

**IASE 17<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference TRAVEL TIPS: July 10-14, 2022, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam**

September 15, 2021

**I. INTRODUCTION TO VIETNAM**

We are super-excited that the 17<sup>th</sup> biennial conference for the International Association of Special Education will be held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, a beautiful Southeast Asian nation.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, widely known as Vietnam, is not a strange name to the whole world. In the last century, the country has become a renowned destination for travelers all around the globe. Despite going through multiple wars with some of the fiercest opponents, Vietnam is a beautiful and loving country fueled by hospitable and diligent citizens. Vietnam is located on the eastern Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia, with Hanoi as its capital. With a tropical climate, Vietnam is well known for its magnificent scenery and colorful hill tribes, wide terraced fields in the Red River Delta and Mekong River Delta, majestic mountains, and white sandy beaches. Vietnam, nowadays, is one of the should-not-miss destinations in Asia.



## **1. Vietnamese people**

Vietnam is one of the most populous countries in the world with a population of over 96 million, 25% of which are city-dwellers and the rest reside in rural areas. The annual population growth rate in Vietnam is 1.18 percent.

The most populous cities in Vietnam are Ho Chi Minh City (10 million) and Hanoi (8.3 million). In the territory of Vietnam, there are 54 ethnic groups living together in harmony, among which the Kinh people account for 86% of the whole population. The rest of the population fluctuates around 1 million, including ethnic minority people of Tay, Nung, Thai, Muong, Khmer, etc. Kinh people reside across the country, especially in the plains and river deltas. They are the owners of the rice civilization. Meanwhile, the majority of ethnic groups live in the midland and mountainous regions, stretching from north to south. Most of them live alternately; in which the typicality is ethnic minority communities in the North and North Central. However, they are all friendly and love peace. Vietnamese people, who are friendly and enthusiastic, welcome visitors to their country with open arms and friendly smiles.

## **2. Vietnamese culture**

Being a nation of 54 ethnic groups, Vietnam definitely has a diverse culture with various traditional customs and cultural identities. Vietnamese culture is affected mainly by religions such as Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Roman Catholicism, and Cao Dai. Most Vietnamese people think that they do not follow any religion, yet they go to temples and pagodas annually to wish for luck and happiness. Since ancient times, a large number of ancient temples and pagodas have been built across the country.

Despite the Chinese, French, and American dominance, people can still enjoy the vibrant and diverse Vietnamese culture, which can be found in its architecture and cuisine. The Hoi An ancient town, once a major trading port, still retains the architectural influences of the Asian merchants, while the broad boulevards of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City are reminiscent of France. In addition, Vietnamese is one of the countries highly appreciating major holidays, festivals and rites of passage. The most important festival in Vietnam is Tet Nguyen Dan (Lunar New Year). In Vietnam, there are many rites such as the birth of a child, engagement, marriage, funeral, and anniversary of ancestors' deaths. All of these features combine to create a unique cultural identity for Vietnam.

## **3. Vietnam economy**

Vietnam is a developing country. Emerging from an under-developed country, Vietnam is recovering and developing after the damage of wars. With economic reform after 1986, the economy of Vietnam has gained a huge accomplishment, with an average growth rate of 9%.

Vietnam, a market economy that is heavily reliant on crude exports and foreign direct investment (FDI), is the sixth-largest economy in Southeast Asia and the 57th largest in the world in terms of nominal GDP in 2011. Vietnam has a mixed economy, but the state's intervention in the economy remains high. Currently, the State of Vietnam is implementing administrative price control measures by requiring economic groups and corporations to adjust levels of investment, gasoline prices, and steel, cement, and coal prices. Vietnam has seven economic regions: Northwest, Northeast, Red River Delta, North Central Coast, South Central Coast, Highlands, Southeast, and Mekong Delta.

## **II. BEFORE YOU GO**

### **1. Health**

As with any big trip leaving home, you should check with your doctor to make sure you are in good health and fit for the rigors of travel, especially given that you will be coming to a tropical country like Vietnam.

Make sure your doctor knows about your trip to a Southeast Asian nation and gives you all the shots needed to keep you healthy while here. A current list of vaccines and medicines can be found here:

[https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/vietnam?s\\_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/vietnam?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001)

Because the epidemic situation is complicated, please purchase medical/travel insurance that covers COVID-19 treatment with a minimum of \$50,000 cover. This typically costs about \$40.

