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Welcome to Vietnam

From colonial Hanoi and dramatic Halong Bay, the mercantile history of Hoi An and the grace of Hue on the Perfume River to vibrant Saigon, the story of Cu Chi and the Mekong Delta, Vietnam is hauntingly beautiful and undeniably charming.

▪ CLIMATE

Vietnam stretches over 1,800 km from north to south, with a topography that varies from coastal plain to mountain ranges; therefore weather patterns in the principle cities are very different.

North: Winter, from November to April, averages temperatures of between 10°C – 16°C. January to March brings fog and drizzle. Summer begins in May and lasts until October, with an average temperature of 30°C heavy rainfall and the occasional violent typhoon.

Centre: Central Vietnam experiences a transitional climate, with heavy rain falls between November and December and dry, hot summer months.

South: Temperatures are fairly constant through the year, 25°C – 30°C. Seasons are determined by the rains - the dry season runs from November to April and the wet season from May to October. The hottest period is March and April. Typhoons are quite common in coastal areas between July and November.

Highland areas: In the hill resorts of Dalat (1,500 m), Buon Me Thuot and Sapa, nights are cool throughout the year, and in the winter months. From October to March, it can be distinctly chilly with temperatures falling to 0°C and even during the hottest months of March and April the temperature rarely exceeds 26°C.

▪ LANGUAGE

The official language is Vietnamese; however English is widely spoken and understood. Information in English can be found easily in big cities such as Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh; as well as in emerging growing tourist hubs.

▪ WHAT TO WEAR

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. When visiting a temple or pagoda, you should wear long trousers and dress respectfully.

▪ COMMON COURTESIES

Shorts or revealing clothing are not allowed in religious places. The Vietnamese value their independence and history and are offended by people who ignore or violate either. The Vietnamese willingness to avoid unpleasantness can sometimes lead to great misunderstandings so try and remain calm when feeling frustrated.

▪ ELECTRICITY

Voltage in most places is 220 volts 50 cycles alternating current AC with either with two round prongs or two flat blades so it's best to take an adapter.



▪ HEALTH

Visitors do not require vaccinations unless coming from or passing through a designated contaminated area. Drink only bottled water and avoid ice unless you know is made from bottled or boiled water. The sun is strong throughout the year so proper care against sunburn and dehydration must be constantly taken. Vietnam is a tropical country so insect repellent is essential. Food from street vendors should be treated with care.

▪ PASSPORT & VISA INFORMATION

Visitors to Vietnam require a valid passport (which must be valid for at least six months for a single entry visa; nine months for a multiple entry visa and feature a minimum of four blank pages). South African passport holders require a visa. Clients can secure a visa on arrival at the airport in Vietnam however this must be prearranged by our office in sufficient time. In the event of a pre-arranged visa, you will receive an approval letter that you need to show to the immigration authority on arrival, together with 1 coloured photo and the relevant visa fee (currently US\$25 per person). Alternatively a visa can be obtained from the Vietnamese consulate prior to departure from South Africa. It is advisable to check for updated visa details with the relevant Embassy before departure.

▪ CURRENCY

The currency is the Dong which is better for bargaining and shopping in markets but US Dollars, Pounds and Euros are accepted at hotels.

▪ TIPPING

Tipping is not customary in Vietnam, but a 5 – 10% gesture is enormously appreciated.

▪ TIME DIFFERENCE

Vietnam is 5 hours ahead of South Africa.



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