



Mekong Delta

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Best Places to Eat

- » Dinh Cao Night Market (p389)
- » Bassac Restaurant (p399)
- » Tan Phat (p396)
- » Noi Ben Tre (p360)

Best Places to Stay

- » Kim Tho Hotel (p369)
- » La Veranda (p387)
- » Victoria Can Tho Resort (p369)
- » Bamboo Cottages (p388)

Why Go?

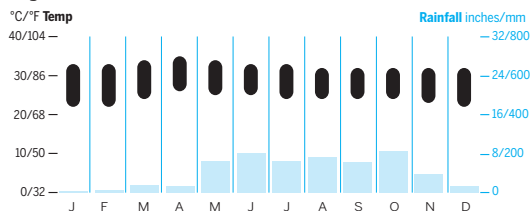
The 'rice bowl' of Vietnam, the Mekong Delta is a landscape carpeted in a dizzying variety of greens. It's also a water world where boats, houses, restaurants and even markets float upon the innumerable rivers, canals and streams that flow through the region like arteries.

Although the area is primarily rural, it is one of the most densely populated regions in Vietnam and nearly every hectare is intensively farmed. Visitors can experience southern charm in riverside cities where few tourists venture, sample fruits traded in the colourful floating markets, or dine on home-cooked delicacies before overnighting as a homestay guest. There are also bird sanctuaries, impressive Khmer pagodas and, inevitably, war remnants.

Those seeking a tropical hideaway will find it on Phu Quoc, an island lined with white-sand beaches and crisscrossed with empty dirt roads, ideal for motorbike explorations.

When to Go

My Tho



Nov The dry season starts, with Khmer longboat festivals in Tra Vinh and Soc Trang.

Jan While they shiver up north, Phu Quoc's beaches stay temperate and dry.

Mar A March visit avoids the Tet madness, and the summer heat and rain.

History

The Mekong Delta was once part of the Khmer kingdom, and was the last region of modern-day Vietnam to be annexed and settled by the Vietnamese. Cambodians, mindful that they controlled the area until the 18th century, still call the delta Kampuchea Krom, or 'Lower Cambodia'.

The Khmer Rouge attempted to reclaim the area by raiding Vietnamese villages and

killing their inhabitants. This provoked the Vietnamese army to invade Cambodia on 25 December 1978 and oust the Khmer Rouge from power.

Most of the current inhabitants of the Mekong Delta are ethnic Vietnamese, but there are also significant populations of ethnic Chinese and Khmer, as well as a smaller Cham community. For more information on the story of the Khmer people



Mekong Delta Highlights

1 Witnessing the bustling commerce of the floating markets on a boat trip from **Can Tho** (p366)

2 Meandering along the **canals** (p356) between My Tho and Ben Tre, then stepping ashore a lush river island to feast on fresh fish

3 Kicking up red dirt during a motorbike ride to the isolated corners of **Phu Quoc Island** (p381)

4 Washing off said dirt at any of Phu Quoc Island's white-sand **beaches** (p381)

5 Experiencing river life up close and personal at

one of the many **homestays** (p367) around Vinh Long

6 Seeking out striking Khmer pagodas in **Tra Vinh** (p360)

7 Feeling like a minor celebrity in remote foreigner-free cities such as **Ca Mau** (p376)