GLOBAL HEALTH EXCHANGE PROGRAM

PARTICIPANT’S GUIDE: VIETNAM
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1. Welcome note to participants

On behalf of Global Health office of Vietnam at Cho Ray Hospital, I have the pleasure to welcome you to our beautiful Hochiminh city! As a participant of a clinical exchange program, you will be exposed to the Healthcare system as well as the Medical Education system of Vietnam. We strive to provide you with the best possible educational experience enriched with cultural traditions of our lively city.

You hope that you will enjoy your 6-week long clinical rotation here at Cho Ray hospital and return home with great memories and knowledge.

In this Guide you will find all needed information regarding your future exchange program rotation in Hochiminh city, Vietnam. Please take you time to read through it carefully. Should you have any questions and concerns, the local Global Health Office members are always at your disposal for assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Director, Global Health office
2. General Information – Vietnam and Ho Chi Minh City

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Vietnam /ˌviːətˈnɑːm/, officially the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Cộng hòa Xã hội Chủ nghĩa Việt Nam, is the easternmost country on the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia. The name Vietnam translates as "South Viet", and was officially adopted in 1945
**Area:** 331,210 km² (127,881 sq.mi). The combined length of the country's land boundaries is 4,639 km (2,883 mi), and its coastline is 3,444 km (2,140 mi) long. Vietnam's land is mostly hilly and densely forested, with level land covering no more than 20%. Mountains account for 40% of the country's land area, and tropical forests cover around 42%. Water coverage is 6.4%.

**Location:** The country is bordered by China to the north, Laos to the northwest, Cambodia to the southwest, and the South China Sea (Biển Đông) to the east. Its capital city has been Hanoi since the reunification of North and South Vietnam in 1976.

**Established:** September 2nd 1945

**Political Status:** Socialist Republic

**Territories:** There are 58 provinces and 5 municipalities. Capital city is Hanoi, located 21°2′N 105°51′E in the northern region. Largest city is Ho Chi Minh City.

**Population:** Total population of Vietnam is 90,388 mil as of 2012 with a density of 272/km² (703/sq mi).

**Ethnic groups:** Vietnam occupies a total of 54 ethnic groups with 86.2% of Kinh (Viet), Tay (1.9%), Thai (1.7%), Muong (1.5%), Khmer (1.4%), Hoa (1.1%), Nung (1.1%), Hmong (1%) and 4.1% others.

**Natural resources:** phosphates, coal, manganese, rare earth elements, bauxite, chromate, offshore oil and gas deposits, timber, hydropower.

**Economy:** Vietnam's nominal GDP is US$155,952 billion, with a nominal GDP per capita of $1,705 (2013 estimate). Vietnam has been, for much of its history, a predominantly agricultural civilization based on wet rice cultivation. In 1986, the Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party introduced socialist-oriented market economic reforms as part of the “Đổi Mới” reform program. Private ownership was encouraged in industries, commerce and agriculture. Thanks largely to these reforms, Vietnam achieved around 8% annual GDP growth between 1990 to 1997, and the economy continued to grow at an annual rate of around 7% from 2000 to 2005, making Vietnam one of the world's fastest growing economies. Growth remained strong even in the face of the late-2000s global recession, holding at 6.8% in 2010, but Vietnam's year-on-year inflation rate hit 11.8% in December 2010, according to a GSO (General Statistics Office of Vietnam) estimate. The Vietnamese dong was devalued three times in 2010 alone. Manufacturing, information technology and high-tech industries now form a large and fast-growing part of the national economy. Though Vietnam is a relative newcomer to the oil industry, it is currently the third-largest oil producer in Southeast Asia, with a total 2011 output of 318,000 barrels per day (50,600 m³/d). According to the IMF, the unemployment rate in Vietnam stood at 4.46% in 2012.

