

What to wear

- ◆ Throughout the year, it is advisable to wear summer clothing: thin clothes in light colors. From December till February, warm clothes are recommended for visits to the northern provinces or the highlands.
- u It is advisable to bring umbrellas and/or raincoats in the rainy season from May to November in southern and northern Vietnam and from August to January in central Vietnam.
- ◆ The wearing of suits for business purposes is now common practice in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Dress should be appropriate at religious sites such as shrines, temples and pagodas.

International air access

Vietnam has four International Airports: Noi Bai (Hanoi), Tan Son Nhat (Ho Chi Minh City) and Danang Airport (Danang).

Direct flights to Noi Bai Airport in Hanoi from the following cities: Bangkok, Beijing, Doha, Frankfurt, Guang Zhou, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Kunming, Moscow, Osaka, Paris, Siem Reap, Singapore, Taipei, Kaohsiung, Tokyo, Vientiane and Seoul.

Airlines currently serving Hanoi: Aeroflot (SU), Air France (AF), All Nippon Airways (NH), Asiana Airlines (OZ), Cathay Pacific Airways (CX), China Airlines (CI), China Southern Airlines (CZ), Eva Air (BR), Hongkong Airlines (...), Japan Airlines (JL), Korean Air (KE), Malaysia Airlines (MH), Lao Airlines (QV), Singapore Airlines (SQ), Thai Airways (TG), Tiger Airways (TR), Uni Air (B7), Vietnam Airlines (VN), Air Asia.

Direct flights to Tan Son Nhat Airport in Ho Chi Minh City from the following cities: Bandar Seri Begawan (Brunei), Bangkok, Busan, Doha, Frankfurt, Fukuoka, Guang Zhou, Hong Kong, Kaohsiung, Taichung, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Melbourne, Moscow, Osaka, Paris, Phnom Penh, San Francisco, Seoul, Siem Reap, Singapore, Sydney, Taipei, Tokyo, Macau, Nanning, Shenzhen and Vientiane.

Airlines currently serving Ho Chi Minh City: Aeroflot (SU), Air France (AF), All Nippon Airways (NH), Asiana Airlines (OZ), Cathay Pacific Airways (CX), China Airlines (CI), China Southern Airlines (CZ), Eva Air (BR), Japan Airlines (JP), Jetstar Asia (3K), Qatar Airways (QR), Korean Air (KE), Lufthansa German Airlines (LH), Malaysia Airlines (MH), Jetstar Pacific (BL), Philippine Airlines (PR), Singapore Airlines (SQ), Shanghai Airlines (FM), Thai Airways (TG), Tiger Airways (TR), Lion air (JT), Bangkok airways (PB), Royal Brunei Airlines (B), United Airlines (UA), Vietnam Airlines (VN), Viva Macau express (ZG), Air Asia, Mandarin Airlines (AE), Air China (CA), Shenzhen Airlines (ZH).

Direct flights to Danang Airport in Danang from the following cities: Bangkok, Singapore, Siem Reap.

Airlines currently serving Danang: PB Air (9Q); Silk Air (MI).

Overland travel (ports of entry & travel distances)

Border crossing into Vietnam is possible from China, Laos and Cambodia. Visitors can pass borders at the following checkpoints:

From China: Vietnam border checkpoint /China border checkpoint

- ◆ Huu Nghi (Lang Son province) / Pinxiang (Guangxi province)
- ◆ Lao Cai (Lao Cai province) / Hekou (Yunnan province)
- ◆ Mong Cai (Quang Ninh province) / Dongxin (Guangxi province)

From Laos: Vietnam border checkpoint / Laos border checkpoint

- ◆ Tay Trang (Dien Bien province) / Muang Mai - Phongsaly Province
- ◆ Na Meo (Thanh Hoa province) / Nam Sooy - Huaphanh Province
- ◆ Nam Can (Nghe An province) / Nam Khan - Xieng Khuang Province
- ◆ Cau Treo (Ha Tinh province) / Nam Pao - Bolikhamxay Province
- ◆ Cha Lo (Quang Binh province) / Naphao - Khammouane Province
- ◆ Lao Bao (Quang Tri province) / Denesavanh- Savannakhet Province
- ◆ Bo Y (Kontum province) / Attapeau - Attapeau province