You can find a suitable travel insurance provider from this website: [https://expatinsurancecompare.com/?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_campaign=vietnam&utm\\_term=expat%20insurance&gclid=CjwKCAiA0KmPBhBqEiwAJqKK4xbYkwEhCBJETXoYkhwEhQEXoYk](https://expatinsurancecompare.com/?utm_source=google&utm_campaign=vietnam&utm_term=expat%20insurance&gclid=CjwKCAiA0KmPBhBqEiwAJqKK4xbYkwEhCBJETXoYkhwEhQEXoYk)

### **2. Packing**

Vietnam is a tropical country. Because Ho Chi Minh City is located in the South of Vietnam, it's very hot. The sun is almost always blazing. You should expect intense sunlight in Ho Chi Minh City all year round, regardless of the seasons. When checking things to bring to Ho Chi Minh City, make sure to bring sunglasses, sunscreen, or a lightweight jacket to protect your skin from sunlight. Since the conference will be held in the rainy season (July), you may have to bring along your umbrella. You don't have to walk under the rain though, because it does not often last long, and you could always take shelter in nearby houses and wait for the rain to stop.

During the conference, it is recommended that you should wear formal clothes and should not wear sleeveless or shorts. However, you may wear informal and comfortable outfits like T-shirts or shorts when you travel around in your free time. Due to strong sunlight, you should not go around just wearing a tank top or any sleeveless, at least not during late morning and noon. When you go around, cover yourself with a lightweight jacket or anything with sleeves. It's what the locals here do. It might be hot to layer up, but it's necessary to protect yourself against the sun.

Footwear should be kept simple with comfortable and sensible shoes. Many roads are not paved. Moreover, sidewalks are few and far between, so be sure you bring your shoes that you are really relaxed in or you will suffer!

If you are going to bring your laptops, cameras, phones, and tablets, don't forget your chargers. Vietnam runs on 220 volts so remember an adapter, or be prepared to purchase one here, they are cheap and widely available.

Check with your phone company to see if they provide a decent international plan and alert them to the dates you will be in Vietnam. If that doesn't suit you, come with an unlocked phone and purchase a SIM card here. Internet connection is fast and stable in hotels in Ho Chi Minh City and the University also provides free Wi-Fi for visitors to connect during the conference.

Remember to bring your Covid-19 Vaccination Certificate!

### **3. Money**

You should alert your banks and credit card companies of your travel plans, taking into account any stopovers and airports you might be traveling through where you want to use your cards. Credit cards are not generally used (except for large expenditures like safaris and hotels), so you need to have easy access to cash, either by withdrawing at one of the banks' ATMS here or by bringing dollars over to exchange at a bureau de change. The Vietnamese shilling is currently about 23000 VND for \$1 USD, and most daily necessities are pretty inexpensive, so bear that in mind when thinking about how much to bring over.

### **4. Passport and Visa**

Depending on your nationality, you may need an [e-visa and medical declaration to visit Vietnam](#). Requirements and fees may vary depending on what passport you carry, so you can visit [iVisa.com](#) for more information of how to apply. Most of the time, the process was quick and easy.

Because it is possible to do a Visa online, delegates should print the electronic VISA in advance. Please have it ready every time you go to the airport, in case the machine malfunctions.



### III. WHEN YOU GET HERE

#### 1. Arriving in Ho Chi Minh City

You will arrive at The Tan Son Nhat International Airport which is located in the center of Ho Chi Minh City. It may take you about 30 to 40 minutes from here to your hotel. In this case, the most common transportation is a taxi. Dozens of taxis are available at the airport so you should wait in taxi lanes to catch a cab. Follow the direction signs with blue background and white texts at the airport to reach the taxi stand. There are the taxi lanes where you queue up for catching a taxi. Check the taximeter carefully before starting the journey, the taximeter should start at zero. Prepare the destination address in your smartphone or written on a note so that you can let the driver know where to drop you off. Prioritize riding reputable taxi brands like Mai Linh and Vinasun.



The airport can often be quite nosy and officious. Please keep calm. If they want to check your bag, allow them and simply state that you are here to attend a conference about special education and that is the reason for your visit. If they object to anything you have packed, find out exactly what the objection is and make sure that the officials understand you are not here for commercial purposes.

