

TRAVEL TIP

V I E T N A M



LANGUAGE

Vietnamese is the official language of Vietnam. English is widely used in business. Other popular languages include French, German, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Thai and Russian.



PASSPORT AND VISA

A passport with more than 6 months of validity remaining is compulsory. If visa is applied on arrival, kindly make sure that the passport has enough blank page(s) for the visa stamp(s).



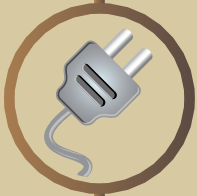
CURRENCY

The local currency is the Vietnam Dong (VND). The current exchange rate is 22-23,000 VND / US dollar. Foreign currency can be exchanged at banks, hotels, and authorized money exchangers.



TIME ZONE & WORKING HOUR

Local time is GMT + 7 hours.



ELECTRICITY

Electricity in Vietnam is 220V, with a frequency of 50hz, the following plugs are used:



TRANSPORTATION

Metered taxis are widely available at reasonable prices. Bicycle rickshaw (Cyclo) and motorbike taxis (Xe om) are also common and easy to get, but you should bargain before the ride. Tip: Carry a business card from your hotel card with you to show your driver.



ETIQUETTE

Dos



Greet people you meet by shaking their hand and say "Xin chào" (Hello)

Show your respect to old people and religious beliefs

Pass things to others using both hands

Dress properly at all times (shorts below the knees, shoulders covered)

Remove shoes when entering homes or temples

Ask for permission before taking photograph at the sights or the local people

Don'ts



Don't touch an adult's head or shoulders

Don't point with fingers (use your whole hand)

Don't refuse an offer of tea at the reception or meeting

Don't point the soles of your feet towards a person or a sacred object, such as an image of Buddha

Don't make another person to "lose face" (i.e. to be embarrassed)

Don't commit public displays of affection



BEFORE TRAVELING

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

No actual vaccinations are officially required. Travelers are advised to check with their doctor or travel immunization clinic regarding the advisability of inoculation against typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis A & B and malaria. It is highly recommended that all travelers purchase comprehensive Personal Travel Insurance issued by companies located in their countries to cover personal belongings, or in case of accident or illness, etc. and avoid complicated paperwork.

WHAT TO BRING

Be a smart traveler. Before heading overseas, make a list of things to bring. You are recommended to "travel light" as much as possible. Please refer to the weather section of the website to identify what you should pack (sunblock, appropriate clothes, hat, mosquito repellent etc.)

CUSTOMS AND FORMALITIES

When you arrive in Vietnam you must complete a customs declaration form. You should complete the form and hand it over to the customs officer as you leave the airport arrivals terminal or pass through a customs post. Customs formalities are straightforward and the duty free allowances are printed on the customs declaration form. If you are bringing in prescription drugs, ask your doctor for a note detailing the drugs you are taking. Music CD's and DVD's may be subject to inspection.

CLIMATE AND WEATHER

Vietnam stretches over 1,800 km from north to south, with an area of 332,000 square km. Vietnam's topography varies from coastal plains to mountain ranges, therefore the climate from North to South can be very different.

Northern Vietnam: Winter lasts from November to April, with the average temperature ranging from 10 – 16°C, although the temperature sometimes tends to drop below 5, fog and drizzle in January -March. Summer begins in May and lasts until October, with an average temperature of 30°C, heavy rainfall and the occasional violent typhoons.

Central Vietnam: Central Vietnam experiences a transitional climate, with heavy rainfalls between November and December and extremely dry, hot summer months. Typhoons are quite common in coastal areas between July and November.

Southern Vietnam: Temperatures are fairly constant through the year; 25°C - 30°C. Seasons are determined by the rains -the dry season runs from November to April and the wet season from May to October. The hottest period is between March and April.

Highlands and plateaus: In the hill resorts of Dalat (1,500 m), Buon Me Thuot and Sapa, nights are cool throughout the year, and in the winter months, October to March, it can be distinctly chilly with temperatures falling to 0°C or even below. Even in the hottest months of March and April the temperature rarely exceeds 26°C.



