

For general information about Vietnam please visit: www.mofa.gov.vn/en/tt_vietnam
For information about British Council Vietnam please visit: www.britishcouncil.org/vietnam

We have made every effort to ensure these notes are accurate and up-to-date. We urge you wherever possible to check details on the relevant web sites and to check with us if you are not sure.

Visas & Entry Requirements

- immigration/customs
- passport validity
- information from relevant authorities
- reference to official websites

Visitors with UK passports and from a number of other European countries no longer require visas for visits related to business or tourism of less than 15 days' duration (see conditions below). However it is advisable to check the conditions for visa-free travel with your local Vietnamese Embassy.

Please note that entry to Vietnam may be refused if your passport has less than six months validity.

Visitors from visa countries, or whose visits are longer than 15 days, or who require more than one entry into Vietnam, or are returning to Vietnam within less than three months from their previous visit must obtain a visa. Visas are usually valid for one month. You should check the visa validity and conditions carefully. There are fines and/or imprisonment if you overstay your visa.

For further information, check with your nearest [Vietnamese Embassy](#).

Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries require documentary evidence of parental responsibility before allowing lone parents to enter the country or, in some cases, before permitting the children to leave the country.

You should retain the Arrival Departure Declaration on entry to Vietnam, as this is required for exit. If you lose this you are likely to be fined on departure.

If you lose your passport or have over-stayed you will need to apply for a new passport at your embassy in Vietnam; and apply for a new visa from the Immigration authorities in order to leave the country. This can only be done during working hours and usually takes five to ten working days.

Travel Advice

Around 80,000 British tourists visit Vietnam every year. Most visits are trouble-free. Serious or violent crimes against foreigners are rare.

We strongly recommend that you obtain comprehensive travel and medical insurance before travelling. You should check any exclusions, and that your policy covers you for the activities you want to undertake. Please see: [Travel Insurance](#).

Cases of locally transmitted Zika virus have been confirmed recently. You should follow the advice of the [National Travel Health Network and Centre](#) and discuss your travel plans with your healthcare provider, particularly if you're pregnant or planning to become pregnant.

There has been an increase in the number of cases of [dengue fever](#) reported in Vietnam. Take precautions to [avoid being bitten by mosquitoes](#).

Outbreaks of Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) in Vietnam have resulted in a small number of human fatalities. As a precaution, you should avoid live animal markets, poultry farms and other places where you may come into close contact with domestic, caged or wild birds; and ensure poultry and egg dishes are thoroughly cooked. For further information see Health section below and also

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	<p>read the FCO's Avian and Pandemic Influenza Factsheet.</p> <p>Vietnam officials have placed screening arrangements for travellers arriving or transiting from countries affected by Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Individuals who display symptoms of MERS-CoV will be subject to quarantine by local health authorities.</p> <p>For the latest information and advice, please visit the website of the World Health Organisation at http://www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/en/ and contact your GP's surgery before you travel if you have any further questions.</p>
Medical	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health advice • immunisation/vaccination requirement • other requirement/advice, e.g. medical & travel insurance, where applicable 	<p>For the most part, Hanoi is generally a healthy place, but respiratory and skin problems are prevalent in the hot and humid conditions associated with living in tropical climates. However, just about every tropical disease, except Yellow Fever, is endemic in Vietnam so it is recommended that you make sure your typhoid, tetanus, polio and tuberculosis (BCG) immunisations are up to date.</p> <p>The FCO-approved health clinic in Hanoi is the Hanoi Family Medical Practice (tel 0438430748). SOS International (Hanoi: 04 3826 4545; Ho Chi Minh City: 08 3823 6520) also operates high quality clinics. Medical facilities outside Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, are variable.</p> <p>Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) are free from malaria. However, malaria has been prevalent in the border regions with Cambodia and Laos and in the Mekong delta and anyone planning to travel outside the main cities, particularly those planning to overnight in rural areas, should check with their doctor. Japanese Encephalitis and dengue fever are serious threats; so visitors should avoid mosquito bites.</p> <p>Hepatitis is also a risk, you are advised to wash fresh food carefully and choose restaurants carefully, especially in the summer months, and always stick to bottled water for drinking.</p> <p>Both SOS International and the Hanoi Family Medical Practice clinics have dental facilities which can deal with dental health to a reasonably high standard.</p>
Climate & Clothing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • average monthly temperatures in °C • climate recommendations • customs/culture • fashion guides • national attire • reference to official weather reports 	<p>Geography</p> <p>Vietnam extends across two climatic zones with a moderate climate in the north, comparable to that of Southern Europe, and a tropical climate in the South. Hanoi, like Hong Kong, is located at a geographical latitude slightly to the south of Cairo or the Canary Islands, while Ho Chi Minh City is at a geographical latitude only slightly to the north of Lagos.</p> <p>Altogether the country stretches for more than 1,650 kilometres from north to south. The coastline of Vietnam is about 3,000 kilometres long. Mountains and hills cover four-fifths of Vietnam's territory with the Truong Son range stretching over 1,400km. Mount Fansipan (3,142m) is the highest peak in Southeast Asia.</p> <p>The West of the country is bordered by Laos and Cambodia, the North is</p>