## **2. Ho Chi Minh Airport Money Changers**

Money changers can be found at both terminals of Ho Chi Minh Airport: the domestic terminal (Terminal 1) and the international terminal (Terminal 2).

- Money Changers at Terminal 1

Foreign exchange at Ho Chi Minh Airport's domestic terminal was offered by Vietinbank. Vietinbank can be found in the Arrival Hall which is located on the first level of Terminal 1. However, the opening hours of Vietinbank at Tan Son Nhat Airport's Terminal 1 are very limited as the bank is only open Monday to Friday, from 8:00 to 11:30, and from 13:00 to 16:30.

- Money Changers at Terminal 2

Several money changers are operating at the international passenger terminal (Terminal 2) of Tan Son Nhat International Airport (SGN). Some of them can be found in the public area on the ground level (Arrivals), right after passing the customs area. However, the meeting point is outside the building and normally people are not allowed to enter the Arrivals from outside.

On the second level of Terminal 2 (Departures), you can also find 3 currency exchange offices. Two money changers are located nearby, between the entrances to Departure Hall. Money changers operating here are:

- Representative of BIDV bank on the left
- EximBank currency exchange office on the right
- EximBank also has another branch in Departures that can be found after passing check-in desks.

Note: The trailing zeros in Vietnamese money may be extremely confusing. Therefore, foreign guests should organize their money. There are several values of money: 500.000 VND (maximum denomination), 200.000 VND, 100.000 VND, 50.000 VND, 20.000 VND, 10.000 VND, 5.000 VND, 2.000 VND, and 1.000 VND. Please put different denominations in different compartments in the wallet, including change for easy use.

### 3. Hotels

All activities of the conference will take place at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. Therefore, hotels will be located near the school.

There are 3 recommended hotels:

- **Hotel Nikko Saigon (5 stars)**

Hotel Nikko Saigon is a modern, stylish with minimalist design five-star hotel nestled within Ho Chi Minh City's business district and tourist attractions.

Located beside Now Zone Shopping Mall, this 5-star property features modern rooms with cable flat-screen TV and a bathroom. The property features a full-service spa, an outdoor pool and fitness facilities.

Offering city views from oversized windows, the spacious rooms feature warm lighting and calming earth tones. They have a tea/coffee maker, a mini-bar and free Wi-Fi.

Hotel Nikko Saigon also has a business center and concierge services. Guests can enjoy the hot tub and a wide selection of spa services at the property.

Hotel Nikko Saigon is a 10-minute drive from Saigon Opera House, Notre Dame Cathedral and the Reunification Palace. It is a 25-minute drive from Tan Son Nhat International Airport and has free parking.

Here is the link of the hotel: <https://www.hotelnikkosaigon.com.vn/> or <https://www.agoda.com/hotel-nikko-saigon/hotel/ho-chi-minh-city-vn.html?cid=-1&checkIn=2022-01-13&los=1&travellerType=1>

Address: 235 Nguyen Van Cu Street, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

- **Dong Khanh Hotel (3 stars)**

Dong Khanh hotel is one of the 3-star hotels of the Saigon Tourist Holding Company. With its history of over 55 years, it boasts one of the most famous Chinese structures combined with the Vietnamese style of architecture in the city. Located in the heart of the economic center of District 5, near a large shopping mall center convenient for shopping and entertainment such as: An Đông Market, An Đông Plaza, China Town.... Just a short distance about 15 minutes drive away from the commercial centers such as Ben Thanh Market, Parkson, Vincom ... and 30 minutes drive from Tan Son Nhat Airport.

Here is the link of the hotel: <https://dongkhanhhotel.com/en/about/> or <https://www.agoda.com/en-au/dong-khanh-hotel/hotel/ho-chi-minh-city-vn.html?finalPriceView=1&isShowMobileAppPrice=false&cid=-1&numberOfBedrooms=&familyMode=false&adults=2&children=0&rooms=1&maxRooms>

=0&checkIn=2021-09-

20&isCalendarCallout=false&childAges=&numberOfGuest=0&missingChildAges=false&travellerType=1&showReviewSubmissionEntry=false&currencyCode=VND&isFreeOccSearch=false&isCityHaveAsq=false&tspTypes=3&los=1&searchrequestid=e7668483-3e75-4069-90e1-685ca3f1cbab

Address: 2 Tran Hung Dao street, District 5, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

- **Lam Son Apartment**

The hotel offers air-conditioned accommodation in Ho Chi Minh City. It is located 2.7 km from War Remnants Museum, 2.9 km from Ben Thanh Street Food Market and 2.9 km from Reunification Palace. It offers free WiFi and free private parking on site.