From Cambodia: Vietnam border checkpoint / Cambodia border checkpoint

- ◆ Le Thanh (Gia Lai province) / An Dong Pech (Ratanakiri province)
- ◆ No Nuê (Binh Phuoc province) / Trapeang Sre
- ◆ Xa Mat (Tay Ninh province) / Trapeang Plong Pir (Kampong Cham province)
- ◆ Moc Bai (Tay Ninh province) / Bavet (Svay Reang province)
- ◆ Dinh Ba (Dong Thap Province) / Pontia Chak Cray (Prey Veng province)
- ◆ Song Tien - by Boat (Dong Thap province) / Kaom Samnoar (Kandal province)
- ◆ Vinh Xuong - by Boat (Chau Doc province) / Kaom Samnoar (Kandal province)
- ◆ Tinh Bien (An Giang province) / Phnom Den (Takeo province)
- ◆ Xa Xia (Kien Giang province) / Loc (Kam Pot province)

Sea ports:

The following sea ports from north to south are used as ports of call for foreign cruise lines such as Norwegian Cruise Line, Crystal Cruises, Hapag Lloyd, Star Cruises, NYK Cruise Line and others: Halong (Halong), Cai Lan (Ha Long), Chan May (Hue), Tien Sa (Danang), Quy Nhon (Quy

Nhon), Nha Trang (Nha Trang), Phu My (Ba Ria - Vung Tau) and Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City).

Passport and Visa information

Each visitor to Vietnam must be in possession of a passport valid for at least six (06) months beyond the completion of his/her trip.

Most nationalities require a valid visa to enter Vietnam, except for the following nationalities:

- Citizens of Kyrgyzstan may enter Vietnam without a visa for not more than 90 days.
- Citizens of the following countries may enter Vietnam without a visa for not more than 30 days: Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.
- Citizens of the Philippines may enter Vietnam without a visa for not more than 21 days.
- Citizens of the following countries may enter Vietnam without a visa for not more than 15 days: Japan, South Korea, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

If visitors book travel arrangements with Saigontourist Travel Service Co. and require Vietnam-entry visa, please kindly send us the following information at least 10 days before travel to Vietnam: the passport details, the arrival date, the point of entry and the Vietnam Embassy (or Vietnam Diplomatic Mission) where visa applicants wish to have visa stamp. Please allow us 5 working days to apply for a letter of visa invitation that will be sent by fax to visa applicant(s). Each applicant must fill out 2 application forms and present these forms and his/her valid passport, 2 passport (4x6) photos and the letter of visa invitation to visa officials at the Vietnam Embassy (or Vietnam Diplomatic Mission) concerned for visa stamping (normally the visa stamp procedure takes 2 full working days).

Vietnam-entry visa can also be issued upon arrival at Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Danang and Hai Phong international airports. Apart from the required information above, please further keep Saigontourist Travel Service Co. well advised of arrival/departure date and flight details. Saigontourist Travel Service Co. will send a letter of visa-on-arrival approval to show to airport staff at the departing airport, confirming that visitors will get visa stamp on arrival in Vietnam.

Vietnam-entry visa can also be issued upon arrival at seaports and international ports of entry & exit for shore excursionists and visitors traveling overland to visit Vietnam.

Entry formalities & Customs regulations

On arrival in Vietnam, you will be asked to fill out one Arrival - Departure declaration form with 6 pages in three sheets. At the passport control counter, this form will be stamped by an immigration official, and one sheet will be returned to you. This sheet must be presented to Customs officials and returned to immigration officials when you leave the country.

A- Entry: Visitors are given duty free allowance for not more than 400 cigarettes, 100 cigars, 500 grams of raw tobacco, 1.5 liter of liquor with above 22 degrees of concentration of alcohol and 2 liters of liquor below 22 degrees.

Personal belongings of a reasonable quantity and small gift items valued at not more than VND5,000,000.00 (equivalent to US\$ 300) are allowed.

Note: There is no limit to the amounts of cash, precious metals and gems that visitors may bring in, but amounts of over US\$ 7,000 and VND 15,000,000 and 300 grams of gold must be declared.

The following items are prohibited:

- Weapons, explosives and inflammable objects.
- Opium and other narcotics.
- Cultural materials unsuitable to Vietnamese society.
- Infected animals, plants or foodstuffs.

B- Exit: Goods of commercial nature and articles of high value require export permits issued by the customs authorities. Antiques, some precious stones and animals listed in Vietnam's red book may not be brought out of the country.

Currency

The local currency is the Dong (abbreviated "d" or VND). Bank notes are 200d, 500d, 1000d, 2,000d, 5,000d, 10,000d, 20,000d, 50,000d, 100,000d, 200,000d & 500,000d. Dong coins include 200d, 500d, 1000d, 2000d & 5000d. The official exchange rates (as of August 2008) are approximately VND16,710 to one US Dollar and VND25,790 to one Euro.