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bordered by China, the East and South are bordered by the South China Sea.

Climate

Hanoi has four distinct seasons. During spring (March and April) and autumn (October and November) the climate is pleasantly warm and dry. Summers (May to September) are hot with temperatures averaging 26-32°C and very humid. During the winter (December to February) there are long periods of low cloud and drizzle. The air is very damp and temperatures can drop sharply within a few hours to as low as 42°F (8°C).

HCMC has a tropical wet and dry climate, with an average humidity of 75%. The rainy season usually begins in May and ends in late November. The dry season lasts from December to April. The average temperature is 28 °C (82 °F), the highest temperature sometimes reaches 39 °C (102 °F) around noon in late April, while the lowest may fall below 16 °C (61 °F) in the early mornings of late December

Clothing requirements

Cool clothes in natural fabrics or those deigned to wick moisture are advised during the hotter months. Lightweight waterproof jackets are also every useful, as are shoes that can withstand heavy rain. Offices and restaurants are usually air-conditioned so a light jacket is useful even in summer.

Men's clothing: the Vietnamese tend to wear suits and ties for business, although a smart shirt and trousers will be suitable for less formal meetings and social events. In winter, Hanoi can be surprisingly cool, and you may well need a sweater and jacket.

Women's clothing: Vietnamese women tend to wear dresses for work, although smart trousers and skirts are also perfectly acceptable. In autumn and winter in Hanoi, you will need UK winter/spring weight clothes, including a jacket/raincoat, light sweaters and tights.

Communication & Time Zones

- GMT+ or – (time zones)
- international dialling codes
- internet access
- mobile coverage
- telephones

Business hours

One legacy of the French in Vietnam is the long lunch hour often extending to two hours or more. Business hours tend to be 08.00 to 11.30 and 13.30 to 16.30, especially at government offices, although private companies and shops obviously open for longer hours.

Telecommunications

International phone call charges from Vietnam are among the highest in the world. It is therefore advisable to use Skype or similar.

All international hotels offer Wi-Fi, usually free of charge. Mobile phone Sim cards are readily available and national calls reasonably priced.

To save costs, you can press 171 or 178 before press 00 for calling out of Vietnam and for calling between cities in Vietnam. Example:

171 + 00 + country code + area code + Tel number

178 + 0 + area code + Tel number

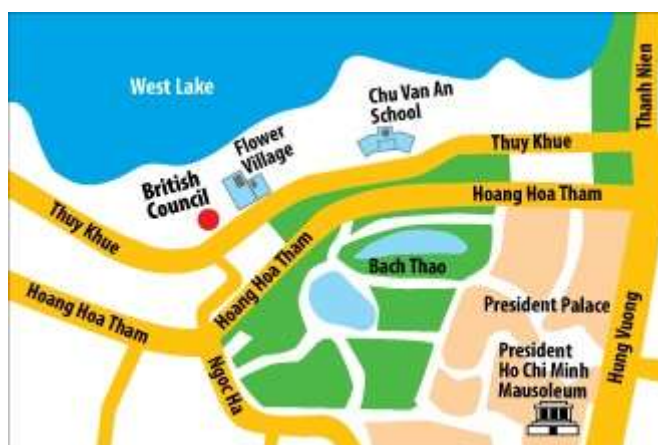
British Council Contact Information & Emergency Contact Information

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- addresses
- intranet
- maps (Google and/or Windows maps)
- staff name/s, telephone, fax, email
- web site

British Council Vietnam

Address: British Council, Hanoi
 20 Thuy Khue,
 Tay Ho District
 Hanoi



British Council, Ho Chi Minh City
 25 Le Duan, District 1
 Ho Chi Minh City



Vietnam country website: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/vietnam>

Business days and hours: The British Council in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City is open seven days a week to the public, offering information services, teaching and exams. Core office working hours at the British Council follow local practice for office hours: Monday to Friday, 0830–1200 and 1330–1730.