Each apartment comes with a sofa, seating area, flat-screen cable TV, fully equipped kitchen and private bathroom with shower. The apartment also has a refrigerator, stovetop and kettle.

The apartment is located 2.9 km from Tao Dan Park and 3.1 km from Fine Arts Museum. The nearest airport is Tan Son Nhat International Airport.

Here is the link of the hotel: <https://www.facebook.com/sunrisehome2/>

Address: 320/2C Tran Binh Trong str, Ward 4, District 5 Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam 700000

- **Zazz Urban Ho Chi Minh Hotel**

The hotel offers quality accommodation and great service. The city center is merely 3 km away, and the airport can be reached within 30 minutes. With its convenient location, the property offers easy access to the city's must-see destinations.

ZAZZ URBAN HO CHI MINH HOTEL offers many facilities to enrich your stay in Ho Chi Minh City. The property provides free Wi-Fi in all rooms, 24-hour security, daily housekeeping, taxi service, wheelchair accessibility to ensure the greatest comfort.

All guest rooms feature a variety of comforts. Many even provide closets, towels, carpeting, slippers, flat-screen television to please the most discerning guest. The property offers many unique recreational opportunities such as an outdoor pool. ZAZZ URBAN HO CHI MINH HOTEL is an ideal place of stay for travelers seeking charm, comfort, and convenience in Ho Chi Minh City.

Here is the link of the hotel: <https://www.agoda.com/zazz-urban-ho-chi-minh-hotel/hotel/ho-chi-minh-city-vn.html?cid=1844104&checkIn=2022-01-21&los=1&travellerType=1>

Address: 28 Su Van Hanh Street, Ward 9, District 5, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, 70000.

#### **4. Living safely with Covid-19 pandemic – 5k message**

The Ministry of Health has officially announced a message featuring 5K (in Vietnamese) Khau trang (facemask)- (Khu khuan) disinfection- (Khoang cach) distance- (Khong tu tap) no gathering – (Khai bao y te) health declaration to help everybody get used to living safely with the COVID-19 pandemic in ‘new normal’ state.

Under the message, the MoH encourages people to regularly wear face masks at public places and crowded areas, wear medical masks at medical facilities and quarantine areas.

People are recommended to regularly wash hands with soap or hand sanitizers; clean surfaces and frequently contacted objects (doorknobs, mobile phones, tablets, tables, and chairs).

People are also asked to keep a safe distance from each other and avoid mass gatherings.

People are called on to conduct health declarations on the NCOVI app, install BlueZone which will help detect the risk of COVID-19 infection.



The organizers will prepare necessary items for Covid-19 prevention during the conference, including sanitizer and masks. In addition, hand sanitizer and 05 medical masks will be available in the conference bag.

Vietnam has closely monitored the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak since its start and has installed a series of proactive, comprehensive measures to ensure the safety of its

citizens and travelers. Travelers experiencing symptoms of the virus — fever, cough, and difficulty breathing — should immediately call Vietnam’s health hotline: 19009095 or 19003228.

Here is the link for participants can check Vietnam Covid data:

<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/viet-nam/>

## **5. What to wear**

During the conference, it is recommended that you should wear formal clothes (BUSINESS CASUAL) such as long pants, skirts, or dresses and should not wear sleeveless or shorts.

However, you may wear informal and comfortable things like T-shirts or shorts when you travel around in your free time. Because of the sun, you should not go around just wearing a tank top or any sleeveless, at least not during the late morning and noon. When you walk around, cover yourself with a lightweight jacket or anything with sleeves. It’s what the locals here do. It might be hot to layer up, but it’s necessary to protect yourself against the sun.

## **6. Safety**

Ho Chi Minh is a relatively safe city to travel to. Its main source of income is tourism, so the tourists' safety is their number one concern. However, Ho Chi Minh City is like any other big city in the world, you will always want to be aware of your surroundings and watch out for common risks that can be dangerous for not only residents but also travelers.

