



Mekong Delta

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Bassac Restaurant (p408)
- ➔ Itaca Resto Lounge (p397)
- ➔ L'Escale (p382)
- ➔ Nem Nuong Thanh Van (p381)
- ➔ Spice House at Cassia Cottage (p396)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Murray Guesthouse (p407)
- ➔ Mango Home Riverside (p372)
- ➔ Island Lodge (p370)
- ➔ Victoria Can Tho Resort (p381)
- ➔ Bamboo Cottages & Restaurant (p396)

Why Go?

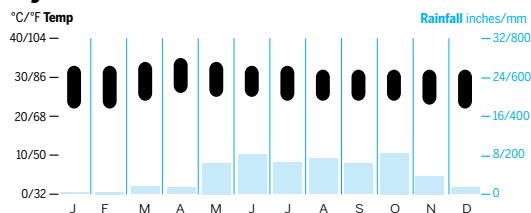
The 'rice bowl' of Vietnam, the delta is carpeted in a dizzying variety of greens. It's a water world that moves to the rhythms of the mighty Mekong, where boats, houses and markets float upon the innumerable rivers, canals and streams that criss-cross the landscape like arteries.

The bustling commerce of its towns contrasts sharply with the languid, almost soporific pace of life in the countryside. Here buffaloes wallow in rice paddies, coconut- and fruit-laden boats float slowly along the mud-brown waters, and two-wheeled exploration of the narrow lanes is amply rewarded with a true taste of rural hospitality (and delicious river fish).

Elsewhere, mangrove forests teem with a wealth of bird life and bristle with the remains of Viet Cong bunkers, ornate Khmer pagodas and Buddhist temples reach for the sky, while off-coast islands offer white-sand beaches and tropical hideaways to some, pirate havens to others.

When to Go

My Tho



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.

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



Mekong Delta Highlights

- 1** Joining the throngs amid the bustling floating markets on a boat trip from **Can Tho** (p379).
- 2** Kicking up red dirt on a motorbike ride and watching a sunset on **Phu Quoc Island's** (p389) many beaches.
- 3** Cycling through idyllic countryside to **Sam**

Mountain (p409) from Chau Doc.

- 4** Meandering along the canals between **My Tho** (p368) and **Ben Tre** (p372), then stepping ashore to feast on fresh fish.
- 5** Watching clouds of storks and egrets at one of the excellent birdwatching sites, such as **Tra Su Bird Sanctuary** (p409).

- 6** Getting a taste of rural river life up at one of the many homestays around **Vinh Long** (p378).
- 7** Ducking into old Viet Cong bunkers and boating around enchanted waterways at **Xeo Quyt Forest** (p415).
- 8** Paying your respects to massacre remains at **Ba Chuc** (p404).

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 cen-

tury, still call the delta Kampuchea Krom (p371), 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