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## VIETNAM MINI GUIDE

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### Overview

Vietnam, a name too long associated with the horrors of war, has finally won its last battle - to capture the imagination of the travelling public. Elegant **Hanoi** now vies with its dynamic sister, **Ho Chi Minh City** (still fondly called Saigon by the locals), for the attention of visitors drawn by the eclectic mix of **old and new**. In both cities the streets are jam-packed with motorbikes and scooters, often carrying whole families, and the **markets** are chaotically busy.

Elsewhere, the scenes are timeless. Early morning on the **Mekong Delta** brings the daily **floating markets** where fruit and vegetables are peddled. Everywhere the green patchwork of **rice paddies** stretches into the distance, broken only by the silhouette of water buffalo and **conical-hatted** farm workers bending down to tend the young plants.

The soaring **mountains** in the north of the country tower over tiny **villages** where life continues much as it has done for centuries, with **traditional** costumes still proudly worn. Old **French hill stations** survive throughout the country offering welcome respite from the heat of the plains below.

The **ancient** former imperial capital, **Hué**, takes visitors back to a time of concubines and eunuchs. In every town, young women wearing the simple but feminine national dress, the *ao dai*, weave their way through the traffic at the controls of a motorbike.

Only in Vietnam could the past and the present be encapsulated so perfectly.

### Vietnam National Administration of Tourism

80 Quan Su, Hanoi, Vietnam

Tel: (4) 942 3998.

Website: [www.vietnamtourism.com](http://www.vietnamtourism.com)

### Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the UK

12 Victoria Road, London W8 5RD, UK

Tel: (020) 7937 1912.

Website: [www.vietnamembassy.org.uk](http://www.vietnamembassy.org.uk)

Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1700; 0930-1230 (visa section).

### Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the USA

1233 20th Street, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036, USA

Tel: (202) 861 0737 or 2293 (consular section).

Website: [www.vietnamembassy-usa.org](http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org)

### Key Facts

#### Location

South-East Asia.

#### Time

GMT + 7.

#### Area

329,247 sq km (127,123 sq miles).

#### Population

83.6 million (UN estimate 2005).

## Population Density

253.9 per sq km.

## Capital

Hanoi. **Population:** 3.2 million (official estimate 2005).

## Geography

Vietnam shares borders to the north with the People's Republic of China and to the west with Laos and Cambodia. The South China Sea lies to the east and south. The land is principally agricultural with a central tropical rainforest.

## Government

Socialist republic since 1980. Gained independence from France in 1954.

## Head of State

President Nguyen Minh Triet since 2006.

## Head of Government

Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung since 2006.

## Recent History

Reforms have resulted in Vietnam having one of the fastest growing economies in the region during the last decade but there has been no parallel development in the country's political environment: Vietnam is still a one-party communist state. The country is ruled by a triumvirate of a president, prime minister and the secretary general of the Communist Party, the latter the most powerful man in the country. The current president and prime minister are both seen as economic reformers and both hail from southern Vietnam. In order to achieve continuing economic progress they will have to propose more privatisation and deregulation and will have to fight Communist Party diehards in the process.

## Language

Vietnamese is the official language. English, French, Chinese and occasionally Russian and German are spoken.

## Religion

Buddhist majority. There are also Taoist, Confucian, Hoa Hao, Caodaist and Christian (predominantly Roman Catholic) minorities.

## Electricity

220/110 volts AC, 50Hz; two-pin flat plugs are in use.

## Social Conventions

Handshaking and a vocal greeting is normal. Clothing should be kept simple, informal and discreet. Avoid shorts if possible as they are usually only worn by children. Footwear should be removed when entering Buddhist pagodas. Vietnamese people should not be touched on the head.

**Photography:** There are restrictions at ports, airports and harbours, and in similar areas elsewhere. It is courteous to ask permission first before taking photographs of people.