Contact details during business hours

British Council, Hanoi
 Telephone: +84 (0)4 37281920
 Fax: +84 (0)4 38434962
 E-mail: Firstname.Surname@britishcouncil.org.vn
 (e.g. ngoc.dao@britishcouncil.org.vn)

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	<p>British Council, Ho Chi Minh City Telephone: +84 (0)8 38232862 Fax: +84 (0)8 38232861</p> <p>British Council, Hanoi Telephone: +84 (0)4 37281946 (Guards)</p> <p>Cherry Gough, Director Vietnam Mobile phone : +84 (0)0975168383</p> <p>Lê Hoàng Yên, Assistant Director, HR Mobile phone : +84 (0)905644688</p> <p>British Council, Ho Chi Minh City Jon Glendinning, Director English Language Services Mobile phone: +84 (0)932188062</p> <p>Name: Le Anh Tho, Assistant Director Ho Chi Minh City Mobile phone: +84 (0)903036930</p> <p>British Embassy Central Building 4th Floor, 31 Hai Ba Trung Hanoi Tel: +84 (0)4 3936 0500 Fax: + 84 (0)4 3936 0561 Duty Officer Mobile : + 84 (0)904102324</p> <p>email: behanoi@fpt.vn website: http://www.uk-vietnam.org/</p> <p>British Consulate General 25 Le Duan, District 1 Ho Chi Minh City Tel: + 84 (0)8 3829 8433 Fax: +84 (0)8 3829 5257 email: bcghcmc@vnn.vn</p> <p>External contact details</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Police</td> <td style="text-align: right;">: Dial 113</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fire Station</td> <td style="text-align: right;">: Dial 114</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ambulance</td> <td style="text-align: right;">: Dial 115</td> </tr> <tr> <td>General Information</td> <td style="text-align: right;">: Dial 1080</td> </tr> </table>	Police	: Dial 113	Fire Station	: Dial 114	Ambulance	: Dial 115	General Information	: Dial 1080
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History of British Council in Vietnam

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> overview (<250 words) 	<p>The British Council began operating in Vietnam in 1993 and has offices in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.</p> <p>We work closely with the British Embassy, UKTI and British Consulate General. We build long-term partnerships and networks between Vietnam and the UK and offer development opportunities for individuals, education institutions, governments and business organisations.</p>
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Money

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accepted denominations 	Currency exchange
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- ATM - type and location
- credit card types
- British Council travel rates and allowances – PIE, meals, etc.
- British Council exchange rate
- travellers cheques
- type of money
- tipping / gratuities - common practices & amount
- VAT or sales taxes added to bills
- reference to official websites

There are plenty of reliable ATM's (ANZ Bank, HSBC, Standard Chartered Bank, Vietcombank, Vietin Bank) in most cities nationwide, and this is the easiest way of obtaining money in Vietnam. You can also change cash at airports, and in high-end hotels. The current exchange rate (July 2015) is around VND33,000 to £1. The US dollar is far and away the most useful currency to bring with you. Despite foreign exchange laws prohibiting the use of dollars in day-to-day transactions, dollars are readily accepted at most establishments.

Visitors should be aware that it's easy to confuse Vietnamese banknotes (e.g. 50,000 and 500,000 and 10,00 and 100,000VND). It's advisable to keep large denomination notes separate from smaller ones.

Accommodation

- British Council corporate hotels
- Other recommendations (list a few credible sources for more information)

