
Travel Guide Ho-Chi Minh City

02 Quick view
02 Vietnam
03 Travel etiquette
03 Health

04 Phone calls & Internet
04 Top 10 sights
06 Shopping in Ho-Chi Minh City
07 Restaurants

08 Nightlife
09 Calendar of events
10 Hotels





Quick view

Ho-Chi Minh City – a brief overview

Vietnam's largest city is the embodiment of fast-paced change in this beautiful country. The former Saigon is growing fast, both outwards and upwards, with new neighbourhoods and skyscrapers at seemingly every turn. There's still a faded colonial grandeur to proceedings, the influence of decades of French rule visible across town.

Grab a *banh mi* and a *bia hoi* at a street-side stall, shop till you drop at Ben Thanh market, and steep yourself in the city's history, from its pretty churches to the Independence Palace's role in the end of the brutal war which tore Vietnam apart until the mid-1970s.



Vietnam

General Information

Country overview

Vietnam is an utter assault on the senses; it is at once dizzying, frenetic and fascinating.

Geography

Vietnam lies within the tropics and is principally agricultural with a central tropical rainforest. The 'S'-shaped country shares borders to the north with the People's Republic of China and to the west with Laos and Cambodia. The eastern and southern shores are lapped by the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean.

Northern Vietnam is dominated by the Red River plains that bisect Hanoi, and the Lo and Chay rivers. To the north and west of Hanoi are green hilly areas; particularly well known is the Sapa Valley.

East of Hanoi, Halong Bay features a stunning natural formation of more than 3,000 limestone islands jutting sharply out of the South China Sea.

To the south, it is the Mekong River and its fertile plain that governs the geography and consequently the rice industry. Among the plains, in the middle of the thin country and to the southwest are mountainous areas, known as the highlands, where farmers grow rubber, tea and coffee.

General knowledge

Key facts

Population: 92477857

Population Density (per sq km): 279

Capital: Hanoi.

Language

Vietnamese is the official language.

Currency

Dông (VND; symbol đ). Notes are in denominations of đ500,000, 200,000, 100,000, 50,000, 20,000, 10,000, 5,000, 2,000, 1,000 and 500. Coins are in

denominations of ₫5,000, 2,000, 1,000 and 500.

Electricity

220/127 volts AC, 50Hz. Flat two-pin, round two-pin and square three-pin plugs are used.

General business opening hours

Offices tend to open between 0730 and 0800 and close around 1700 or 1800 with a long lunch break between 1130 and 1400 hrs. Some offices are also open on Saturdays.

Public holidays

Below are listed Public Holidays for the January 2019 – December 2020 period.

2019

New Year's Day: 1 January 2019
Tết Nguyên Đán (Vietnamese New Year): 4 to 9 February 2019
Gio to Hung Vuong-Tag (Gio to Hung Vuong Day): 14 April 2019
Liberation Day: 30 April 2019
Labour Day: 1 May 2019
National Day: 2 September 2019

2020

New Year's Day: 1 January 2020
Tết Nguyên Đán (Vietnamese New Year): 25 to 29 January 2020
Gio to Hung Vuong-Tag (Gio to Hung Vuong Day): 2 April 2020
Liberation Day: 30 April 2020
Labour Day: 1 May 2020
National Day: 2 September 2020

All information subject to change.



Travel etiquette **How to fit in**

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. It is also polite to give and receive gifts and business cards using two hands.

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.



Health **Health**

Food & Drink

Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled

or otherwise sterilised. However, bottled water is widely available and cheap; make sure the seal is unbroken before drinking. 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. Dengue fever continues to be a problem; guarding against mosquito bites is advised. Japanese encephalitis is found in Northern Vietnam, including Hanoi.

Contractual physician of Lufthansa

Ho Chi Minh City Family Practice HCMC
Diamond Plaza
34 Le Duan Street
District 01
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam
Tel. +84-83822-7848 / 49

Please note that Lufthansa accepts no responsibility for the treatment nor will it bear the cost of any treatment.



Phone calls & Internet Phone calls & Internet

Telephone/Mobile Telephone

Dialing code: +84

Telephone

It is expensive to call home from hotels but international calls from post offices are much better value.

Mobile Telephone

Roaming agreements exist with some international mobile phone companies. Coverage is available throughout large parts of the country. It is possible to buy competitively priced sim cards for use in the country.

Internet

Internet cafés are widely available throughout the country and they are good value. High-speed connections are only available in major towns and cities.



