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Vietnam factsheet





ABOUT VIETNAM

- **Geographical Location**

Vietnam is a country located in the southeasternmost of the Indochina peninsula. It shares the 4,639 km border with the Gulf of Thailand to the south, the Gulf of Tonkin and the South China Sea to the east, China to the north, Laos, and Cambodia to the west. With a shape resembling an S, the distance from north to south is 1,650 km straight. The country extends from latitude 23°23' North to 8°27' North, The narrowest point from east to west is 50 km. The coastline is 3,260 km long excluding the islands. The part of the East Sea under Vietnamese ownership, including islands and archipelagos, is over 1 million km² in total.

- **Natural Gifts: Topographical Variety**

Vietnamese topography is diverse with mountains, highlands, and plateaus in the northernmost and along the west border. There are two big deltas, Red River Delta in the North and Mekong River Delta in the South. The coastal land in the Middle is pretty plains but the area is very small. Mountains and hills account for three-fourths of the territory but they are mostly low hills. The country is also home to the rooftop of Indochina, Fansipan peak in Hoang Lien Son mountain range. With the height of 3,143 m, it is the highest point of the Peninsula. Vietnam faces the ocean in three directions: East, South, and Southwest. The total coastline is running 3,260 km. The Tonkin Gulf alone has gathered a population of nearly 3,000 islands in the area of Ha Long Bay, Bai Tu Long, Cat Ba, Bach Long Vi islands. The southwest and the south have groups of major islands such as Con Dao, Phu Quoc, and Tho Chu.

- **Tropical Weather Under The Influence Of Monsoon**

The majority of Vietnam territory features the tropical monsoon climate. The climate of Vietnam varies seasonally and by region from low to high, from north to south and from east to west. Due to the strong impact of the northeast monsoon, the average temperature in Vietnam is lower than the average temperature of many other countries with the same latitude in Asia.

- **Cultural Diversity**

Vietnam has a rich and diverse culture in all aspects due to its long history and ethnic variety. Regional culture is also apparent in each part of Vietnam. Since the cradle of national culture in the Red River Delta, wet rice cultivation has played a crucial part in the traditional rituals of the Vietnamese. The local people hold a lifelong tradition of worshipping their ancestors. They emphasize the family as well as the community bond.

The Vietnamese (Kinh people) and the community of 54 ethnic groups have their own traditions and beliefs featuring many festivals. With the ancient influences of China and the influences of France from the 19th century, the West in the 20th century and globalization from the 21st century, Vietnam has been enduring cultural exchanges. But, the long-standing values in rituals and lifestyles are still well preserved, creating the national identity.

- **Abundant Cuisine**

Due to the differences in geography, culture, ethnicity, and climate, regional cuisine in Vietnam varies greatly. However, most of the traditional dishes are based on rice as a staple ingredient. Moreover, due to the colonization of China and France in the past, Vietnamese cuisine is an excellent fusion of East and West culinary techniques.

- **Local Hospitality**

Vietnam is on the top 6 nations for local hospitality based on a report by InterNations. The Vietnamese is renowned for friendliness and easy-going. Local people would like to invite friends to their home and have meals with other family members. They will not hesitate to make a feast for the new guests.

- **Stable Environment**

Vietnam is a one-party country, so politics is relatively stable. Public strikes, riots, and violence rarely happen. The national government also keeps a friendly relation with other countries, so there is nothing like political unrest.

- **Lifelong History**

Vietnamese history has been developed for thousands of years. The written history of Vietnam begins with the birth of Van Lang ruled Hung Kings, followed by Au Lac. During its history, Vietnam has gone through plenty of wars with many great invaders such as China, France, Japan, and the United States. Still, thanks to the great waves patriotism, excellent leadership, the country finally liberated itself and reunifying the territory. After regaining independence in 1975, Vietnam has made a lot of breakthrough in all fields of life.

AIRPORT

Vietnam has 21 airports with civil flight operations including 4 largest international airports in terms of capacity (Noi Bai in Hanoi, Tan Son Nhat in Ho Chi Minh, Danang Airport in Danang, Phu Quoc Airport in Phu Quoc Island). Noi Bai international airport is



around 25 km from the city center. Tan Son Nhat and Danang International Airport are right in the middle of town. Phu Quoc Airport is approximately 20 km away from popular tourist attractions on the island. The national crews, Vietnam Airlines, currently operates 75 routes to 21 domestic destinations and 26 international destinations. In addition, Vietnam Airlines has also become an official member of SkyTeam, a global aviation alliance.

