

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW WHEN TRAVELLING TO VIETNAM

SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- In general, Vietnam has a tropical climate with average annual temperatures ranging from 22°C to 30°C.
- From April to October, most of the country is affected by south-western monsoons. The rains, which tend to be concentrated in the late afternoons, provide welcome relief to the heat. Travel to very remote areas may be affected by the rains, but overall they should not interfere with your trip.
- The Rainy season runs from around May to October in the north, August to December in the centre and May to November in the south.
- November to April is the Dry season in the north, while this is January to July in the centre and December to April in the south.
- Only the north has a cool season, running from December to March

WHAT TO PACK

The climate can vary depending on when and where you go. For example, while Hanoi is cold enough to warrant a coat from December to February, but this is an excellent time to visit Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta.

If your trip to Vietnam includes stops at beaches and mountainous areas, you will need clothes for all temperatures. If you plan to visit northern Vietnam in the winter, you'll need a warm coat. Mountainous areas can get chilly so choose clothes that you can layer. If trekking is on your agenda, you will need sturdy footwear with traction—plus lots of socks. Slip-on shoes or sandals are useful for visits to pagodas or people's houses as you'll save time taking your shoes on and off. Larger cities like Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi offer upscale bars and restaurants so be sure to pack some clothes and shoes for a nice evening out. It's not advisable to bring flashy jewellery.

RETAIL HOURS

Shops are generally open from 08:00 – 18:00. Some street markets close from 12:00 – 14:00 in the hotter months.

MONEY MATTERS

- Vietnam's currency is the Vietnam Dong (VND) and is generally the only accepted currency.
- The best place to change money is at the hotel or a local bank. Most banks are open Monday to Friday.
- Traveller's cheques can be difficult to change.
- Credit cards are accepted in major hotels and retail outlets, but not many other places.
- ATMs are widely available throughout Vietnam and are the easiest and safest way of accessing money.

POPULAR SHOPPING OUTLETS

- Saigon: Ben Thanh Market, Vincom Center
- Hanoi: Hang Gai Street, Hanoi Weekend Night Market
- Nha Trang: Nha Trang Market, Vinh Luong Market
- Phu Quoc: Duong Dong Market, Dinh Cau Night Market
- Hoi An: Hoi An Central Market, Hoi An Silk Village

DRINKING WATER

It is recommended not to drink tap water in Vietnam, but to buy bottled water.

TIPPING / PORTERAGE

While not compulsory, tipping is greatly appreciated throughout Southeast Asia, especially in the service industry, when you are pleased with the services provided. For reference, we have provided a general guideline below:

- Guides: from VND 250,000 day per traveller
- Drivers: from VND 1250,000 day per traveller
- Restaurants: 10-15% of the total bill
- Hotel Maid Service: from VND50,000 per day
- Porters: from VND50,000 at time of service
- Local Boat Transport: from VND120,000 per boat
- Overnight Cruise: from VND120,000 per person per night (to cover all crew)

TRAVEL RESPONSIBILITY

- Learn a few words of the local language so you know what's considered polite in terms of eating, greeting and local values.
- Appropriate behaviours by travellers helps ensure local communities continue to be hospitable and friendly.
- Respect other people's cultures and avoid imposing your beliefs.
- Adhere to the hotel's water or energy conservation policies.
- Buy locally made crafts and support local skills. Buy them preferably from the craftsman himself to ensure your money goes to the artist and not the middle man.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Lock valuables away while travelling and always be vigilant of your belongings. Never leave them unattended.
- South African passport holders do not require a visa.
- Time is 5 hours ahead of South Africa.
- Smoking is only allowed in designated areas.
- Vietnamese is the official language, however English is spoken in main cities.
- Vietnam uses 230V AC electricity. Power outlets most commonly feature two-prong round (like much of Europe) sockets.

WHAT THINGS COST

Costs vary from Local Supermarkets / Street Food Stores and Local Restaurants. Here is an average of local costs; Bottle of water VND5000; Soft Drink VND10000; Beer VND15000; Bottle of wine local from VND50000; Light lunch from VND25000; Dinner from VND60000.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS/ADVICE

- Beware of pick pockets in markets.
- Don't trust beach hawkers selling excursions; these vendors don't always follow the required safety procedures and rarely have the required insurances. It is recommended to rather arrange sightseeing through your hotel or from Thompsons.