

The very name of Vietnam conjures up images of a country at war for decades; of a fiery people filled with pride and strong will to persevere. Other images that come to mind immediately are the spectacular Halong Bay, farmers in seemingly endless rice fields, the Perfume River and bustling Saigon street life.

The truth is that Vietnam is much more than these images. Emerging

from decades of war and self-imposed socialism, the country is beginning to establish itself again as a strong industrial and commercial hub in Southeast Asia. From architecturally beautiful Hanoi to fast-living and bustling Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) the visitor revels in the sights of splendid Halong Bay, the famous Perfume River, the scenic Hai Van Pass (pass of the clouds), the ancient Cham temple ruins, Nha Trang's stretches of white sandy beaches, ethnic minorities in Sapa, and the China town of Saigon. Vietnam shares borders with Cambodia, Laos and China, and features 3,200 km of coastline bordering the Eastern Sea. With an area of 332,000 square km, Vietnam's topography varies from coastal plains to mountain ranges.

Vietnam stretches over 1,800 km from north to south. With a population of 80 million people, it is the most densely populated country in Southeast Asia. Vietnam, once a forbidden country for tourists, now attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Rich culture, strong tradition, and a patriotic people characterize this fascinating country. This exotic destination offers such wonders as magical islands set in pristine waters as well as historic and cultural sites like temples, pagodas and churches. Travelling to Vietnam is an unforgettable experience & leaves its guests deeply impressed. A beautiful and ancient land.

Please Note: All Australian passport holders require a tourist visa for entry into the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. This must be obtained prior to arrival & should be arranged through the Vietnamese Consulate in Sydney.

Please contact your travel agent for more details



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FACTS AT A GLANCE

CURRENCY

The monetary unit is the Dong (VND).

Coins are not used in Vietnam. Bank note denominations include 100, 200, 500, 1,000, 2,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000, 50,000, 100,000 and 500,000 dong. Credit cards are not widely accepted. Money and travellers cheques, particularly U.S. Dollars, can be exchanged at banks and authorized money exchangers.

EXCHANGE RATE

AU\$1.00 = 14,250 Dong (Subject to change)

ELECTRICITY

220 volts AC, 50 cycles. Sockets vary throughout Vietnam so a universal adaptor is recommended.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

No vaccinations are presently required. Visitors should check with their doctor or travel clinic regarding the advisability of inoculation against polio, typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis A and B, and malaria.

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

All visitors need to complete a customs declaration form and this form must be presented upon departure. Unlimited amounts of foreign currencies can be carried in, but they must be declared to ensure the same amount will be allowed to be carried out.

Importation of all kinds of narcotics, firearms and pornographic media are strictly prohibited.

DUTY FREE

200 cigarettes, 250 grams of tobacco or cigars, 1 litre of wine or spirits and an unlimited amount of film.

LANGUAGE

Vietnamese is the official language of Vietnam. French & English is widely spoken in the major cities such as Hanoi, Hoi An, Nha Trang & Ho Chi Minh city.

PASSPORT & VISA REQUIREMENTS

All travellers to Vietnam must have a valid passport, an onward or return ticket, & a visa. One-month visas can be acquired from any Vietnamese consulate with two application forms, a valid passport, the application fee, and two passport-sized photos. The visa application process normally takes 7 to 10 working days. These may be obtained through your travel agent and issued by the Vietnamese Embassy.

OFFICIAL PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 2008

1 Jan 08 New Year's Day
07 - 09 Feb 08 Lunar New Year (TET)
30 Apr 08 Liberation Day
01 May 08 Labor Day
02 Sep 08 National Day
15 Apr 08 Hung Kings Anniversary

TIME ZONE

Vietnam time is 7 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). It lies in the same time zone as its neighbors Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.

TIPPING

Many tourist hotels and restaurants add a 10 percent service charge to the bill. Tipping is officially discouraged, but small, discreet tips are appreciated.

GUIDE TO HOTEL CATEGORIES

These categories apply to the hotels in general; in some hotels there may be rooms of a higher category.



- Basic accommodation with limited facilities



- Moderate and comfortable standard of air-conditioned accommodation. Limited range of facilities such as restaurant/bar



- Good quality accommodation and offering a range of eating facilities. Resort areas may include some leisure activities



- High standard of accommodation with a range of facilities, including coffee shop, restaurants, bars shops and probably a gymnasium/health club



- Excellent accommodation with a complete range of facilities and services to match



- Luxurious accommodation with every facility to suit the most discerning traveller

BEDDING

This is a guide only to the bedding types supplied in hotel rooms. Hotels will generally allocate rooms according to requests, but at time of check-in, certain bedding may not always be available. Every effort is made by the hotel to ensure your requests are met.

Flight Reconfirmation

Your onward or return flights will be reconfirmed upon request.

General Assistance and Emergencies

Should you have any additional needs or require emergency assistance, you will be given local phone numbers to contact.

Departure Service

On departure day your guide will collect you from your hotel for transfer to the airport.

Local Contacts

With offices in Hanoi, Danang & Ho Chi Minh City, our local operators are always available to assist you with any questions you may have. Local offices mean that you are never alone in Vietnam.



Meet and Greet on Arrival

On arrival after clearing customs your local guide will welcome you and assist

you with your luggage to the transfer vehicle.



Air-conditioned Transfers

After a long flight it is refreshing to know that you will be transferred to your hotel in an air-conditioned vehicle. Your guide will highlight some interesting information and facts along the way.