## Passport/Visa

### Passport Required?

<i>British</i>	Yes
<i>Australian</i>	Yes
<i>Canadian</i>	Yes
<i>USA</i>	Yes
<i>Other EU</i>	Yes

### Visa Required?

<i>British</i>	Yes
<i>Australian</i>	Yes
<i>Canadian</i>	Yes
<i>USA</i>	Yes
<i>Other EU</i>	Yes/1

### Return Ticket Required?

<i>British</i>	No
<i>Australian</i>	No
<i>Canadian</i>	No
<i>USA</i>	No
<i>Other EU</i>	No

## Passports

Passport valid for at least one month after expiration of visa required by all nationals referred to in the chart above.

## Passport Note

For security reasons, it is advisable to carry copies of documents rather than originals when in Vietnam.

## Visas

Travel visas to Vietnam and passports for US citizens.

Required by all nationals referred to in the chart above except:

- (a) 1. nationals of Denmark, Finland and Sweden for stays of up to 15 days;
- (b) transit passengers continuing their journey within 24 hours, provided holding valid return or onward tickets. At present, visas can be issued for either groups or individuals.

**Note:** Nationals not referred to in the chart above are advised to contact the embassy to check visa requirements (see *Contact Addresses*).

## Visa Note

All regulations, including those concerning which countries require visas, cost of visas and validity of visas, are very complex and subject to frequent change. It is therefore advisable to contact the consular section at the embassy before any travel to Vietnam.

## Types of Visa and Cost

Costs vary from embassy to embassy. *Tourist*: from US\$43 (single-entry); from US\$48 (express service); from US\$50 (multiple-entry). *Single-entry Business*: from US\$48. *Multiple-entry Business*: from US\$95 (three months, multiple-entry); from US\$150 (six months, multiple-entry).

## Validity

Tourist visas are valid for one month from proposed date of entry. Visas can usually be extended for another month, at extra cost, in the larger towns.

## Applications to:

Consulate (or consular section at embassy); see *Contact Addresses*.

## Working Days Required

Two (tourist visa express application); five (tourist visa), not including postal delivery. Entry visas can be applied for in person up to six months prior to date of travel.

## Money

### Currency

Dông (VND; symbol  $\text{đ}$ ). Notes are in denominations of  $\text{đ}$ 500,000, 200,000, 100,000, 50,000, 20,000, 10,000, 5,000, 2,000, 1,000, 500, 200 and 100. Coins are in denominations of  $\text{đ}$ 5,000, 2,000, 1,000 and 500.

### Currency Exchange

The US Dollar is the most favoured foreign currency. Australian, British, Japanese, Singaporean and Thai currency, as well as the Euro, can usually be changed in the larger cities; great difficulty may be encountered in trying to exchange any other currencies. There is a commission charge for changing money in banks.

### Credit/Debit Cards and ATMs

An increasing number of outlets accept MasterCard and Visa. However, outside main towns and cities, it is wise to carry cash. There are ATMs in many major towns, but not everywhere.

### Traveller's Cheques

These are widely accepted in hotels and banks. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in US Dollars.

## Currency Restrictions

Restrictions apply.

## Banking Hours

Mon-Fri 0730/0800-1130 and 1300-1600.

## Exchange Rate Indicators

Date Apr 09  
 £1.00= ₫26,516.69  
 \$1.00= ₫17,776.00  
 €1.00= ₫23,545.07

## Duty Free

The following items may be freely imported into Vietnam by foreign visitors without incurring customs duty:

- 200 cigarettes.
- 100 cigars or 500g of tobacco.
- 1.5l of liquor at 22% and above, and 2l of liquor below this amount, and 3l of all other alcoholic beverages.
- A reasonable quantity of perfume and personal belongings.

**Note:** Foreign currency has to be declared on arrival.

## Prohibited Imports

The importation of non-prescribed drugs, firearms, anti-government literature and pornography is prohibited.

## Public Holidays

Below are listed Public Holidays for the January 2009-December 2010 period.

### 2009

**1 Jan** New Year's Day.  
**25-29 Jan\*** *Tết*, Lunar New Year.  
**5 Apr** Gio to Hung Vuong Day.  
**30 Apr** Liberation of Saigon.  
**1 May** May Day.  
**2 Sep** National Day.