WHILE TRAVELING

CURRENCY, MONEY EXCHANGE & ATM

The local currency is the Dong (abbreviated "d" or VND). Bank notes are 1000d, 2,000d, 5,000d, 10,000d, 20,000d, 50,000d, 100,000d & 500,000d. Exchange rate can be checked at: <http://www.vietcombank.com.vn/en/Exchange%20Rate.asp>
Most retailers do not accept cheques. But Visa, Master & JCB cards are widely accepted. A 3% bank fee charge on transaction (4% for AMEX) is quite common, due to bank's policy. ATMs are very popular in most tourist destinations.

SAFETY

Ostentatious displays of money, jewelry, luggage, and dress can encourage the wrong type of attention. When travelling, be aware of where your luggage is at all times - particularly your hand bag, camera, etc. Do not leave them unattended or hanging on the back of chairs in restaurants. Petty theft is also common on crowded trains, buses, and at supermarkets.

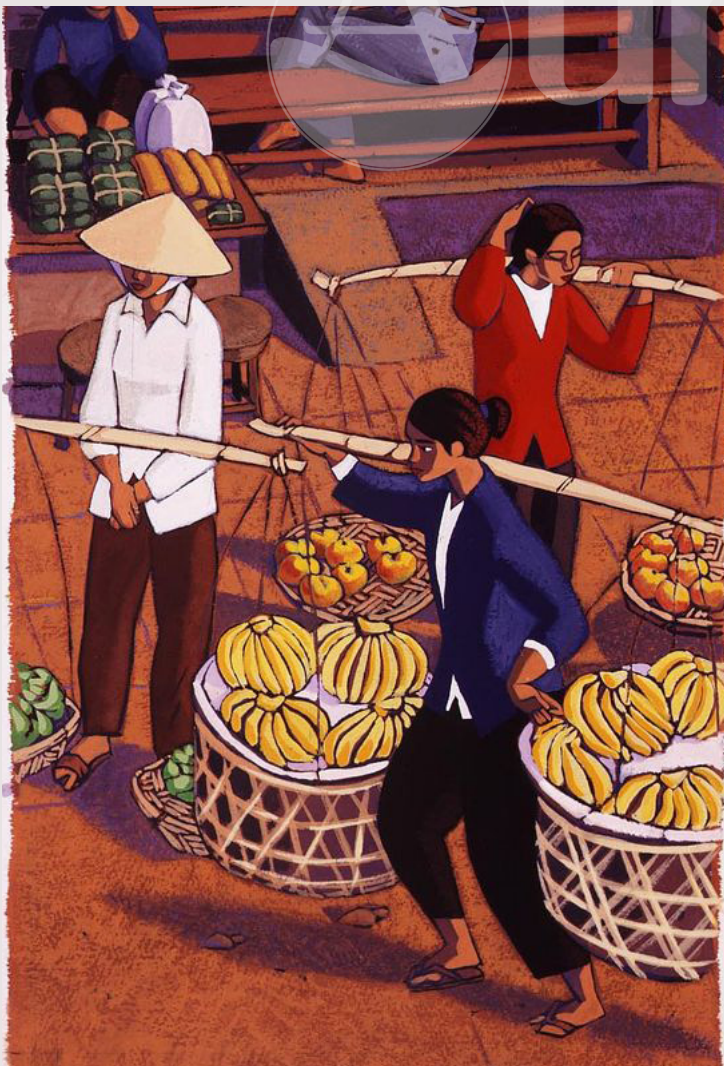
Importance: *You should take good care of all your belongings first, and do not always rely on your escorted guides or drivers as their duty is not to take of your belongings during the trip; but to help you to go and well understand the destinations.* Lost items are not always found by local policemen as the report procedures are quite complicated and take time. In case of any loss, do not claim your local agent or tour operator as they are not involve in this matter. They may try to help you as much as possible so that you can claim to Insurance Company if it is the case. Local operators are not responsible these losses.