Top 10 sights Top 10 sights in Ho-Chi Minh City

Reunification Palace

Once the home of the President of South Vietnam, this palace is famous for one of the final acts of the war: a North Vietnamese tank crashing through the gates to secure reunification of the country. Meticulously restored rooms show the opulence colonial rulers once enjoyed.

135 Nam Kỳ Khởi Nghĩa, Ben Thanh
Ho Chi Minh City

Opening times:
Mon-Fri 0700-1100 and 1300-1630

Vietnam
Tel: +84 8 3822 3652

www.dinhdoclap.gov.vn

War Remnants Museum

At times harrowing, the War Remnants Museum pulls no punches in telling the story of the French and American wars which beset the country until 1975. The pictures showing the effects of Napalm and Agent Orange are hugely effecting.

28 Võ Văn Tần, Phường 6, Quận 3
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam
Tel: +84 8 3930 6664

Opening times:
Daily 0730-1200 and 1330-1700
warremnantsmuseum.com

Ben Thanh Market

Sometimes claustrophobic but always fascinating, Ben Thanh Market sits at the centre of Ho Chi Minh, with the city seemingly revolving around it. Pick up cheap handicrafts and sharp clothes or just grab a bite and watch locals and tourists barter.

Lê Lợi, Ben Thanh
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Opening times:
Daily 0600-1800

Jade Emperor Pagoda

This bold Taoist temple dates back to 1909. It's crammed with beautifully carved statues and pungent with incense, and worshippers flock here to pray in front of the robed Jade Emperor. There's a clear Buddhist influence too, meaning it draws a diverse crowd.

73 Mai Thị Lựu, Đa Kao, Quận 1
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Opening times:
Daily 0700-1800

Cu Chi Tunnels

Located just outside the city, these renowned tunnels were dug and used by the Viet Cong during their bitter guerrilla war with the USA. They were used for smuggling supplies into the south and for hiding during fighting. A must-see.

Cu Chi
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam
Tel: +84 8 3794 8830

Opening times:
Daily 0900-1700

Notre Dame Cathedral

A 19th-century cathedral built during French rule, this pretty church is well worth a visit. Its dual bell towers soar over this otherwise low-rise part of Ho Chi Minh, while its pretty interior is awash with natural light.

Ben Nghe
Ho Chi Minh City

Opening times:
Daily 0600-1100 and 1600-1900

Vietnam
Tel: +84 8 3822 0477

tgpsaigon.net

Central Post Office

Close to Notre Dame, this delightful building was designed and built by Gustave Eiffel (of the Eiffel Tower fame). Wander in and marvel at its high-vaulted ceilings and the painted maps detailing telegraph lines across Vietnam and Cambodia.

2 Công xã Paris, Ben Nghe
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam
Tel: + 84 8 3822 1677

Opening times:
Daily 0700-1800

History Museum

Get a grip on Vietnam's history from before the American war, which so dominates proceedings everywhere else. This excellent museum houses artefacts from prehistory through to Vietnam's emergence as a major South East Asian power.

2 Nguyễn Bình Khiêm, Ben Nghe
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam
Tel: +84 8 3829 8146

Opening times:
Tue-Sun 0800-1100 and 1330-1700

baotanglichsvn.com

Khanh Van Nam Vien Pagoda

Unlike the Jade Emperor Pagoda, this is a purely Taoist place of worship. The principal artefact is a statue of Lao-tse, the key figure of Tao philosophy. The temple doubles as a home for the elderly too, with donations welcome.

269 Nguyễn Thị Nhỏ
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam
Tel: + 84 8 3969 2732

Opening times:
Daily 0400-1700

Tao Dan Park

Opposite the Independence Palace, this pretty park is one of Ho Chi Minh's best green spaces. Head here to take the shade on a scorching hot day and indulge in a spot of people watching. Be careful to avoid the park late at night.

Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai, Ben Thanh
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam
Tel: + 84 8 3930 1941



Shopping in Ho-Chi Minh City

Shopping in Ho-Chi Minh City

Key Areas

Vietnam's booming economy has led to the growing middle class developing a taste for luxury goods. Lam Son Square and around has stacks of top-end global stores, while the streets which run off of it are lined with craft shops. Ly Chinh

Thang has endless shoe stores, with strides made to measure.

Markets

Ben Thanh's vast expanse rules all when it comes to Ho Chi Minh markets. Clothes, bric-a-brac and souvenirs are available in abundance. The Ben Thanh night market, which crops up after dark on Lê Lợi, is also great for knick-knacks.

