

# A Travelers Guide to

# Ha Noi, Viet Nam

## Contents

<a href="#">Page 1.....</a>	<a href="#">Contents</a>
<a href="#">Page 2.....</a>	<a href="#">About this EBook</a>
<a href="#">Page 3.....</a>	<a href="#">Hanoi at a Glance / Hanoi Fast Facts</a>
<a href="#">Page 4.....</a>	<a href="#">Vietnamese Money – The Vietnam Dong</a>
<a href="#">Page 5.....</a>	<a href="#">Arriving into Vietnam</a>
<a href="#">Page 6.....</a>	<a href="#">Arriving into Vietnam (con't)</a>
<a href="#">Page 7.....</a>	<a href="#">Where to Sleep in Hanoi</a>
<a href="#">Page 8.....</a>	<a href="#">Eating in Hanoi</a>
<a href="#">Page 9.....</a>	<a href="#">Hanoi Sightseeing</a>
<a href="#">Page 10.....</a>	<a href="#">Emergency in Hanoi</a>
<a href="#">Page 11.....</a>	<a href="#">Emergency in Hanoi (con't)</a>
<a href="#">Page 12.....</a>	<a href="#">Travel Tips for Hanoi</a>
<a href="#">Page 13.....</a>	<a href="#">Vietnam Travel Resources</a>

### Give a copy to a friend

This guide is free. If you paid for it, you've been robbed! Impress your friends, colleagues and customers by giving them a copy. This guide must NOT be sold.

You may NOT change or alter this guide in any way, shape or form.

## About This Book

**The Author** - Originally from Newcastle, Australia, I have spent the past seven years living and working through out Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia, in which time I've been lucky enough to have traveled wide and far, exploring both, cities and the rural provinces of these amazing countries.



Prior to my travels in Asia, I served in the Australian Regular Army for 10 years and taught English in small secondary schools through out Western Kenya.

After spending the last 4 years in Hanoi, I have moved with my family to Ho Chi Minh City where I blog about Vietnam at [Vietnam Travel Notes](#) and also dabble in photography – [click here!](#)

**The E-Book** - *A Travelers Guide to Hanoi - Vietnam* is meant to be just that, a guide. The information here in has been gained from personal experience and travels from through out Vietnam.

This guide is not an account of Vietnam's history, actually there's very little history in it! Rather it provides basic information for all types of travelers, making it easy for you to find a hotel, find somewhere to eat, find something to see or sort out your money

Plus there's an emergency section, which I hope you will never need, providing important contact details and helpful hints should something happen.

If you have any questions or comments about this book, you can contact me at [Vietnam Travel Notes](#) or by [Email](#). And don't forget, feel free to give this book away to your web site visitors, subscribers, friends, local plumber.....

Enjoy Vietnam,

Adam Hurley!

Visit me at - [www.vietnamtravelnotes.com](http://www.vietnamtravelnotes.com) & [www.adamhurley.wordpress.com](http://www.adamhurley.wordpress.com)

## **Hanoi at a Glance**

Many travelers heading to Vietnam think Ho Chi Minh City is the Capital and many others that refuse to make the journey think Vietnam is still a war torn country.

While the fighting finished a long while back and Hanoi is definitely the Capital City of Vietnam!

Vietnam's history can date back several millions of years, the culture and history of this magical country, is nothing short of mind boggling!

Today, the countries economy is booming, standards of living slowly improving and more and more travelers are opening up their eyes, minds and soul to the wonders of the Asian jewel.