Hanoi

Sofitel Plaza Hanoi USD115++

Add: 1 Thanh Nien Road, Tay Ho District, Hanoi

Tel: +84 (0)4 38238888

Fax: +84 (0)4 38294283

Email: resvn@sofitelplazahanoi.com.vn

<http://www.sofitel.com/gb/hotel-3553-sofitel-plaza-hanoi/index.shtml>

InterContinental Hanoi Westlake USD133++

Add: 1A Nghi Tam Tay Ho Hanoi

Tel: +84 (0)4 62708888

Fax: +84 (0)4 62709999

Email: res.hanoi@ihg.com

<http://www.ihg.com/intercontinental/hotels/gb/en/hanoi/hanhb/hoteldetail>

Ho Chi Minh

Sofitel Saigon Plaza USD150++

17 Le Duan District 1

Tel: +84 (0)8 38241555

Fax: +84 (0)8 38241666

Email: h2077@sofitel.com

<http://sofitel.com/gb/hotel-2077-sofitel-saigon-plaza/index.shtml>

Pullman Saigon Centre USD120++

148 Tran Hung Dao Boulevard, District 1

Tel: +84 (0)8 38388686

Fax: +84(0)8 38389179

Email: h7489@accor.com

<http://www.pullmanhotels.com/gb/hotel-7489-pullman-saigon-centre/index.shtml>

Novotel Saigon Centre USD110++

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	<p>167 Hai Ba Trung, District 3 Tel : +84 (0)8 38224866 Fax : +84 (0)8 38221698 E-mail : h7965@accor.com</p> <p>http://www.novotel-saigon-centre.com/</p> <p>Da Nang</p> <p>Novotel Da Nang</p> <p>36 Bach Dang Street, Hai Chau District, Danang City Tel : +84 (0)511 392 9999 Fax : +84 (0)511 392 9998 E-mail : h8287@accor.com</p> <p>http://www.novotel-danang-premier.com/</p> <p>Note: Breakfast included Price is subjected to 15.5% service charge and tax.</p>
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Transportation / Getting Around

- airport procedures
- arrival & departure
- buses
- car rental
- customs & agricultural formalities
- location maps to and from main points
- taxis
- trains
- underground

Hanoi

Noi Bai Airport

Hanoi is served by Noi Bai International Airport, approximately 40 km (25 mi) north of Hanoi.

Taxis can be obtained outside the arrivals area. Queues are currently not very organised so if you see a taxi at the stand and nobody else is getting in it, you can just get in and go. There are a variety of taxi companies, the most reliable are Hanoi Taxi Group, ABC, Mai Ling and Noi Bai, so it's wise to stick to those if possible. All taxis are metered and you should only pay what's on the meter when you arrive at your destination. Occasionally they will tell you that there's an extra charge for the airport. This is not true and you are unlikely to get into an argument if you just pay the amount on the meter. It takes around 30 minutes to reach Hanoi from Noi Bai Airport, more if you're going into the centre in the rush hour, and currently (July 2015) costs around 300-400,000VND (£10-15).

The Airport minibus costs VND35,000 per person in either direction and drops passengers downtown on Quang Trung Street.

Getting around town

Taxis in Hanoi are abundant, safe and cheap. They all have meters. They can be booked by phone and hailed on the street. The cost will usually relate to the size of the cab, and the price per distance is written on the outside of the passenger door.

Most taxi drivers don't speak English and won't understand the destination unless your pronunciation is perfect. It's best to write it down and show them.

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Some smaller taxi company drivers may not know the city well – if the driver doesn't know your destination get out and find someone who does. Please note that taxis tend to disappear during very heavy rainstorms so be prepared to wait.

Some of the smaller taxis have been known to be running meter scams, in order to overcharge you, this usually happens when hailed on the street. You may want to use the bigger firms below to avoid this.

Taxi Group: 0438535353

ABC: 0437191919

Mai Linh: 04 38228666

Bicycles and motorbikes can be hired. Bicycles cost around \$1 per day and motorbikes about \$5 to \$10. A local driving licence is a legal requirement for driving a motorbike (although many foreigners ride them without). Driving rules and habits are very different from the UK so extreme caution is required. Under Vietnamese law, a helmet must be worn at all times when driving a motorbike.

You can also use a motorbike taxi. These are very common but caution is advised. Drivers are not always careful, there are no meters and you can easily end up paying almost as much as you would in a small taxi.

Fleets of cyclos (bicycle rickshaw) also cruise the streets looking for custom. A cyclo ride can be a pleasant way to see the city. It is unwise to take a cyclo late at night.

Ho Chi Minh City

Tan Son Nhat Airport

Tan Son Nhat International Airport (IATA: SGN, ICAO: VVTS), is the largest airport in Vietnam. It is located 6km (4 mi) north of the centre (District 1) of Ho Chi Minh City (previously known as Saigon).

Tan Son Nhat International Airport operates from two terminal buildings - Domestic Terminal 1 and International Terminal 2.

Travelling from Tan Son Nhat Airport to the city centre by taxi takes about 20 to 30 minutes, a bit more during peak hours (07.00 - 08.30 & 17.00 – 18.30). Plenty of metered taxi companies run services 24 hours a day from the airport. However it can be a bit chaotic and we'd advise arranging an airport pick-up if this is your first visit.

It costs approximately VND 100,000 – VND150,000 (USD6 – USD8) to take passenger to downtown.

