



Vietnam

Key facts & travel tips

Geography & Population

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, shaped like the letter "S" with 330,991 sq. km of land area and 1,000,000 sq. km of seawaters, lies in the eastern part of the Indochina peninsula and shares borders with China to the north, Laos and Cambodia to the west, and the East Sea and Pacific Ocean to the southeast. The country's total length, from the northernmost point to the southernmost point, is 1,650 km. Its width, stretching from east to west, is 600 km at the widest point in the north, 400 km in the south, and 50 km at the narrowest part in the Quang Binh province on the central coast. Hanoi is the capital of Vietnam, and Ho Chi Minh City is the largest city in the country.

There are nearly 4,000 small and large islands, of which Truong Sa and Hoang Sa are the largest archipelagos and Phu Quoc and Con Dao are the largest islands. Vietnam is a transport junction from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean and the country features 3,200 km of coastline bordering the East Sea stretching from Mong Cai in the north to Ha Tien in the south with many spectacular beaches.

Diversified with rivers, mountains, plains, highlands and islands, Vietnam is divided into 3 various regions: The northern region consists of

the northern plain, formed by the Hong and Thai Binh rivers; the northwest mountainous region with various mountains and highlands run from northwest to southwest with Phansipan mount, the highest peak in Indochina with 3,143 m; and the north east region covered with arrow-shaped limestone mountains, of which the Dong Trieu arrow being submerged into the sea, forms the mountain cliffs of Ha Long Bay, also called Bai Tu Long. The Center of Viet Nam is a narrow region, covered with a mixture of mountains (the Truong Son range), hills, rivers and coastal plains. The southern region features some low hills and mountains near Tay Nguyen (Central Highlands) and the western region of Kien Giang province; the Dong Nai river Delta and the Mekong River Delta (the latter is the largest delta in the whole country).

With a population of more than 85 million, Vietnam is the most densely populated country in Southeast Asia and the homeland of 54 ethnic groups (the vast majority of the population is Vietnamese; other ethnic groups include Tay, Thai, Muong, Hoa (Ethnic Chinese), Khmer, Nung, Hmong, Cham, etc.).

Considered as a secured destination, Vietnam with age-old history, diverse cultures, marvelous landscapes, friendly people and significant

improvement in tourism infra-structure has been attracting millions of visitors from every corner of the World.

Culture

A multi-cultural country with a long and proud history of 4,000 years, Vietnam is a fascinating blend of the Orient and the Occident, the old and the new.

Despite the modernization process taking place day and night, villages with traditional customs, festivals, farming methods, folk arts and ancient monuments still play an important role in Vietnam's present-day society. Visitors can discover the idyllic charm of varied scenes of everyday life, from simple peasants in conical hats tilling their paddy fields with rudimentary tools to innocent children riding and tending water buffaloes at sunset or sunrise.

For visitors seeking hill tribe cultures, the presence of different minority groups, e.g. the H'mong, the Thai, the Dao, the Tay, the Nung... in the northern highlands or the K'ho, the Edeh, the M'ngong, the J'rai, the Bahnar... in the central highlands will bring amazement at their simple life style, from primitive villages clinging to mountain sides to traditional customs being kept intact. In addition, the Cham ethnic group in the

coastal plains has made its complex of countless brick towers in My Son a World Heritage.

Vietnamese culinary art, acknowledged a superb cuisine worldwide, is a wonderful balance of yin and yang featured in the harmonious formula of green vegetables and fresh meat seasoned with mild spices. Cooking is seen as an art and some Vietnamese dishes have achieved international fame, including such traditional dishes as noodle soup (pho), pork sausage (gio lua), spring rolls (cha gio or nem rang), and fish balls (cha ca). In addition to Vietnamese food, the larger hotels also serve a wide variety of Continental and Chinese cuisine.

Apart from their rich culture, the warm friendliness of the gentle Vietnamese people also makes travels to Vietnam a well of joy beyond compare.

Language

Vietnamese is the official language of Vietnam. Learning foreign languages, particularly English, is currently popular among young people in Vietnam. English, French, Cantonese and Japanese are spoken by hotel staff. Guides and interpreters speaking English, French, Russian, Japanese, German, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Thai, Italian, Spanish, etc. are available from the Saigontourist Travel Service Co.

Climate & Weather

Vietnam has a tropical monsoon climate that varies significantly from north to south. Each region has its best time for visiting: Hanoi from September to May with a pleasant winter, Hue from March to August with a sunny summer and Ho Chi Minh City with warm weather the whole year round.

- ◆ In the north (Hanoi & its vicinities), winter is from November to April and is characterized by cool damp weather (15-20°C), and summer lasts from May to October and is hot with periods of heavy rain (25 - 28°C).
- ◆ Southern Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City & its vicinities) has a more tropical climate all year round (25 - 30°C) with a dry hot season from December to April and a rainy season from May to November.
- ◆ Northern central Vietnam (from Thanh Hoa to Danang) may have heavy rain from September to February and occasional typhoons along the coast from September to October.
- ◆ Southern central Vietnam (from Quy Nhon to Phan Thiet) is endowed with a long dry season from December to September and a short rainy season from October to November.
- ◆ The highlands have a temperate climate but it is cooler and temperatures can be freezing in winter from December to February. Temperatures may range anywhere from 15-18°C in the central highlands to 7-10°C in the northern highlands with heavy rain from May to November.

CITY/TOWN	HUMIDITY (%)	RAINY SEASON	DRY SEASON	ANNUAL RAINFALL (mm)
Hanoi	83	May-Oct	Nov-Apr	1680
Halong	82	May-Oct	Nov-Apr	1994
Dien Bien	84	Apr-Sep	Oct-Mar	1567
Sapa	87	Mar-Nov	Dec-Feb	2769
Hue	88	Jul-Jan	Feb-Jun	2890
Danang	83	Jul-Jan	Feb-Jun	1974
Quy Nhon	81	Sep-Dec	Jan-Aug	1647
Pleiku	85	May-Oct	Nov-Apr	2684
Dalat	84	Apr-Nov	Dec-Mar	1820
Nha Trang	82	Sep-Dec	Jan-Aug	1441
HCM City	82	May-Nov	Dec-Apr	1979
Can Tho	82	May-Nov	Dec-Apr	1560

The above is not an exact weather forecast. Unseasonable weather can occur, and visitors should pack with a degree of flexibility in mind.

Map of Vietnam