**Time zone (nationwide):** ICT (Indochina Time) UTC +7

**Right-hand driving**

**Currency:** đồng (₫) or VND. Estimated currency exchange: 1USD = 21,000 VND.

**Measure:** meter or m (1 m = 3.28 ft.)

**Mass:** kilogram or kg (1kg = 2.2 lbs.)

**Volume:** Liter or Lit or L (1 L = 1.05 quart or 0.26 gal.)

**Country code:** +84

**Internet TLD:** .vn
Ho Chi Minh City is the largest city in Vietnam. It has gone by several different names during its history, reflecting settlement by different ethnic, cultural and political groups. In the 1690s, the city had the official name of Gia Định. This name remained until the time of French conquest in the 1860s, when the occupying force adopted the name Sài Gòn (Saigon) for the city. Immediately after the communist takeover of South Vietnam in 1975, a provisional government renamed the city after Hồ Chí Minh, the late North Vietnamese leader. Even today, however, the informal name of Sài Gòn remains in daily speech both domestically and internationally

Area: 2,095 km² (809.23 sq mi). Elevation is 19m (63 ft)

Location: the city is located at 10°46′10″N 106°40′55″E in the Southeastern region of Vietnam. It borders Tây Ninh and Bình Dương provinces to the north, Đồng Nai and Bà Rịa–Vũng Tàu provinces to the east, Long An Province to the west and the Biên Đông to the south with a coast of 15 km long. The city extend 102 km (63 mi) from N to S and 47 km (29 mi) from W to E

Distance from Hanoi: 1,760 km (1,090 mi) to the south of Hanoi, 2 hours by plane or 40 hours by train

Established: 1698

Population: Ho Chi Minh is the most crowded city in Vietnam with a total of 7,521,138 (2011), density is 3,590/km² (9,294/sq mi)

Economy: Ho Chi Minh City is the economic center of Vietnam and accounts for a large proportion of the national economy. Although the city only takes up just 0.6% of the country's land area, it contains 8.34% of the population of Vietnam, 20.2% of its GDP, 27.9% of industrial output and 34.9% of the FDI projects in the country (2005). The city’s GDP was estimated around $28.595 billion, GDP per capita reached $3,600, compared to the country's average level of $1,500 (2012). The economy of Ho Chi Minh City consists of industries ranging from mining, seafood processing, agriculture, and construction, to tourism, finance, industry and trade. The state-owned sector makes up 33.3% of the economy, the private sector 4.6%, and the remainder in foreign investment. Concerning its economic structure, the service sector accounts for 51.1%, industry and construction account for 47.7% and forestry, agriculture and others make up just 1.2%

Area code: +848

Postal code: 70000

Official website: http://www.hochiminhcity.gov.vn
Emergency telephone numbers: 113 (police), 114 (fire), 115 (ambulance)

3. Brief history of Ho Chi Minh City

Early history: Ho Chi Minh City began as a small fishing village known as Prey Nokor. The area that the city now occupies was originally swampland, and was inhabited by Khmer people for centuries before the arrival of the Vietnamese. In Khmer folklore southern Vietnam was given to the Vietnamese government as a dowry for the marriage of a Vietnamese princess to a Khmer prince in order to stop constant invasions and pillaging of Khmer villages.

Khmer territory: Beginning in the early 17th century, colonization of the area by Vietnamese settlers gradually isolated the Khmer of the Mekong Delta from their brethren in Cambodia proper and resulted in their becoming a minority in the delta. In 1623, King Chey Chettha II of Cambodia (1618–1628) allowed Vietnamese refugees fleeing the Trịnh–Nguyễn civil war in Vietnam to settle in the area of Prey Nokor and to set up a custom house there. Increasing waves of Vietnamese settlers, which the Cambodian kingdom could not impede because it was weakened by war with Thailand, slowly Vietnamized the area. In time, Prey Nokor became known as Saigon. Prey Nokor was the most important commercial seaport to the Khmers. The loss of the city prevented the Cambodians access to the Indochine. Subsequently, the Khmers’ access to the sea was now limited to the Gulf of Thailand.

Nguyễn Dynasty rule: In 1698, Nguyễn Hữu Cảnh, a Vietnamese noble, was sent by the Nguyễn rulers of Huế by sea to establish Vietnamese administrative structures in the area, thus detaching the area from Cambodia, which was not strong enough to intervene. He is often credited with the expansion of Saigon into a significant settlement. A large Vauban citadel called Gia Định was built, which was later destroyed by the French following the Battle of Kỳ Hòa.

Colonial French era: Conquered by France in 1859, the city was influenced by the French during their colonial occupation of Vietnam, and a number of classical Western-style buildings and French villas in the city reflect this. Saigon had, in 1929, a population of 123,890, including 12,100 French.