Getting around the city

Taxis and cyclos (bicycle rickshaw) are the most reliable means of transport in the city and its centre. However, the cyclos are restricted in a certain number of main streets. The leading taxi companies are:

Mai Linh Taxi: 08 38383838

Vina Sun Taxi: 08 38272727

Vina Taxi: 08 38111111

Saigon Tourist Taxi: 38464646

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	<p>If you use a cyclo, you need to agree the route and total cost with the driver to avoid unnecessary arguments. Take advice on catching a cyclo from the concierge or reception staff at your hotel.</p>
Safety & Security	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • common sense rules & observations • firearms 	<p>Safety and security</p> <p>The latest security advice on Vietnam can be found at the FCO website.</p> <p>Terrorism You should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate terrorist attacks, which could be deliberately aimed against civilian targets, including places frequented by foreigners. There have been serious attacks in other parts of South East Asia. Elsewhere in the region, Westerners were killed and injured following terrorist attacks in Indonesia; in Bali (October 2002 and October 2005) and Jakarta (August 2003, September 2004, July 2009).</p> <p>Please read: Security and General Tips and Risk of Terrorism when Travelling Overseas pages of the FCO website for further information and advice.</p> <p>Crime Crime levels are low, but petty street crime is increasing in the larger cities (such as Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi) and tourist resorts and a few violent attacks against tourists have been reported.</p> <p>Safeguard your belongings against pickpockets and bag-snatchers. Thieves have used razors to cut the straps or bottoms of bags. You should avoid wearing highly visible jewellery, especially necklaces, and expensive looking watches. When possible, leave passports and valuables in a hotel safe and only carry a photocopy of the data page of your passport. Bag snatchers on motorbikes can also be a problem.</p> <p>Some tourists have been attacked while on a motorcycle taxi (xe om).</p> <p>Sexual assaults are rare, but you should take normal precautions. Do not walk in secluded locations alone, or with people you do not know.</p> <p>When travelling by bus or train, remain vigilant against petty theft. Always use licensed taxis or pre-arranged hotel pick-up when transferring from airports. Do not accept offers of free transfers to hotels, as these are likely to be bogus.</p> <p>You should be aware of spiked drinks, particularly late at night in the bars. You are advised not to leave food or drink unattended or accept it from strangers.</p> <p>Illegal drugs are increasingly available in major cities. You should be aware that drugs are likely to have been 'tampered with' or spiked.</p> <p>Political situation Vietnam operates a single party political system, which does not welcome dissent. Internal conflict is rare, although there have been some violent clashes between protestors and police in the Central Highlands region of Vietnam, which resulted in a number of deaths.</p> <p>Road Safety The standard of driving and vehicle maintenance is poor, including for public transport, and is the cause of many accidents and injuries. Pedestrians should</p>

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	<p>take particular care crossing roads in major cities. Driving is erratic and sometimes dangerous.</p> <p>Local Travel Unexploded mines and ordnance are a continuing hazard in former battlefields, particularly in central Vietnam and along the Lao Boarder. You should not stray off main routes in rural areas and you should check with your tour operator before travelling to affected regions.</p> <p>Rail Safety Rail travel in Vietnam is generally safe (there was one serious accident in 2004). There have been incidents of crime on trains and you should remain vigilant.</p>
Drinking Water	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • availability • safety 	Water should not be consumed from the tap.
Electricity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plug type • supply • type 	The power supply is 220 volts and AC. Two-pin plugs are the norm although some hotels also have UK-style 3-pin sockets.
Doing Business	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building relationships • business cards • business protocols • do's & don'ts • introductions 	The Vietnamese prefer doing business with people they respect. Relationships develop slowly and do not flourish after one meeting; it may take several meetings. Always be respectful and courteous when dealing with others. Rank and age should be respected. It is difficult for many Vietnamese to say no, so you must pay attention to non- verbal communication. Watch your body language and facial expressions, as these will be believed over your words.
Language	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • common language characters • common phrases & signs, e.g. airport, toilet, taxi, bus, hello, thank you, etc. • spoken languages • reference to auto-translation sites 	Vietnamese is the official language in Vietnam. English use is becoming more prevalent in government and commerce.
Business & Leisure Time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work week begins on/ends on? • working hours/definition of work week 	Business Hours: Most businesses are open from 0830 to 1730 hours, with an extended lunch hour, Monday to Friday. Government offices are usually open from 0800-1630 hours.
Calendar	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if using non-British calendars - public holidays, e.g. Islamic • public holidays 	<p>Please check with a colleague in our office for a public holiday calendar of the month you plan to visit.</p> <p>Everything slows down and then stops for the Lunar New Year Tet Festival which usually falls in February. If you're planning a business visit at this time be prepared to have difficulty arranging meetings.</p>

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Country Key Facts

- country flag
- location
- membership of international groups & organisations
- name of capital city
- official languages & use of English
- political system, head of state
- people (ethnicity)
- population
- religion
- reference to principal websites run by country tourist organisations

Country

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam lies along the eastern coast of the Indochina Peninsula. It is a long and narrow country, over 1,600 kms in length covering an area of just under 330,000 square kilometres.

