

Getting to and then travelling around and about in Vietnam: - Visas - Flights - Buses - Railways - Car.

Nearly everybody who wishes to enter Vietnam is required to have a [Vietnam visa](#) which generally speaking you need to have before arriving into the country. In the U.K. just visit the consular website where you can download an application form, which then can be either posted or taken in person to the Vietnamese Consular Section, 12-14 Victoria Road. Postal applications usually take around 5 working days - the fee for a single-entry 30-day visa for one person was UKstg 44 plus UKstg 8 handling fee and postage (postage etc is UKstg 6 each for two people) but this was due to increase in January 2013. You do have to specify your date of entry and a 30-day visa starts from that date i.e. you cannot arrive prior to your chosen date and have to leave Vietnam within 30 days of that date. Vietnamese Visas can easily be extended once you are actually in Vietnam - your hotel travel desk or most travel agencies will assist with this. You can also apply [Vietnam visa on arrival](#) if you fly to Vietnam and get the visa at arrival airports. It costs only USD 14 and take you 2 working-days to get an approval letter through email.

Vietnam Flights | International.

There are a just a few non-stop flights each week from the U.K. into Vietnam at the moment going to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The cheapest flights from the U.K. (which do involve a stop) will take you as far as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur or perhaps cheapest of all into Bangkok - you then have to switch to more localized services to get flights to Hanoi, Saigon or Da Nang. Thai Airlines operate a good link from Heathrow to Bangkok and if you pick the right flights only a short wait for one of their connecting flights on to Saigon or Hanoi.

Hanoi Noi Bai International Airport is the largest airport in north Vietnam and is situated 45kms from Hanoi Old Quarter (Downtown). Hanoi airport provides international flights in and out of Vientiane, Kunming, Guangzhou, Bangkok, Yangon and Taipei amongst others.

Tan Son Nhat International Airport is Vietnam's largest airport and serves Ho Chi Minh City - which is only 6kms to the north of the airport. The airport provides flights to a variety of international places around the Far East including Siem Reap, Da Nang, Haiphong, Phnom Penh, Manila, Guangzhou, Pleiku, Kuala Lumpur, Taipei, Singapore, Yangon and Bangkok.

Da Nang Airport is still mostly a military set-up although the civilian side of things is apparently being developed - you can get flights to and from Bangkok, Vientiane, Taipei and Phnom Penh however there do not appear to be direct long-distance international flights i.e. from Europe etc...

Airport transfers in Vietnam - certainly in our case the last thing we want to do when coming off a very long international flight is to mess about getting to our hotel. Therefore, we always negotiate a pick up by our hotel in order to save hassle (and of course you know that your hotel room has not been double booked by said hotel...) - generally we found that the hotels did not overcharge for this.

Domestic i.e. internal Vietnam Flights.

Internal Vietnam flights are mostly provided by Vietnam Airlines and the airline offers a quick and not too expensive way of covering longer distances where you might not fancy being on a bus for so long. It's worth noting that these internal flights do get very booked up and you should probably get your seats well in advance - this of course can be a nuisance if you are being flexible on where and how long you stay somewhere since you are then committed to moving on. We knew that we wanted to fly from Hanoi to Hue on a certain day so a flight pre-booked worked out but we only booked one other flight whilst on holiday in Vietnam which was from Da Nang to Nha Trang about 10 days later so we more or less kept our flexibility. Hanoi's Airport provides flights within Vietnam to Da Nang, Siem Reap, Nha Trang and Ho Chi Minh City. Tan Son Nhat Airport at Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) provides flights to Da Nang, Hanoi, Nha Trang, Dalat, Hue and Da Nang. Da Nang airport offers flights to Hanoi, Saigon, Hue and Nha Trang.

Trains, buses or car and driver.

Roads are often very busy in Viet nam - especially the coastal road south from Hanoi - so there is no real speed advantage in travelling by car and driver hire or by mini bus/coach - in fact the min-buses in particular are probably the fastest moving vehicles on the roads.

Vietnam operates a huge bus network which will get you anywhere within the country at very reasonable cost - both long distance sleeper coaches and short hops between towns which are mostly on mini-buses. You do not need to worry about taking luggage on the mini-buses - just book an extra couple of seats for your suitcases if necessary. Most hotel travel desks as well as travel agencies will sort your route, tickets and what buses you need to connect with - and often will arrange local transport to get you to the local bus terminals in the various towns if necessary.

It's worth noting that when you arrive at your destination the chances are the bus station is a little away from your hotel - you will find lots of motorcyclists and tuk-tuk drivers around who will insist there is no taxi service available from the bus station - and want to take you to your hotel often at very inflated rates. Ignore them and just go into the local bus office where they will happily call up a taxi at no charge. Another option for getting between towns is to hire a car and driver - this is obviously a far more expensive option although very convenient of course. The advantage of car and driver hire in Viet Nam is you can plan a route and stop off at various places on the way or just have the driver stop when you see something you want to look at like a nice river and bridge. Rates for car and driver hire are really negotiable - as you travel south from Hue the rates do get more expensive though. As an example, we hired a car and driver to take us from Hue to Hoi An which was USD55 - another trip from Nha Trang over the hills to Dalat (with an hour or so stop at some temples on the way) was USD80.

Vietnam Useful Bits

Vietnamese Currency: The currency used in Vietnam is the Dong - you cannot buy any Dong until you arrive in the country. The main airports all have currency exchange facilities as well as ATMs - in fact ATMs are present all over Vietnam so there is never a problem getting some cash that we found. Most hotels in Vietnam and also any trips and so on are always actually quoted in US Dollars although you can of course pay in Dong. If you pay at hotels by credit card they will actually take the money in US Dollars and then it all gets converted back. So basically, it is worth

having a few hundred US Dollars available - also Euros can be easily used/exchanged.

Time in Vietnam: Have a look at this Vietnam time and date facility to see the time differences - and perhaps avoid waking up a relative or friend with somewhat early phone call. Incidentally Vietnam's International Dialling Code is +84

Vietnam Hotels and Rooms: There is a huge variety in the standard of quality and therefore price for hotels in Vietnam - many of them are present on the Web so you can easily book your next stay as you travel through the country. As we travelled south from Hanoi the prices for hotels did increase quite a bit especially after leaving Nha Trang. Dalat hotels are quite expensive and probably compare with Hanoi hotels but once you travel into the Mekong Delta things vary enormously. Mekong Delta locations such as My Tho and Vinh Long hotels were quite cheap but Chau Doc was expensive (probably because of the few hotels available there). Of interest we never stayed at any hotel whilst in Viet nam where the internet was not free of charge which is of course very useful for planning your next travel stage.

Eating and Dining in Vietnam: Hanoi restaurants mostly offered fairly basic and inexpensive food which often seemed a little bland - as you travel south the food improves with both taste and quality plus much more choice of restaurants - however the prices ever increase the further south you go. There are certainly plenty of Indian Restaurants located in and around most towns in Vietnam. Once you get deeper into The Mekong you may find far less choice in restaurants - sometimes only your hotel may be an option for eating out. Certainly, Vinh Long and My Tho are somewhat short of choice for eating out.