- **Pickpockets risk:** Pickpocketing and bag snatching is a very common issue in Ho Chi Minh, especially on the side of the roads where motorbike snatching may occur. Keep your belongings by your side at all times and try to leave all your valuables in a security deposit box of your hotel.
- **Sidewalks risk:** Sidewalks are always a bit congested and difficult to walk in the more local areas because of several reasons. First, some shop owners turn their storefront sidewalks into parking lots. Second, hawkers bring their goods everywhere to sell to customers whom they meet on the street. When they find a “gold place” where there are many people, they will set up shop. As a result, this causes congestion on the sidewalk and many of us accept this as a way of ordinary life from time to time. Third, the sidewalk is a bit rough and uneven in many places. Be sure to wear nice walking shoes when traveling around during the day so that you can be more steady on your feet when running into unexpected cracks and potholes.
- **Scams while shopping:** Dishonest sellers have many ways to deceive foreigners such as raising the price of goods, taking advantage of currency confusion, or using some fraudulent calculations. To prevent these situations from happening,

make sure that you have knowledge of Vietnamese currency and can distinguish similar banknotes. A tip for bargaining is to not pay more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the starting price the vendor offers. Also, always be willing to walk away from the deal!

## **7. Transportation**

Despite its notorious traffic, getting around in Ho Chi Minh City is a fairly easy task once you've done a bit of research before making your way to this lively city. Ho Chi Minh City is made up of 24 districts, with District 1 to 5 hosting the highest number of attractions, restaurants, bars, nightclubs, and shopping venues in the city.

Traveling via the iconic cyclo is a tourists' favorite way of getting around, but there's also an efficient network of motorcycle taxis, public buses, and private taxis that connects you to the city center and beyond. Travelers can also rent a bicycle or motorbike, though navigating through the city's busy (and dangerous) traffic might be quite the challenge for the inexperienced.

You can use Grab to book a car or a motorcycle for traveling. Grab is a mobile app that allows you to book a cheap and safe taxi service. The app matches passengers with taxi drivers for transport with cars and motorbikes. Grab drivers are often not official taxi drivers. They use their car or motorcycle to take passengers from a to b. You set your location and destination in the app and a car or motorcycle comes directly to you. You get in and the driver knows exactly your destination. A Grab motorcycle taxi can only take one person. If you travel with more people, each person needs his own motor taxi. The motorcycle taxi is also the fastest option, except when it is not busy in the city, but this usually only means in the middle of the night.



## **8. Food and Drinks**

One of the exciting experiences that anyone traveling to another country has is tasting local food. Vietnamese cuisine is a rich and important part of Vietnamese culture. Ho Chi Minh

City has a lot of food hawkers and small local restaurants that serve up great delicious Vietnamese food.

In Vietnam, you will discover one unmistakable fact: Vietnamese people love noodles. They eat them every day, sometimes for every meal. Vietnamese noodles are made from a few basic ingredients, the most common being rice, wheat and mung beans, but a whole sub-cuisine is built on these basics.

In addition to the world-famous Pho noodle soup, and spring rolls, you must try these specialties: Com Tam (Broken Rice), Banh Xeo (Sizzling Cake), Banh Mi, and Banh Cuon (Steamed rice roll).

You should use online apps for recommendations, find stalls that have prepared a lot of food, and eat from crowded places. Many famous food locations have many good reviews on food apps like Foody.vn or Tripadvisor. Looking to see how much food a vendor or restaurant has prepared in advance is a safe bet that lots of locals eat there every day. Another way that is used to identify good quality food stalls is based on the number of guests; the crowded stalls will often be safe.



## 9. Rules

Every country has its own sets of laws and regulations. Vietnam is no exception to this, with some laws that are similar to most other countries in the world, but also a select few that may seem strange to some.

