



Vietnam

POP 95.3 MILLION / 🇻🇳 84

Includes ➔

Hanoi	49
Halong Bay	71
Sapa	81
Hue	89
Danang	102
Hoi An	106
Dalat	128
Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)	134
Mekong Delta	152

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Chim Sao (p62)
- ➔ Hanh Restaurant (p95)
- ➔ Tim Ho Wan (p62)
- ➔ Banh Mi Huynh Hoa (p145)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Tam Coc Garden (p69)
- ➔ Sofitel Metropole Hotel (p58)
- ➔ Mui Ne Backpacker Village (p123)
- ➔ Mia Resort Nha Trang (p120)

Why Go?

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

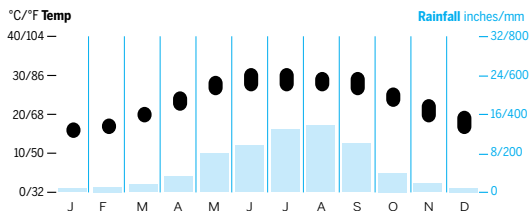
Nature has blessed Vietnam with soaring mountains in the north, emerald-green rice paddies in the Mekong Delta and a sensational, curvaceous coastline with ravishing sandy beaches. Travelling here you'll witness children riding buffalo, see the impossibly intricate textiles of hill-tribe communities, 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* (draught beer) 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 nation as a whole.

Jul–Aug

High season on the central coast, with balmy temperatures.

HANOI

Sights

Vietnam's capital races to make up for time lost to the ravages of war and a government that as recently as the 1990s kept the outside world at bay. Its streets surge with scooters vying for right of way amid the din of constantly blaring horns, and all around layers of history reveal periods of French and Chinese occupation – offering a glimpse into the resilience of ambitious, proud Hanoians.

Negotiate a passage past the ubiquitous knock-off merchants and you'll find the original streets of the Old Quarter. Defiant real-deal farmers hawk their wares, while city folk breakfast on noodles, practise t'ai chi at dawn on the shores of Hoan Kiem Lake, or play chess with goateed grandfathers.

Dine on the wild and wonderful at every corner, sample market wares, uncover an evolving arts scene, then sleep soundly in a little luxury for very little cost. Meet the people, delve into the past and witness the awakening of a Hanoi on the move.

Old Quarter

Hanoi's historic heart, 'The Old Quarter', is home to more than 1000 years of trade, commerce and activity, with no signs of slowing down. Although its name tends to evoke images of ancient lamp-lit streets lined with the wooden storefronts of traditional artisans, merchants and craftspeople, you'll find the reality of the Old Quarter more gritty than romantic. In spite of this, the Old Quarter is what Hanoi is all about and adjusting your expectations will help you make the most of your time here.

Bach Ma Temple BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Den Bach Ma; Map p60; cnr P Hang Buom & P Hang Giay; ☉8-11am & 2-5pm Tue-Sun) **FREE** In the heart of the Old Quarter, the small Bach Ma Temple is said to be the oldest temple in the city, though much of the current structure dates from the 18th century and a shrine to Confucius was added in 1839. It was originally built by Emperor Ly Thai To in the 11th century to honour a white horse that guided him to this site, where he chose to construct his city walls.

Pass through the wonderful old wooden doors of the pagoda to see a statue of the legendary white horse, as well as a beautiful red-lacquered funeral palanquin.

Memorial House HISTORIC BUILDING

(Ngoi Nha; Map p60; 87 P Ma May; 5000d; ☉9am-noon & 1-5pm) One of the Old Quarter's best-restored properties, this traditional merchants' house is sparsely but beautifully decorated, with rooms set around two courtyards and filled with fine furniture. Note the high steps between rooms, a traditional design incorporated to stop the flow of bad energy around the property.

There are crafts and trinkets for sale here, including silver jewellery, basketwork and Vietnamese teasetts, and there's usually a calligrapher or other craftsman at work too.

Dong Xuan Market MARKET

(Cho Dong Xuan; Map p60; cnr P Hang Khoai & P Dong Xuan; ☉7am-9pm) The largest covered market in Hanoi was originally built by the French in 1889 and almost completely destroyed by fire in 1994. Almost everything you can think of from fresh (and live) produce to cheap clothing, souvenirs, consumer goods and traditional arts and crafts can be found inside.

Long Bien Bridge BRIDGE

(Cau Long Bien; Map p52) **FREE** A symbol of the tenacity and resilience of the Hanoian people, the Long Bien Bridge (built between 1899 and 1902) was bombed on several occasions during the American War, and on each, quickly repaired by the Vietnamese. Designed by Gustave Eiffel (of Eiffel Tower fame) the bridge, used by trains, mopeds and pedestrians, is undergoing reconstruction to restore its original appearance. It's colourfully illuminated at night.

Around Hoam Kiem Lake

Hoa Lo Prison Museum HISTORIC BUILDING

(Map p56; ☎04-3824 6358; cnr P Hoa Lo & P Hai Ba Trung; adult/child 30,000d/free; ☉8am-5pm) This thought-provoking site is all that remains of the former Hoa Lo Prison, ironically nicknamed the 'Hanoi Hilton' by US prisoners of war (POWs) during the American War. Most exhibits relate to the prison's use up to the mid-1950s, focusing on the Vietnamese struggle for independence from France. A gruesome relic is the ominous French guillotine, used to behead Vietnamese revolutionaries. There are also displays focusing on the American pilots who were incarcerated at Hoa Lo during the American War.

These pilots include Pete Peterson (the first US ambassador to a unified Vietnam