Capital of South Vietnam: The Vietnamese people had proclaimed their own independence in 1945 after a combined French and Japanese occupation, and before the Communist revolution in China. They were led by Ho Chi Minh. The US decided to support France in its reconquest of her former colony. Former Emperor Bảo Đại made Saigon the capital of the State of Vietnam in 1949 with himself as head of state. After the Việt Minh gained control of North Vietnam in 1954, it became common to refer to the Saigon government as "South Vietnam." The government was renamed the Republic of Vietnam when Bảo Đại was deposed by his Prime Minister Nguyễn Đình Diệm in 1955 in a fraudulent referendum. Saigon and Cholon, an adjacent city with many Sino-Vietnamese residents, were combined into an administrative unit known as the Đô Thành Sài Gòn (Capital City Saigon).

Post-Vietnam War and today: At the conclusion of the Vietnam War on 30 April 1975, the city came under the control of the Vietnamese People’s Army. Among Vietnamese diaspora communities and particularly the U.S. (which had fought the communists), this event is commonly called the “fall of Saigon,” while the communist Socialist Republic of Vietnam refers to it as the "Liberation of Saigon." In 1976, upon the establishment of the unified communist Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the city of Saigon (including Cholon), the province of Gia Định and two suburban districts of two other nearby provinces were combined to create Ho Chi Minh City in honor of the late Communist leader Hồ Chí Minh. The former name Saigon is still widely used by many Vietnamese, especially in informal contexts. Generally, the term Saigon refers only to the urban districts of Ho Chi Minh City.
4. City climate

The city has a tropical climate, specifically a tropical wet and dry climate, with an average humidity of 75%. The year is divided into two distinct seasons. The rainy season, with an average rainfall of about 1,800 millimeters (71 in) annually (about 150 rainy days per year), usually begins in May and ends in late November. The dry season lasts from December to April. The average temperature is 28 °C (82 °F), the highest temperature sometimes reaches 39 °C (102 °F) around noon in late April, while the lowest may fall below 16 °C (61 °F) in the early mornings of late December into early January.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Record High °C (°F)</td>
<td>38 (100)</td>
<td>40 (104)</td>
<td>38 (100)</td>
<td>38 (100)</td>
<td>39 (102)</td>
<td>38 (100)</td>
<td>41 (106)</td>
<td>37 (99)</td>
<td>38 (100)</td>
<td>38 (100)</td>
<td>37 (99)</td>
<td>37 (99)</td>
<td>41 (106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. high °C (°F)</td>
<td>31.6 (88.9)</td>
<td>32.9 (91.2)</td>
<td>33.9 (93)</td>
<td>34.6 (94.3)</td>
<td>34.0 (93.2)</td>
<td>32.4 (90.3)</td>
<td>32.0 (89.6)</td>
<td>31.8 (89.2)</td>
<td>31.3 (88.3)</td>
<td>31.2 (88.2)</td>
<td>31.0 (87.8)</td>
<td>30.8 (87.4)</td>
<td>32.3 (90.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily mean °C (°F)</td>
<td>26.4 (79.5)</td>
<td>27.7 (81.9)</td>
<td>29.2 (84.6)</td>
<td>30.2 (86.4)</td>
<td>29.6 (85.3)</td>
<td>28.5 (83.3)</td>
<td>28.2 (82.8)</td>
<td>28.1 (82.6)</td>
<td>27.9 (82.2)</td>
<td>27.6 (81.7)</td>
<td>26.9 (80.4)</td>
<td>26.1 (79)</td>
<td>28.0 (82.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. low °C (°F)</td>
<td>21.1 (70)</td>
<td>22.5 (72.5)</td>
<td>24.4 (75.9)</td>
<td>25.8 (78.4)</td>
<td>25.2 (77.4)</td>
<td>24.6 (75.3)</td>
<td>24.3 (75.7)</td>
<td>24.4 (75.9)</td>
<td>23.9 (75)</td>
<td>22.8 (73)</td>
<td>21.4 (70.5)</td>
<td>23.7 (74.7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record low °C (°F)</td>
<td>13 (55)</td>
<td>17 (63)</td>
<td>16 (61)</td>
<td>17 (63)</td>
<td>16 (61)</td>
<td>21 (70)</td>
<td>17 (63)</td>
<td>21 (70)</td>
<td>20 (68)</td>
<td>20 (68)</td>
<td>17 (63)</td>
<td>15 (59)</td>
<td>13 (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainfall mm (inches)</td>
<td>13.8 (0.54)</td>
<td>4.1 (0.16)</td>
<td>10.5 (0.41)</td>
<td>50.4 (1.98)</td>
<td>218.4 (8.60)</td>
<td>311.7 (12.3)</td>
<td>293.7 (11.6)</td>
<td>269.8 (10.6)</td>
<td>266.7 (10.5)</td>
<td>116.5 (4.6)</td>
<td>48.3 (1.9)</td>
<td>48.3 (1.9)</td>
<td>1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. rainy days</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>155.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%humidity</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly sunshine hrs.</td>
<td>244.9</td>
<td>248.6</td>
<td>272.8</td>
<td>231.0</td>
<td>195.3</td>
<td>171.0</td>
<td>179.8</td>
<td>173.6</td>
<td>162.0</td>
<td>182.9</td>
<td>201.0</td>
<td>232.2</td>
<td>2486.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Public Holidays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>English name</th>
<th>Local name</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 1st</td>
<td>New Year</td>
<td>Tết Dương Lịch</td>
<td>Largest holidays, usually around late Jan – early Feb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st three days of lunisolar calendar</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tết Nguyên Đán</td>
<td>Since 2007, around Apr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th of 3rd lunar month</td>
<td>Hung Kings Commemorations</td>
<td>Giỗ tổ Hùng Vương</td>
<td>Fall of Saigon and reunification of Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 30th</td>
<td>Liberation Day/ Reunification day</td>
<td>Giải phóng miền Nam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1st</td>
<td>International Worker’s Day</td>
<td>Quốc tế Lao động</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. City tourist sites