### 2010

**1 Jan** New Year's Day.  
**7-9 Feb\*** *Tết*, Lunar New Year.  
**23 Apr** Gio to Hung Vuong Day.  
**30 Apr** Liberation of Saigon.  
**1 May** May Day.  
**2 Sep** National Day.

## Note

\*Check with the embassy for the exact date. Visitors may experience difficulties during this period as shops, restaurants and public services close and prices tend to go up in the few shops that remain open.

## Health

### Vaccinations

### Special Precautions

Diphtheria	Yes
Hepatitis A	Yes
Malaria	Sometimes
Rabies	Sometimes
Tetanus	Yes
Typhoid	Yes

Yellow Fever

No\*

Inoculation regulations can change at short notice. Please take medical advice in the case of doubt. Where 'Sometimes' appears in the table above, precautions may be required, depending on the season and region visited.

\* A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers over one year of age coming from areas with risk of yellow fever transmission.

### Food and Drink

Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Unpasteurised milk should be boiled. However, pasteurised milk is widely available now. Avoid dairy products that are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

### Other Risks

Vaccinations against tuberculosis and hepatitis B are sometimes advised.

### Health Care

There are excellent hospitals in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and health care centres in all provinces, but facilities are limited and there is a lack of medicines. Health insurance is essential and should include cover for emergency repatriation by air. Immediate cash payment is expected for services.

### Accommodation

#### Hotels

Tourist facilities have vastly improved and most towns have small hotels and guest houses. In the major towns, there is a full range of accommodation to suit all budgets.

Both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City have excellent standard hotels with the facilities expected in international-standard hotels such as air conditioning, room service, swimming pool, health club and good restaurants. There are also a number of beach resorts with deluxe hotels in excellent locations. Most towns frequented by tourists have at least one good standard hotel, although it may not always have facilities such as swimming pool or room service.

**Grading:** There is no formal grading of hotels, but usually the price gives an idea of the standard.

#### Guest Houses

There are very many value-for-money guest houses, or mini-hotels, across the country, mainly without air conditioning and some with shared bathrooms or without hot water. Generally they are simply furnished but clean.

#### Camping/Caravanning

There are no campsites in Vietnam. Some travel companies arrange camping for organised groups on treks, and all the camping equipment is supplied.

#### Going Out

#### Food and Drink

Vietnamese cooking is varied and usually very good. It is a mixture of Vietnamese, Chinese and French traditions, with a plethora of regional specialities. As in all countries of the region, rice or noodles usually provide the basis of a meal. Not surprisingly, fish is plentiful.

#### National specialities:

- Breakfast is generally noodle soup locally known as *pho*.
- French-style baguettes are available throughout Vietnam.
- *Nem* (spring rolls - pork mixed with noodles, eggs and mushrooms wrapped in rice paper, fried and served hot).
- *Banh chung* (glutinous rice, pork and onions wrapped in large leaves and cooked for up to 48 hours, to be eaten cold at any time).
- Vietnamese dishes are not complete without *nuoc mam*, a fermented fish sauce.

**National drinks:**

- Green tea is refreshing and available everywhere.
- The French culinary legacy embraces rich, fresh, filter coffee, usually brewed on the table in front of the customer.
- *Bia Hoi*, a local draught beer available at street stalls everywhere. It is not only cheap, but free of additives.
- *Rice wine* is also a favourite throughout the country. It is generally extremely potent.

**Tipping:** Tipping is now quite customary, especially in tourist areas. Upscale restaurants and hotels may add a 5 to 10% service charge to the bill.

**Nightlife**

Vietnam definitely isn't Thailand when it comes to the nightlife, but Ho Chi Minh City has a vast range of **bars**, **clubs**, **live music** venues and **restaurants** from gloomy little establishments to some rather upmarket venues. Hanoi's nightlife is on the up and now there is a good selection of bars and restaurants, although the city can still seem a little quiet after 2200. Elsewhere there are bars and restaurants but the choice is limited.

