



Vietnam

Includes »

Hanoi	60
Halong Bay	79
Sapa	91
Huế	95
Hoi An	107
Mui Ne	123
Con Dao Islands	127
Central Highlands	129
Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)	135
Mekong Delta	150
Understand Vietnam	160
Directory A-Z	165
Getting There & Away	173
Getting Around	174

Best Places to Eat »

- » Morning Glory (p112)
- » Hanoi's street-food kitchens (p69)
- » Cuc Gach Quan (p142)
- » Veranda (p121)

Best Places to Stay

- » Sofitel Metropole Hotel (p66)
- » Full Moon Resort (p124)
- » Pilgrimage Hotel (p97)
- » Phong Nha Homestay (p101)

Why Go?

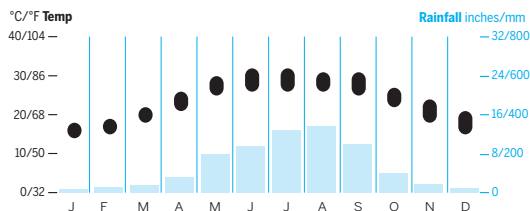
If there's one country in Southeast Asia that everyone has heard about before they discover the region, it's Vietnam. Of course, such infamy wasn't always for the right reasons, but that's history. This is the new Vietnam and it's one of the most intoxicating destinations on earth. It's a kaleidoscope of vivid colours and subtle shades, of exotic sights and curious sounds, of 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 blessed 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.

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 Huế; 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

Ho Chi Minh City Airport Taxi to centre 100,000d, around 30 minutes; bus (Route 152) 4000d, every 15 minutes, 6am–6pm, around 40 minutes.

Hanoi Airport Taxi to centre 300,000d, around one hour; Vietnam Airlines minibus US\$3, every 30 minutes.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Begin in **Hanoi**, immerse yourself in Old Quarter life and tour the capital's sights and its famous museums for a couple of days. Then it's 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 **Hué** 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**. **Hué**, city of pagodas and tombs, beckons next before pushing on to charming **Hoi An**. Rest up here. Party in **Nha Trang**, Vietnam's beach king, then continue south to idyllic **Mui Ne Beach** and hit lovely An Bang beach nearby if the climate is benign. Round things off Saigon-style in Vietnam's liveliest metropolis, **HCMC**.

What to Take

- » Calculator – for all those tricky sums; the Vietnamese currency is notoriously hard to fathom.
- » Mobile phone – get yourself a local SIM card and domestic calls and international texts (SMS) cost next to nothing.
- » Earplugs – sleep deeper in the cities with every traveller's best friend.
- » Hiking boots – ideal for tackling both tough highland trails and rough city streets. It's best to bring your own as large sizes are hard to find.

NEED TO KNOW

- » **Currency** Dong (d)
- » **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
- » **Country Code** 84
- » **Population** 90 million

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	21,700d
Canada	C\$1	20,600d
Europe	€1	28,900d
Japan	¥100	27,500d
New Zealand	NZ\$1	16,700d
UK	£1	33,600d
USA	US\$1	21,000d

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** US\$8–15
- » **Memorable restaurant meal** US\$5–10
- » **Beer in bar** from US\$0.75
- » **Short taxi ride** US\$2