The northern border is with China; to the west lies Laos and the south west, Cambodia. The country is wider at its northern and southern ends while the central part is narrow, as little as 50km at its narrowest point. The eastern side of the country is a 3,000 km coastline along the South China Sea.

In addition to the mainland, Vietnam comprises various offshore islands including Phu Quoc off the coast of Cambodia, and lays claim to the Paracel Islands east of Danang and the Spratly Islands, the latter being claimed by several other countries in the region.

Hanoi is the second largest city in Vietnam (after Ho Chi Minh City) with a land area of over 900 square kilometres and a population in excess of 3 million. Hanoi lies in the fertile Red River Delta. Most of the city lies at an average of 5m above sea level, although parts are more than 10m below sea level and protected only by artificial embankments.

Population

The population of Vietnam is approximately 84 million. Ethnically, Vietnam is the most homogenous country of Southeast Asia. About 90% of the population are Vietnamese and there are more than 50 ethnic minorities. The largest groups are Thai and Hmong tribes. There is about 1 million ethnic Chinese living in urban centres in the South of the country.

Human Rights / Freedom of Expression

- info from Foreign Office - HMG position related to country
- how this may affect how people need to behave

As Vietnam opens up to the world, opinions on human rights and freedom of expression are becoming more varied. Most people are open about their views but may prefer not to have political discussions with strangers or foreigners. The Vietnamese are, like most people, loyal to their country and unwilling to welcome hostile or overly critical comments. Foreigners should avoid trying to force people to be critical or speak on subjects they are uncomfortable with.

Known Natural Disasters

- advice on what to do
- earthquake zones
- tsunami advice
- volcanic activity
- reference to principal websites run by local authorities

The typhoon season in Vietnam normally runs from June to December. Central and North Vietnam are most affected by seasonal storms and typhoons which can cause considerable damage in coastal areas, particularly in Ha Long Bay and the Hue/ Hoi An region, as well as damage and occasional loss of life in Hanoi. You should monitor local and international weather updates from the [World Meteorological Organisation \(WMO\)](http://www.wmo.int). You can also access <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov> for updates. Please also see [Hurricanes](#) for more detailed information about what to do if your are caught up in a typhoon.

Vietnam, particularly the Central Region and Mekong Delta, is subject to sporadic serious flooding in the monsoon season. (The timing of this varies across the country but is usually from June to October). This can cause considerable damage to the infrastructure and on occasion has left whole areas

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	<p>isolated, including border-crossing points into Laos. You should check the situation carefully through the media, weather reports, transport services and tour operators before embarking on journeys into the interior of the country.</p> <p>Tragic accidents have occurred during mountain climbing excursions in the north of the country, and you should ensure such activity is undertaken under the supervision of reputable guides.</p>
Culture & Social Customs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special features to be aware of or to observe, e.g. status of women in society, social acceptance of gays & transgender people 	<p>Role of Women Vietnamese society is traditionally patriarchal. The role of women has changed to one of greater equality under the Socialist system. While women have equality in the public sphere, the home is still regarded as 'run' by women.</p> <p>Gay and Lesbian visitors Whilst there is no legislation against homosexuality, society in general does not approve, although attitudes seem to be changing. The gay scene in Hanoi remains more underground than some other countries in the region, such as Thailand or even Cambodia, but gay clubs are now becoming more mainstream.</p> <p>Gay and Lesbian (and Gay and Lesbian-friendly) bars and nightclubs in Hanoi :</p> <p>GC Bar 5 Bao Khanh Street, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi T: +84 4 38250499 Local pub near Hoan Kiem Lake with a good mix of people and a reputation for being gay friendly.</p> <p>Aqua 333 Kim Ma, Ba Dinh, Hanoi T: +84 904170 569 A small gay-friendly bar/club well out side the Old Quarter with a DJ and small dance floor.</p> <p>One More Time 9 Hang Vai, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi T: +84 91231 9181 Gay-friendly bar in the Old Quarter</p> <p>Mao's Red Lounge 7 Ta Hien, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi T: +84 43926 3104 maoredlounge@gmail.com Old Quarter gay-friendly bar with cheap drinks and a rustic feel.</p> <p>Social Customs Unlike, say Thailand, Vietnam is not noted for its highly developed social customs. You are unlikely to go wrong if you remain polite, good humoured and follow common sense. The following are some basic points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Vietnamese usually present their name cards (with two hands) on first introduction and will expect one in return. Staff normally have cards printed with English on one side and Vietnamese on the other. • The Vietnamese usually shake hands Western style on meeting and