Government restrictions mean that venues are unable to stay open very late and there are occasional police raids should a bar flout the unspecified regulations. Imported drinks are considerably more expensive than local ones and alcohol sold in the more upmarket places is even more expensive again. There is never any entrance fee to the bars but nightclubs generally charge around US\$5. The dress code is very relaxed with no restrictions on jeans or trainers. Gambling is illegal in Vietnam for the Vietnamese but is allowed by foreign passport holders.

**Shopping**

Vietnam is a **bargain** hunter's paradise and the streets are awash with little shops selling all manner of items. Hanoi's Old Quarter is particularly excellent for visitors with shops selling **clothes**, gold, embroidered tablecloths and handbags. Markets are always great places to enjoy the local flavour and buy **souvenirs**.

Ben Thanh **market** in Ho Chi Minh City and Dong Xuan market in Hanoi are worth a visit. Local specialities include **lacquer** painting, reed mats, embroidery, tailor-made *ao dais* (female national costume) and mother-of-pearl inlay on ornaments and furniture, not to mention the ubiquitous **conical hat**.

The **hill tribes** of the Central Highlands and the north of the country now sell colourful woven bags and clothing. Good souvenirs are marble figurines and vases, ceramics from Bat Trang village, silk paintings and **hand-painted** greetings cards. VAT is included on most items sold, but at the moment there is no system for foreign visitors to be able to claim this back. **Bargaining** is expected in markets and many souvenir shops.

**Shopping hours:** Daily 0800/0830-2100/2200.

**Business**

- **GDP:** US\$52.9 billion (2005).
- **Main exports:** Crude oil, garments, footwear, rice and coffee.
- **Main imports:** Machinery and equipment, refined petroleum and steel.
- **Main trade partners:** USA, Japan, China, EU and Australia.

**Economy**

The economy of Vietnam was devastated by 30 years of war up to 1975, after which policy errors and a USA-enforced trade boycott combined to stifle development. Since the end of the boycott in 1994, and the introduction of liberalising and deregulating measures by the government, the Vietnamese economy has undergone significant growth of around 8 to 9% annually.

The 1997 Asian financial crisis put a temporary brake on the economy but annual growth has since recovered to 8.4% in 2005 despite downward pressures on the economy from SARS, avian influenza and rocketing oil prices. The average inflation rate was 4.4 % between 2001 and 2004, although it jumped to 8.3% in 2005, and unemployment has hovered around 6 or 7% for a few years with a small drop to 5.5% in 2005.

**Business Etiquette**

Smart lightweight casuals would usually be worn for meetings as suits are needed for only the most formal occasions. English is not spoken by all officials and a knowledge of French will be useful. Business cards should have a Vietnamese translation on the back.

**Office hours:** Mon-Fri 0730/0800-1200 and 1300-1630/1700. Some offices are open on Saturday mornings.

### Conferences & Conventions

Vietnam is slowly being seen as a venue for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions. At the moment there are no conference venues as such in the country, but the major hotels, in particular in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, are able to host smaller events in their meeting rooms and ballrooms.

### Business Contacts

#### Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry

4th Floor, 9 Dao Duy Anh Street, Hanoi, Vietnam

Tel: (4) 574 3985.

Website: [www.vcci.com.vn](http://www.vcci.com.vn)

