



VIETNAM

Pre-departure Information

Vietnam is one of the most exciting countries in Southeast Asia and the best place to witness the convergence of ancient history and modernity, whether it be in the royal tombs of Hue, the colonial era shop-houses in Hoi An or the bustling Old Quarter in the capital, Hanoi, which recently celebrated its 1000 year anniversary. We wish you a memorable trip in Vietnam, and offer the below information to help you prepare.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

All nationalities, with exception of some Asian and Scandinavian nationals, must have a visa to enter Vietnam.

You may apply for a visa through a Vietnamese embassy or consulate in your country. Check with the embassy or consulate for latest requirements.

If you do not want to send off your passport or need your passport for your current travel, Senses Journeys can assist you in obtaining a visa-on-arrival if you are arriving to Vietnam by air. For other land and river borders, a visa must be obtained in advance.

VIETNAM VISA ON ARRIVAL:

To arrange for a visa on arrival which is available only at HCMC (Saigon), Hanoi, Danang, Nhatrang & Phu Quoc airports, please send Senses Journeys the following information:

- (1) Arrival date with arrival flight information
- (2) Passport copy or full passport details as:
 - Full name as it appears in your passport
 - Nationality
 - Date of birth DD/MM/YY
 - Gender
 - Passport number
 - Issue date and expiry date of your passport
- (3) Occupation

- ❖ It normally takes several workdays to secure a Visa Authorization Letter, which we will send to you. You must present this letter when boarding your inbound flight to Vietnam. The effective date will be mentioned in the approval letter. You are not allowed to enter Vietnam before the authorized date of entry. In urgent cases, we may be able to arrange a visa on arrival more quickly, but we cannot guarantee this.
- ❖ Cost for a one month single entry visa on arrival is US\$25. Be aware that there may be long queues at the office where the visas are being issued.
- ❖ It is a requirement to provide Senses Journeys with your full passport and visa information prior to entering Vietnam.
- ❖ Please make sure your passport is valid more than 6 months from the date of departure of each country you are visiting. Also, make sure you have enough blank pages – you may need up to 1.5 pages for each country you visit in Southeast Asia.

ARRIVAL INFORMATION

ARRIVAL TRANSFER TIPS

- ❖ In most gateway cities you will be met by a Senses Journeys representative and carrying the Senses Journeys signboard with your name. However, in some airports, there are restrictions on signboards in which case the representative may just have your name printed on a sheet of paper.
- ❖ If you are unable to find the Senses Journeys transfer staff, please call our Emergency number for immediate assistance on +84 (0) 933 023 363 (Mr. HUE)
- ❖ Please keep a copy of your completed Immigration and Customs form as you will need to present it at Immigration upon departure from Vietnam.

VIP ARRIVAL SERVICE

If you have booked our VIP arrival service, our immigration officer will meet you as you depart the plane and take you to the VIP area for immigration formalities. In the meantime, staff will collect your luggage and after, escort you to meet your tour guide.

- ❖ After walking through the exit gate, take your time to look for a guide or driver holding a welcome sign with the Senses Journeys logo and your name.
- ❖ In Hanoi, there are 2 arrival gates next to each other. Your transfer person should be waiting for you at the correct gate, however, if you cannot find the person, please check the other gate.

INSURANCE

Travelers are highly recommended to purchase trip and travel insurance. Trip insurance covers the cost of your trip should you be forced to cancel your trip before you start the trip. Travel insurance covers such costs as emergency and medical evacuation, hospital fees, property loss, etc which could possibly happen during the trip. If you would like Senses Journeys to have a copy of your travel insurance information in case of emergency, please forward these details to your agent who will in turn forward to our office.

HEALTH

Please consult your doctor to discuss your particular health or immunization requirements. If you would like to have a source of further information, please refer to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov

AIRLINES AND AIRPORT INFORMATION

Domestic Airlines

The State-run Vietnam Airlines (VNA) is the most established domestic airline. For domestic flights, VNA use a mixture of Boeing (338 seats) and Airbus (320 seats). With some short flights to small airports such as Dalat or Phu Quoc, ATR (72 seats) and Fokker (79 seats) are operated.