- **Register Yourself:** Whether you're an ex-pat or just a tourist, as long as you're a foreign citizen, you are required to register with the local police when you move into a residence. As a tourist, your hotel/hostel usually takes care of this for you.
- **Do not carry more than two people on the same motorcycle:** This should be more of a common sense entry than anything, but if you're walking down the street and see a motorbike with an entire family of four (and their dog) on it, it is illegal. According to Vietnamese law (and common sense), it is illegal to have more than two people sitting on a bike. Plus, you also need a license to be able to drive or ride a bike on the road, just like in every other country in the world.
- **Exporting antiques is illegal:** Fancy that vase that you saw in Da Nang that has been around for about 200 years? Bad news: you can't bring it back home. Well, not unless you get a permit from the Ministry of Culture. It is illegal to export antiques from Vietnam without a permit, so your best course of action is to speak to the ministry to get further advice on what you can do if you really like that vase and can already picture it in your living room back home.
- **Wearing a helmet is compulsory:** It is the law to wear a helmet in Vietnam for both riders and passengers. Most bikes will come with a helmet, however, I recommend spending some money and getting yourself a new helmet that is of good quality.
- **Taking pictures is deliberate:** For those of you into photography, or just like taking pictures in general, do take note that photography of, or near, military installations are generally prohibited. You might get your camera confiscated and be subjected to some serious questioning.

## IV. WALKING AROUND

As previously mentioned, be sensible in your attire and what you carry on your person. Keep your photocopied passport pages at hand. 'Xin chào 'is the Vietnamese salutation used for both 'hello 'and 'goodbye', "thank you for 'cảm ơn'. Some more common Vietnamese words can be found below, and you can always get a pocket-sized dictionary from the bookstore before you come.

Our conference is being run in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) – formerly known as Saigon, which is the economic heart of Vietnam and the main hub of the southern region. A freewheeling, cosmopolitan metropolis, HCMC's dynamic cityscape draws together old and new Vietnam in the most compact of spaces, representing the city's past as well as its future. People here are friendly, warm-hearted and welcome all sorts of new things and new cultures. Please click this link for a virtual 360-degree tour of HCMC.

<https://www.vietnam.travel/sites/default/files/360Tour/HoChiMinhCity/index.htm>

(Vietnam Tourism. (n.d.). Retrieved September 18, 2021, from

<https://www.vietnam.travel/>)

## **V. TOP THINGS TO DO IN HO CHI MINH CITY**

*See the top landmarks* - Walk down Đồng Khởi street to acquaint yourself with the Notre Dame Cathedral, the city's Central Post Office, and the Saigon Opera House. On a more local level, Bến Thành Market and the Jade Emperor Pagoda are worth a visit.

*Shoppings* - Around District 1, a host of old apartments and former office buildings have been repurposed as shopping centres. Decades-old buildings such as 22 Lý Tự Trọng and 42 Nguyễn Huệ are brimming with all kinds of fascinating stores. Bargaining is something you should do when shopping, but if you're the first customer of the day and you don't close the deal after bargaining, it's considered bad luck for shop owners, and they'll be unhappy about it. So, I would recommend doing your shopping, and your bargaining in the afternoon.

*Explore the Chinese Quarter* - The Chinese neighbourhood known as Chợ Lớn is great for exploring on foot. Head for Bình Tây Market, a colossal wholesale trading centre, and Thiên Hậu Pagoda, an atmospheric temple that pays homage to the goddess of the sea.

*Hop on a motorcycle* - Do as the locals do and hop on the back of a motorbike to see the city on street level and feel its energetic pulse. Motorbike tours set off in the evening, when the city is at its most romantic and the sidewalk vendors are out in force.

*Eat street food* - Ho Chi Minh City locals love to gather around dented metal tables across the city for incredible roadside feasts. Don't miss highlights such as bánh mì, southern-style savoury pancakes (*bánh xèo*) and broken rice (*com tấm*).

*Weather* - Ho Chi Minh City has consistent temperatures year-round, and the weather is generally warm. Heatwaves hit the city from April to May, welcoming the rainy season from May to November. Slightly cooler temperatures emerge in December and January.

## **Health**

Major cities such as Hanoi, Danang, and Ho Chi Minh City have a number of state-owned and private hospitals with English-speaking staff. While small pharmacies are common in almost any Vietnamese city, in the rural areas you may be far from the nearest pharmacy or hospital. Please access the link for the list of healthcare services and hospitals as you might need it (<https://www.internationalinsurance.com/hospitals/vietnam/>).

#### *Health services and prevention measures*

Vietnam has closely monitored the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak since its start, and has installed a series of proactive, comprehensive measures to ensure the safety of its citizens and travellers. Travellers experiencing symptoms of the virus — fever, cough and difficulty breathing — should immediately call ***Vietnam's health hotline: 19003228***.