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS & AIRPORT TAXES

Airport departure tax for domestic is included in the airfare. Flight schedules are subject to change without prior notice.

For international travel, it's recommended to arrive at the airport 3 hours prior to departure and 2 hours for domestic travel. International flights often start boarding 45 minutes to 1 hour prior to the departure time.

Regarding baggage allowance, Vietnam Airlines allows 01 pack of 23kg for checked luggage, 01 pack of hand up to 12kg per person on economy class. As a rule, for other low cost airlines, the baggage fee is supplemented unless it is included in your purchased tickets.



COMMUNICATIONS

Phone/ SIM Card

Vietnam has high international telephone charges. It is important to check the exact amount with the hotel before making a call. VOIP calls help reduce call charges. Pre-paid internet & mobile SIM cards (3G, 4G) can be bought in the major cities so if your phone is unlocked, this solution is cheap (around USD5) and it is easy to then add credit to your card.

Internet

You can access the internet at hotels, cyber cafés & Internet/Computer Service Centers. WIFI internet is available at some cyber cafés, restaurants, and most hotels in major tourist destinations. Free WIFI is also available in some international airports.

Post Service

Regular international postal service is available. Express Mail Service (EMS) is available to more than 50 countries worldwide with a delivery time of 2 to 10 days.

FOOD AND DRINKS

Foreign visitors consider Vietnamese food quite healthy. It is neither spicy nor oily. It has a very distinctive style, although it is also clearly influenced by Chinese and to a lesser extent, French cuisine. Coffee and local draft beer is widely available. Drinking tap water is not advisable; bottled drinking water is widely available for a reasonable price.



SHOPPING & BARGAINING

Vietnam is most famous for its handicrafts, war souvenirs, art, antiques and gems. Markets vary from high class shopping malls and supermarkets to bustling open markets, galleries, boutiques, and street stalls. Before going to Vietnam you should do some research for a general idea about local prices. To make your trip even more enjoyable, you should know something about the art of bargaining. If you are being followed by street vendors and do not wish to make a purchase, often the best course of action is to say “no” politely and firmly and continue on your way. Do not hesitate or linger, as this will encourage the seller to try and engage you further.

TIPPING

Gratuity is a prime motivator for tour guides, as well as a major source of their income and therefore is commonly expected in the travel industry of Southeast Asia in general.

If you are pleased with the services provided by your tour guides and drivers, then a tip for their hard work and being away from home will be very much appreciated. Tips are expected by hotel, boat and restaurant staffs also. All suggested tips below are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars (do not use coins, personal or traveler's check for tips). Of course, whether you tip, how much you tip, and how you tip is always at your own discretion.

Tour guides and drivers

The following gratuity guideline is introduced solely for the convenience of our travelers.

If you are on private trip:

- US\$04-06/guest/day for local (city) guide

If you are on group trip:

- US\$04-07/guest/day for escorted (through-out) guide
- US\$02-04/guest/day for local (city) guide

Normally, drivers expect to receive half of the guides'

For biking/trekking trip: as guide and driver work harder than on regular cultural tours, you may consider tipping more in addition to the above tipping guidelines.

Hotel & Restaurant staffs

Most hotels and restaurants levy a 5% service charge, but this may not go directly to the staff. A tipping of 5-10% of the total bill is appreciated. If you stay a couple of days in the same hotel, try to tip the hotel cleaner, possibly US\$2-3/day/room. For hotel porters, US\$1-2/time/room is appreciated by those who have escorted you to your room and/or delivered your baggage.

Boat Cruise staffs

If you travel on a local basic boat such as in the Mekong Delta, Nha Trang, Hue, Hoi An, Ninh Binh etc., a suggested tip from US\$1-2 per guest.

For an overnight boat trip such as in Halong Bay or Mekong River, the suggestion is US\$20-50 for the entire boat cruise team depending on group size, or US\$3-5 per passenger.