Seat Assignment

Seat assignment is not always possible in advance. The best way to secure a seat of your choice is to arrive at the airport early and request this at check in.

Airport Security

Please be aware that our courtesy check in service is now limited due to the current world security climate. You must have an airline ticket to enter the check-in terminal. Some airports will stipulate that you must check in your own bags. We thank you for your understanding on this matter.

Luggage allowance

Each airline has its own luggage allowance policy. You are advised to check your airline prior to travel since the below price is subject to change. All airlines now stipulate that liquids, gels and/or aerosols in hand luggage must be in completely closed containers of 3 oz/100ml or less (even if the container is partially filled).

Vietnam Airlines Luggage Allowance

- *Economy: 20kg (44 lbs) checked baggage, 7kg (15.4 lbs) cabin baggage*
- *Business: 30kg (66 lbs) checked baggage, 7kg (15.4 lbs) cabin baggage*
- *Excess baggage charge: US\$1.5 / kg for domestic flights and US\$3-5 / kg for international flights.*

Departure airport tax

Departure Airport taxes have been included in the airfares for both domestic and international airports in Vietnam.

MONEY

The currency in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Dong (VND). US Dollars and Euros are accepted in many hotels, restaurants and shops. Banks are open Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 05:00 and some on Saturday morning. In the major cities, some exchange offices open long hours near places frequented by tourists and most hotels will change US Dollars and Euros at very reasonable rates.

US dollars are accepted in most hotels and high-end restaurants, although you will need dong for taxis and in smaller shops. The exchange rate is around 23,000 VND to the US Dollar (check www.xe.com for the latest exchange rate).

ATMs for withdrawing Vietnamese Dong are available in major airports, hotels, towns and capitals of provinces throughout Vietnam. Most ATMs have an English language version. Ask your tour guide for help when you need to locate an ATM.

Most credit cards are accepted in Vietnam. Visa and MasterCard are the most widely accepted. JCB and American Express are also accepted in some outlets. Not all hotels, commercial centers, shops and restaurants accept credit cards. Check with the cashier before making any purchases. Bear in mind that in some places a surcharge applies for credit card purchases: Visa and MasterCard charge approximately 2.2% surcharge, JCB: 2.75% surcharge, American Express: 4% surcharge.

NOTE: Surcharges can change without prior notice. Check the percentage charged before you pay.

TIPPING

Tipping for good service is not compulsory but is always appreciated throughout Southeast Asia where the average annual income is quite low compared to Europe for example.

It is customary to tip tour guides and drivers at the end of a tour. Hotel and station porters should also be tipped.

Do not let the guide talk you into tipping more than you plan to. It is totally up to you who you tip, when and how much. For reference, we provide hereafter a general guideline:

➤ **Tour Guide/Drivers**

If you are pleased with the services provided by the tour guide and driver, then a tip for their hard work will be very much appreciated. In general, we recommend around US\$10 -15 per day per traveler for guides and US\$5-7 per day per traveler for drivers if less than 4 people in a group. And for group from 05 person or more we recommend around US\$5-10 per day per traveler for guides and US\$3-5 per day per traveler for drivers.

➤ **Hotel & Restaurant Staff**

A tipping of 5-10% of the total bill in restaurants is appreciated. If you stay a couple of days in the same hotel, a tip to the maid service of \$1-2/day is appreciated. For porters, US\$1-2/time/room is acceptable.

➤ **Boat Cruise**

If you travel on a local basic boat such as in the Mekong Delta, Nha Trang, Hue, Hoi An etc., a suggested tip from US\$5-10 per boat is appreciated - more or less depending on the group size and the trip's duration. For an overnight boat trip such as in Halong Bay, the suggestion is \$5 - \$10 per person to cover all the boat crew.

PACKING ESSENTIALS

What you take will naturally depend upon where you are traveling, and it can often be difficult to decide what to pack, nevertheless the following should act as a useful checklist of essential items worth thinking about taking.

