

VIETNAM TRIP NOTES

Astonishingly exotic and utterly compelling, Vietnam is a country of breathtaking natural beauty with an incredible heritage that quickly becomes addictive. It's people are cheerful and resilient.

Travel experiences in Vietnam range from hilarious to haunting. Hilarious: crossing the street in "sticky rice" formation through an onslaught of motorbikes in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Haunting: gazing over a surreal seascape of impossibly picturesque limestone islands and karsts from a junk in Halong Bay at sunset. Last but not least, there is the food; delicious beyond all description.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

US citizens must be in possession of a passport with at least 6 months' validity from date of return and one blank visa page. U.S. citizens should apply online for a 30 day single entry E-visa on the Vietnam Immigration website. <https://evisa.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn/web/guest/trang-chu-ttdt> It is advisable to review the List of Ports of Entry that allow for foreigners to enter and exit Vietnam by E-visa. Visa processing time is usually 3 days.

MEDICATIONS & INNOCULATIONS

No medication or vaccinations are required for entry to Vietnam.

CURRENCY

The currency of Vietnam is the Dong. Symbol: đ USD notes that are post 2006 and in mint condition are accepted at major shops and restaurants, but Dong are often required in small restaurants and at markets. A mix of both is recommended.

A convenient currency converter can be found at <http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/>

CREDIT CARDS

Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted, American Express less so. Cash is needed for shopping at small local restaurants and shops. ATMs are easily found in major cities and at airports.



TIME DIFFERENCE

Saigon is 12 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time and 15 hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time.

SHOPPING

Silk is the most popular item to purchase in Vietnam, whether raw fabric or in the form of arts and crafts, clothing, lanterns and home décor.

ELECTRICITY

Vietnam operates on 220 volts and the plug type is A, C or D. For more information on plugs and voltage, please visit <http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets/>

LANGUAGE

The official national language of Vietnam is Vietnamese. Older people speak Russian, but younger people, and those in the tourism industry are likely to speak English.

CLIMATE

In Hanoi, May to October is hot and humid with high rainfall; November to April is cooler and dry. In Sapa, December & January can be particularly cold.

Central Vietnam experiences hot, dry weather between January and August when temperatures can hit the mid-90°F's; whilst high levels of rainfall can occur in September, October & November.

Southern Vietnam is generally dry and hot from November to April, and warm and wet between May and October, with the highest rainfall in June, July & August.

TIPPING GUIDELINES

Tipping is appreciated. Before you tip in a western style restaurant, check to see if a 10% service charge has already been added, if it has not, 10% is appropriate. Guides should receive \$10 a day, drivers about \$5 a day. Housekeeping staff appreciate a gratuity at the end of the stay.

ETIQUETTE

At a pagoda Remove shoes and hat when entering a pagoda or temple. Women should ensure that they cover their shoulders and knees when entering a pagoda or temple.

This information is provided as a guideline to the country you will be visiting, and is up to date to the best of our knowledge. Further information is available to you on the official Vietnam Tourism Office website - <http://vietnamtourism.com/>