Money and travelers' cheques, particularly US Dollars, can be exchanged at banks, hotels and authorized money-exchangers. It is advisable to carry US Dollar bills in small denominations.

Credit cards are generally only accepted in major hotels, and in some up-market shops and restaurants in major cities. ATM facilities are readily available now in major cities.

National holidays

January 1: International New Year Day

January 26-29, 2009: Lunar New Year (TET)

April 30: Saigon Liberation Day

April 4, 2009: King HUNG's Anniversary

May 1: International Labour Day

September 2: National Day

Health

No vaccinations are presently required for visitors to enter Vietnam. However, it is advisable that precautionary measures be taken against cholera, malaria, hepatitis A & B, typhoid and tuberculosis.

Although international medical centers are available in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, they can

be expensive for emergency and/or intensive care. Therefore, health and emergency medical insurance prior to visiting Vietnam is highly recommended.

Clinics and hospitals with qualified Vietnamese and foreign doctors to treat foreign patients:

- Hanoi:

Viet Duc Hospital

40 Trang Thi St., Hoan Kiem District
Tel: (84-4) 8253531

Asia Emergency Assistance

31 Hai Ba Trung St., Hoan Kiem Dist.,
Tel: (84-4) 9340555

- Ho Chi Minh City:

Columbia International Healthcare

08 Alexandre de Rhodes St., District 1
Tel: (84-8) 8238455

Asia Emergency Assistance

65 Nguyen Du St., District 1
Tel: (84-8) 8298520

FV Hospital

6 Nguyen Luong Bang Street, Tan Phu Ward, District 7, Ho Chi Minh City
Tel: (84-8) 4113333

Ho Chi Minh City Family Medical Practice

Diamond Plaza
34 Le Duan St., Dist. 1, Ho Chi Minh City
Tel.: (84-8) 8227848

Food:

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.

Security

- ◆ In big cities, it is advisable not to bring along valuables while going shopping or sightseeing.
- ◆ It is dispensable to give alms to beggars or to buy souvenirs from street vendors.
- ◆ Foreign currencies should be exchanged at banks or authorized exchange bureaus. Do not exchange money in the street.
- ◆ It is advisable to ride on pedicabs or "honda-om" only after agreeing on the fare.

Film and developing

Fresh negative film is widely available. Popular brands are Fuji, Kodak and Konica. Positive colour print film is only obtainable in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi.

- ◆ One-hour service photo shops are ubiquitous in tourist areas. Positive film can be

processed and printed only in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi.

- ◆ Digital cards can be printed and made CD burning only in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi.

Internet

Internet service is popular in most cities. Visitors can access the internet at hotels, internet cafes or computer service centers. The following websites provide useful information about Vietnam: www.vietnamtourism.com, www.saigontourist.net, www.saigontourist.com, www.saigontimes.com.vn, www.vneconomy.com.vn, etc...

Shopping

The following items are preferred by foreign travelers:

- Carved wooden furniture, rattan furniture, fine lacquer ware and fine ceramics. They can be shipped home on request.
- Traditional Vietnamese hand-made silk dresses (ao dai), kimonos and suits. They can be made to measure in 1 day or half a day.
- Embroideries, embroidered pictures, etc.
- Simulated antiques, old watches, Zippo lighters, etc.
- Copies of famous paintings.

Local markets, supermarkets and department stores are plentiful in major cities, where visitors can find almost anything from simple gifts and souvenirs to sophisticated electronic products.

Other useful tips

- ◆ Business hours: (GMT + 7)
 - Offices: 08:00 a.m to 12:00 a.m and 01:00 p.m to 05:00 p.m, closed on Saturdays & Sundays.
 - Banks: 08:00 a.m to 03:00 p.m, closed on Saturdays & Sundays.
- ◆ Airport tax (international and domestic flights): included in airfares.
- ◆ There are no sky train and subway in Vietnam. Cyclos (pedicabs/ rickshaws) are not allowed in most major cities, except tourist cyclos. Taxis and city buses are popular. The taxi fare is around US\$ 0.40 - 0.50/km.
- ◆ Electrical current: 110-220 volts A.C.
- ◆ Long distance calls should be made at post offices, hotels or telephone booths (phone cards are available at post offices). Postcards and stamps are available at all post offices in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.
- ◆ A tip for good service might be about 5% of the bill.
- ◆ Bottled water and mineral water are obtainable at any shops in most cities. It is advisable to drink boiled water and not to drink ice and tap water.