Today, the city’s core is still adorned with wide elegant boulevards and historic French colonial buildings. The majority of these tourist spots are located in District 1 and are a short leisurely distance from each other.

**Reunification Palace:** (Vietnamese: Dinh Thống Nhất) formerly known as Independence Palace (Dinh Độc Lập), built on the site of the former Norodom Palace, is a landmark in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. It was designed by architect Ngô Viết Thụ and was the home and workplace of the President of South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. It was the site of the end of the Vietnam War during the Fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, when a North Vietnamese Army tank crashed through its gates.

**Municipal Theatre:** also known as Saigon Opera House (Vietnamese: Nhà hát lớn Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh; French: Opéra de Saigon), is an opera house in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. It is an example of French Colonial architecture in Vietnam. Built in 1897 by French architect Eugène Ferret as the Opéra de Saigon, the 800 seat building was used as the home of the Lower House assembly of South Vietnam after 1956. It was not until 1975 that it was again used as a theatre, and restored in 1995.
Saigon Notre-Dame Basilica: (Vietnamese: Vương cung thánh đường Đức Bà Sài Gòn or Nhà thờ Đức Bà Sài Gòn, French: Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Saïgon), officially Basilica of Our Lady of The Immaculate Conception (Vietnamese: Vương cung thánh đường Chánh tòa Đức Mẹ Vô Nhiễm Nguyên Tội) is a cathedral located in the downtown of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Established by French colonists, the cathedral was constructed between 1863 and 1880. It has two bell towers, reaching a height of 58 meters (190 ft.).
Bến Thành Market: is a large marketplace in downtown area in District 1. The market is one of the earliest surviving structures in Saigon and one of symbols of Ho Chi Minh City, popular with tourists seeking local handicrafts, textiles, áo dài, and souvenirs, as well as local cuisine.

Củ Chi tunnels: 70 km (43.5 mi) or 2 hrs. by bus from downtown is the tunnels of Cu Chi, an immense network of connecting underground tunnels. The Cu Chi tunnels were the location of several military campaigns during the Vietnam War. This were used by Vietnamese guerrillas as hiding spot during combat, as well as serving as communication and supply routes, hospitals, food and weapon caches and living quarters for numerous soldiers. The tunnel systems were of great importance of Vietnamese forces and helped achieve ultimate success. The tunnels are a popular tourist attraction, and visitors are invited
to crawl around in the safer parts of the tunnel system. Some tunnels have been made larger to accommodate Western tourists, low-power lights have been installed in several of them to make traveling through them easier and booby traps have been clearly marked. Underground conference rooms where campaigns such as the Tết Offensive were planned in 1968 have been restored, and visitors may enjoy a simple meal that Vietnamese guerrillas ate during the war. Tourist can purchase one-day tour to visit Cu Chi tunnel from local travelling agent or bus ticket from Ben Thanh Market bus station.

