VIETNAM

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Climate:

Vietnam is a rainforest country, so it is important to be prepared for rain even during the non-rainy seasons in all the different parts of the country. The central coast gets rain from May to October just like the south, and is generally dry about the same time. For both the central coast and the south, November is typhoon season and there is often major flooding in the central coast. The Central highlands don't get the same rain as the Central coast. They are usually drier from October -April. The average annual temperature in Hanoi is 74° F (23° C), in Hue is 77° F (25° C) and in Ho Chi Minh City is 81° F (27° C); in the highland city of Da Lat, it drops to 70° F (21° C).

Currency:

The local currency is the Dong, but US Dollars can pretty much be used interchangeably with the Dong in Vietnam. Many merchants actually prefer Dollars. Credit cards and Travelers checks are getting more and more popular. They are accepted in many good hotels, restaurants and most of the banks in the bigger cities. If you travel outside these areas, you should carry enough US$ in cash (Please use only new notes in perfect condition). Visit www.oanada.com for currency exchange rates.

Immunizations:

Although no vaccinations are required for travel in SE Asia, we recommend you consult your physician about tetanus, polio, typhoid, gamma globulin, Hepatitis A & B and malaria. For current information, check directly with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a traveler's clinic or other medical authority. Visit http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list#P for more information.

Suggested Tipping Guideline:

Drivers: $5-$8 per person/per day
Mainland Guides: $10-$20 per person/per day

For Sea Canoe Excursions in Halong Bay:
Sea Canoe Rep: $10 per person/per day
Captain: $6-8 per person/per day
Cooks: $6 per person/per day
Crew: $4-5 per person/per day

Budget:

You will need to analyze your spending habits and decide how much extra money to bring for alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, gratuities, souvenirs, and laundry. For a ten-day trip, budget at least $200 - $300 per person above and beyond tips for additional expenses. A rule of thumb: take half the clothing and twice the money you thought you would need!

Shopping:

We have instructed all our guides to not make any "shopping stops" against your wishes anywhere during the course of the trip. THERE ARE NO SHOPS RECOMMENDED BY US IN ANY CITY. No guide is supposed to push you into shopping. If any guide, anywhere, pushes you for shopping, please firmly tell him/her that you are not interested and if need be, feel free to email or call us on the emergency contact information given. We take strict action against the guide(s) who push our travelers to shop.

Calling Vietnam from the United States or Canada:

- 011 - US exit code; dial first for international calls made from the USA or Canada
- **84 - Country Code for Vietnam**
- area code - 1 - 3 digit area codes
- phone number - 5 - 7 digits

Area Codes (add only to fixed local numbers):

Bien Hoa	61	Hanoi	4	Nam Dinh	350
Buon Me Thuot	500	Hai Phong	31	Nha Trang	58
Camau	780	Ho Chi Minh/Saigon	8	Phan Thiet	62
Can Tho	710	Hue	54	Qui Nhon	56
Cao Bang	26	Hung Yen	321	Rach Gia	77
Dalat	63	Lai Chau	231	Thai Nguyen	280
Da Nang	511	Lao Cai	20	Vung Tau	64

How to dial to Vietnam cellular:

- Dialing format for calls to a cell phone: **011 + 84 + 9?? ??? ??? (or 1?? ??? ????)**

Dialing within Vietnam:
For a cellular phone, dial 0+:
1?? ??? ???? or 9?? ??? ???

For a fixed line (local number), dial 0+ (area code*) + local number
*see above for area codes

Time Zone: GMT/UTC + 7
Electricity: 220V ,50Hz

Weight Restrictions:

Be mindful that the international weight restrictions are 20 kilos (44 lbs). Internal flights typically allow two bags and one carry-on, with the 20 kilo. weight restriction for the two bags.

Visas:

You can either get your visa upon arrival or in advance. We recommend getting it on arrival since it is convenient, easy, and inexpensive compared to getting it in advance. For a visa upon arrival, we need a copy of your passport. Our operator will send us a Vietnam Visa Approval Letter, which we will forward to you. This invitation letter, valid passport, two passport sized photos and the visa fee (US $45) must be given to the immigration authorities upon arrival in Vietnam (along with a form you obtain and fill out on arrival). Do **NOT** forget the invitation letter- people have been denied access into Vietnam without it.

Important Note About Passports: Many countries require that your passport be valid 6 months after travel. Be sure to check your expiration date and renew your passport if it expires within 6 months of travel!

Additional Country Information:

Visit the following website for more country specific information at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1060.html.

"A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions." – Oliver Wendell Holmes

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See the Longitude Books website: http://www.longitudebooks.com/ for more book ideas.

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