Shopping Centres

Malls have bloomed across HCM in recent years. The ground floor of the Rex Hotel is home to some of the world's biggest luxury brand names, while the huge Zen Plaza (54-56 Nguyễn Trãi) sells top-end sports gear and the latest fashions.



Restaurants Restaurants in Ho-Chi Minh City

Ho Chi Minh is at the heart of Vietnam's food scene. Street eats are the main draw here, serving gorgeous *pho* and *banh mi*, but if you'd rather eat indoors, options are excellent and plentiful.

Shri

A fancy rooftop setting and tasty European-style dishes for those who've had their fill of noodles and rice.

23rd floor, Centec Tower, 72-74 Nguyễn Thi Minh Khai
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Price: Expensive

Scott and Binh's

Highly rated and a favourite with expats, this spot serves gorgeous comfort cooking.

Bizu Boutique Hotel, 15-17 Cao Triểu Phát
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Price: Moderate

KOTO Saigon

A social enterprise, teaching disadvantaged kids about cooking, service and business, with great food and an even better cause.

151 Hai Ba Trung
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Price: Moderate

Ben Thanh Night Market

The stalls that line the edge of Ben Thanh Market after dark offer a plethora of tasty, cheap Vietnamese eats.

Lê Lợi, Ben Thanh
Ho Chi Minh City

Price: Cheap

Vietnam

Ru Pho Bar

Settle down to some of the tastiest *pho* in HCM – the menu offers classic flavours and some more out-there versions of this Vietnamese staple.

27E Tran Nhat Duat
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Price: Cheap



Nightlife Nightlife in Ho-Chi Minh City

Ho Chi Minh is a partygoer's paradise. The drinks are cheap and the bars stay open long into the night. Backpackers are the main target, but there are plenty of fancy options for those who want to hang out with a less youthful crowd.

Rooftop Garden at The Rex

One of the city's original and best rooftop bars; try the Tom Collins and enjoy the view.

141 Nguyễn Huệ
Bến Nghé,
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Saigon Saigon

Classy rooftop bar where travellers linger over a few beers at sunset.

19-23 Lam Son Square
District 1
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Go2 Bar

Cheap Saigon beer and party tunes keep this place jumping into the early hours.

187 De Tham, Phạm Ngũ Lão
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Park Lounge

Laid-back live music entertains drinkers in this fancy bar in the Park Hyatt hotel; dress for the occasion.

2 Lam Son Square
District 1
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Vasco's

A hub for creative types, this bar is great for a few jars followed by dancing to local DJs.

74 Hai Bà Trưng, Ben Nghe
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam



Calendar of events Calendar of events

Tet (New Year)

The most important festival of the year timed according to the lunar calendar.

5 February 2019

Venue: Throughout the city

International Women's Day

Parades and celebration by women.

8 March 2019

Venue: Throughout the city

Liberation Day

Celebrations commemorating the end of the American War.

30 April 2019

Venue: Throughout the city

International Labour Day

Following Liberation Day this gives citizens a two-day holiday.

1 May 2019

Venue: Throughout the city

National Day

Celebrating the Declaration of Independence, in 1945, of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and also the anniversary of the death of Ho Chi Minh.

2 September 2019

Venue: Various venues throughout Ho Chi Minh City

Christmas Day

Celebrated by the small Christian community but increasingly seen as a party period by other groups.

24 - 25 December 2019

Venue: Throughout the city



Hotels

Hotels in Ho-Chi Minh City

Ho Chi Minh's hotels offer amazing value, whatever your budget. Whether you want a cheap, cosy joint near all the happening bars in Pham Ngu Lao or colonial glamour and modern luxury downtown, it's all available and won't break the bank.

Rex

Old-school charm with a rooftop bar and pool, and made famous by US journalists during the war.

141 Nguyễn Huệ
Bến Nghé,
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Category: Expensive

Windsor Plaza Saigon

HCM's tallest building, this swanky modern spot offers amazing views and 5-star luxury.

18 An Duong Vuong
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Category: Expensive

The Alcove Library Hotel

Gorgeous boutique hotel a little out of the centre with its own beautiful library and ultra-modern rooms.

133A Nguyen Đình Chính
8, Phú Nhuận
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Category: Moderate

A & EM 19 Dong Du Hotel

A small, fancy hotel with beautifully furnished rooms, this place is great value.

19 Dong Du, Ben Nghe
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

Category: Moderate