## **Hanoi Fast Facts**

**Full Name:** Hanoi (Capital of Vietnam)

**Area:** 2,146 sq km (829 sq miles)

**Population:** 4,000,000

**Government:** Communist People's Republic

**Average Temperatures:** January 17° C (62° F) / July 29° C (84° F)

**Average Annual Precipitation:** 1680 mm (66 in)

**Time Zone:** GMT+7 hours

**Languages:** Vietnamese. Some English, Russian, German, French

**Religion:** Mostly Buddhism. Others include Confucian, Hoa Hao, Muslim and Christian

**Currency:** Vietnam Dong

**Electricity:** 220V

## Vietnamese Money – The Vietnam Dong

The local currency in Vietnam is the Vietnam Dong (VND). Currently the exchange rate (June 2008) for the Dong is approx:

- 16200VND = 1USD
- 16700VND = 1AUD
- 35000VND = 1GBP
- 24000VND = 1EUR

For the latest in rates, check out [Yahoo! Finance](#) or my Squiddo Lens all about the Vietnam Dong – <http://www.squiddo.com/vietnamdong>

USD and other major currencies can be exchanged at banks, gold shops and hotels. USD can be used for shopping and also at larger restaurants.

Exchanging money on the streets (or black market) should be avoided as many travelers are often cheated.

Travelers Cheques can be exchanged at banks and larger hotels, while credit cards are accepted at many hotels and a few restaurants.

Visa cards and some cash cards can be used at ATM's.

Banks and ATM's can be found through out the city, but here are two in the middle of Hanoi's CBD:

- **ANZ Bank** - 14 Le Thai To Street. International bank with all your needs. ATM's (24hr) outside, manned by security guards.
- **Vietcom Bank** - 198 Tran Quang Khai Street. Local Vietnamese bank will most banking needs. ATM's available

Vietnam has introduced coins and plastic notes into the country. Currently the coins include 200vnd, 500vnd, 1,000vnd, 2,000vnd and 5,000vnd.

While the new Australian made, plastic notes include 10,000vnd, 20,000vnd, 50,000vnd, 100,000vnd and 500,000vnd.

It's illegal to take Dong out of Vietnam, plus it is also worthless! So spend up before heading home!

## **Arriving in Vietnam**

### **Visa / Customs**

Except for some ASEAN member countries, all nationalities require an entry visa for Vietnam. Tourist visas are generally valid for a 30 day period; however they may be extended when you're in Vietnam.

When arriving into Vietnam, you need to fill in a "Arrival/Departure" card; you **MUST** keep this and return it to the Custom official when exiting the country.

There are limitations on the amount of cigarettes (200), alcoholic drinks (1lt) and foreign currency (\$3,000USD) that you can bring into the country.

### **Air**

Most travelers arrive into Vietnam by air. These days there are many international carriers flying from around the world to both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

The national carrier, Vietnam Airlines, fly numerous services to/from Europe, the USA, Australia and other major Asian hubs to Hanoi almost on a daily basis. Full schedules can be found at [www.vietnamairlines.com](http://www.vietnamairlines.com).

If you're traveling on a budget, check out some of the low-cost airlines, you can now travel between Hanoi and Thailand/ Singapore for as low \$25USD one way (plus taxes). For bookings & details check out the following carriers:

- [Tigerairways](#) - Singapore to Hanoi
- [AirAsia](#) - Bangkok to Hanoi
- [Nok Air](#) – Bangkok to Hanoi

Getting to and from the Airport is easy work with Noi Bai Taxi's (Ph: 886 5615). While many of the drivers lack English skills, they are "mostly" good drivers with clean and modern cars. The 45 min drive from the Airport to central Hanoi is \$12USD, while the return journey is \$9USD (City to Airport). Prices are fixed (and subject to change).

A handy tip is to remember to write down the address of your hotel when you make the booking. Many drivers will speak little or no English and with the Vietnamese language being tonal, it's very easy to end up in the wrong location!

## **Arriving in Vietnam (cont)**

### **Train**

If you began your travels in the south, you may arrive into Hanoi via [Vietnam Railways](#) fine train service. Or you may have traveled south from China to Vietnams Capital, either way you'll end up in the same spot, Ga Hanoi (Hanoi Train Station)!

Hanoi Train Station is located southwest of the CDB, in Le Duan Street. Whatever time you arrive, there will be Mai Linh Taxis waiting on the platform and outside the main gate there will be plenty of eager taxi drivers, cyclo riders and motorbike taxis ready to take you to your hotel.