The trap door is closed and camouflaged (left), opened (right)

Crawling through the tunnels
Khu “Phố Tây”: (Foreigner streets) the area around the streets Pham Ngú Lao, De Tham, Bui Vien in district 1 are often referred to as the “foreigner streets”, where you can find all services for travelers: hotel, motor bike renting, tour registration, restaurants, bars, souvenir shops… Price are reasonable in this area. Sitting along the street of Pham Ngú Lao at night and enjoy a “Saigon” beer is the first thing you should try when coming here.
One dollar and a half for a glass of beer

7. Southern region tourist sites

**Mekong Delta:** (Vietnamese: Đồng bằng Sông Cửu Long “Nine Dragon river delta”) is the region in southwestern Vietnam where the Mekong River approaches and empties into the sea through a network of distributaries. The Mekong delta region encompasses a large portion of southwestern Vietnam of 39,000 km² (15,000 sq. mi). The size of the area covered by water depends on the season. The Mekong Delta has recently been dubbed as a “biological treasure trove”. Over 10,000 new species have been discovered in previously unexplored areas of Mekong Delta. A homestay among the people of the Mekong Delta is an unforgettable experience and can give you a unique insight into the day-to-day lives of the local people. The bulk of the local people here make their living from growing fruit or cultivating rice. Tourists can also enjoy floating markets, visit national parks and reverses in the Mekong Delta. There are 13 provinces in the region and will take you from 2 days up to 2 weeks to visit the Mekong Delta.
Floating market in Can Tho

Mũi Né beach: a coastal resort town in the Binh Thuan Province of southeastern Vietnam. The town is close to the city of Phan Thiết. Mui Ne has many resorts on the beach, as well as restaurants, bars and cafes. Mui Ne is a popular destination for Russian tourists, and many of the restaurants and resorts are Russian-owned. Mui Ne Beach is a popular tropical beach. Strong sea breezes make it very popular for kitesurfing and windsurfing. The tourist season is from December to May. Average temperature is 27°C, and climate is hot and dry for all year round.

Sand dune in Mui Ne (left) and beach (right)

8. Northern region tourist sites

Hà nội: the capital of Vietnam and the country’s largest city, founded in 1010 with over a thousand year of history. The city is well-known for many historic sites, temples and pagodas. Văn Miếu Quốc Tử Giám (Temple of Literature) is one of the world oldest university can be founded here. The city is also known
as “city of lakes” with most famous are Hoan Kiem Lake (Sword Lake), West Lake, Halais Lake (French name for Hồ Thiên Quang”), Bay Mau Lake. Hanoi has rich food traditions and many of Vietnam’s most famous dishes, such as phở, chả cá, bánh cuốn and cộm are thought to come from Hanoi.

The city of Hanoi

**Northern highlands – SaPa:** a frontier town and capital of Sa Pa District in the Lao Cai province in northwest Vietnam. It is one of the main market towns in the area, where several ethnic minority groups such as Hmong, Dao (Yao), Giay, Pho Lu, and Tay live. Here you can find the highest peak of Vietnam, Fansipan at 3,143 m (10,312 ft.) locate in the Hoang Lien Mountains, southeastern extent of the Himalayan chain. The mean temperature of SaPa town is 15.4°C (60°F), with a maximum of 29.4°C (85°F) and a minimum of 1°C (34 °F) which is ideal for trekking and mountain climbing. Best time to visit Sapa is during spring blossom and July – August when the harvest season starts.
Ha Long bay: (Vietnamese: Vịnh Hạ Long, means “descending dragon bay”) is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and a popular travel destination, located in Quang Ninh province. The bay features thousands of limestone karsts and isles in various sizes and shapes. Ha Long Bay is a center of a larger zone which includes Bái Tử Long bay to the northeast, and Cát Bà islands to the southwest. These larger zones share similar geological, geographical, geomorphological, climate, and cultural characters. Ha Long Bay has an area of around 1,553 km², including 1,960–2,000 islets, most of which are limestone. The core of the bay has an area of 334 km² with a high density of 775 islets. The limestone in this bay has gone through 500 million years of formation in different conditions and environments. The evolution of the karst in this bay has taken 20 million years under the impact of the tropical wet climate. The geo-diversity of the environment in the area has created biodiversity, including a tropical evergreen bio system, oceanic and sea shore bio system. Ha Long Bay is home to 14 endemic floral species and 60 endemic faunal species. Spend your night on a tourist boat cruising around Ha Long bay is one thing you shouldn’t miss during your trip here.
9. Central region tourist sites:

Hoi An ancient town: (Vietnamese: Phố cổ Hội An) also Faifo, is a city of Vietnam, on the coast of the Biển Đông in the South Central Coast of Vietnam. It is located in Quang Nam province and is home to approximately 120,000 inhabitants. It is recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Hoi An Ancient Town is an exceptionally well-preserved example of a South-East Asian trading port dating from the 15th to the 19th century. Its buildings and its street plan reflect the influences, both indigenous and foreign, that have combined to produce this unique heritage site. The city possessed the largest harbor in Southeast Asia in the 1st century and was known as Lâm Ấp Phố (Champa City). Between the seventh and 10th centuries, the Cham (people of Champa) controlled the strategic spice trade and with this came tremendous wealth. The former harbour town of the Cham at the estuary of the Thu Bồn River was an important Vietnamese trading centre in the 16th and 17th centuries, where Chinese from various provinces as well as Japanese, Dutch and Indians settled. During this period of the China trade, the town was called Hai Pho (Seaside Town) in Vietnamese. Originally, Hai Pho was a divided town with the Japanese settlement across the "Japanese Bridge" (16th-17th century). The bridge (Chùa cầu) is a unique covered structure built by the Japanese, the only known covered bridge with a Buddhist pagoda attached to one side.
Hue: (Vietnamese: Huế) the capital city of Thua Thien – Hue province, Vietnam. Between 1802 and 1945, it was the imperial capital of the Nguyen dynasty. Hue is well known for its historic monuments, which have earned it a place in UNESCO’s World Heritage Sites. The seat of the Nguyễn emperors was the Citadel, which occupies a large, walled area on the north side of the Perfume River. Inside the citadel was a forbidden city where only the emperors, concubines, and those close enough to them were granted access; the punishment for trespassing was death. Today, little of the forbidden city remains, though reconstruction efforts are in progress to maintain it as a historic tourist attraction. Roughly along the Perfume River from Hue lie myriad other monuments, including the tombs of several emperors, including Minh Mạng, Khải Định, and Tự Đức. Also notable is the Thiên Mụ Pagoda, the largest pagoda in Huế and the official symbol of the city. A number of French-style buildings lie along the south bank of the Perfume River. Among them are Quốc Học High School, the oldest high school in Vietnam, and Hai Ba Trung High School. The Hue Royal Antiquities Museum on 3 Le Truc Street also maintains a collection of various artifacts from the city.
10. Cuisines

Some would call Vietnamese food simple, and it typically is, but never boring. The food of the north is heavily influenced by China with its stir-fries and noodle-based soups. As you move south, there's more flavor-blending with nearby Thailand and Cambodia. Despite the varied landscape of Vietnam, all of the food came back to that balance of herbs, heat, sweetness, sourness, bitterness, and the all-powerful fish sauce. As with other Southeast Asian cuisines, it's all about the yin and yang; the sweet and salty, the cooling and heating, the fresh and fermented.

Some common dishes you should try:
The famous “Pho”

Broken rice served with grilled pork, eggs...
“Banh my”, bread served with pâté, sausage... a common street food esp. for breakfast

“Banh cuon”, rice paper roll wrap with grilled pork
Nem ran / cha gio, crunchy spring rolls

Cha ca La Vong, grilled fish seasoned with garlic, ginger... on a hot pan tablesde

11. Cho Ray

Cho Ray Hospital was established in 1900 and officially named “Hoàpital Municipal de Cho lon”. It is a longstanding, prestigious and the largest hospital in South Vietnam. After a history of 100 years forming and developing, Cho Ray Hospital is now a general hospital directly under the Ministry of Health and acts as the ultimate hospitals of 37 cities and provinces in South Vietnam, including Ho Chi Minh City. In the new era, the hospital have conducted many changes such as increasing the quality of medical treatment and services, promoting quality management, improving hospital procedures, enhancing communication style and restlessly developing high technologies for the target, “Be cured, be pleased”.

