



VIETNAM

TOP SIGHTS, AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES



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Welcome to Vietnam

A land of staggering natural beauty and cultural complexities, of dynamic megacities and hill-tribe villages, stupendous beaches and towering mountains, Vietnam is Asia at its most exotic and compelling.

Self-confident and fast-developing, Vietnam is a country going places. Economic progress is booming in the country's metropolises, where the pace of change is intoxicating. Here ancient, labyrinthine trading quarters of still-thriving craft industries are juxtaposed with grand colonial mansions from the French era, all overseen from the sky bars of 21st-century glass-and-steel high-rises.

Away from the urban centres, you'll find unforgettable experiences everywhere. There's the sublime: gazing over a surreal seascape of limestone islands from the deck of a traditional junk in Halong Bay.

The inspirational: exploring the world's most spectacular cave systems in Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park. The comical: watching a moped loaded with honking pigs weave a wobbly route along a country lane. And the contemplative: witnessing a solitary grave in a cemetery of thousands of war victims.

Take time to savour Vietnam's incredibly subtle, flavoursome national cuisine on a street-food tour or attend a cooking class. Scoot around the rural back roads that fringe the historic old trading port of Hoi An or hike the evergreen hills of Sapa. And for horizontal 'me' time, you'll find outstanding spas – from marble temples of treatments, lotions and potions, to simple, inexpensive family-run massage salons.

“...you'll find unforgettable experiences everywhere.”



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Plan Your Trip

Vietnam's Top 12

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Hoi An

Temple-rich trading port and culinary mecca

Vietnam's most civilised and cosmopolitan town, this beautiful ancient port is bursting with gourmet restaurants, hip bars and cafes, quirky boutiques and expert tailors. Immerse yourself in history in the warren-like lanes of the Old Town, and tour the temples and pagodas. Dine like an emperor on a peasant's budget. Then hit glorious An Bang Beach and bike the back roads. Yes, Hoi An (p134) has it all.

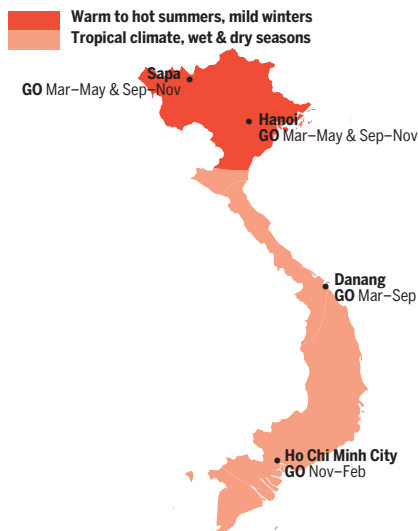
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Plan Your Trip

Need to Know



When to Go



High Season (Jul & Aug)

- Prices increase by up to 50% by the coast; book hotels well in advance.
- All Vietnam, except the far north, is hot and humid, with the summer monsoon bringing downpours.

Shoulder (Dec-Mar)

- During the Tet festival, the whole country is on the move and prices rise.
- North of Nha Trang can get cool weather. Expect chilly conditions in the north.
- In the far south, clear skies and sunshine are the norm.

Low Season (Apr-Jun, Sep-Nov)

- Perhaps the best time to tour the whole nation.
- Typhoons can lash the central and northern coastline until November.

Currency

Dong (d)

Language

Vietnamese

Visas

Some nationalities need a visa in advance for all visits, some don't. The standard length of stay for tourist visas is 30 days; for visa-exempt nationalities it is 15 days.

Money

ATMs are found throughout the country, even in small towns. Cash is king but debit and credit cards can be used in many hotels.

Mobile Phones

To avoid roaming charges, local SIM cards can be used in most European, Asian and Australian (and many North American) phones.

Time

Vietnam is seven hours ahead of GMT/UTC.