### Top Things To Do

- Hire a bicycle as Vietnam is ideal for long-distance **cycling** - much of the country is flat and the shortage of vehicles makes for light traffic. Caution is needed however, especially on busier roads, as traffic can be very undisciplined.
- Relax on one of the many beaches, such as **Vung Tau**, southeast of Ho Chi Minh City or **Nha Trang**, where there is some superb snorkelling around the many offshore islands. Slide down the sand dunes at **Mui Ne**.
- Get a made-to-measure outfit in one of the many **tailors** of **Hoi An**, beautiful with its narrow trafficless streets lined with ancient houses and temples. Relax in one of the many cafes and watch the world go by.
- Go **hiking** or **horse riding** in the beautiful countryside around **Da Lat**. Be pleasantly surprised at the emerald green lakes surrounded by mountains. Hike through **Ba Be Lake National Park** and **Cuc Phuong National Park** (near Hanoi), and **Cat Ba National Park** on Cat Ba Island.
- Go **kayaking** in spectacular **Halong Bay** and paddle through the limestone karsts dramatically rising up out of the sea.
- **Hire a boat** to explore the intricate network of rice paddies, swamps and forests interlaced with canals and rivers in the **Mekong Delta**.
- See some of the **Vietnam War sights**. Walk part of the **Ho Chi Minh Trail**, used as supply routes by the North Vietnamese during the war. Go underground into the claustrophobic network of tunnels used by villagers and guerrillas during the war at **Cu Chi**.
- Journey at least part of the route from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City on the **Reunification Express** to sample life on Vietnam's railways.
- Learn the subtleties of **Vietnamese cookery** at a class in ancient Hoi An. Submerge into the hustle and bustle of the market to buy provisions before retreating to the calm of the kitchen.

See *Contact Addresses* for further tourist information.

### Top Things To See

- Start with the capital, **Hanoi**, which retains an air of French colonial elegance, with pretty yellow stucco buildings lining leafy streets. Wander round the **Old Quarter**, a fascinating maze of tiny shops, markets and cafes. Pay respects at the **Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum**.
- Sail through **Halong Bay** and be amazed by the 3,000 limestone islands rising out of the South China Sea. The area is strange, eerie and very beautiful. Many of the islands contain bizarre cave formations and grottoes.
- Savour the alpine scenery around **Sapa**, home to several hill tribes whose way of life has changed

very little and who still wear colourful traditional costumes.

- Discover the architecture of **Huế**, the former capital of the emperors of Vietnam, and the remains of the **Imperial Citadel** (largely destroyed during the Tet offensive in 1968). Tour the nearby **mausoleums** of several of Vietnam's emperors, including **Khai Dinh** and **Tu Duc**, each unique in style.
- To escape the heat of the plains, head for **Dalat**, a former colonial hill station, reminiscent of a French town, with faded, elegant villas evocative of another era. The romantic lakes and alpine scenery are magnets for Vietnamese honeymooners.
- Savour the hustle and bustle of life on the streets of Ho Chi Minh City, with tiny temples and faded French colonial buildings overshadowed by gleaming high rises. Visit the **Reunification Palace** and the **War Remnants Museum** to learn about the realities of war.
- Attend the midday service at the unique **Cao Dai** Temple in **Tay Ninh**. En route, scramble through the tunnels at **Cu Chi**, from where the Viet Cong successfully launched attacks against US forces.
- Watch the **river markets** on the **Mekong Delta**, where life is dominated by the mighty Mekong and much of Vietnam's rice crop is grown.

See *Contact Addresses* for further tourist information.

### Getting There

#### Getting There by Air

The national airline is *Vietnam Airlines (VN)* (website: [www.vietnamairlines.com](http://www.vietnamairlines.com)).

#### Approximate Flight Times

From **Paris** to Hanoi is approximately 12 hours.

#### Main Airports

**Noi Bai International Airport (HAN)** is 35km (21 miles) north of Hanoi. **To/from the airport:**

Buses and metered taxis are available to Hanoi with a journey time of approximately 45 to 60 minutes. **Facilities:** Cafes, shops, duty-free and bureau de change.

**Tan Son Nhat International Airport (SGN)** is 7km (4.5 miles) from Ho Chi Minh City. **To/from the airport:** Metered taxis are available with a journey time of approximately 20 to 30 minutes into the city. **Facilities:** Snack bar, shops, duty-free and bureau de change.

#### Departure Tax

At Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh: US\$14. At Da Nang: US\$8.

#### Getting There by Water

**Main ports:** Ho Chi Minh City, Vung Tau, Haiphong and Da Nang.

International **cruise** facilities are available. There is a **ferry** service from Phnom Penh in Cambodia to Chau Doc in the Mekong Delta and tickets can be booked through local travel agents or at the dock. In addition there is a service from Can Tho to Phnom Penh offered by *Tourism & Passenger Ship Company Vinasin* (tel: (071) 888 960).