Today, the hospital has 1,800 planned beds, 3,102 employees totally, in which 426 ones are postgraduate and 534 ones graduated from universities. The hospital always strengthens and expands cooperation with many countries and NGOs worldwide as well as solidifies the relationships between it and other hospitals.

**Cho Ray hospital**

**Departments:**

- Department of General Medicine
- Department of Cardiology
- Department of Thoracic and Vascular Surgery
- Department of Interventional Cardiology
- Department of Cardiac Surgery
- Department of Head Injury
- Department of Neurosurgery - Gamma Knife Unit
- Neurosurgical Intensive Care
- Department of Tropical Diseases - Poison Control Unit
- Department of Endocrinology
- Department of Dialysis
- Department of Rheumatology
- Department of Research & Treatment of Hepatitis
- Department of Nephrology
- Department of Dietetics
- Department of Gastroenterology
- Department of Pulmonary Medicine
- Department of Neurology
- Department of Burn - Plastic Surgery
12. Visa information

A VISA to Vietnam can be applied for by mail or in person at the Embassy of Vietnam as early as six months prior to the date of travel.

The applicant must submit:

a. Original PASSPORT (which requires at least 01 month validity prior the date of exit from Vietnam and/or 06 month validity to meet airlines’ requirements). You can request for a loose-leaf visa, then a copy of passport (photo and personal detail pages) may be submitted instead of the original passport.

b. Application form (http://vietnamembassy-usa.org/sites/default/files/visaform.pdf): The form must be completed, signed and attached with 01 original photo (2x 2in). In case of a loose-leaf-visa request, 01 additional photo must be stapled to the form. If the applicant has already got a visa approval, she/he may write the reference number on the top of the form. For anyone who comes to Vietnam for less than 3 months and does not have visa approval, just leave “visa approval number” blank and the Embassy will take care of it. Additional processing fees for visa approval may be required.
c. Visa fees must be in the form of MONEY ORDER, or CASHIER’S CHECK, or CERTIFIED CHECK payable to “THE EMBASSY OF VIETNAM.” Applicants applying together may submit combined payment in one money order or certified check. Fee for stamping visa can be checked at Consular Fee. Other current fees (such as visa approval arrangement fee, processing fee, shipping, handling and expedite services) may be checked at: Email: vnconsular@vietnamembassy.us Tel: 202 - 861 - 0737. Once visa has been applied, the fee is NOT refundable.

d. A prepaid return envelope, if the applicant requests the visa be returned by mail. Please use USPS - United States Postal Service (prepaid postage stamp envelope or return label bought online at www.usps.com) or prepaid return FedEx label (bought online at www.fedex.com. For your documents’ safety, the Embassy advises to use USPS Express Mail or FedEx with the tracking numbers. In case the package is lost, applicant is fully responsible for the problems that may occur.

Applicants applying together may provide one envelope for visas to be returned to the same address.

Processing Time: Five business days are required to process visa applications with approval. Expedited processing requires one to two business days after the Embassy has received the application (additional fee required).

Note: Please keep the tracking numbers of the envelopes to and from the Embassy. When the above deadlines have passed, use the tracking number to check with the mailing service first. Please do not make telephone inquiries on the status of your application (make sure that you keep your passport number for this request) until after the 3rd business day for an expedited case and the 7th business day for a regular case. The Embassy will be closed on Saturday, Sunday, Vietnamese and US holidays. Please take account of the observed holidays in planning for your visa application and travel. In addition, no mail can be delivered at the Embassy during weekends and holidays.

For further information, please contact the Visa Section of the Embassy:

Opening hours: 9:30 – 12:30 Monday through Friday.

Phone: (202) 861-0737 during 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM and 1:30 PM – 5:00 PM Monday through Friday.

Fax: (202) 861-1297 and (202) 861-0917

Email: vnconsular@vietnamembassy.us

Website: http://www.vietnamembassy.us

* Applicant is responsible for checking accurate information on visa being issued by the Embassy. In case of mistakes, please contact the Embassy immediately for correction. Otherwise, applicant is fully responsible for the mistakes.