All taxis should be metered and will cost around 30/40,000VND to the center of town. Cyclos and motorbike taxis will generally cost around 10/20,000VND, be sure to negotiate a price before leaving. Prices will vary depending on traffic, time of day and your bargaining skills!

Generally speaking the area around the train station is safe; however you do need to be on guard. The major risk is pickpockets, so keep your bags and wallets secure and you shouldn't have a problem.

If your taxi driver tells you that "your hotel burnt down last night" or "your hotel is fully booked," don't believe him/her. Chances are they want to take you to a hotel that pays commission!

### **Bus**

Many companies now have bus services plying up and down National Highway 1. The journey into Hanoi will begin for most in the Imperial City of Hue. Taking around 16 hours and costing only a couple of dollars, it's a cheap means of travel.

Most of the Tour Companies operating now have large modern air-con buses (while others now have sleeper style seats) which make regular stops at local cafes. Most will offer a pick up service in Hue and arriving in Hanoi, they will drop you at their "company" hotel or office. Most of the company hotels a good value and designed for the traveler. If it's not for you, the bus staff can help you arrange a taxi to your choice of hotel.

## **Where to Sleep in Hanoi**

As the tourism industry grows, the choice of accommodations also increases. Whether you are after 5 star mega hotels with all the trimmings, or a cheap and basic room to throw your bags, Hanoi has something for you. Most hotel rooms will include the basics such as

- Air-con
- En-suite
- Cable TV
- Laundry service (additional charge)
- Mini – Bar (additional charge)
- Security Box/Safe
- Tour Booking services

Due to the law in Vietnam, the reception staff in most hotels will ask you to leave your passport with them. They do this, as they are required to complete registration forms for each guest (which later goes to the police station). Passports are returned on check out.

Hanoi hotels/hostels that get rave reviews include:

- **Hanoi Backpackers** - 48 Ngo Huyen. Central location, with dorm and private rooms. Full range of services. Cheap, friendly and a great meeting point.
- **Sofitel Metropole Hanoi** – 15 Ngo Quyen Street. Hanoi at it's best. This hotel is nothing but 5 star luxuries. Centrally located near Hoan Kiem Lake, the Sofitel Metropole is continually ranked as "the best in Hanoi".
- **A TO Z Queen Cafe Hostel** - 10 D Dao Duy Tu Lane. Another great cheapie in Hanoi and very highly rated among travelers.
- **Melia Hotel Hanoi** -44B LY Thuong Kiet Street. A great 5 star choice, central to Hanoi's business district.

Currently many hotels don't offer an online booking service, but will take bookings over the Internet via email or you could call them. If you want to book online, have a look here at the following site:

- [Reserve Me A Room](#)
- [Bed Finder](#)
- [Hotel Club](#)

## **Eating in Hanoi**

When you're in Vietnam the amount of choice when it comes to eating is truly staggering!

Pick your meal and Hanoi will have it – Local Vietnamese, sandwiches, pizza, steak or pies, its all here for the taking.

For the more spirited traveler, be sure to try some of the street food on offer. Many of Hanoi's street stalls are full of cheap, tasty fresh dishes. Best thing to remember when eating on the street, if it's full of local people; it's bound to be good!

Check out a few listed below:

- **Cha Ca La Vong** – 14 Cha Ca Street. Traditional Hanoi fish dishes.
- **Bia Tuoi (Fresh Beer)** – 124 Hai Ba Trung. 3 story beer house serving up local fresh beer and great food at cheap prices. Busy and very popular with locals.
- **Highway 4** – 5 Hang Tre Street. Traditional Vietnamese fare. Huge range of foods and local wines. Great atmosphere.
- **Chim Sao** – 65 Ngo Hue Street. Vietnamese dishes, along with many traditional dishes from the North of Vietnam. A large selection of local rice wine is also on offer. Reasonably priced.
- **Moca Café** – 14 Nha Tho Street. Famous for its coffee, Moca also serves up great food including Western, Indian and Vietnamese.
- **Little Hanoi** – 21&23 Hang Gai Street. Excellent sandwiches and a great spot for people watching.
- **Vine** – 1A Xuan Dieu Street. Fine dining at its best. Huge menu and a bigger collection of wines.
- **Pho Bo/Ga (beef/chicken noodle soup)** - Located on nearly every street corner, this specialty is generally eaten for breakfast. Pho is a favorite amongst the locals, so look for the signs and go for it. Be sure to add some lemon, greens and a touch of chili!

