



Vietnam

84 / POP 94.3 MILLION

Includes ➔

Hanoi	816
Halong Bay	831
Sapa	838
Dien Bien Phu	841
Hue	849
Danang	859
Hoi An	863
Nha Trang	869
Mui Ne	875
Dalat	878
Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)	882
Mekong Delta	894

Why Go?

A kaleidoscope of dazzling colours and subtle shades, limestone highlands and endless rice paddies, full-on cities and laid-back beach resorts, deeply moving war sites and grand colonial-era architecture – Vietnam has a unique appeal.

The nation is a budget traveller's dream, with inexpensive transport, outstanding street food, good-value accommodation and *bia hoi* – perhaps the world's cheapest beer.

Nature has gifted Vietnam soaring mountains in the north, tropical islands in the south and a sensational, curvaceous coastline of ravishing sandy beaches. Travelling here you'll witness children riding buffalo, see the impossibly intricate textiles of hill-tribe communities, taste the super-fresh and incredibly subtle flavours of Vietnamese cuisine and hear the buzz of a million motorbikes.

This is a dynamic nation on the move, where life is lived at pace. Prepare yourself for the ride of your life.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Minh Thuy's (p826)
- ➔ Hill Station Signature Restaurant (p841)
- ➔ Nu Eatery (p867)
- ➔ The Racha Room (p889)
- ➔ Lac Canh Restaurant (p873)

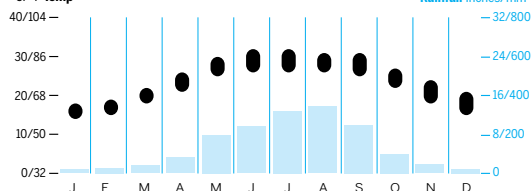
Best Beaches

- ➔ Phu Quoc (p897)
- ➔ An Bang (p868)
- ➔ Mui Ne (p875)
- ➔ Phu Thuan (p859)
- ➔ Bai Dai (p874)

When to Go

Hanoi

°C/°F Temp



Dec–Mar Expect cool weather north of Hue as the winter monsoon brings cloud, mist and drizzle.

Apr Danang's riverfront explodes with colour and noise during the city's fireworks festival.

Jul & Aug Perfect beach time on the central coastline, with balmy sea and air temperatures.

Don't Miss

Northern Vietnam comprises one of the world's most impressive limestone landmasses, a vast swathe of spectacular scenery that has been eroded into ethereal rock formations. The myriad pinnacle-like islands of Halong Bay are one superb example of this spectacular karst scenery, or head to neighbouring Lan Ha Bay for less crowds.

Near Ninh Binh, the jagged limestone mountains of Tam Coc are a surreal sight, while further south the extraordinary Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park is home to three gargantuan cave systems (including the world's largest cave) set in tropical forest studded with towering peaks.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Begin in Hanoi, immerse yourself in Old Quarter life and tour the capital's sights. Then it's a day trip to Halong Bay to lap up the surreal karst scenery. Move down to Hue to explore the imperial citadel and then shift to Hoi An for two days of foodie treats, old-world ambience and beach time. Finish off with a night in Ho Chi Minh City.

One Month

Check out the capital, seeing the sights and experiencing Hanoi's unique street life. Tour incomparable Halong Bay, followed by more epic scenery in the highlands around Sapa and Bac Ha. Then it's the extraordinary caves of Phong Nha. Hue, city of pagodas and tombs, beckons next, followed by booming Danang and charming Hoi An. Continue south via the beach resort of Nha Trang, genteel Dalat and kitesurfing capital Mui Ne before hitting high-energy Ho Chi Minh City. After a tour of the Mekong Delta, enjoy some beach bliss in lovely Phu Quoc before returning to HCMC.

Essential Food & Drink

White rose An incredibly delicate, subtly flavoured shrimp dumpling topped with crispy onions.

Pho Rice-noodle soup. A good *pho bo* (beef noodle soup) hinges on the broth, which is made from beef bones boiled for hours in water with shallots, ginger, fish sauce, black cardamom, star anise and cassia.

Banh xeo This giant crispy, chewy rice crêpe is made in 12in or 14in skillets or woks and amply filled with pork, shrimp, mung beans and bean sprouts.

Bia hoi 'Fresh' or draught beer brewed daily, without additives or preservatives, to be drunk within hours.

Vietnamese coffee Often served iced, with condensed milk.

AT A GLANCE

Currency Dong (d)

Language Vietnamese

Money ATMs are widespread

Visas Complicated, see p910

Mobile phones Prepay SIM cards available for a few dollars

Fast Facts

Area 329,566 sq km

Capital Hanoi

Emergency Police ☎113

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	16,041d
Cambodia	10,000r	55,829d
Euro	€1	24,495d
Laos	10,000K	27,528d
UK	UK£1	34,341d
US	US\$1	22,316d

Daily Costs

Budget room US\$8–20

Filling meal US\$2–4

Beer from US\$0.30

Short taxi ride US\$2

Entering the Country

Fly into Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City, or cross at one of the many land borders with Cambodia, China and Laos.