#### *Common Health Issues in Vietnam*

*Pollution* - Air pollutants may aggravate asthma and allergy symptoms. Symptoms include scratchy throat and nasal drip. For anyone with respiratory ailments, invest in a small mask while travelling around metropolitan areas, or plan to spend more time in the countryside if possible.

*Mosquito-borne diseases* - The risk of contracting malaria is heightened in the rural highlands. Consider taking anti-malarial medication if you plan to travel to any remote destinations in Vietnam. Dengue fever has become increasingly problematic in Southeast Asia and occurs mostly in the Mekong Delta, including Ho Chi Minh City. With no vaccines available, the best preventive measure is to wear bug spray during the hours of sunrise and sunset.

*Dehydration* - Vietnam tends to be hot and humid year-round. Don't underestimate the strength of the sun. Sunburn can happen quickly: it's best to wear sunscreen throughout the day. Be vigilant with reapplication, especially at beachside destinations. Dehydration is another concern, as well as heat exhaustion, which may show up in symptoms such as headaches and irritability. Drink plenty of water. Heatstroke is a more serious consequence of overexposure to sun and may require hospital treatment. If you're feeling weak, dizzy, nauseous, and have a temperature of over 41°C, get medical help immediately.

*Food-related illnesses* - Traveller's diarrhoea is a common concern when in new countries. Stick to bottled water and avoid ice in rural areas. To avoid contracting bacteria, look for restaurants with a high turnover of customers and those that prepare freshly cooked food. Generally, street food in Vietnam is quite safe, but always use your own judgement when choosing from vendors. If you experience stomach upsets or diarrhoea, take rehydration salts and stay hydrated. If the problems persist, seek medical attention.

*Critter bites* - These are sometimes an issue when staying in hostels and other shared dormitories, and sometimes even in hotels. Seek help at the nearest clinic if you're suffering from the bites of fleas, bed bugs, and/or lice. Be on the lookout for rabies when in contact with animals, wild or domesticated. When jungle trekking, be wary of ticks, leeches and poisonous snakes lurking in the undergrowth. Seek medical assistance immediately if bitten.

## **Tourism**

Vietnam is an exhilarating country to travel to. Vibrant street life, exquisite food and epic landscapes await you here. A nation on the move, Vietnam balances cool urban culture with traditional values. In the cities, ancient pagodas squat just around the corner from sleek rooftop bars; and in the countryside, life still follows the rhythms of the rivers and the rice harvest. This contrast between old and new Vietnam is a big part of its appeal. Another great reason to visit Vietnam is its diverse natural beauty. The capital of Hanoi is your gateway to the treasures of the north: spectacular mountains and bays studded with karsts. Smack in the centre, up-and-coming Danang gives you easy access to photogenic riverside towns, national parks and long, sandy beaches. In the south, Ho Chi Minh City will entice you with its captivating streets (just watch out for those motorcycles.) Nearby, the water world of the Mekong Delta as well as islands big and small, are just waiting to be explored.

## ***Fabulous Food***

If there is one characteristic that unites Vietnamese food, it's freshness. The Vietnamese love their food, and all across the country, markets are bursting with the abundance of sea and soil. Plucked the same morning, feathery herbs, plump vegetables, colourful fruits, and flapping-fresh proteins are just waiting for a skillful cook to transform them into something magical. These beautiful ingredients are combined with a symphony of delightful textures and flavours. Simply put, it's one of the world's healthiest and most mouth-watering cuisines.



(Vietnam Tourism. (n.d.). Retrieved September 18, 2021, from  
<https://www.vietnam.travel/>)

### *Timeless Culture*

Vietnam inherited its cultural wealth from thousands of years of history, sprinkled with a handful of outside influences. Vietnamese have a strong sense of pride in their traditions. If you're a culture seeker, the central cities of Hue and Hoi An are treasure troves, as is Hanoi, the country's graceful capital. Outside the cities, many elements of Vietnamese culture trace back to cycles of wet rice cultivation. Old and new, side-by-side, is what makes Vietnamese culture so compelling.