VISA ISSUES

Vietnam has signed visa exemption agreements and agreements with 107 countries. Citizens from many European and all Southeast Asian countries are eligible for visa exemption. However, the duration of the stay in the visa exemption varies by country. Citizens from 40 countries (including US and UK) are eligible to apply for electronic visas, which is super convenient. Foreigners who enter, exit and reside in Phu Quoc island are exempt from visas for a temporary stay of fewer than 30 days. In case foreigners enter an international border gate of Vietnam (including air and sea borders), staying in the transit area at that border gate, then forwarding to Phu Quoc island, they are also exempted from visa.

A Vietnamese visa on arrival can also be arranged by Authentic Asia. When you choose Authentic Asia as an Asian Destination Management Corporation, we will obtain the pre-approval documentation from the Vietnamese authorities and send it to you. All you need to do is to bring the "Visa pick-up upon arrival approval letter" to the airline check-in counter, get onboard. Upon your arrival in Vietnam, you will have the visa stamped at the Immigration Counter after filling some forms.

SAFETY

According to the Global Finance magazine, safety index factors that calculated risks of natural disasters with the crime, terrorism, and war ranked Vietnam in the 83rd position worldwide, higher than many other attractions in Southeast Asia such Thailand (ranked 100th), Indonesia (ranked 104th). Most visits to Vietnam are trouble-free but you should take sensible precautions to protect yourself and your belongings in big cities and tourist areas. Consider splitting key items between bags and remember not to carry all of your cash whenever you go out. Petty thefts are a serious issue in all nations worldwide; and the Vietnamese government is trying to solve this problem by installing more CCTV, especially in populous cities like Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh. In addition, be aware of the street vendors to avoid being overcharged. You should also buy visiting tickets and bus tickets from authorized sellers. Traffic in Vietnam as well as many Southeast Asian nations is messy. So watch your steps when you cross the street.

RELIGION

Vietnam is a multi-religious nation. Vietnamese people have a long tradition of religious activities. All ethnic groups in the Vietnamese community have their own beliefs attached to their economic and spiritual life. The main religions are Buddhism, Catholicism, Taoism. The majority of the nationals are non-religious, but they worship their ancestors.

CURRENCY

The official currency unit of Vietnam is Vietnam Dong (VND). Most popular banknote includes VND 500,000; VND 200,000; VND 100,000; VND 50,000; VND 20,000; VND 10,000; VND 5,000; 2,000 VND; VND 1,000. In addition to cash, international visitors can use checks, credit cards (American Card, Credid Card, JCB Card ...) to exchange for Dong, or buy goods at shops, hotels, restaurants, big shopping mall. Foreign currencies are exchanged into Vietnamese Dong at banks, airport exchange counters, hotels, and gem and gold shops.

LANGUAGE

The official language of Vietnam is Vietnamese. Vietnamese writing today originated in the seventeenth century when a group of European missionaries created an alphabet based on Latin letters. After that, Vietnamese writing has been increasingly developed and completed, becoming the official Vietnamese writing, called the national script, since the beginning of the twentieth century. Besides the national language, many ethnic minorities have their own speaking and writing system. As English is a compulsory subject from elementary schools, English literacy rate is pretty high. Most of young people can speak English well.

WEATHER

Vietnam has a tropical monsoon climate with high temperatures and great humidity. The climate of Vietnam varies seasonally and by region from low to high, from north to south and from east to west. Vietnam can be divided into two major climatic zones.

The North (from Hai Van Pass to the North) is a tropical monsoon climate with 4 distinct seasons (spring, summer, autumn, winter), bearing effects of the northeast monsoon and southeast monsoon. In the South (from Hai Van Pass to the South), due to the low influence of monsoon, the tropical climate is quite harmonious, hot all year round and divided into two distinct seasons (dry and rainy seasons).

Besides, due to the topography of the terrain, Vietnam also has sub-climatic regions such as the temperate climate in Sa Pa (Lao Cai), Da Lat (Lam Dong). The average temperature in Vietnam ranges from 21°C to 27°C and increases gradually from North to South. During the winter in the North, the temperature drops to the lowest in December and January. In the northern mountains (such as Sa Pa, Tam Dao, Hoang Lien Son) it even goes below 0°C with snow. Vietnam has a huge amount of solar radiation with the number of sunshine hours from 1,400 - 3,000 hours per year. The average annual rainfall is from 1,500 to 2,000 mm.

PEOPLE

The current population of Vietnam is 97,689,923 on October 12, 2019, according to the latest figures from the United Nations. Vietnam's population currently accounts for 1.27% of the world's population. The country is ranked 14th in the world in the population rankings of countries and territories. Vietnam is home to about 54 ethnic

groups. The Vietnamese (Kinh people) account for more than 85% of the total population living in the delta and river delta provinces. The remaining 53 ethnic groups mostly reside in the mountains and midland, stretching from the North to the South, including Khmer, Tay, Muong, Thai, and so on.

