



# Southwest Highlands

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Le Rabelais (p296)
- ➔ Thanh Tram (p302)
- ➔ Restaurant Ichi (p295)
- ➔ Ming Dynasty (p296)
- ➔ Dakbla's Restaurant (p310)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Villa Vista (p294)
- ➔ Ana Mandara Villas Dalat (p294)
- ➔ Forest Floor Lodge (p300)
- ➔ Coffee Tour Resort (p301)
- ➔ Konklor Hotel (p309)

## Why Go?

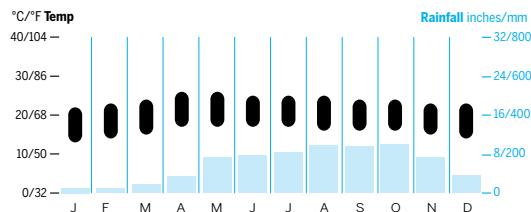
Few parts of Vietnam stir the imagination with the lure of adventure quite like the highlands. The ribbon that is the Ho Chi Minh Hwy winds its scenic way past coffee plantations, pine-studded mountains, rice paddies with their wallowing buffalo, enormous reed-covered lakes and peaceful hill-tribe villages, laying down the challenge of a two-wheeled journey.

Protected jungle hosts singing gibbons, pygmy loris, wild elephants and incredible numbers of birds. Active travellers take to the mountains, forests, waterfalls and rivers in biking, hiking, rafting and abseiling adventures, and the former French hill station of Dalat beguiles with its cool climate, the palaces of the last emperor of Vietnam and bars for after-dark thrills.

As varied as the land, the people of the highlands are a great mix of cultures. If you're lucky, you may sleep in a Bahnar *rong* or watch the Jarai 'feed' the graves of their dead.

## When to Go

### Dalat



**Mar** Great for the annual Coffee Festival in Buon Ma Thuot or elephant races in nearby Don.

**Oct** Autumn in Dalat, the perfect time for exploring or adrenaline-pumping activities.

**Dec** Trek or cycle through Cat Tien National Park in cooler times, visiting the wild gibbons.

## Southwest Highlands Highlights

1 Cranking up the adrenaline rate with a hike, biking trip, white-water rafting, or canyoning or climbing adventure in the hills around **Dalat** (p289).

2 Firing up a motorbike and exploring the twists and turns of the **Ho Chi Minh Highway** (p304).

3 Discovering the hill-tribe customs and culture in Bahnar, Sedang and Jarai villages around **Kon Tum** (p307).

4 Tracking down wild gibbons in the early morning, then seeking out crocodiles by torchlight in **Cat Tien National Park** (p298).

5 Viewing the watery majesty of **Dambri Falls** (p298).

6 Hiking and boating to the minority villages of **Lak Lake** (p300), the biggest lake in the highlands.

7 Going birding, hiking and elephant washing at **Yok Don National Park** (p303).