- ✓ Passport – Ensure that it is valid and in good condition with empty pages available. Make a photocopy as well
- ✓ Copy of visa approval letter (if visa is to be obtained on arrival)
- ✓ Insurance – Ensure that it will be valid for the whole journey
- ✓ Passport Photos – Will invariably be needed for identification passes and certain overseas visas
- ✓ Emergency contact numbers: Senses Journeys, Insurance company, friends and family.
- ✓ Debit/credit card cancellation numbers
- ✓ Air tickets and Itinerary
- ✓ Money belt – Ensure that it is discrete and comfortable to wear
- ✓ First Aid kit - Basic travel kit to cover basic mishaps which may occur along the way
- ✓ Personal Medication –with international doctors' note to ensure easy passage of medication across international borders
- ✓ Sun block – High UVA protection ideally
- ✓ Sunglasses & sunhat
- ✓ Comfortable walking shoes
- ✓ Mosquito spray & insect repellent
- ✓ Long sleeve top and trousers – Useful to protect against mosquitoes at dawn and dusk and the sun through the day
- ✓ Camera & battery
- ✓ Security code pad lock
- ✓ A small amount of currency in USD small notes

CLOTHING

If your trip to Vietnam includes stops at beaches and mountainous areas, you will need clothes for all temperatures. A swimsuit, sunglasses, a hat, t-shirts, shorts that are not too revealing, long trousers, some light-weight, long-sleeved tops and a light jacket that is wind and rain-resistant will get you through most trips. If you plan to visit northern Vietnam in the winter, you'll need a warm coat. Mountainous areas can get chilly; choose clothes you can layer.

If trekking is on your agenda, you will need sturdy footwear with traction—plus lots of socks. Slip-on shoes or sandals are useful for visits to pagodas or people's houses, as you'll save time taking your shoes on and off.

Larger cities like Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi offer upscale bars and restaurants, so be sure to pack some clothes and shoes for a nice evening out. It's not advisable to bring your flashy jewelry.

TOILETRIES & MEDICATION

While imported beauty products are readily available in major cities, you'd be wise to pack staples like sunscreen, contact lens solution, tampons and mosquito repellent. It is advised that your prescription medication is in its original box with the label along with the prescription to avoid any complications that may arise at Customs. Many medicines are available in Southeast Asia without prescriptions. If you plan to purchase medication, choose a reputable supplier and read the labels carefully, particularly paying attention to expiration date.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Bring a money-belt to safely carry your travel documents and cash, and ensure that your luggage has a lock. Bring photo-copies of your passport and visa, plus some extra passport-sized photos (4x6cm) if you're applying for on-arrival visa (just in case). When flying into or within Vietnam, you will probably be given baggage claim tags (they might be stuck to the back of your ticket). Keep these, as you will need to show them when leaving the airport.

SAFETY TIPS

In general, Vietnam is very safe for travelers. Violent attacks are rare, although petty theft is a problem in big cities. Where possible, secure your valuables in the hotel safe. Remember to record your traveler's cheque numbers and credit card information—just in case.

- ❖ Do not leave your wallet or mobile phone in the back pocket of your pants or anywhere else that's easily reached (like an outer zip-up compartment on a backpack). Be especially vigilant in markets and other crowded places like ports and train stations.
- ❖ Pick-pocketing and purse snatching are more of a problem in Ho Chi Minh City than smaller towns or cities. Some thieves approach on motorcycles, grab your belongings and race off before you've realized what's happened. If you ride in a cyclo (pedicab), it is advisable not to carry or wear things of personal value (i.e, jewelry, lots of money). Wearing a money belt or something that can be easily tucked away is considered safer.
- ❖ Use common sense and don't walk alone after dark. You're always better off avoiding cyclos or motorbike taxis at night; ask your hotel or restaurant to call a reputable taxi firm. If confronted by a mugger, do not resist.
- ❖ Traffic is chaotic, if you choose to ride a motorcycle, you must have an international driver's license and wear a helmet. Please note that you may not be covered by your travel insurance if you have an accident on a motorcycle, whether you are the driver or passenger.
- ❖ When crossing the street on foot, move at a slow and steady pace. Fight the urge to weave and run! Walk slowly, looking up and meeting the driver's eyes, and the traffic will flow around you. For best results, follow a local.

CONTACT US

If you have any question or encounter any problems please contact us immediately at our Hear Office in Vietnam so we can provide an immediate solution.

SENSES JOURNEYS

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