FOOD

Due to wet rice cultivation, rice is the staple ingredient in a large number of Vietnamese traditional dishes. It is the striking features of geography, culture, ethnicity, and climate that define the specific characteristics of each region's cuisine. Every region has a typical taste. Northern cuisine is considered the most harmonious. People in the Middle prefers spicy food while Southern residents tend to add more sugar to their dishes. Ethnic cuisine is also an exciting part, which features exotic herbs and seasonings. That contributes to enriching and diversifying Vietnamese cuisine. Moreover, Vietnamese cuisine, like many other Asian countries, emphasizes the balance between yin and yang. For example, when the Vietnamese have seafood, which is considered "cold", it is often served hot with chili, ginger, and lemongrass. The use of herbs and vegetables is also dominant in most regions of Vietnam. In addition, situated on the Indochina Peninsula and colonized by France for quite a long time, Vietnamese cuisine displays a perfect fusion of Chinese, Indian and French food with the national identity still imprinted deeply on the Vietnamese dining tables.

The Vietnamese using chopsticks for eating, most of the dishes on the table will be shared among all members.

SHOPPING

Vietnam is renowned for its bustling markets and colonial shophouses, but there are a growing number of flash boutiques and shopping malls thanks to the rapid modernization. Traditional markets (outdoor and indoor) are scattered across the city with local vendors selling Vietnamese coffee beans, household supplies, and Vietnamese street food at affordable prices. You can find a lot of souvenirs on large traditional markets such as the Dong Xuan market in Hanoi, Ben Thanh market in Ho Chi Minh. They are great for purchasing quality textiles and custom-made clothes. There is also an extensive selection of international brands like Zara, H&M, Adidas in major shopping malls including Vincom, Aeon Mall. Many of these establishments are also fitted with arcade centres, ice-skating rinks, and theme parks – perfect for travellers with young children. If you're visiting the capital city of Vietnam for the first time, make sure you check out our helpful guide on what to buy and where to shop in Hanoi.

ENTERTAINMENT AND NIGHTLIFE

To boost the development of tourism, a wide range of recreational complex has been built in Vietnam. Ba Na Hills in Danang and Vinpearl Nha Trang are the most popular. In large shopping malls, there are also arcade centers, ice-skating rinks, and theme parks, very suitable for travelers with young children.

Nightlife is the most vibrant in big cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh. There are often some main streets full of lively pubs, clubs and bars close to the city center such as Ta Hien Street in Hanoi, Bui Vien Street in Ho Chi Minh.

TIME ZONES

The whole territory of Vietnam is within the GMT +7. It does not apply the summertime, wintertime mode.

CLOTHING

The traditional costume of the Vietnamese is Ao dai. However, the locals wear it only on special occasions such as weddings, ceremonies, festivals. Each ethnic communities also have their own costumes which are usually made by hands. Casual clothes much depend on the weather. In general, the Vietnamese wouldn't expose much of their skin in public places, except for the beach. However, due to the high solar radiation, it's better off wearing sunscreen and not doing sunbathing for a long time. When you enter religious places, beware to put on long clothes as a respect to the Gods.

ELICTRICITY

In Vietnam, the power plugs and sockets are of type A, C and D. The standard voltage is 220V and the standard frequency is 50Hz.



PUBLIC HOLIDAY

Vietnamese workers observe 6 public holidays a year including:

- New Year (January 1st)
- Lunar New Year (the largest holiday of the year, occurs around late January to early February)
- Hung Kings Commemorations (the 10th day of the 3rd lunar month)
- Day of Southern Liberation for National Reunification (April 30th)
- International Labour Day (May 1st)
- National Independence Day (September 2nd)

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Buses are the most popular public transport. In Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh, there is a mobile app for you to search for the bus routes within the city. Trans provincial buses are operated by private traveling corporations at a reasonable price. They are the optimal choice for transferring within a short distance. The government operates the national railway but it doesn't stop at all provinces. The railway tickets will be much lower if you book in advance.

TIPPING

Tipping is not customary in Vietnam although nowadays many Western-style restaurants and coffee shops have a tipping box at the counter. Still, customers are not required to tip for the service. It all depends on how you rate the service quality. If you use taxi app like Grab, GoViet... you can add a small amount of tipping so that the drivers will come to you quicker. Still, it's not a requirement.

WATER

The tap water in Vietnam is undrinkable because the purifying process in water plantation only eradicates harsh materials. Many bacteria and chemicals are still living in the water. So to drink it, you have to boil it or using a purifier. Water bottles in convenience stores can be a solution but it is not environmentally-friendly. Another way to have clean water is to bring your reusable water bottle to restaurants or hotels, where there are huge purified water tanks.



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