Several hotels and restaurants are now offering cooking classes around Hanoi. Check out the local Vietnam Newspaper (English and French), Time Out, Discovery or Pathfinder Magazines for advertisements.

## **Hanoi Sight Seeing**

Steeped in history and culture, Hanoi is full of sight seeing opportunities. Some of the best simply mean walking down the street. But if you're into museums and alike, be sure to visit the following:

- **Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum**, Hong Vuong Street.
- **Ho Chi Minh Museum**, behind mausoleum.
- **Temple Of Literature**, Van Mieu Street.
- **Fine Arts Museum**, cnr of Nguyen Thai Hoc and Cao Ba Quat Streets.
- **Hoa Lo Prison**, Hai Ba Trung Street (next to Hanoi Towers).
- **Tran Quoc Pagoda**, Thanh Nien Street. Free entry. Dress conservatively
- **Woman's Museum**, Hai Ba Trung Street.
- **History Museum**, cnr of Tran Khahn Du and Trang Tien Streets.
- **Revolutionary Museum**, opposite History Museum.
- **Hanoi Opera House**, next to History Museum. Performances normally weekly, check out the Vietnam News Paper for details.
- **Thang Long Water Puppets** – 57b Dinh Tien Hoang Street.
- **Walking tour of the Old Quarter**. 36 streets of beautiful old buildings, shops and crazy traffic. A must walk for all!
- **Hoan Kiem Lake**, Central CDB. Great area to walk around
- **West Lake**. Located close to Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, this is Hanoi's largest lake. With plenty of parks and cafes, it's a great place to relax and take in Hanoi.

Museums are generally opened from 8am – 5pm and closed from 11.30am - 1pm daily for lunch. Many are closed on Mondays.

### **Tours**

Tours in and around Hanoi can be booked with relative ease. Every street in the Hanoi's Old Quarter has a travel agent on it and most hotel receptions can also book tours. Such tours may include:

- Ha long Bay

- Tam Coc
- Cuc Phuong National Park
- Guided City Tours
- Handicraft Village Tours
- Sapa (you'll need a few days!)

For more information on tours around Hanoi or to Halong Bay check out <http://www.vietnamtravelnotes.com/tours>

=====

**Advertisement**

[Join Priority Privilege for discounts and best rates at all participating hotel brands within Asia Pacific, including InterContinental, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn.](#)

=====

## **Emergency in Hanoi**

Before leaving home, many people make up check lists, pack and then unpack only to repack everything again. Often one basic common travel essential is forgotten, Travel Insurance!

Travel Insurance can be a life saver, quite literally. Should you have any problem's whilst traveling, whether they are medical, lost baggage or theft, your insurance can help you out with refunds and piece of mind.

If your in Hanoi and require Emergency Medical/Dental Treatment, there's a few places you should know about. Such as:

### **SOS International Medical Clinic**

31 Hai Ba Trung Street - 934 0666. 24 hour Emergency Phone - 934 0555.

- SOS provides international care 24hrs a day. Staffed by both Vietnamese and Expatriate doctors, SOS is not cheap, but the service is second to none! Also provides Dental care.

### **Hanoi French Hospital**

1 Phuong Mai Street - 574 0740. 24 hour Emergency Phone 574 1111.

- The French Hospital is also up there with international care, staffed by local and (you guessed it) French doctors. Full services are available including Dental care.