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	<p>parting. The two handed shake is used to add an extra degree of warmth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level official meetings tend to follow a set pattern of seating and opening small talk. It is impolite to dive straight into business; initiate small talk when first meeting someone. • Table manners are usually rough and ready. The Vietnamese use chopsticks but are not offended by requests for a knife and fork or eating certain dishes with the fingers. • At official meals, the host will usually open with a few formal words of welcome and a toast. The guest is expected to reply in kind at the end of the meal, usually when tea has been served. The gathering then breaks up quickly. During the formal pleasantries it is considered impolite to smoke or to touch your glass. • Westerners still attract interest, especially outside of the main cities. Don't let this annoy you. It is not meant to be rude and there is nothing you can do about it anyway. • The Vietnamese have a keen sense of time and are often superstitious. For example, it is important to pick the right date, according to the lunar calendar, for a marriage or major business event. The 1st (new moon) and the 15th (full moon) of every lunar month are sacred days when many Vietnamese go to the pagodas with offerings or burn incense joss sticks at home while praying.
Law	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference to country-specific laws relevant to travellers 	<p>You should avoid any involvement with drugs. Drug trafficking and possession carries heavy penalties, including the death penalty, which is enforced in Vietnam. Other crimes, such as sex offences or fraud, can result in very long prison terms or a death sentence. The Vietnamese legal system is not well developed and the standard of prisons is very poor.</p> <p>Foreign visitors to Vietnam are not permitted to invite Vietnamese nationals into their hotel rooms.</p> <p>Photography of, or near, military installations is generally prohibited.</p>
Environmental & Green Policy (if applicable)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Council initiatives • national & local government initiatives 	<p>NA</p>
Tourist Limitations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • out-of-bound areas • buildings • military installations • regions 	<p>As in many countries, military installations are sensitive and visitors are advised against taking photographs in their vicinity.</p>
Special Needs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general advice and access for disabled travellers • where to get help 	<p>Vietnamese towns and cities are not very accessible for visitors with disabilities although gradually the situation is improving. Modern international hotels are the most accessible venues with the likelihood of ramps and lifts for guests in</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URL to relevant web sites 	<p>wheelchairs. Traffic and the crossing of roads is problematic for all pedestrians but especially for those with disabilities. The Vietnamese people are very welcoming and keen to assist and visitors requiring assistance are likely to receive help if they ask.</p> <p>The Independent Living Center can provide some services such as lift van rental, and assistant/support.</p> <p>Address: 42 Kim Mã Thượng, Ba Đình, Hà Nội</p> <p>Tel: 84,437674808</p> <p>Email: tsongdoclaphn@gmail.com</p> <p>Website: http://eng.tsongdoclaphn.vn/</p>
Cuisine	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food & drink • food hygiene • Halal/vegetarian/vegan options • main types • recommended restaurants and bars 	<p>Vietnamese food is rightly famous worldwide and new local and international restaurants are opening up all the time so it's best to ask friends or colleagues for advice on where to go. Use common sense when trying street food and avoid places where basic hygiene requirements do not seem to be met.</p> <p>Recommended Restaurants in Hanoi</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Press Club, Western Cuisine 59A Ly Thai To Street Tel 84 4 39340888 Email trang@hanoi-pressclub.com Web site www.hanoi-pressclub.com 2. Quan An Ngon, Vietnamese Food 26 Tran Hung Dao Street Tel 84 4 39336133 Email ngonhanoi@vnn.vn Tel 84 4 37162959 Email foodshop45@yahoo.com 3. Madame Hien, Vietnamese 15 Chan Cam Tel : 84 4 3938 1588 - 84 4 3938 1589 Email: madame.hien@didiercorlou.com http://verticale-hanoi.com/en/madame-hien 4. Jacksons Steak House (Western Steakhouse) 23 Hai Ba Trung Tel: 84 4 3938 8388 No email address given http://www.alfrescosgroup.com/en/hanoi-jackson-restaurant-

