



# Mekong Delta

## Includes ➔

My Tho.....	350
Ben Tre.....	353
Tra Vinh.....	355
Vinh Long.....	357
Can Tho.....	360
Ca Mau.....	367
Rach Gia.....	370
Phu Quoc Island .....	372
Ha Tien.....	382
Chau Doc.....	388
Long Xuyen.....	393
Cao Lanh.....	394
Sa Dec.....	397

## Off the Beaten Track

- ➔ Phu Quoc National Park (p375)
- ➔ Bang Lang (p365)
- ➔ Xeo Quyt Forest (p396)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Nam Bo Boutique Hotel (p363)
- ➔ La Veranda (p378)
- ➔ Xoai Hotel (p360)
- ➔ Bamboo Cottages (p380)
- ➔ Victoria Chau Doc Hotel (p390)

## Why Go?

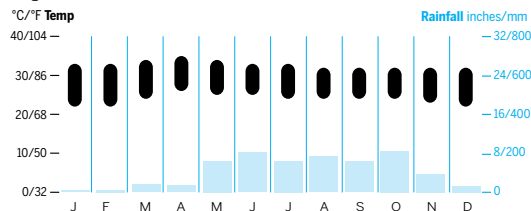
The 'rice bowl' of Vietnam, the Mekong Delta is a landscape carpeted in a dizzying variety of greens and slashed with mighty waterways. It's a water world where boats, houses, restaurants and even markets float upon the innumerable rivers, canals and streams that flow through the region like arteries. At times you can quite simply lose sight of land.

The area is both riparian and deeply rural, but it's also one of Vietnam's most densely populated regions, with nearly every hectare intensively farmed. Visitors can dwell on southern charm in little-visited riverside cities, sample fruits traded in the colourful floating markets, or feast on home-cooked delicacies before overnighting as a homestay guest. Mangrove forests, sacred Khmer pagodas and off-the-beaten-track attractions round out the picture.

Those seeking tropical hideaways can come ashore on Phu Quoc, a divine forested island fringed with white-sand beaches and crisscrossed with empty dirt roads that simply beg for motorbike exploration.

## 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.



## Mekong Delta Highlights

- 1 Join in the throngs amid the bustling commerce of the floating markets on a boat trip from **Can Tho** (p360).
- 2 Meander along the **canals** between My Tho and Ben Tre (p350), then step ashore a lush river island to feast on fresh fish.
- 3 Kick up red dirt on a motorbike ride to the far-flung corners of **Phu Quoc Island** (p372).
- 4 Watch the sun set across the Gulf of Thailand from a **Phu Quoc Island beach** (p372).
- 5 Witness a forest of trees entirely full of storks at breathtaking **Bang Lang** (p365).
- 6 Get a taste of rural river life at one of the many **homestays** (p359) around Vinh Long.

## History

Once part of the Khmer kingdom, the Mekong Delta 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 today's inhabitants of the Mekong Delta are ethnic Vietnamese, but significant populations of ethnic Chinese and Khmer, as well as a smaller Cham community, also exist.

When the government introduced collective farming to the delta in 1975, produc-