedication to Tran Hung Dao, a general of pre-eminent position under the Tran Dynasty. The festival consists of a welcome ceremony and a naval procession on the Luc Dau River.

#### Oc Om Bok Festival

November 30 and December 01, 2009 (in the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> day and the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the tenth lunar month)

Dedicated to the moon, this ritual ceremony is organized by ethnic Khmer in Soc Trang Province. The ceremony starts when the moon appears and participants pray to the Moon Goddess to bring abundant crops and big catches from the rivers, as well as good health to all the villagers. Offerings of green rice flakes, ripe bananas, fresh coconuts and potatoes are displayed in the pagoda yard. The ceremony winds up with a "ngo" boat race. Ngo boats are a sort of wooden boat curved at both the bow and the stern.