



Vietnam

📍 84 / POP 92.5 MILLION

Includes →

Hanoi	50
Halong Bay	68
Sapa	77
Hue	85
Danang	97
Hoi An	100
Dalat	122
Ho Chi Minh City	129
Mekong Delta	145

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Morning Glory (p106)
- ➔ Hill Station Signature Restaurant (p80)
- ➔ Hanoi's street-food kitchens (p60)
- ➔ May (p140)
- ➔ Lac Canh Restaurant (p115)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Mia Resort Nha Trang (p114)
- ➔ An Bang Seaside Village (p105)
- ➔ Sunny Sea (p113)
- ➔ Sofitel Metropole Hotel (p58)
- ➔ Madame Cuc 127 (p137)

Why Go?

Astonishingly exotic and utterly compelling, Vietnam is a kaleidoscope of vivid colours and subtle shades, grand architecture and deeply moving war sites.

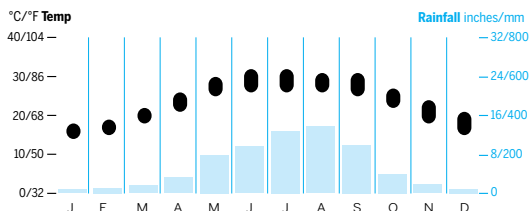
Nature has blessed Vietnam with soaring mountains in the north, emerald-green rice paddies in the Mekong Delta and a sensational, curvaceous coastline with ravishing sandy beaches. Travelling here you'll witness children riding buffalo, see the impossibly intricate textiles of hill-tribe communities, hear the buzz of a million motorbikes and eat some of the world's greatest food.

Costwise, it's simply outstanding value: dining out is amazingly affordable, *bia hoi* must be the world's cheapest beer and spa prices are a complete bargain.

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

When to Go

Hanoi



Dec-Mar

Cool weather north of Hue; the winter monsoon brings cloud and drizzle.

Apr-May

On balance perhaps the best time to tour the whole nation.

Jul-Aug

High season on the central coast, with balmy temperatures.

Connections

Vietnam shares a long border with Laos, with seven possible crossings. Visas for Laos are available at all border posts for most nationalities for between US\$30 and US\$40, payable in US dollars (other currencies may be accepted too). A passport photo is also required. Crossing from Laos to Vietnam, you must have a visa organised in advance; visas are not available at the border.

There are five main border crossings between Vietnam and Cambodia and many other minor ones. Cambodian visas are available on arrival (US\$20) for most nationalities (photo required). Vietnamese visas must be arranged in advance.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Begin in **Hanoi**, immersing yourself in Old Quarter life and touring the capital's sights and famous museums for a couple of days. Then make a day-trip to **Halong Bay** to lap up the surreal karst scenery from the deck of a boat, ideally with a cold beer in hand. Move down to **Hue** to explore the imperial citadel and any number of wonderful pagodas on the banks of the Perfume River. 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 (HCMC)**.

Two Weeks

Acclimatise in the capital, **Hanoi**. See the sights, then wine and dine. Tour incomparable **Halong Bay** by boat, then take in the extraordinary caves and karsts of **Phong Nha**. **Hue**, city of pagodas and tombs, beckons next before pushing on to charming **Hoi An**. Rest up here, and hit lovely An Bang beach nearby if the climate is benign. Party in **Nha Trang**, Vietnam's beach king, then continue south to idyllic **Mui Ne Beach**. Round things off Saigon-style in Vietnam's liveliest metropolis, **HCMC**.

Internet Resources

- ➔ **Vietnam Coracle** (vietnamcoracle.com) Excellent independent travel advice.
- ➔ **The Word** (www.wordhcmc.com) Based in HCMC, this superb magazine has comprehensive coverage and features.
- ➔ **Thanh Nien News** (www.thanhniennews.com) Government-approved news, but includes diverse and interesting content.
- ➔ **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com/vietnam) Destination information, hotel bookings, traveller forum and more.

NEED TO KNOW

- ➔ **Currency** Dong (đ)
- ➔ **Language** Vietnamese
- ➔ **Money** ATMs are widespread
- ➔ **Visas** Required in advance for most nationalities
- ➔ **Mobile phones** Prepay SIM cards for a few dollars

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Area** 329,566 sq km
- ➔ **Capital** Hanoi
- ➔ **Emergency** Police ☎113

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	19,045đ
Cambodia	10,000r	53,250đ
Euro	€1	28,960đ
Zone		
Laos	10,000K	26,330đ
Thailand	100B	65,105đ
UK	£1	35,110đ
USA	US\$1	21,085đ

Set Your Budget

- ➔ **Budget hotel room** US\$8–18
- ➔ **Memorable restaurant meal** US\$8–20
- ➔ **Beer in bar** from US\$1
- ➔ **Short taxi ride** US\$2