

Travel tips

Things to remember:

- It's in your best interests not to drink the tap water, especially after flooding!
- Avoid cyclo rides after dark.
- Dress modestly and appropriately when visiting local dwellings and religious sites, etc.
- Leave your valuables behind before a night out on the town, or going to the beach.
- When crossing the road – especially in HCMC – always keep looking to the left and right and walk slowly!
- Don't offer money directly to minority people – instead donate to a local charity or offer a small gift, such as pens.
- However frustrated, don't lose your temper (“loosing face”), as it won't get you very far!
- By all means, sample the delicious street food but for hygiene's sake only at venues that are busy with a big turnover.
- Always ask permission first before taking photographs, especially in minority areas.
- Arrange for medical insurance (including the provision for emergency evacuation) prior to their departure, as there is no free medical treatment available in Vietnam and the standard of local health facilities is below international standards.
- Keep your entry/exit form (yellow form from airport) as it must be returned upon departure. Lost forms may result in fines or other inconveniences.
- International departure tax is US\$ 14. Domestic departure tax is included in the ticket. Children under two are exempt. Things not to miss:

- Sleeping out on deck on a boat in Halong Bay.
- Ordering custom – made clothes from the local tailor shop.
- Taking a slow cyclo ride through the French Quarter of old Saigon.
- Eat “pho ga” (chicken noodle soup) at a street – side noodle stall.
- Watch the traditional water – puppet performance in Hanoi.
- Experience the Full – Moon festivities in the ancient town of Hoi An.
- Drink rice – wine in the minority villages of the north.
- Take a boat along Hue's Perfume River, taking in the Royal Mausoleums.
- Overnight in a homestay in the Mekong Delta's riverside orchards.
- Barter for a bargain at Saigon's largest market, Ben Thanh.
- Take a stroll through Hanoi's ancient Old Quarter. Visas: Tourist visas are generally valid for thirty days. You're given more than a month to play with, but your actual visa allowance starts once through Vietnamese immigration. It's easy to get a visa extension in most major tourist destinations, at tourist offices and operators. Now visitors from the following 12 countries – Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Laos, Philippines, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden – are exempted from requiring visas when they enter, exit, or stay in Vietnam for less than 15 days. Safety: Vietnam is one of the safest countries for traveling. However, you should take great care with your personal possessions, especially in HCMC and Nha Trang, where there's been an increase in bag snatches. Leave all your valuables, documents, credit cards, etc., at home before venturing out at any time. ATMS & Credit cards: Major credit cards are now accepted in most tourist destinations and many banks can organize cash advances for Visa and MasterCard at a rate of 3%, AMEX card at a rate of 4% commission. Some travelers cafes provide this service at higher rates, but they operate daily – banks usually close weekends. 24 – hr ATM's, dispensing Dong only, are available at:

- HSBC: 235 Dong Khoi, D1, HCMC.
- HSBC: 23 Phan Chu Trinh, Hanoi.
- ANZ Bank: 11 Me Linh Square, D1, HCMC.
- ANZ Bank: 14 Le Thai To, Hanoi.
- Vietcombank: Most branches nationwide.
- Citibank: 17 Ngo Quyen, Hanoi. Telephones: Always dial the 171, 177 or 178 code first when phoning home: this gives you a reduced flat – rate of US\$ 0.6 per minute to all countries. Public phones accept phone cards only, you can buy these at Post Offices for domestic and international calls. Useful phone numbers:
- International Operator 110
- Police 113
- Fire 114
- Ambulance 115
- Directory Enquiries 116
- Information Line 1080 Shopping:

There are many attractive items, such as traditional furniture, paintings and other works of art, that are well beyond the weight and size allowances for personal export. If you are interested in buying large or heavy items, and the vendor is unable to provide export facilities, we can make all necessary arrangements for the goods to be dispatched by air or freight according to your instructions. Please note that the export of some antiques and ancient artifacts is strictly prohibited, as are souvenirs and articles made from, or incorporating, endangered species or plants. We fully support the Vietnamese government in its efforts to stamp out illegal trafficking of cultural and natural heritage resources. Electricity: Vietnam uses 220V electricity nationwide. In the South, outlets are often US-style flat pins. In the North, many outlets fit round pins. As the electrical current varies, use a surge protector when running sensitive electronic equipment

like laptops.