### **Family Medical Dental Clinic**

Van Phuc Diplomatic Compound, 298D Kim Ma Street.

- Full range of Dental care and emergency treatment. Open 8.30am - 5.30pm

Should you encounter a problem such as theft, you will need to obtain a police report from the local authorities. This can sometimes be a time consuming and costly activity.

Generally most police won't speak much English, so ask someone to help translate (maybe a hotel staff) and then begin the process of filling in forms and

then some more! Finally you will get a piece of paper with an official red stamp, which you must include with your Travel Insurance claim.

## **Emergency in Hanoi (cont)**

In most cases travelers don't have any problems on the streets. The main threats are pickpockets around crowded markets and crossing the road! If your unsure or want up to date information on Hanoi and Vietnam in general, check out your governments travel advisory on the net.

After nearly seven years in Vietnam, I have never had any problems during my travels, but just incase I always make sure I have travel insurance. This is mainly for piece of mind should something happen or in the case of medical treatment and/or evacuation. My choice for Travel Insurance is [World Nomads](#). Their cheap, extensive policies are hard to beat. They also offer free Vietnamese language guides in PDF format or you can download them to your iPod.

=====

### **Advertisement**

#### **[Travel insurance: simple & flexible](#)**

You can buy, extend and [claim online](#) even after you've left home. Recommended by Lonely Planet, World Nomads [travel insurance](#) is available to people from over [150 countries](#) and is designed for [adventurous travelers](#) with cover for overseas medical, evacuation, baggage and activities such as [skiing and snowboarding](#).

=====

## **Travel Tips for Hanoi**

1. **Dress modestly** when visiting Pagoda's, Church's, Historical sites or a local's house. Modestly generally means shoulders covered and pants (or shorts down to the knees)
2. **Ask before you take photographs of people.** Think about it, if you when in your front yard pruning your roses or enjoying a coffee with a friend and bus load of tourist got out and started taking your photo, would you throw your shovel/coffee mug at them? I would! So ask first!
3. **Leave you valuables in the hotel safe.** Most hotels have a safe at reception and they'll issue you with a receipt for stuff left. If you're heading to the local market to photos or the local Bia Hoi for a drinking session, do you really need your plane tickets, credit card, passport, excess cash etc? Leave it behind!
4. **He who invites pays.** In Vietnam, if you "invite" someone for drinks or dinner, it is common practice that the person who initiated the invite pays the bill!
5. **Agree on a price** before catching a Cyclo or Xe Om (motor bike taxi). It's best for both you and the driver to know the agreed price before heading off.
6. **Vietnam's electricity is 220V.** Power points are the 2 pin type. Power adaptors can be purchased easily at markets or supermarkets' for around \$1US.
7. **Time in Vietnam** is GMT+7hrs.
8. **Carry a hotel business card** everywhere you go! It's so easy to get lost in a new city, yet so hard to say "Take me to ABC Hotel" to a local cyclo/taxi driver who doesn't speak English! This business card can save your life!

## Vietnam Travel Resources

- [Travel Zoo](#) – Free newsletter with hot travel deals. 12 million have already joined!
- [Vietnam Travel Notes](#) – Vietnam travel blog written by the author of this guide.
- [World Nomads Travel Insurance](#) – Cheap, extensive and simple.
- [Hotel Club](#) – Book hotels online at discount rates!
- [Bed Finder](#) – Accommodation through out Asia and the world.
- [Go Go Gear](#) – Find all your travel accessories at Go Go Gear.
- [Dreamstime](#) – Do you take photos when you travel? Why not sell them!
- [Lonely Planet Vietnam](#) – Guide books, maps and more
- [Reserve Me A Room](#) - Receive the best deals on your last minute hotel bookings with Reserve Me A Room
- [Priority Privilege Discount Card](#) - Join Priority Privilege for guaranteed savings on selected accommodation rates, along with exclusive dining discounts.

www.TravelShpere.blogspot.com  
The world really is at your finger tips