* In case of emergency, pls call: (202)-716-8666 or (202)-739-1666

13. Arriving to Ho Chi Minh City

Participants are recommended to book flights to Tan Son Nhat airport (SGN). Airlines which service to Tan Son Nhat airport include Eva Air, Singapore Airlines, Japan Airlines, and United Airlines. Day time arrivals are preferred, participants will be picked up at the airport by a member of Global Health – Vietnam office.
14. What to bring with you

Suggested items you should bring when travel to HCMC:

- Stethoscope
- Lab coats
- Professional clothes to work in hospital
- Casual clothes (winter clothes are not needed unless you want to travel North in winter)
- Backpack
- Umbrella
- Other personal stuffs (shampoo, conditioner, toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant… can be purchased at local supermarkets and convenient stores)
- Vietnam Electrical voltage is 220v – 50Hz, travel voltage converter can be easily found at local stores for 100,000 VND (less than 5 USD)

15. Shopping

Food stores and restaurants can be found everywhere in the city as well as the area near Cho Ray hospital but most of them offer Vietnamese food only. Western food stores can be found mostly in district 1 or at “Khu pho Tay”. Staff lunch will be provided by Cho Ray hospital.

It is recommended to buy your personal items, accessories, snacks, pre-made foods from supermarkets and convenient stores. Popular supermarket brands include CoopMart, CoopFood, BigC, CitiMart, MaxiMark, LotteMart. Shop n Go, Circle K are two popular convenient store brands. Most supermarkets and convenient stores will accept credit card as well.

16. Financials: money and spending advice

Monetary unit: Vietnam Dong (VND). Exchange rate is about 21,000 VND to 1 USD. It’s better to have some cash with you (300 – 400 USD for initial expense). Bank notes: 500đ, 1000đ, 2000đ, 5000đ (old issue, still in circulation), 10,000đ, 20,000đ, 50,000đ, 100,000đ, 200,000đ, 500,000đ
Most common Vietnamese bank notes

**Credit card:** many ATMs can be found in HCMC and most restaurants, supermarkets will accept credit card. Most popular credit cards are Visa and Master, very few accept AMEX.

**Average price:**
- Taxi: 16,000 – 18,000 VND per kilometer (~ 1 USD / mi.)
- Bus ticket: 3,000 – 5,000 (depend on distance)
- Lunch or dinner in local food stores: 40,000 – 50,000 VND (~2 – 2.5 USD)
- Milk: 30,000 per liter (~1.5 USD)

**International bank:**
- ANZ Bank (+84-8-829 9319; 11 Me Linh Square), 24-hour ATM.
- HSBC (+84-8-829 2288; 235 Dong Khoi street), 24-hour ATM

**International money order:** Western Union

### 17. Accommodation for Participants

Participants will be arranged in one of the hotels near Cho Ray area. Average price for hotels room:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROOM TYPE</th>
<th>SINGLE</th>
<th>TWIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>700,000 (~35 USD)</td>
<td>750,000 (~37 USD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>750,000 (~37 USD)</td>
<td>800,000 (~40 USD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deluxe</td>
<td>900,000 (~45 USD)</td>
<td>1,000,000 (~50 USD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suite</td>
<td>1,100,000 (~55 USD)</td>
<td>1,300,000 (~65 USD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra bed</td>
<td></td>
<td>350,000 (~18 USD)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 18. Public transportation

**Bus:** There are now more than 130 local bus routes around the city and beyond. There is a useful and free Ho Chi Minh Bus Route Diagram available at the Ben Thanh market bus station. Some useful numbers from Ben Thanh include the 152 to Tan Son Nhat Airport, 149 to Saigon train station, 1 to Binh Tay Market in Cholon, 102 to Mien Tay bus station and 26 to Mien Dong bus station. All buses have air-con and uniformed drivers, and the average ticket price is just 3000 VND. Buy your ticket on board from the attendant.

**Taxi:** Metered taxis cruise the streets, but it is worth calling ahead. Lots of companies in HCMC offer metered taxis and charge almost exactly the same rates. The cost is around 16,000d to 18,000d per kilometer. Most rides in the city center cost just a couple of bucks. Most popular taxi companies include:

- Vinasun: +84-8-38 27 27 27
- Mai Linh: +84-8-38 38 38 38

![Vinasun taxi](image)
Mai Linh taxi