#### Getting There by Rail

It is possible to cross into China by rail from Lao Cai to Kunming in the Yunnan province of China or through Lang Son to Nanning. There are trains from Beijing-Dong Dang-Hanoi and back. Contact *Vietnam Railways* (tel: (04) 942 2770; website: [www.vr.com.vn](http://www.vr.com.vn)) for details.

#### Getting There by Road

There are routes to China through Lang Son, Mong Cai and Lao Cai, Cambodia through Moc Bai and also to Laos at Lao Bao and Cau Trieu. *The Saigon Passenger Transport Company* (tel: (08) 920 3623 or 829 7278; website: [www.sotranco.com.vn](http://www.sotranco.com.vn)) operates daily services from Ho Chi Minh City to Phnom Penh.

There is a **bus** service from An Cuu bus station in Huế to Savannakhet in Laos. Go in person to buy tickets in advance.

## Getting Around

### Getting Around by Air

*Vietnam Airlines (VN)* (website: [www.vietnamairlines.com](http://www.vietnamairlines.com)) operates daily flights between Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hué, Da Nang and Nha Trang. Regular services are also provided between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to Buon Ma Thuot, Dalat, Phu Quoc, Pleiku and Qui Nhon. *The Northern Airport Flight Service Company* operates flights by helicopter to Halong Bay from Hanoi.

### Getting Around by Water

A local network operates between ports. There are **hydrofoils** from Haiphong to Cat Ba and Mong Cai and **express boats** from Rach Gia to Phu Quoc, which can be booked by local travel agents or in person at the dock. *Greenlines* (tel: (08) 821 8185) operates a hydrofoil from Ho Chi Minh City to Vung Tau.

### Getting Around by Rail

Visitors may use the rail transport system independently or as part of a rail tour. Express long-distance trains are faster than local services, more reliable and more comfortable. Although a few carriages now have air conditioning, facilities are still short of international standards. The main rail route connects Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City and the journey can take between 30 and 40 hours. There are also services from Hanoi to Haiphong, Dong Dang and Lao Cai. Contact *Vietnam Railways* (tel: (04) 942 2770; website: [www.vr.com.vn](http://www.vr.com.vn)) for more information. Tickets should be bought at railway stations.

In 2007, plans were approved for a new high-speed rail connection between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. If this goes ahead, the journey time could be reduced to less than 10 hours. The Vietnamese government wants the new link to be completed within six years.

### Getting Around by Road

The road network throughout Vietnam is reasonable but the standard of the roads varies dramatically from good to appalling. Roads throughout Vietnam are designated by numbers and the main north to south route is Highway 1 connecting Hanoi with Ho Chi Minh City. In theory, traffic drives on the right but in practice drivers take the most direct path avoiding the many thousands of bicycles, motorbikes and animals wandering along the road.

**Coach/bus:** Services are often poor and overcrowded, although long-distance buses are sometimes more modern and air-conditioned. *Saigon Passenger Transport Company* (tel: (08) 920 3623 or 829 7278) operates inter-province services from Ho Chi Minh City. Otherwise go in person to the bus station in advance to purchase tickets.

**Car hire:** It is possible to hire chauffeur-driven cars from travel companies. Self-drive car hire is non-existent.

**Regulations:** Seat belts are not compulsory in Vietnam.

**Documentation:** An International Driving Permit and a test (taken in Vietnam) are required for long-term residents.

### Getting Around Towns and Cities

There are local **bus** services in Ho Chi Minh City and in Hanoi. It is also possible to travel by **taxi**, **motorbike** or **cyclo** (cycle rickshaw; motorised version also exists). Taxi drivers do not expect to be tipped, but it is welcomed.

### Journey Times

The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from **Hanoi** to other major cities/towns in Vietnam.