(Vietnam Tourism. (n.d.). Retrieved September 18, 2021, from <https://www.vietnam.travel/>)

### ***Blissful Beaches***

Sun, sand, and saltwater: Vietnam is home to countless inviting beaches -- some are well-known, others are completely hidden. The islands of Con Dao and Phu Quoc are famous for inviting water and pristine shores. If you enjoy activity and nightlife mixed into your beach holidays, the coastal towns of Da Nang and Nha Trang will spoil you with five-star resorts, golfing and watersports. Vietnam also offers countless remote beach destinations, such as Quy Nhon, Con Dao and Phu Quoc, where you can have sublime shores all to yourself.



(Vietnam Tourism. (n.d.). Retrieved September 18, 2021, from <https://www.vietnam.travel/>)

### ***Striking Scenery***

Vietnam is chock-full of forested peaks, thundering waterfalls, and breezy coastline, so it's no wonder the country is luring more and more nature lovers. While you'll find plenty of pulse-pounding activities here, including spelunking, canyoning, and trekking, there's no shortage of leisurely ways to enjoy Vietnam's natural wonders. Areas such as Phong Nha and Ha Long Bay offer equal opportunities for relaxing and adventure in spectacular natural settings.



(Vietnam Tourism. (n.d.). Retrieved September 18, 2021, from <https://www.vietnam.travel/>)

### *Changing cities*

Vietnam's vibrant urban centers are growing fast. Here you'll find international restaurants alongside cheap-as-chips street food, ancient pagodas across the street from five-star hotels, and glittering shopping malls around the corner from wet markets. Hanoi is a city of lakes, brimming with historical and cultural treasures. Da Nang is a coastal metropolis on a fast track to becoming a hub for technology and tourism. Ho Chi Minh City is home to uber-cool rooftop bars, trendy co-working spaces, and colonial-chic cafes. Don't forget to hop on a scooter at least once to truly feel the pulse of urban Vietnam.



(Vietnam Tourism. (n.d.). Retrieved September 18, 2021, from <https://www.vietnam.travel/>)

### ***A list of Tourism Companies***

Please access the link for the list of tourism companies and their special offers:

<https://www.vietnam.travel/travel-offers>.

There is a recommended tour company, which is TheSinhTourist. TheSinhTourist was established in 1992. It provides comprehensive travel services in Vietnam to international travelers such as bus/airplane/train tickets, accommodation booking, visa extension, currency exchange, cars for hire, and local tours. The mission of the company is to introduce Vietnam country and Vietnamese people to friends all over the world.

Here is the link of the company: <https://thesinhtourist.vn/>

### **Vietnamese**

The national language of Vietnam is Vietnamese - Tiếng Việt, although many people have some command of English. Very few people are fluent, so remember to always speak slowly and enunciate. Still, you may need to know a few Vietnamese words in times of desperation, so I have listed a bunch below. Don't be scared to try it!

Hello – Xin chào /*Sin chow*!/

How are you? - Khỏe không? /*kweh kong*?/

Fine, thank you - Khỏe, cảm ơn /*kweh, kam un*/

Thank you - Cảm ơn /*kam un*/

My name is \_\_\_\_ - Tôi tên là \_\_\_\_ /*Toy ten la \_\_\_\_*./

Yes (correct) – Đúng /*dung*/

No - Không - /*kong*/

You're welcome - Không sao đâu /*kong sao dwoh*/

I'm sorry - Tôi xin lỗi /*sin loy*/

Good bye - Tạm biệt /*tam byet*/

Yes – Vâng /*vung*/

Do you speak English? - Biết nói tiếng Anh không? /*bet noy tyeng ang kong*/

I don't understand - Tôi không hiểu /*toy kong hugh*/

That's too expensive - Đắt quá /*dat kwah?*/

Ok, I'll take it - Ok, tôi lấy! /*Oh-kay, toy lay*/

I can't speak Vietnamese [well] - Tôi không biết nói tiếng Việt [giỏi lắm] /*thoy kong byet noy tyeng vyet [zoy lum]*/

## **HEADING BACK HOME**

Your trip is done! The conference was amazing!! Asia is beautiful!!! Now you are on your way back home. Make sure your flight is still on schedule but check online and remind your airport transfer of the date and time you will be leaving.

Pack up in reverse, leaving behind anything you don't want/need for the local community. Make sure your bags are full of souvenirs and conference materials anyway!

Make sure all your documents are in order and be prepared to fill out an exit slip at the airport. Check your items to see if you have anything to declare and be sure to do so at the airport.

Hope you had a great time, and you are welcome to visit Vietnam again soon!