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	<p>concept.html</p> <p>5. Don's Bistro (Asian and European) 16/27 Xuan Dieu Tel: 04 4 3719 2828 Email: donchef@donviet.vn http://www.dons-bistro.com/</p> <p>6. KOTO Restaurant, Vietnamese, Breakfast & Brunch (Supporting street kids) 61 Pho Van Mieu Tel : +84 4 3747 0337 Email:kotohanoi@koto.com.au</p>
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Shopping & Leisure

- URL to more information
- what are the must-buys, e.g. unique country items, gift ideas
- what are the must-knows, e.g. fixed price or bargaining needed
- where are the must-go places, proximity of malls & shopping areas

Shops in the city are usually open from 8:30 until 21:00 hrs or 22:00 hrs. Most shops are open on Sunday.

Credit cards are accepted at most major hotels, some restaurants and a few shops. These establishments often charge fees, not approved by credit card companies, of four or five per cent.

You can usually track down most things you need, if you know where to look, and often discover something new in the process. Prices, and quality, are extremely variable. As a foreigner you will be expected to pay a little more than the Vietnamese and the price you pay will often depend on your bargaining skills!

There is a wide range of toiletry items, but you may not find the brand you are looking for. It is therefore advisable to bring favourites. Some shops now stock a limited range of tampons.

Places to Visit:

1. Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum
 The final resting place of Ho Chi Minh
 More details:
 8 Hung Vuong (access via 5 Hgoc Ha St), Ba Dinh (on the very northwestern edge of Hoan Kiem district)
 Opening Hours: 07:00 to 11:00
2. Presidential Palace and Ho Chi Minh's House on Stilts
 Just to the north of Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum sits the presidential palace, (which you can't enter), and Ho Chi Minh's bungalow set in a stretch of mango tree-filled parkland around a small pond.
 More details:
 North of Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum
 Opening Hours: Summer: 07:30-11:00, 14:00-16:00 Winter: 08:00-11:00, 13:30-16:00

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3. Temple of Literature

The site of Vietnam's first national university linking learning and religion founded in 1070 by Emperor Ly Thanh Tong as a temple dedicated to the cult of Confucius.

More details

Quoc Tu Giam St, Hanoi

Opening Hours: Daily 08:00-17:00

4. St Joseph's Cathedral

This Catholic cathedral was completed in 1887 by Monseigneur Pigneau de Behaine. It was closed in 1975 upon reunification of Vietnam, and was not reopened until 1985.

40 Nha Chung, Hanoi

Opening Hours: Daily 05:00-07:00, 17:00-21:00

5. Hoan Kiem Lake

Hoan Kiem Lake, 'Lake of the Restored Sword', forms the centerpiece of Hanoi. Around sunset it is difficult to find a free seat as young couples congregate there. Early in the morning the lakeside is a popular venue for tai chi and exercise.

Central Hanoi

6. Ngoc Son Pagoda

At the northern end of Hoan Kiem Lake, just down the street from the Water Puppet Theatre, Ngoc Son Pagoda is on an islet accessed via an old red wooden bridge. The site has been used as a temple since ancient times and honours Confucian and Taoist notables, as well as Van Xuong, the spirit of the intellectuals, and national hero Tran Hung Dao, among others.

Hoan Kiem Lake, Hanoi

Opening Hours: Summer 07:00-18:00, winter 07:30-17:30

Shopping:

1. Old Quarter

Hanoi's Old Quarter is made up of 26 streets which have been the commercial heart of Hanoi for hundreds of years. Now alongside the travel agents and cafés for tourists you will still find many of the old trades working as they have been doing for centuries

Location:

North of Hoan Kiem lake in the centre of Hanoi

2. Vincom Towers

While there is more and more mall type development on the outskirts of

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	<p>Hanoi, Vincom Tower remains the main mall in the centre. Here you will find many brand names (not the fakes you'll find in the Old Quarter) as well as mall style fastfoods and a multi-screen cinema.</p> <p>Location: 191 Ba Trieu, Hai Ba Trung District, Hanoi</p> <p>3. Hang Gai (Silk Street) A short stretch of shops all specialising in silk and embroidery</p> <p>Location: Hang Gai (the North West corner of Hoan Kiem lake)</p>
Photographs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice on acceptable practice • image archives 	NA

Updated on 27 November 2015