	Air	Road	Rail
Ho Chi Minh City	2.00 -		30.00
Halong Bay	-		3.30 -

The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from **Ho Chi Minh City** to other major cities/towns in Vietnam.

Road

Phan Thiet 4.00

Dalat 7.00

## Communications

### Telephone

Country code: 84.

### Mobile Telephone

Roaming agreements exist with some international mobile phone companies. Coverage is available throughout large parts of the country.

### Internet

Internet cafes are widely available throughout the country.

### Post

Postal services can be slow. Airmail to Europe can take up to three weeks.

**Post office hours:** Daily 0700-2100.

### Media

The media is controlled by the Communist Party. Newspapers straying beyond restrictive government reporting guidelines are shut down. Internet access is tightly controlled. Web content is subject to government approval and sites deemed unacceptable are blocked.

### Press

- Daily and weekly newspapers in Vietnam include *Lao Dong*, *Nhan Dan (The People)* and *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*.
- The *Vietnam Economic Times*, *Vietnam Investment Review*, *Saigon Times* and *Vietnam News* are published in English.
- *Le Courier du Vietnam* is published in French.

### TV

- VTV is the national TV service.
- Regional stations also exist and some foreign cable channels are broadcast.

### Radio

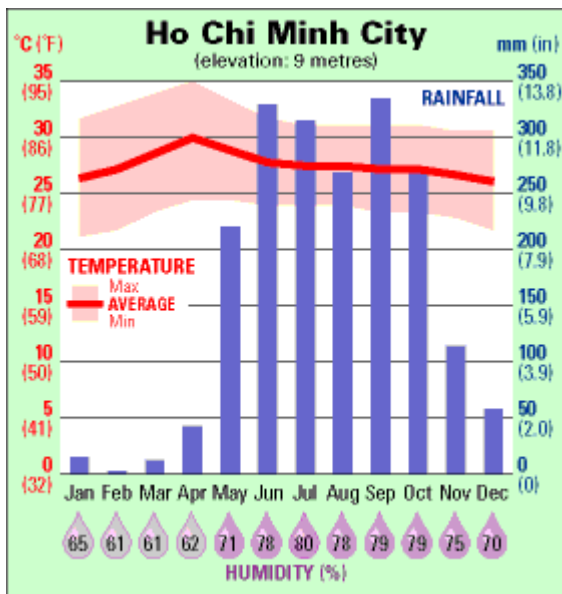
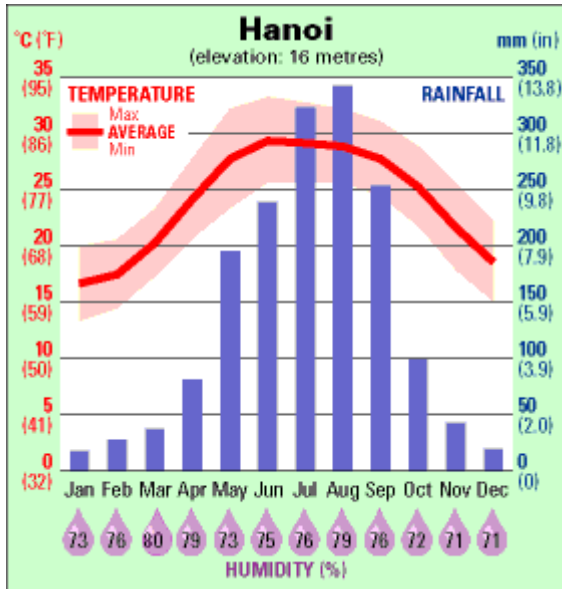
- *Voice of Vietnam (VoV)* is state operated.
- VoV 5 broadcasts programmes in English, French and Russian.

## Climate

Because of its geography, the climate in Vietnam varies greatly from north to south. Tropical monsoons occur from May to October in the north and south and from September to January in the centre. It is almost totally dry throughout the rest of the year.

## Required Clothing

Loose, natural fabrics all year, but warmer clothing is required in the highlands, and in the winter in north Vietnam. Rainwear is essential during the wet season.



**Map**



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