Hotel Check-in

Upon arrival at your hotel, your guide will assist with your luggage and check-in formalities.



Sightseeing and Shopping

Advice

Asia is renowned for its shopping and your guide knows the best shopping areas and is happy to assist with what there is to see and do in this exciting destination.



"Total Care" Ground Service

Our "Total Care" Ground Service has evolved after extensive research and consultation with our local representatives into the requirements of Australian travellers.

- "Total Care" Ground Service
- Widest Choice of Hotels
- Interesting Sightseeing Tours
- Extended Tour Options (we recommend you pre-book these options to avoid any disappointment)
- Best Value Prices
- Bonus Offers
- Late Hotel Checkout Last Day (may vary from hotel to hotel)
- Quality Travel Kit



Hanoi Opera House

Vietnam

Region & Climate Guide

Vietnam stretches over 1,800 kilometres from north to south – therefore weather patterns in the principle cities are very different.

North: In the north of Vietnam winter lasts from November to April, with temperatures averaging 10-16C, with occasional fog & drizzle in February & March. Summer begins in May & lasts until October, with an average temperature of 30C.

Hanoi – Vietnam's capital. The city centre is an architectural museum piece, with blocks of French Colonial buildings in the 'Old Quarter' reminding us of Vietnam history. Hanoi is situated right on the banks of the Red River & has a population of 5 million people.

Halong Bay – Just 2 hours drive from Hanoi, this stunning region is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Bay itself covers 1.5 square kilometers & is filled with over 3,000 islands jutting out of the emerald water.

Sapa – Sapa lies northwest of Hanoi & is home to Mount Fansipan – the highest mountain in Indochina (3,143 m). Sapa's largest attractions for tourists are the various ethnic minority groups in their colourful costumes.

Centre: Central Vietnam experiences transitional climate, with heavy rainfalls between November & December, and dry, hot summer months.

Hue – Founded as a Royal City in 1687, Hue is the gateway to the treasures of Vietnam's royal past. This small & quiet city situated right on the banks of the Perfume River.

Hoi An – The ancient town of Hoi An was one of the major trading centres of Southeast Asia in the 16th century & is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Hoi An has a distinctive Chinese atmosphere with low, tiled-roof houses & narrow cobbled streets.

Nha Trang – The 7km long white sandy beach of Nha Trang is sunny all year round with an average temperate of 25C. It has less rainfall than anywhere else in the country, ensuring that it is the ultimate beach destination in Vietnam.

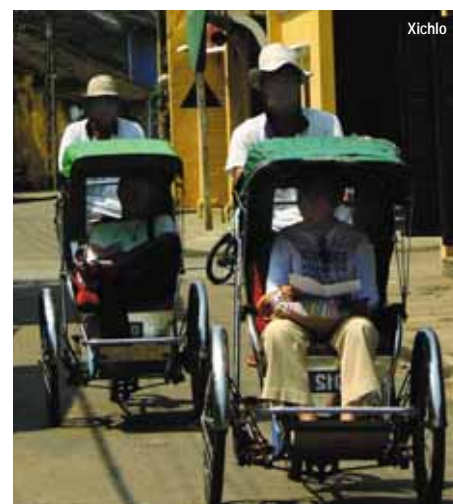
South: Temperatures are fairly constant right throughout the year – around 25-30C. Seasons are determined by the rains – the dry season from November to April & the wet season from May to October. The hottest period is March & April.

Ho Chi Minh City – Formally known as Saigon, and with a population of over 6 million people, Ho Chi Minh City is the bustling & vibrant economic centre of the South. A fabulous city with a rich personality.

Phan Thiet – Just a 3-hour drive from Saigon, Phan Thiet is situated on the banks of a river. Just 10 minutes out of Phan Thiet is the stunning Mui Ne beach, famous for it's sand dunes. Home to a professional 18-hole golf course & a magnificent stretch of beach, Phan Thiet is an excellent 'getaway' destination from Saigon.



Vietnamese Girl



Xichlo



Hoi An Lanterns



Danang Team



Ho Chi Minh Team



Hanoi Team

Our People

It is extraordinary how quickly the i-xplore Travel Groups Vietnam program has become a success. Some of this success can be contributed to our foundations being firmly cemented in the years of experience in the Asia region. i-xplore was founded over 25 years ago and is 100% Australian owned. With over 25 years of experience in Asia we have ensured that the relationships we have formed with industry partners in Vietnam over the past 5 years are valued and rock-solid.

Our ground operator in Vietnam is Asian Trails. Asian Trails was conceived in 1999 and has

offices in Ho Chi Minh City, Danang and Hanoi – with a total staff force of 47. Asian Trails strong presence throughout Vietnam enables i-xplore to offer a massive range of hotels and tours.

We have boutique, family run hotels and 5 star, internationally branded 350 room resorts. We have fully escorted city tours and intimate Mekong Delta homestays. Our history and presence in the region allow us to offer a diverse range of products.

When you add up all those years of experience and all those staff numbers working for you, it becomes clear that i-xplore Pty Ltd is not just

big, solid, reliable and supportive, but we are also the pioneers of the region. We are proud to announce that our programmes are bigger and better than ever.

As the interest in Vietnam continues to grow, so too does our range of products. i-xplore Travel Groups Vietnam program has been developed with the purpose of opening the door to Vietnam to the Australian market. i-xplore's Vietnam is a product that offers reliability, diversity, creativity and - above all - excellent value for money.

Allows us to take your hand and introduce you to Vietnam.



Lion Dance